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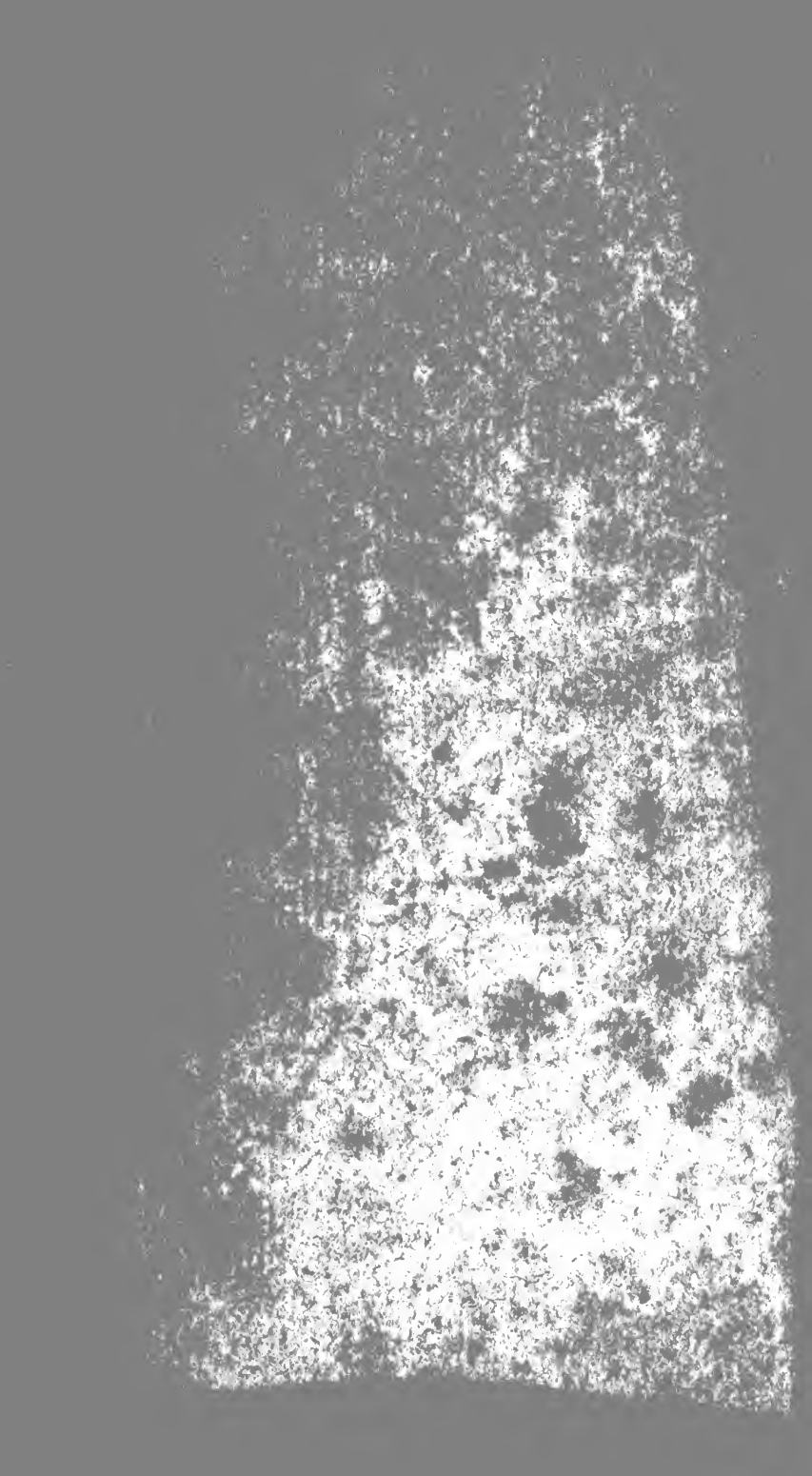


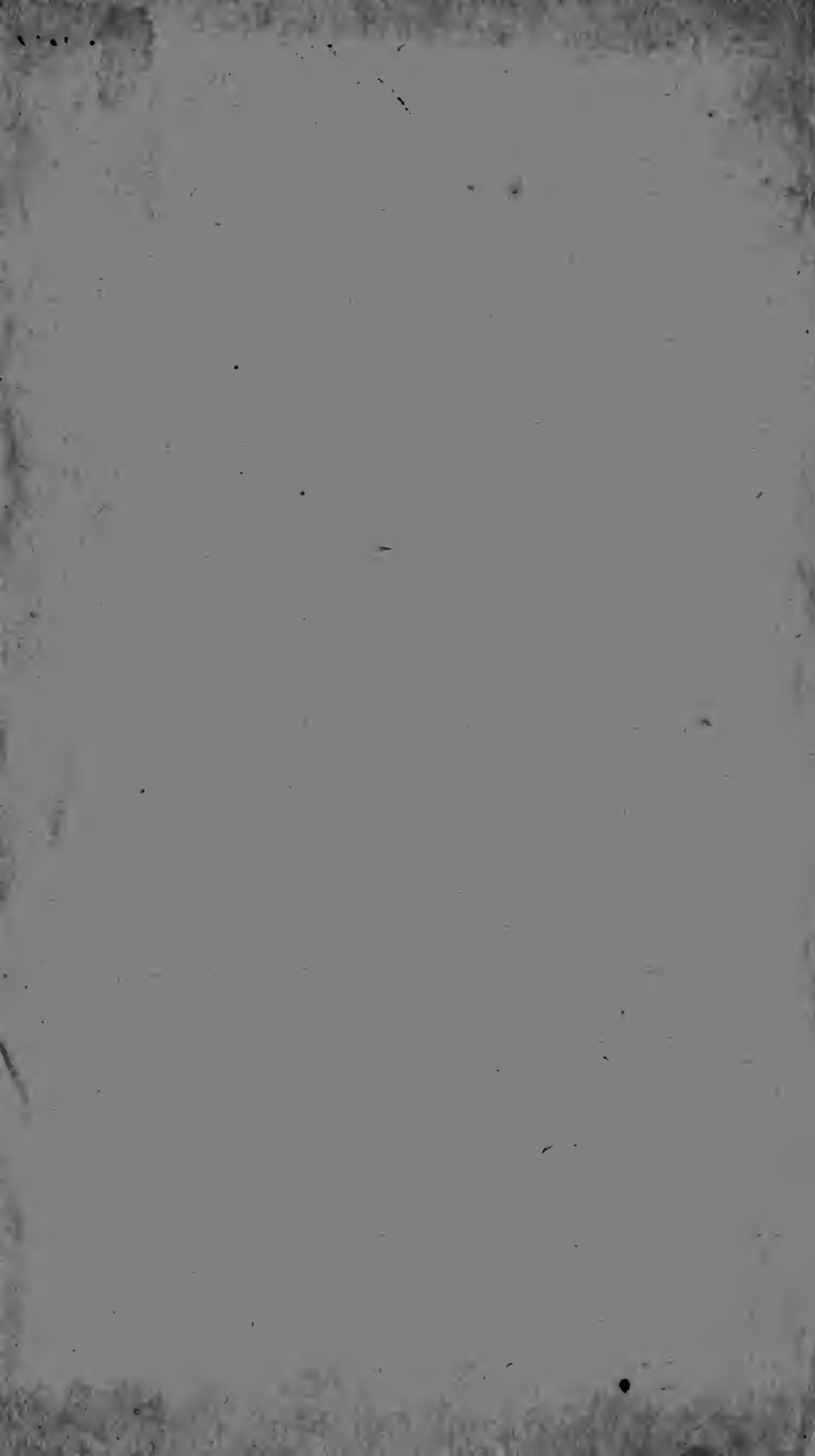
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T H E *John Adams*

W O R K S

Of the MOST REVEREND

Dr JOHN TILLOTSON,

L A T E

Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY.

IN TEN VOLUMES.

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S E R M O N CCIV.

Of the form, and the power of godliness.

2 TIM. iii. 5.

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

The first sermon on this text.

THE Apostle in these words distinguishes two things in religion, which do not, but ought always to go together, *viz.* the shew and pretence of religion, and the life and power of it. He condemns neither, but blames the separating of them. The latter indeed cannot be without the first; for where-ever religion really is, there will be some appearance of it: but the former may be, and often is, without the latter. Men may make a great shew of religion, and yet be very destitute of the power of it. And such were those persons the Apostle describes here in the text; they were guilty of the greatest faults and vices in their lives, but thought to cloke all these by an outward shew and appearance of godliness: *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.*

The word *μῆραυς*, which is here translated *form*, signifies the shew or image of a thing, which is dead and ineffectual, in opposition to the reality and life, which is quick and powerful. And, I think, this word is but once more used in the New Testament, and much in the same sense, *viz.* for an empty and ineffectual knowledge of religion, without the practice of it, Rom. ii. 17. 20. 21. The Apostle there speaks of some Pharisaical Jews, who gloried in their knowledge of the law, but violated it in their practice. *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest, a man should not steal, dost thou steal?*

So that a *form of godliness* signifies an empty shew and profession of religion, without the real effects of it.

And they who are destitute of these, are said to *deny the power of religion*. It is usual in several languages to draw metaphors from words to actions; and men are said to contradict or deny any thing, when they do contrary to what they pretend; and so this phrase is elsewhere used, Tit. i. 10. *They profess to know God, but in their works they deny him.* 1 Tim. v. 8. *If any man provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith.* The Apostle does not mean that such an one denies the faith by an express declaration in words, but by actions so contradictory to the Christian faith, as an infidel would hardly do: *He hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

In the handling of these words, I shall do these four things.

First, Shew wherein a *form of godliness* consists.

Secondly, Wherein the *power of it* lies.

Thirdly, Give some marks and characters whereby we may know when these are separated, when the *form of godliness* is destitute of the *power*.

Fourthly, Shew that a mere *form of godliness*, without the *power of it*, is insignificant to all the great ends and purposes of religion.

First, To shew wherein a *form of godliness* doth consist. In general, it consists in an external shew and profession of religion, or of any eminent part of it, or of that which is reputed to be so; and a form of religion is more or less complete, according to the extent of it. Some pitch upon one part of religion, and set themselves chiefly to make a shew of that; others take in more parts of it, and endeavour to express and counterfeit them; so that the forms of religion are various and different, and not to be reduced to any fixed and constant standard; but they commonly appear in some one or more of these shapes.

I. An external devotion.

II. An orthodox profession of the Christian faith.

III. Enthusiasm, and pretence to inspiration.

IV. A great external shew of mortification.

V. An

V. An imperfect repentance, and partial reformation.

VI. The appearance and ostentation of some particular grace and virtue.

VII. A great zeal for some party, or opinions, or circumstances of religion.

VIII. Silliness and freakishness, and either a pretended or real ignorance in the common affairs and concernments of human life.

IX. Much noise and talk about religion.

These are the several forms of religion which men are wont to assume. Not that these do always go singly; but sometimes men put on one, sometimes more of them, as may best serve their several turns and interests. Nor would I be understood to condemn all these; for several of these particulars which I have mentioned are good in themselves, and necessary parts of religion; but being destitute of other things, wherein the life of religion doth consist, they are but *a form of godliness*.

I. External devotion. This is the most common form of religion, and easiest to be assumed, and therefore it is that so many take it up. And this is good in itself, and a necessary part of religion: but if there be no more than this, it is a mere image and picture of religion, abominable to God, and fulsome and odious to discerning men.

Now, this external devotion shews itself more especially these two ways.

1. In a frequent and diligent use of the means and instruments of religion.

2. In a curious and nice regard to the modes and circumstances of performing these.

1. In a frequent and diligent use of the means and instruments of religion, such as prayer, reading, and hearing the word of God, and receiving of the blessed sacrament. These are not the life of religion, the great end and design of it, but the means and instruments which God hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of holiness and virtue in us. Many exercise themselves in these with great constancy and devotion, pray to God, and read the Bible frequently, go to church duly, and hear God's word attentively, and receive the

sacrament reverently, and behave themselves devoutly in all parts of public worship; and yet all this may be but a mere form, and certainly is no more, where the great end of all this is neglected, and men do not sincerely endeavour to do what God's word directs them to, and what they daily pray to God to enable them to do.

For all these means are in order to some farther effect and design. We read and hear the word of God, that we may know his will, and that we may do it; that, by the precepts and counsels of the holy scriptures, we may learn and understand our duty; and, by the motives and arguments which are there offered to us, we may effectually be persuaded to the practice of it. We pray to God, not only for the forgiveness of our sins, but for his grace and assistance, to enable us to mortify and subdue them, and to proceed in all virtue and godliness of living. We receive the sacrament, to inflame our love to God and our blessed Saviour, to excite in us a greater hatred of sin, and to confirm us in the purpose and resolution of well-doing. These are the great ends for which God hath appointed all these helps and means; and if these ends be not obtained, in vain do we worship God, all our religion is but mere shew and pageantry. We are but like the people God himself describes, *Is. xxix. 13.* *This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do they honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.* And like those, *Ezek. xxxiii. 30. 31. 32.* *who spake one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song, of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.* This is not to worship God, but impudently to affront him; and if we take this for religion, we put the grossest cheat imaginable upon ourselves. Hear how God challenges the people of Israel upon this account, *Jer. vii. 2. 3. 4. &c.* *Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter*

in at these gates to worship the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. This is the great end of all religious worship and devotion, the reformation of our lives and actions; and if it have not this effect, it is a cheat. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways, and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt; then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever. Behold, ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods, whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? What greater impudence can there be, than to worship God devoutly, and to live wickedly? This is to declare that we mock God under a pretence of serving him; or else that we believe that God, whom we worship, allows these abominations, and is pleased with them.

2. Others make this form of external devotion yet more complete, by a curious and nice regard to the modes and circumstances of performing the duties of religion. They are very punctual and exact in all their carriage and gestures, as if they minded nothing else but the outward part of religion.

Not but that great humility and reverence does very well become men in their addresses to God; but then we must be sure, that this external reverence be a signification of the inward and real devotion of our minds. For if it be separated from this, it is not devotion, but superstition; it is not to worship God in spirit and in truth, but in bodily shew and appearance only; not to honour the divine majesty, but to fawn upon him, and flatter him. And where men are very intent upon these things, and endeavour to outstrip o-

ther people in voluntary expressions of outward devotion, it too often happens that such persons are destitute of the substance and reality of religion. They are like the formal complimenting sort of people in civil conversation, who commonly have very little in them, and, notwithstanding all their smooth outside and appearance, they have neither that solidity nor sincerity which is in many a plain ordinary man.

II. An orthodox profession of the Christian faith. This is another form of religion, which the more knowing and inquisitive sort of men are apt to take up and rest in. And this is that which, in the Jewish religion, the Apostle calls *a form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law*.

And this is good as far as it goes. But then it must not rest only in the brain, but descend from thence upon the heart and life: otherwise a man may have this *form of godliness*, and yet be a *denier of the power of it*. St Paul puts this very case, that a man may have the theory and knowledge of religion, and yet if it do not produce the fruits of a good life, it is nothing worth: 1 Cor. xiii. 2. *Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing*. And the reason is plain, because the knowledge of religion is only in order to the practice of it; and an article or proposition of faith is an idle thing, if it do not produce such actions as the belief of such a proposition doth require.

There are many persons in the world very solicitous about an orthodox belief, and mightily concerned to know what the scriptures, but especially what the councils and fathers, have declared in such a matter; and they are nice and scrupulous in these things, even to the utmost punctilios, and will, with a most unchristian passion, contend for the Christian faith: and yet perhaps all this while they can allow themselves in plain sins, and in the practice of such things as are in scripture as clearly forbidden to be done, as any thing is there commanded to be believed. Whereas religion does not consist so much in nicety and subtilty of belief, as in integrity and innocency of life; and the truest

truest and most orthodox persuasion in matters of religion, is but a mere form and image, if it be not accompanied with an answerable practice; yea, like the image presented to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, *whose head was of fine gold, but the legs and feet were iron and clay.*

Not but that a right belief is of great concernment in religion; but then this belief must be prosecuted into the proper and genuine consequences of it, upon our lives: if it be not, it is unhappy for men that they believe so well, when they live so ill. The devils have a right faith, St James tells us, *they believe and tremble.* And indeed none have so much reason to tremble, as those who believe the principles of religion, and yet are conscious to themselves that they live contrary to them; because of all persons in the world they are the most inexcusable.

III. Another form of religion which many take upon them, is enthusiasm, and pretence to inspiration. And this is a very glorious form, which is apt to dazzle and amuse the ignorant, because they know not what to make of it. It seems to be something strange and extraordinary, and yet it is nothing but what every man that has confidence enough may pretend to.

There is no Christian doubts but that the Spirit of God hath heretofore inspired men in an extraordinary manner, and that he may do so again when he pleases: but since the great and standing revelation of the gospel, we have reason not to be rash in giving heed to such pretences. If those who pretend to inspiration declare nothing but what is revealed in the gospel already, their inspiration is needless; if they declare any thing contrary thereto, we are sufficiently cautioned against them; if any thing besides the revelation of the gospel, but not contrary to it, then we are to expect what evidence they bring for their inspiration. For God does not inspire men for their own sakes, but for the sake of others; and another man's inspiration is nothing to me, unless he can satisfy me that he is inspired. For either I must believe every one that pretends to inspiration, or those only that can make good their pretence. Not every one, for then I yield up myself to the mercy of every confident man, to lead

me into what delusions he pleases. If I believe only those who are able to make good this pretence, then am I in no great danger; for nothing less than a miracle can give me reasonable assurance of another man's inspiration; and, I think, few or none of our modern enthusiasts have so much as pretended to miracles. So that this form of religion is calculated only to impose upon the ignorant, but signifies little among the steady and considerate sort of people.

Nay, if this pretence were real, yet it may be no more than a form of religion. For the Apostle supposes that men may *have the gift of prophecy*, and yet *want charity, without which they are nothing*. And our Saviour tells us, that many shall plead at the day of judgment, *Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?* And yet these very persons, for all this, may be *workers of iniquity*, and such as our Lord will bid to *depart from him*.

IV. A great external shew of mortification.

This the Pharisees of old did much applaud themselves in; they fasted twice a-week. And this is still a great part of the religion of many in the Romish church; they impose strict penalties and corporal severities upon themselves; abstain from several sorts of meats and drinks, watch and afflict their bodies with several sorts of rigours: whereas one severe resolution of a good life, well prosecuted, is a thousand times better than all this.

For experience shews us, that men may be very severe to their bodies, and yet favourable to their lusts. The Pharisees indeed fasted often, but they were ravenous in another kind, *they devoured widows houses*. It is possible that men may kill themselves by corporal austerities, and yet never mortify one lust; they may submit to a thousand penances, and yet never truly repent of one sin; they may turn pilgrims, and go as far as Jerusalem to visit our Saviour's sepulchre, and yet never *know the power of his death*.

Fasting may be a good instrument of religion, if it be discreetly used; and as it may be used, there may be no religion in it. But as for those other kinds of severities, they are absurd and superstitious, and taken

up upon a great mistake of the nature of God; as if he were never well pleased, but when we do something very displeasing to ourselves; as if he were extremely delighted in the misery and torment of his creatures; and to be cruel and unmerciful to ourselves, were the only way to move his compassion towards us.

These are barbarous and heathenish conceits of God; and the absurd practices grounded upon them are nowhere recommended to us in scripture, nor have any example there, but only in Baal's priests, who lanced and cut themselves, believing that to be a good way to incline their gods to hear them. These are voluntary superstitions, which God hath required at no man's hands. And no wise man can doubt, but that he that really mortifies his lusts, and subdues his passions, may be a good man, though he never whipped himself in all his life; and that he that lives soberly, and righteously, and godly, may justly be accounted religious, without turning vagrant, and rambling idly up and down the world. These are such forms of religion as can have no esteem and reputation, but in a very superstitious church and age.

V. An imperfect repentance, and partial reformation.

By an imperfect repentance, I mean a trouble and sorrow for sin, without the forsaking of it, and the amendment of our lives; or when, if men do reform in some things, they continue in the love and practice of other sins. This is not true repentance; for he that hath truly repented, is heartily troubled for all his offences against God, and resolved not to commit the like again; but he that retains any lust, and allows himself in the practice of it, is not troubled that he hath offended God, but hath left his sins for some other reason. For whatever arguments and considerations, respecting God, will move a man to quit any one lust, ought, upon the same account, to prevail with him to abandon all. So that whatever trouble and sorrow a man may pretend for his sins, there is no surer sign of an insincere repentance, than if, after this, he continue in the habitual practice of any known sin.

VI. The appearance and ostentation of some particular grace and virtue.

A man may be moved by the inclination of his nature, or upon some interest and design, to the practice of some particular virtue. Some are tender and compassionate in their nature, and that excites them to charity; others of quiet and easy dispositions, and that makes them patient, and meek, and peaceable; others assume one or more virtuous qualities, out of vain-glory, or to serve some other interest. The Pharisees were much in giving alms, because this is a piece of religion universally applauded, and well spoken of; and therefore though they omitted many other necessary parts of religion, yet they were so cunning that they would not be defective in this; not out of regard to God, but themselves and their own reputation. For, as our Saviour observes, they did their alms with such circumstances of vain-glory, as quite blasted the glory of them. *They caused a trumpet to be sounded before them in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they might be seen of men, and have glory of them.*

Now, though the exercise of every grace and virtue be materially a substantial part of religion, yet the practice of one virtue, with the neglect of others, is a shrewd ground of suspicion that it is not virtue but design, that it is not religion but interest which prompts men to it. For if it were religion, and done with regard to God, the very same reason would oblige them to all other parts of their duty as well as that.

VII. A great zeal for some particular party, or opinions, or circumstances of religion.

This form is frequently assumed, because men find the greatest shelter and protection under it. He that declares zealously for a party or opinion, and is fierce and eager against those that oppose it, seldom fails to gain the reputation of a religious and godly man; because he hath the vote of the whole party, and a great number to cry him up. And if he be guilty of any miscarriage, unless it be very gross and visible, he shall never want those that will apologize for him, and be ready to vindicate him at all turns. Either they will not believe what is reported of him, but impute it to malice; or they will extenuate it, and ascribe it to human infirmity: but still they cannot but think he is a
religious.

religious man, because he is so zealous for that which they esteem to be so considerable a part of religion. Nay, such is the horrible partiality and injustice of parties, that a very bad man that appears zealous for their way, shall easily gain the esteem of a holy and religious man, though he have many visible and notorious faults; though he be passionate and ill-natured, censorious and uncharitable, cruel and oppressive, sordid and covetous; when another, who quietly, and without any noise and bustle, minds the substantial parts of religion, and is truly devoted towards God, just and peaceable, and charitable towards men; meek and humble, and patient, kind and friendly even to those that differ from him, shall hardly escape being censured for a lukewarm, formal, moral man, destitute of the grace of God and the power of godliness.

So likewise zeal for or against indifferent circumstances of religion, is another form of godliness which many appear in. And commonly such persons, the more destitute they are of true piety and virtue, the greater stir they keep about these things, that they may seem to be something in religion; just like those, who being conscious to themselves that they are defective in true and useful learning, that they may not seem to be so, are always troublesome with the shreds and ends of it.

Now, the indifferent circumstances of religion are things which no man ought to have the face to trouble himself about, that neglects the weighty and substantial duties of it. No man that hath *a beam in his own eye*, ought to be concerned for *the mote that is in his brother's eye*. Indeed he that is careful of the main parts of religion, may and ought to be concerned for the other in their due place, so far as the order and decency of God's worship, and obedience to authority, and the peace of Christians is concerned in them. But to place all religion in a zeal for or against these things, is one of the thinnest and slightest forms of religion.

VIII. Silliness and freakishness, and either a pretended or real ignorance in the common affairs and concerns of human life.

This may seem at first hearing to be a very odd form of religion, and indeed so it is; yet, in several religions,
men

men have appeared in it with great applause and acceptance. Among the Turks, idiots and madmen are mightily revered, it being always taken for granted that they are inspired. And, among the Papists, the most eminent of their saints, if their legends do not belie them, especially St Francis and St Dominic, are magnified scarcely for any other reason, but for saying and doing the most silly and ridiculous things. What can be imagined more foolish and fantastical than St Francis's stripping himself of his cloaths, and running about naked? than his frequent preaching to the birds, and beasts, and fishes? Was ever any thing more nauseously ridiculous, than his picking up the lice which were beaten off his cloaths, and putting them in his bosom? which is magnified in him as a profound piece of humility; as if nastiness were a Christian grace. These and many more such freaks which are related in his life, as instances of his great sanctity, serve to no other purpose, but to render religion ridiculous to any man of common sense: As if to be a spiritual man, and a mere natural, were all one; and as if this were a good consequence, that a man cannot chuse but be very knowing in religion, because he is very silly in all other things; and must needs have abundance of grace, because he hath no wit. It is pity it should be so; but I am afraid it is too true, that the greatest mischiefs that have been done to the world, have been done by silly well-meaning men.

Lastly, Great noise and talk about religion.

This is as empty a form as any of the rest, and yet this does strangely please and satisfy a great many. If a man do but mix something of religion with all his discourses, and be often speaking of God and heavenly things, this passeth for a more than ordinary character of a religious man. And many deceive themselves with it, they have talked of religion so long, till they believe they have it.

Not but that this is a good thing, provided it be ordered with discretion and humility, and be not forced and affected, impertinent and troublesome. But then we must have a great care that other things be answerable. Our lives must justify our godly talk, and our actions

actions must give weight to our words; for nothing is more odious, than a religious and good discourse from the mouth of a bad man. This made our Saviour so full of indignation against the Scribes and Pharisees; they were not what they appeared to be in their discourse and outward garb. *They said and did not*; therefore he compares them to *whited walls and painted sepulchres, that were beautiful indeed without, but within were full of all uncleanness and rottenness.*

It is true indeed, that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*; if religion be within, it will appear in mens words as well as actions; this is a fire that will break out: but the best men are very modest, and make little noise, do nothing out of ostentation, and to be taken notice of, and had rather refrain from good words, than to make an unseasonable shew of religion.

Speech is intended to signify the inward sense of mens minds, but it does not always do so; men may be full of religious talk, when there is nothing of religion in their hearts, nothing answerable in their lives; men may speak like angels, and yet do like devils.

Therefore let no man deceive himself, or think to deceive others with this appearance of religion: for, let men talk never so piously, every considerate man knows that there is more of true religion in one good action, than in a thousand good words.

And thus I have done with the first thing, *viz.* wherein a form of religion doth consist.

Secondly, Wherein the power of godliness doth consist. And because it is very material to be rightly informed in this, I will reduce the several particulars to these four general heads.

I. A due sense of God, and suitable affections towards him.

II. A sincere and diligent use of the means and instruments of religion.

III. A firm and steady resolution of well-doing.

IV. As the proper and genuine effect of all these, the practice of a good life, in the several parts and instances of it.

I. A due sense of God, and suitable affections towards him. This is the principle and fountain of all religion, from whence all actions of piety and goodness do spring.

Under this I comprehend a lively sense of God's being; which the Apostle tells us is fundamentally necessary to all religion: *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is.* This is the great spring of all religious motions, and of our dependence upon him; the lively sense whereof will make us humble and thankful, and teach us to *acknowledge him in all our ways*, and to refer all our concernments to him; and of our subjection to him, which will make us obedient to his laws, and submissive to his pleasure; nothing being more reasonable than that he that gave us our lives should have the entire government and disposal of them; than that he that made us what we are, should command us what we should do. In short, this comprehends faith in God, or a readiness to assent to what he reveals, with the fear and the love of God, which are the great principles of religion.

II. A sincere and diligent use of the means and instruments of religion, such as prayer, reading, and hearing the word of God, and receiving the sacraments. These are the means which God hath appointed for the improving of us in holiness and goodness; and we sincerely use these means, when we really aim at this end; when we pray, and read, and hear, and meditate on God's word, and receive the sacraments, that we may truly become better, more holy and virtuous in all manner of conversation; and do not rest in the use of these means, as if a man were a religious and good man, because he prays often, and every day reads the Bible, and goes to all the sermons he can hear of, and takes all occasions to receive the sacrament. The life of religion does not consist in the bare use of these, but in the real efficacy of them upon our lives. It is a very good caution which St John gives us, *Be not deceived; he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous,* 1 John iii. 6. Men are apt to impose upon themselves, as if they could be righteous, and approve themselves to God, upon some other terms; whereas only

only they that fear God, and work righteousness, are accepted with him.

I do not speak this to undervalue the exercises of religion, but to inform men of the true nature and design of them. Be as diligent as thou wilt in the exercises of piety and devotion, but be sincere in the use of those means; do not satisfy thyself in the performance of those duties, unless thou find the effect of them upon thy heart and life, always remembering, that *not the hearers of the word, but the doers of it, are blessed; that the prayer, and all the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.*

III. A firm and steady resolution of well-doing. This is the result of a true and sincere repentance, and the great principle of a new life; and if it be firm and stedfast, it will derive its influence into all our actions; but if it be wavering and inconsistent, it is only the occasion of a religious mood and fit, but not the principle of a religious state. Therefore it concerns us to strengthen this principle, and to be true to it, when we have once taken it up; for whenever we quit it, we break loose from God and religion at once, and cast ourselves back into a much more dangerous state than we were in before.

There is no doubt, but that the devil and our own corrupt hearts will make many assaults upon such a resolution, and raise all their batteries against it, because it is our main fort, and the great security of our souls, and so long as we maintain that, we are safe; and therefore it had need be a mighty resolution that is able to stand out against such opposition.

But what are we that we should take up such a resolution, and what is our strength? We are weak and *unstedfast as water, reeds shaken with the wind; we are not sufficient of ourselves, as of ourselves, for any thing that is good; the way of man is not in himself, nor is it in man that walks to direct his steps:* but we have a greater strength than our own to rely upon, and greater than that of any adverse power that can set itself against us; we have God on our side, and the assistance of his grace to back and fortify these holy resolutions; so that we have no reason to despair of success and victory, if

we be not wanting to ourselves: for *God's grace is sufficient for us; greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.*

IV. And lastly, which is the proper and genuine effect of all these, the practice of a holy and virtuous life in all the parts and instances of it. And unless this effect be produced, we want the surest evidence of the former: for it is not credible, that that man hath a due sense of God, and pious affections towards him, or does sincerely exercise himself in the duties of religion, or is firmly resolved in well-doing, who does not shew forth effects of all this in a good conversation. Thus St James reasons, chap. iii. 13. *Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you? that is, instructed in the Christian knowledge, in the heavenly wisdom; let him shew forth, out of a good conversation, his works.*

So that herein the power of godliness doth visibly appear in the course of a good life; and it is the very design of the Apostle, in this chapter, to declare this to us, as will appear to any one that considers the description here given of those persons, who, under a shew of religion, denied the power of it; they were such as, notwithstanding all their pretences to godliness, allowed themselves in several vices, and lusts, and passions, and were destitute of the virtues of a good life; they were selfish, and covetous, and vain-glorious, and proud, evil-speakers, disobedient to parents, unthankful to their benefactors, filthy and impure, treacherous, heady, conceited, sensual, and voluptuous; so that whatever appearance of godliness they made, they were almost as bad as could be imagined; there is hardly a fuller catalogue of sins to be met with in the Bible: besides that all these vices are such as are plain and evident in the lives of men.

So that, upon the whole matter, it is very clear wherein the Apostle mainly places the power of godliness, namely, in the real effects of religion, such as are the mortifying of our lusts, and subduing of our passions, the government of our tongues, and the several virtues of a good life.

I. In the mortifying of our lusts, the lusts of intemperance and uncleanness, covetousness, and ambition. He that

that is a slave to any of these, his religion is but a form, how glorious a shew soever it may make. *Fleshly lusts war against the soul, and will finally ruin it. Covetousness and pride are enmity to God. God resists the proud afar off, and the covetous man the Lord abhors.*

2. In the subduing of our passions, wrath, hatred, malice, envy, and revenge. They are the very nature and properties of the devil, and dispositions as contrary to God, as light is to darkness; therefore whoever allows himself in these, whatever pretences he makes to religion, is really a bad man. This St John tells us is a plain case: 1 John iii. 10. *Whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* James iii. 12. 14. *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth, that is, do not pretend to be religious; this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.*

3. In the government of our tongues. This is a great effect of religion, to *keep our tongues from speaking evil, from backbiting, and slandering, and censuring, and reviling, from profane swearing and cursing, lewd and filthy talking.* When mens tongues run out into these disorders, it is a sign that they are not under the government of religion, and that the fear of God hath not seized upon their hearts; for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* So St James tells us, chap. i. 26. *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart; this man's religion is vain.* And, on the contrary, it is a good sign that religion hath some power over men, when it restrains them in this kind. So the same Apostle tells us, chap. iii. 2. *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.*

4. In the several virtues of a good life, in opposition to these and all other vices; such as are truth and justice, humility and meekness, patience and contentedness with our condition, peaceableness and charity to those that are in want and necessity, a readiness to forgive our enemies, and an universal love and kindness to all men. I have not time to recommend these particularly to you; the scripture does it frequently and fully,

telling us that these are *the will of God, and the divine nature, the new creature, pure religion and undefiled, the wisdom that is from above, the fruits of the Spirit, the proper and genuine effects of true piety, the sensible and substantial evidences of our love to God, the things wherein the kingdom of God consists, and that he that in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men; but he that neglects these, whatever form of godliness he puts on, is a denier of the power of it. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. He that doth not righteousness, is not of God.*

Thus I have done with the second thing I propounded to speak to, namely, wherein *the power of godliness consists.* There are two other particulars remaining, which I shall reserve to a farther opportunity.

S E R M O N CCV.

Of the form, and the power of godliness.

2. TIM. iii. 5.

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

The second sermon on this text.

THE third thing propounded, was to give some marks, whereby we may know when these are separated, when there is *a form of religion without the power of it.*

I need not insist long upon this, because this will, in a good measure, appear by the account I have given of these two severally, of the form of religion, and of the power of it; for he that considers wherein each of these consists, will easily judge when they are separated. But yet, that we may be sure not to mistake in a matter of so great concernment, I will instance in two or

three

three gross and palpable characters of this, and they are so comprehensive as to contain most of the rest.

I. He hath only *a form of godliness*, who minds merely the external part of religion, without any inward sense of it:

II. He that useth only the means of religion, without regard to the end and effect of it.

III. He that is grossly and knowingly defective in the practice of any part of it.

I. He hath only *a form of godliness*, who minds merely the external part of religion, without any inward sense of it. He that worships and serves God outwardly, but hath no inward reverence and esteem for him, who cares not, so the work be done, and the duty performed, with what heart and affection he does it. This is a mere carcase of religion, which is so far from being pleasing to God, that it is intolerably offensive to him; for though it be outwardly an honour done to God, yet really and in truth it is a contempt of him.

And yet it is to be feared, that this is a religion which many in the world chuse and content themselves with. They can serve God an hour together, and mention his name an hundred times, without ever thinking of him, or being affected with the business they are about: nay, which is worse, this is a religion which a great part of the world use, and cannot help it; I mean all those who serve God in an unknown tongue. For how is it possible their minds and hearts can be concerned in a service they do not understand? They may possibly have a devout mind in general; but they cannot exercise any acts of devotion in the particular service they are engaged in. The best of men are apt enough to let their thoughts swerve, and go astray from God when they are worshipping of him, though they understand the service they are about; but when they do not understand, it is impossible their minds and thoughts should go along with it, and be concerned in what is done. This is properly, and in the strict sense of the word, *μόρφωσις εὐσεβείας*, “an image of religion and devotion, without any life or sense.” And if to have our bodies put in a devout posture, to move our hands, and lips, and eyes, without understanding the service

we offer to God, may be accounted worshipping of him, this is a service that may be performed by puppets as well as men. *God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* In *spirit and in truth*, in opposition to a mere bodily service, and external shew of devotion. God, who is a spirit, must be worshipped with our spirits. He expects from reasonable creatures a reasonable service; and that service only is reasonable, which is dictated by our understandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections: and to worship him otherwise, is to offer a sacrifice without a heart; it is to *offer the lame and the blind in sacrifice*, which would be an affront to our governor, much more to the great King of the world. Whatever we do in the service of God, we must *do it heartily as to the Lord*, because he is *the searcher of hearts, and all things are open and naked to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

II. He hath only a *form of godliness*, that useth only the means of religion, without regard to the end and effect of them. A man may exercise his understanding in the service of God, and his heart may be touched, and his affections moved in prayer, and at the hearing of God's word, and the receiving of the sacrament, and yet this may be but a form of religion, if it go no farther. If we do not forsake those sins we confess to God, and daily beg the pardon of; if we do not truly and heartily endeavour that we may live godly, and righteous and sober lives, as well as pray that we may do so; if the counsels and directions of God's word have not an influence upon our lives; if we be not awed by the threatenings of it, to leave our sins, and encouraged by the promises of it, to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God*; we use the means of religion to no purpose, and we discredit the institutions of God, because we make no proficiency under them. We are just like the disciples of those formal professors of religion, whom the Apostle describes after the text, who are *ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*. It seems they used the means of instruction, and continued to use them, *they were ever learning*; but all this while

while they were under the dominion of sin, and the power of their lusts; *they were laden with sin, and led away with divers lusts*, and so they never attained to that which the Apostle calls *the knowledge of the truth*, that is, such a knowledge of the doctrine of Christ as is accompanied with a suitable practice, according to that of our Saviour, John viii. 31. *If ye continue in my word, that is, if ye practise my doctrine, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* Then men come to the knowledge of the truth, when it frees them from the slavery of sin. If our knowledge have not this effect, it signifies nothing, and does not deserve the name of knowledge, because *we know nothing in religion as we ought to know.* 1 John ii. 2. 2. speaking of the knowledge of Christ, *Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith he knows him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

III. He hath only *a form of religion*, who is grossly and knowingly defective in the practice of any part of it. And this sort of persons are those whom the Apostle particularly intended here in the text; for such were they whom he describes by this character, that *they had a form of godliness, but denied the power of it.* Under the garb of religion which they had put on, they were grossly faulty in their lives and practice, and mainly defective in many of the essential duties of Christianity; they were selfish and covetous, vain-glorious and despisers of others, calumniators and slanderers, undutiful to their superiors, and unthankful to those that had obliged them, fierce and ill-natured, treacherous and false to their word, persecutors of those that were good, filthy and sensual: not that every one of them had all these vices, they are so many and gross, that no cloak of religion could have covered them; but the Apostle means, that among those that made an empty profession of religion, these vices were visible, some of them in one, and some in another. And the living in any one of these, or any other of the like nature, is inconsistent with Christianity. The power of religion appears chiefly in the subduing of these lusts, and in the exercise and practice of those graces and virtues

virtues which are contrary to these. Here the very heart and life of religion lies, and these are the veins in which it runs; and if there be a failure in any of these main virtues of a Christian life, it is a plain case, that we are destitute of the power of religion, and do only make a vain and empty shew of it. St James instanceth, as one would think, in none of the grossest and most considerable of these, the government of our tongue, and yet he peremptorily determines, that the want of this virtue is enough to destroy all a man's other pretences to religion, chap. i. 26. *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceives his own heart; this man's religion is vain.*

So that, by the practice or neglect of these main virtues of a good life, every man may examine and judge himself. This is the rule which our Saviour gives to try the religion of men by: Matth. vii. 16. 17. *Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.* The force of which reasoning is this, that every tree bringeth forth fruit according to its nature, and by the kind and quality of the fruit, you may certainly know what the tree is. So, by the good or bad actions of mens lives, you may know by what principle they are governed, whether the fear of God, or the love of sin, bear sway in them; the course of their lives will discover the bent and inclination of their minds, whatever shew and profession they may make to the contrary. *By their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, (there is some profession of religion), shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven; (there is the power of it).*

I would by no means encourage men to be over censorious towards others, there is too much of that spirit already in the world; but it is not amiss that men should be strict and severe towards themselves. And would to God men would bring themselves to this test,
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and examine the truth and sincerity of their religion, not by the leaves of an outward profession, but by the fruits it produceth in their lives. Every man that will but take the pains to look into himself, and to observe his own actions, may, by comparing the temper of his mind, and the general course of his life and practice, with the rules and precepts of religion, easily discern what power and efficacy religion hath on him. A man may as certainly know himself, and make as sure a judgment of his state and condition toward God in this way, *as a tree is known by its fruit.* Therefore let us not flatter ourselves: for if we indulge any lust, or irregular passion in our souls, and do not endeavour to mortify and subdue it; if we allow ourselves in any vitious practice in our lives; we do but deceive ourselves with an opinion of our godliness, and whatever shew and appearance we may make of religion, we are certainly destitute of the power of it. True religion and godliness is an uniform principle, which inclines a man to all holiness and goodness, and does bias him against all known sin and wickedness. All the motives and arguments of religion, and all considerations of piety, are levelled against all sin, and tend to engage men to universal holiness of life. *Bonum constat ex integris causis, sed malum ex quolibet defectu:* the practice of any one vice, is enough to render a man a bad man; but there must be the concurrence of all the parts of religion and virtue, to make a man good.

I proceed to the fourth thing I propounded, which was to shew, that *a form of godliness*, without *the power of it*, is insignificant to all the great ends and purposes of religion. The great ends that men can reasonably propound to themselves in being religious, are these three.

I. The pleasing of God.

II. The peace and tranquillity of our own minds.

III. The saving of our souls. Now, *a form of godliness*, without *the power of it*, is unavailable to all these purposes.

I. To the pleasing of God. External devotion, and exercising ourselves in the means and instruments of religion, and the profession of a right belief, or any other form of religion whatsoever, do not recommend
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any man to the divine favour and acceptance, without the real effects of religion in a good life: nay, so far is it from this, that all forms of religion, destitute of the life and power of it, are extremely odious and offensive to him. Devotion in prayer, without a holy life, is but a rude and troublesome noise in the ears of the Almighty. *The prayer of the wicked is so far from being accepted, that it is an abomination to him.* He does not love to be invoked by unhallowed mouths, and to be praised by the workers of iniquity. Flattery is hateful to a wise man, much more to the infinitely wise God. He cannot endure that men should lift up eyes to him *that are full of adultery, and hands filled with violence and oppression, and tread his courts with feet ready to shed blood.* It is an affront to God to be worshipped by evildoers, and to see men diligent in reading his word, and attending to his law, who break it every day. *Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest to be reformed, and castest my words behind thy back?* What God says of the sacrifices of the Jews, offered to him by a sinful people laden with iniquity, may be applied to the worship of Christians who live wicked and abominable lives, *Is. i. 11. 12. &c.* *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offering of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meetings. Your new moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth, they are a trouble unto me. I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well.* This is that which God expects from us, the amendment and reformation of our lives, and without this all our religious addresses to him are nauseous and abominable. God does hardly any
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where in scripture expresse so great a detestation of the greatest sins, as he does of the devotion of wicked men. I will but bring one text more to this purpose, II. lxvi. 3. *He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man: he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood: he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.* What is the reason of all these severe expressions? Because they were *the sacrifices of the wicked, of those who had chosen their own ways, and whose soul delighted in their abominations;* they worshipped God according to his will, but lived according to their own; and therefore they were to him no better than an assembly of murderers, and a church of idolatrous worshippers: for this is false worship, to offer sacrifices to God, and to devote ourselves to the service of our lusts.

II. Another end of religion is the peace and tranquillity of our minds. And this is not to be attained upon true and lasting grounds, by any form of religion without the power of it. Men may delude themselves with some false peace, and make a hard shift to stop the loud and vehement clamours of their conscience; but the guilt of any vitious course of life will frequently recoil upon them, to disturb and interrupt their peace, and to put out their false joy; their consciences will ever and anon give them many secret girds and lashes. For no man can knowingly live in the practice of any sin, but he must be guilty to himself; and whoever is guilty, hath received a secret sting into his heart, which is never to be taken out but by repentance, and a thorough reformation. God hath said it, and I doubt not but every sinner finds it true, *There is no peace to the wicked.* Especially when such a man is seized upon by sickness, and approaches in his thoughts near to eternity, then his drowsy conscience awakes, like a lion out of sleep, full of rage and fierceness, and all his false peace and comfort vanisheth. *For what is the hope of the hypocrite, when God comes to take away his soul?* It is, as Job elegantly expresses it, *like the spider's web, artificially wrought, but miserably weak, it can endure no stress, upon the least touch it breaks and vanisheth.*

And this is no small disadvantage which a man that hath only *the form of religion* lies under, that in effect he loseth all the pleasure and satisfaction of religion; or if he fancy any hope or comfort to himself, it is built upon a false foundation, which, when it is tried, will endure no shock. This is the comparison our Saviour useth in this very case, Matth. vii. 26. 27. *Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, (here is a form of godliness without the power of it), shall be likened to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.* But real and substantial religion is like *a house built upon a rock*, which no tempest can overthrow. *Righteousness*, saith Solomon, Prov. x. 25. *is an everlasting foundation*; it is a continual spring of joy and peace. There is a certain unspeakable contentment and delight arising from a good conscience, and from the sincere discharge of our duty, which a hypocrite is a stranger to, and is never admitted to the taste of. Now, what an uncomfortable thing is this, for a man to take the pains to seem to be religious, and yet to lose the real pleasure of religion!

III. The great end of all, of being religious, is the saving of our souls. And this end a mere *form of religion* will certainly miss of. No external garb of religion will gain a man admission into heaven; there is no getting in there in masquerade; no prayers will then avail, though never so fervent and importunate. *Many shall say in that day, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and yet he will bid them depart from him.* Though we had heard Christ himself preach, and had received the blessed sacrament with him, yet this will not avail. So our Saviour tells us, Luke xiii. 26. *Then shall they begin to say, We have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets; and yet he will say unto them, I know not whence you are.* It is not a pretence to inspiration, no, though it were justified by miraculous gifts, that will then stand us in stead. *Many shall say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wondrous words?* And yet these shall be

be rejected. Why, what should be the reason of all this severity? Our Saviour gives us a plain account of it; because they were *workers of iniquity*. Under all these several masks of religion, they were wicked in their lives.

It is not an orthodox faith, and the belief of all the articles of Christianity, that will save a man, without the works of a good life: Jam. ii. 14. *What doth it profit a man, my brethren, though a man say that he hath faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him? thou believest there is one God; thou dost well; the devils believe this too, but they are not so vain as to hope to be saved by this faith; no, they know the contrary, and that makes them fear and tremble. Know then, O vain man, that faith without works is dead. Thou believest in one Lord Jesus Christ, that came down from heaven to save us, that was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, and became man that he might bring us to God; that suffered and died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and is ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty, and from thence he shall come again at the end of the world to judge the quick and the dead; thou dost well to believe this: but if thou do not live accordingly, what will become of thee, when the Son of God shall come to judge the world? then the great inquiry will be, how we have lived? what good we have done? So our Saviour represents the proceedings of that great day: I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not: therefore depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. So that it seems here the business will stick, upon the good and bad actions of mens lives, and accordingly sentence shall be pronounced upon them. For God will render to every man according to his works; to them that by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but to those that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: but glory and honour, and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also*

to the Gentile: for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. Still you see that it is to the patient continuance in well-doing, to the obeying of the truth; to the working of righteousness, that eternal life is promised: and the wrath of God is threatened to them that obey unrighteousness, to every soul of man that doth evil. To the Jew first. Why so? Because he had great advantage of coming to the knowledge of the truth, which is so much the greater aggravation of his wicked life, and makes his sentence so much the heavier.

Indeed it shall be to men at the day of judgment likewise according to their faith, in a certain sense, that is, according to the doctrine of the gospel which they profess to believe; according to what our Saviour and his Apostles have taught, that *the workers of iniquity shall depart from him; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; and if we live after the flesh, we shall die; that no whoremonger, nor adulterer, nor covetous, nor unrighteous person, shall have any inheritance in the kingdom of God, and of Christ.* This we profess to believe, and according to these declarations God will proceed with men at the great day. And he that believes this, and yet goes on in an impiety and wickedness of life, though his faith will not justify him, yet God will justify his faith, and make it good, when he shall judge the world in righteousness.

Thus you see plainly, that a form of godliness, without the power, is insignificant to all the great ends and purposes of religion; nay, he that takes up in a form, does not only lose the advantages of religion, but he hath two great disadvantages by it.

I. He hath the trouble of making a shew of religion, without the real benefit of it.

II. He incurs a heavier sentence upon this very account.

But these, with the application, I shall refer to the next opportunity.

S E R M O N CCVI.

Of the form, and the power of godliness.

2 TIM. iii. 5.

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

The third sermon on this text.

I Come now to shew, that he that takes upon him a form of religion, without the power of it, doth not only lose all the considerable advantages of religion, but he hath two great disadvantages by it.

I. He hath the trouble of making a shew and appearance of religion, without the real benefit of it.

II. He incurs a heavier sentence upon this account, that he hath a form of religion, and yet is destitute of the power of it.

I. He hath the trouble of making a shew and appearance of religion, without the real benefit of it. And it is no small trouble to personate and act a part well; it requires great art and attention, great guard and caution. That which men are prompted to by an inward principle, is natural and easy, it is done with pleasure and delight; but whatever is artificial and counterfeit, is stiff and forced. *Nemo fictam personam diu sustinere potest*; "No man can dissemble always;" one time or other he will be surpris'd, and forget himself, and let his mask fall. A form of religion is a dry unpleasant thing, and a continual burden to him that assumes it, and the more outwardly strict and holy he is, he is the more inwardly guilty; his conscience never stings and galls him more than when he is playing the hypocrite with God and men: whereas a truly good man when he employs himself in acts of religion, or justice, or charity, he doth it naturally, and hath a mighty satisfaction of mind in the doing of it, and if he were permitted to

make his own choice, he would not do otherwise; but a hypocrite puts a force upon himself all the while, and acts against his nature and inclinations; every thing that he does in religion goes against the grain, and because it is unnatural must be uneasy; his outward conversation and demeanour is set, and in a frame; he does not move as he would, but as he must; and the secret propensities of his nature are under a continual restraint.

He hath indeed one advantage by his artificial garb, that he can more securely over-reach and defraud others by a shew of godliness, while men are not aware of his dissimulation. But this commonly does not last long, and only serves a man for a few turns: and when it is discovered, the man is lost, and nobody will trust him. But suppose he could serve himself of religion this way for some considerable time, where is the advantage? It amounts to no more than this, that the man hath the opportunity of being a greater sinner, of making himself more miserable, and *treasuring up to himself more wrath against the day of wrath*. So that he pays dear for all this in the end and issue, as well as in the way. He spends many a tedious hour in the service of God; and the exercise of religion; more it may be than many do, who save their souls, and get to heaven. For as to the external parts of religion, a hypocrite must do all that which a truly religious man does; he must frequent the church, and make as much shew of devotion as the best; nay, it may be he prays more, and fasts oftener, and is more busy, and keeps a greater stir in the outward part of religion, than the sincere Christian; for being conscious to himself of his own hollowness and insincerity in religion, he thinks himself obliged outwardly to overact it in unseasonable and superstitious observances, and in all other arts of affected devotion; and when he goes abroad into the world, he is forced to lay great restraints upon himself, and to be continually gathering his cloak about him, as being afraid lest any body should spy what is under it. So much more troublesome it is for any man to seem to be religious, than to be so indeed.

II. A mere form of religion does, upon some accounts, bring a man under a heavier sentence, than if he

were openly profane and irreligious. He that makes a shew of religion, flatters God, but all the while acts and designs against him: whereas the profane man deals plainly; and though he be a monstrous and unnatural rebel, yet he is a fair and open enemy; and the kisses of a false friend are more hateful than the wounds of an open enemy. Upon this account it is, that our Saviour denounces so many severe woes against the Scribes and Pharisees, because they were wicked under a shew of religion, *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*: and when he would set forth the severity of the Lord against the evil servant, Matth. xxiv. 51. he expresseth it thus, *He shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*; as if the punishment of hypocrites were the rule and standard of the severest punishment. *He shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.*

I will not deny but that a profane man is a worse example to the world, and may do more mischief upon that account: but the hypocrite is more mischievous to himself, and of the two more odious to God; and sometimes does more prejudice to religion, by undermining it, than the other does by all his open assaults and batteries. God cannot endure to be affronted: but he hates to be mocked. So that, upon this account, it is like to go harder with the formal professors of religion, than with the open contemners of it.

And thus I have done with the four things I propounded to speak to, from these words; wherein a form of godliness does consist; wherein the power of it lies; by what marks and characters we may know when these are separated; and that a form of religion, without the power of it, is insignificant to all the great ends and purposes of religion; and not only so, but it is greatly to mens disadvantage to assume a form of godliness, if they be destitute of the power of it.

All that now remains, is to draw some inferences from this discourse, by way of application; and they shall be these three.

First, To take heed of mistaking the form of religion for the power of it.

Secondly, To take heed of being captivated and seduced by those who have only a *form of godliness*.

Thirdly, To persuade men to mind the life, and power, and substance of religion.

First, To take heed of mistaking *the form of religion for the power of it*. The Papists have almost confined the words *religion* and *religious* to cloisters and monks; and they make a religious life to consist in masses, and Ave-Maries, and Pater-nosters, in the observation of canonical hours, and the distinction of meats and habits, in coarse cloaths, and a dissembled poverty, and several bodily rigours and severities; as if to make a man a religious and good man, it were necessary that he should be dressed fantastically, and in a great many indifferent things be different from other men. Nay, so far doth this superstition prevail, that a great many think that they should hardly get to heaven without it, or that it will be very much for their advantage, if they be buried in the habit of a religious man: as if to be put in a monk's coul, would give a man the start of other people at the resurrection. But what reason is there, that the name and title of religion should be appropriated to these usages? Does the scripture any where constitute religion in these things, or confine it to them? are not these voluntary things, which God ties no man to? whence then come they to swallow up the name of religion, and to ingross it to themselves, as if they were the very life and soul of Christianity; when the great author of our religion Jesus Christ, and his blessed apostles, never spake one word of them? What an abuse of language is this, to confine the name of religion to that which is not so much as any part of it!

But the church of Rome is not alone guilty of this: among ourselves it is very ordinary to mistake *the form of godliness for the power*, though the mistake is not so gross, as in those particulars I have mentioned. How many are there who talk as if *the power of godliness* consisted in nothing else but a daily talk of devotion, in frequent hearing of sermons, and a strict observation of the Lord's day? These are very good things; but they are but a *form of godliness*, and may be, and often are, with-

out the power of it; they are but the means and instruments of religion, but not the great end and design of it; that consists in the renewing of our natures, and the reformation of our lives, in *righteousness and true holiness; in mortifying the flesh with the affections and lusts of it*, such as are *adultery, fornication, hatred, variance, wrath, sedition, envying, murder, drunkenness*; for they which do such things, cannot inherit the kingdom of God; and in the fruits of the spirit, such as are *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance*, as the Apostle reckons them up, Gal. v. 22. These are real and sensible effects of religion; and the means of religion, if they be sincerely used, do all tend to the begetting and increasing of these in us; so that it is a gross mistake to talk of the power of religion without these. Whoever is destitute of these, whatever attainments in religion he may pretend to, is got no farther than a form of godliness, he is not yet under the power of it. This is the first.

Secondly, Let us be cautioned against being captivated and seduced by those who have only a form of godliness. This is the Apostle's exhortation here in the text, *From such turn away; for of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women.* To the same purpose is our Saviour's caution, Matth. vii. 15-16. *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.* And that we may know how to avoid them, our Saviour bids us to observe their lives: *Ye shall know them by their fruits.* He does not bid us examine their opinions, and try their pretences to inspiration; that is a thing many times above the capacity of the ordinary sort of men; but their lives and actions are open to every man's view; and though it is possible men may counterfeit even in this, yet they seldom do it so exactly, as not to betray themselves some time or other: however, this of all other is the easiest and surest rule; *By their fruits ye shall know them.*

Therefore if any man pretend to any new discoveries in religion, beyond what is plainly revealed in scripture though he appear in never so sanctimonious a garb, be not moved with this; for the power of religion does not consist

consist in any thing now to be discovered; but in those things which are clearly contained in the word of God, in the precepts and directions, and in the motives and arguments to a good life; and whoever lives according to these, is in the best way to heaven that any man can put himself into; and he need not trouble himself about those new lights and opinions, which in every age appear like comets, and gl re a while, and draw people to gaze upon them, and then vanish. And none are so much to be suspected of a *form of religion*, as those who make frequent changes in it, and wander from one party and opinion to another. An outward form and shape is easily changed; it is that which a man shifts and puts off at pleasure.

Thirdly, To persuade men to mind the power, and life, and substance of religion. It was the commendation of Socrates, the best of philosophers, that he did *philosophiam de c elo deducere*, “bring down philosophy from heaven to earth,” that is, from contemplation to practice, and from being an art of talking and disputing to be an art of living. This I desire may be the aim of all my discourses, to instruct men in religion in order to the practice of it, to teach men to know God, in St John’s sense, 1 John ii. 3. *Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*. This is the great end and scope to which all discourses of religion ought to be levelled. It was a good saying of Pacuvius, *Ego odi homines ignava opera et philosophos sententia*, “I hate men that are unactive in their lives, and philosophers in their opinions.” Christianity is the best philosophy, and the most perfect institution of life that ever the world was acquainted withal; and therefore it is much more odious to see men Christians in their profession, and faulty and vicious in their lives; because the very design of the Christian religion is to give men a perfect and plain law and rule of life, and to enforce this law by the most powerful and prevailing arguments. So that as Tully says concerning the philosopher who lived but a bad life, that he was utterly inexcusable, *Quod in eo cujus magister esse vult labitur, artem vitę professus, delinquit in vita*; “Because he failed in that wherein he pretended to be a master, and while
“ he

“ he professed to have an art of living better than other men, he offended and miscarried in his life:” all defects in the practice, and in the virtues of a good life, may with much more reason and justice be upbraided to Christians, to those who have learned Christ, who have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; to those who are blessed with the clearest and most perfect revelation which ever God made to the world, the holiest and most reasonable religion, which furnisheth us with the best counsels and directions, the most prevalent motives and arguments, and the greatest helps and advantages to a good life; a religion plain and simple, that hath less of outward form and pomp, and more of substance and reality, than any religion that ever was known in the world.

What a sad thing is it, that a religion so wholly fitted and calculated to the design and purpose of a good life, armed with such powerful considerations to engage men thereto, should yet have so little force and power upon the lives of men, as we see it generally to have! As if the grace of God had never appeared to men, to teach them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.

There was hardly ever any age, wherein the form of religion did more abound, and there were greater variety in them; and it is to be feared that there was never less of the power and efficacy of it.

I will instance in two great defects in the lives and practice of Christians, which are visible to every one, but are sad indications how little the power of religion prevails among men; I mean the want of common honesty and integrity among men, and the want of peace and love; the first of which is the great virtue of civil conversation, and the other, the great bond both of civil and ecclesiastical societies. These are two great duties of religion frequently mentioned, and strictly charged upon the conscience of men in scripture: and yet how rare is the practice of them in the lives of Christians? These are two main defects in religion, and a plain demonstration of a form of religion, without the power of it.

I. The want of common honesty and integrity among men. So indeed it used to be called, common honesty ; but it grows so rare now, that it is like to lose that name. *Righteousness, truth, and faithfulness, are almost failed from among the children of men* ; all ranks of men have corrupted themselves in this kind ; this is grown almost an universal depravation, there is hardly any trade or profession which hath not something of knavery and falsehood woven into the very mystery of it, and is become almost a necessary part of it. Where is the generous honesty and uprightnes which did heretofore possess the spirits of men, and which is an inseparable companion of true courage ? but we are now passing apace into foreign manners and vices, and any form of religion will serve, when justice and integrity are gone.

II. The want of peace and love. How full of factions and divisions are we ? and these managed with all imaginable heat and animosity one toward another ; as if the badge of Christiannity were changed, and our Saviour had said, *Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye hate one another.*

All the differences among Christians, of what denomination soever, are sadly to be lamented ; but I almost despair as to the difference between us and the church of Rome, because the reconciliation is impossible, unless they renounce their principles. They cannot come over to us, because they think they are infallible ; and we cannot pass over to them, because we know they are deceived ; so that there is *a great gulf between us and them.* We must not only renounce the scriptures, but our reason and our senses, to be of their mind. We cannot communicate with them in the sacrament, because they have taken away one half of it, which is as plainly instituted and commanded, as the other part, which is left. We cannot worship the virgin Mary, and the saints, much less their images, because it is written, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth ; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them ; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.* In short, several

several of their articles of faith are such as no credulity can swallow; and several parts of their worship are such as no piety can join with.

But this we bewail, that those who agree in the same essentials of faith and worship should be so forward to divide and separate from one another, merely upon forms of government, and circumstances of worship. What can justify the breach of communion and peace, upon such terms? Either church-government is of divine right, or it is not. If it be, why do not men submit to the form which is established by authority? If it be not, what kind of government can contend for that right, with any equality of advantage, against that which cannot be denied to have almost universally obtained in most ages and parts of the Christian world?

As for the circumstances of worship, there is scarce any man hath the face to contend, that any of those used in our church are clearly condemned by the word of God; and what else can make them unlawful? One of the chief causes of separation, is *a form of prayer*; the lawfulness of which our Saviour hath abundantly justified, and I do not think was ever questioned by any writer in the Christian church, for near upon sixteen hundred years; and is it worth while to break the peace of the church, and violate one of the greatest precepts of Christianity, upon little and slight pretences of unlawfulness, and doubtful reasons of convenience and expedience; and about such things as are no more reasonable grounds of quarrels among Christians, than the differences of mens stature and faces would be a just ground for mankind to make war upon one another?

Where is *the power of religion*, when the peace and unity of Christians is violated upon these terms? It is a sign that the life and substance of religion is little regarded by us, when men can afford to employ so much zeal about these things.

And that men may be effectually persuaded to mind the substance of religion more, let me desire them to imprint these three considerations upon their minds.

I. That the parts of religion are subordinate to one another, and are to be minded each in their due place. The means of religion are less worth than the end, and

therefore deserve our regard chiefly in order to that. The circumstances of religion are less considerable than the means and instruments of it, and therefore are to be subordinated to them. Faith is in order to the practice of a good life, and signifies nothing, unless it produces that. So that the issue and upshot of all is a holy and virtuous life; *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world; to love God and our neighbour; to deal justly, and to be kind, and peaceable, and charitable towards all men.*

II. Consider that religion consists in an entire and universal obedience to the will of God, *in a respect to all his commandments, and hating every evil way.* Here the power of godliness consists in being *holy in all manner of conversation.*

III. Consider that religion chiefly respects God, and another world. *A form of religion, if it were artificially contrived, might possibly serve to cheat men, and be useful enough to all the interests and advantages of this world: but we are to do all things in reference to God, who cannot be imposed upon with shews and pretences; and with regard to another world, where no form of religion will be current, without the power of it. Yea, and in reference to this world, if there be any advantage in seeming religious, certainly the best way to seem to be so, is to be so indeed.*

S E R M O N CCVII.

Of the necessity of good works.

TIT. iii. 8.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

The first sermon on this text.

THis epistle of St Paul to Titus, whom he had made Bishop of Crete, contains directions how he ought to demean himself in that great charge.

1. By appointing in every city bishops or elders, to teach and govern those that were already, or should afterwards by their means be converted to the faith of Christ; and to be very careful to make choice of worthy and fit persons into this high office; men of sound doctrine and unblameable lives, chap. i. from ver. 5. to the end.

2. By his own doctrine and conversation among them. And this is the subject of the two following chapters, in which he gives him a strict charge, to be very careful both of his doctrine and his life. Of his doctrine, that it be according to the soundness and purity of the gospel; not such corrupt and adulterate stuff, as the false apostles and teachers were wont to vend among them: chap. ii. 1. *But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine; which he elsewhere calls the doctrine of truth which is according to godliness*, such a doctrine as tends to reform the lives of men, to make them better, and more like to God. And then he should be careful likewise, that his life and conversation be exemplary in all virtue and goodness; without which the

best words will be of little weight, and the wisest doctrines and counsels of small efficacy and force to persuade others to the practice of them, ver. 7. *In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works.* When sound doctrine is seconded by the good life of the teacher, it must have great authority and force of persuasion: ver. 15. *These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority; let no man despise thee.* If the minister of God do but so preach and so live, this will give him authority, and set him above contempt; let men despise such an one if they can.

More particularly, as he would have him instruct men in general in all the virtues of a good life; so more especially, the several ages and conditions of men in the duties and virtues respectively belonging to them; to young and old, men and women.

And because great scandal had been brought upon the Christian religion, by the undutiful carriage of servants and subjects towards their masters and magistrates, upon a false notion of Christian liberty, advanced and propagated by the false apostles and Gnostic libertines, he gives Titus, in particular, charge to put Christians in mind of their duty in this particular, and to inculcate it earnestly upon them, that the Christian religion might not be slandered upon this account: chap. ii. ver. 9. 10. *Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters, &c. that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.* Chap. iii. 1. *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to be ready to every good work; that is, in short, to endeavour to be good in all relations, and in all sorts and kinds of goodness.*

And then, ver. 8. he lays great stress and weight upon this matter, that Christians should constantly and upon all occasions be taught the great necessity of the virtues of a good life. *This is a faithful saying, &c.* By which solemn and vehement kind of expression, the Apostle seems to insinuate, that the false apostles did exalt the virtue of faith, to the prejudice and neglect of a good life; as if, by a mere speculative belief and profession of the Christian religion, men were discharged and released from the practice of all virtue and goodness. And this is very probable, because we find these

these kind of licentious doctrines very frequently reflected on, and reprov'd by the apostles in their epistles, and especially by St Paul. The false apostles made the Christian religion a matter of mere speculation and dispute, but laid no weight upon the virtues of a good life. And therefore St Paul, after he had charg'd Titus to inculcate upon Christians the necessity of good works, immediately adds, *But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain;* intimating, that the false apostles, instead of pressing the necessity of a good life, did amuse people with these idle notions and disputes.

But to return to my text: *This is a faithful saying.* This kind of preface the Apostle useth several times, but always when he is speaking of something that is of great weight and concernment to us, and which deserves our serious attention and regard; as in 1 Tim. i. 15. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.* 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Godliness is profitable unto all things; having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying.* And 2 Tim. ii. 11. 12. *This is a faithful saying; if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us.* And so likewise here in the text, *This is a faithful saying, that they which have believed in God, should be careful to maintain good works.* By which you see, that it is not a form which the Apostle useth of course, and applies to any thing, but only to things of more than ordinary consideration and regard, such as are of the essence of Christianity, and fundamental to the belief and practice of it.

This is a faithful saying, πιστός λόγος, a credible saying, that which every man that truly understands the nature and design of religion will readily assent to.

And this I will that thou affirm constantly. He chargeth him to preach this upon all occasions, lest the doctrine of justification by faith and by grace, without any works of righteousness preceding, should be turned into licentiousness, as it had been by some, and men should falsely con-

clude, that because works of righteousness were not necessary before justification, and to bring men into that state, they were not necessary neither afterwards to our continuance in that state.

The Apostle indeed did teach that *God did justify the ungodly*, by the grace of the gospel, and *faith in Christ*; that is, that those who did sincerely believe and embrace the gospel, though they had been never so great sinners before, were justified upon that faith; that is, all their former sins were forgiven, and they were received into the favour of God. But though works of righteousness were not necessary before their justification, yet they are necessary afterwards, because the faith of the gospel, and the embracing of Christianity, doth imply a stipulation and engagement on our part, to live according to the laws and rules of the gospel, which do strictly injoin all kind of virtue and goodness. The covenant of baptism, by which we are entered into Christianity, doth contain on our part not only a profession of faith in Christ, but a solemn promise to *deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world*. So that it is the greatest mistake in the world to think, that because we are justified by faith and the profession of Christianity, without works of righteousness, therefore we are under no obligation to a good life: for faith in Christ, and the sincere profession of the Christian religion, doth imply a good life, and an engagement to the practice of all virtue and goodness; which if we do not perform and make good, we fail in our part of the covenant, and thereby forfeit all the blessings and benefits promised therein on God's part.

Therefore it is observable, that the Apostle, after he had spoken of our justification by grace, without works of righteousness, gives this charge to Titus, to press the necessity of good works upon those who did believe, and embrace the profession of the gospel, as it were on purpose to prevent all mistake and abuse of the doctrine of justification by faith, and the free grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ: ver. 5. 6. 7. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done; but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the re-*

newing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that is, by our solemn profession of Christianity at our baptism; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life. And then he adds, ver. 8. *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works; that is, that they who are thus justified by the faith of the gospel, should be so far from thinking themselves hereby excused from good works, that they should upon this account be more careful to maintain and practise them, because by the very profession of the Christian faith and religion, they have solemnly engaged themselves so to do.*

That they which believe in God; that is, who have taken upon them the profession of Christianity in their baptism. For it is not improbable, that the Apostle, having spoken of baptism just before, may, by this phrase of *believing in God*, refer to that profession of faith made in baptism, which began with these words, *I believe in God*; and then, *they which have believed in God*, are those who in baptism have made a solemn profession of Christianity: as if he had said, *These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that all that profess themselves Christians be careful to maintain good works.* Or if by the phrase of *believing in God*, we will understand an assent to all divine revelations, more especially that of the gospel, and the Christian religion, the most perfect that ever God made of his will to mankind, the matter will come much to the same issue.

Be careful to maintain good works. This phrase seems in the latter end of this epistle, to be used in a very restrained sense; for labouring in an honest calling, ver. 14. *Let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.* In the margin of your Bibles you will find it rendered, *to profess honest trades: Let ours also learn to profess honest trades for necessary uses*, that is, for the supply of their necessities. But in the text it seems more agreeable to the scope of the Apostle's discourse, to understand the phrase of *maintaining good works*, for the practice of all Christian virtues, especially those which are more useful and beneficial to human

human society; among which diligence and industry in an honest calling, is none of the least considerable, because it follows, *these things are good and profitable unto men.* And indeed these are properly works of goodness, which redound to the public benefit and advantage.

But good works may well be taken in a larger sense, for all sorts of virtuous actions. And so it is certainly used several times in this epistle, chap. i. 16. *Unto every good work reprobate,* speaking of all profligate persons who were lost to all virtue and goodness. Chap. ii. 7. *In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works,* that is, an example of all kind of virtue. And chap. iii. 1. *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, and to be ready to every good work;* that is, to the practice of all goodness, of whatsoever is honest and virtuous in itself, amiable and commendable in the sight of others, useful and beneficial to any.

Having thus explained the words, I come now to consider the two points contained in them.

First, The certain truth and credibility of this saying or proposition, That they which have believed in God, ought to be careful to maintain good works. *This is a faithful saying;* that is, a most evident and credible truth. And,

Secondly, The great fitness and necessity of inculcating this upon all Christians, that the Christian religion doth indispensably require the virtues of a good life. *These things I will that thou affirm constantly,* &c. I begin with the

First of these points, *viz.* The certain truth and evident credibility of this saying or proposition, *That they which have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. This is a faithful saying,* πιστός λόγος, *a saying worthy of credit, a most certain and credible truth.* And it will appear to be so, whether we consider the great end and design of religion in general, or of the Christian religion in particular.

I. If we consider the great end and design of religion in general, which is to make us happy, by possessing our minds with the belief of a God, and those other principles

principles which have a necessary connection with that belief; and by obliging us to the obedience and practice of his laws.

1. By possessing our minds with the belief of a God, and of those other principles which have a necessary connection with it. Such are the belief of the divine perfections, of the infinite goodness, and wisdom, and power, and truth, and justice, and purity of the divine nature; a firm persuasion of his providence, that he governs and administers the affairs of the world, and takes notice of the actions of men, and will call them to an account for them; of the immortality of our souls, and their endless duration after death, and consequently of the eternal rewards and punishments of another life. These are the great principles of natural religion, which mankind are in some measure possessed with, and persuaded of, without any external revelation from God; and these are necessary and fundamental to religion, as the Apostle to the Hebrews declares, Heb. xi. 6. *Without faith it is impossible to please God; that is, there can be no such thing as the practice of religion, without the belief of the principles of it; and what these are, he tells us in the next words: He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

But then we must not rest here, in the belief of a God and the principles of religion; for this faith is not required of us for itself, but in order to some farther end, which if it be not attained by us, the mere belief of the principles of religion is to no purpose, neither acceptable to God, nor useful and beneficial to ourselves. God would not have imprinted the notion of himself upon our nature, he would not have discovered himself to us, nor have required of us the belief of his being and providence, merely that we might know there is such a being as God in the world, who made us and governs us; but that this belief might have its proper influence upon us, to oblige us to the obedience of his laws, which are the proper causes and means of our happiness. It will not avail us at all, nor is it in the least acceptable to God, for men to profess that they know him, when in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient,
and

and to every good work reprobate, as the Apostle describes some, chap. i. 16. And therefore,

2. The great end and design of religion is, that our minds being possessed and prepared by the principles of religion, the belief of these should have its proper influence upon us, which is effectually to oblige us to the obedience and practice of God's laws. Now, the laws which God hath given us to live by, as they are the rule and measure of our duty, by the performance whereof only we can hope to gain the favour of God, so they are the proper directions and means in order to our happiness; they teach us both the conditions of our happiness; and the proper qualification and disposition for it.

Obedience to the laws of God is the condition of our happiness, both temporal and eternal, both in this world and the other. The promises which God hath made of temporal felicity and blessings, are upon condition of our obedience to his laws; it is *godliness only that hath the promise of this life, as well as of the other*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. A truth so certain and evident, that the Apostle thought fit to add that solemn seal to it, which he prefaceth to the saying in the text, *This is a faithful saying*. And though God be pleased out of his excessive goodness to bestow many temporal blessings and favours upon every bad men, that by this *goodness of his he might lead them to repentance*; yet God never made any promise of temporal blessings to wicked men; but, on the contrary, hath threatened them with great temporal evils and calamities; but all the promises, even of temporal good things, are made to the obeying of God's laws; *to them that keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them*.

And this is not only the condition upon which the promises of temporal blessings are suspended, but generally, and for the most part, the natural cause and means of those blessings; for there is no moral duty enjoined by God, no virtue the practice whereof he requires from us, which does not naturally tend to our temporal felicity in this world; as temperance and chastity to that invaluable blessing of health, and to the preservation of our estate, which is wasted by lewd and riotous living; humility and meekness to our quiet and safety;

safety; justice and integrity to our reputation and honour, one of the chief instruments of temporal prosperity and success. Kindness and charity, and a readiness *to do good to all men as we have opportunity*, are in their nature apt to recommend us exceedingly to the love and esteem of all men, and to their favourable regard and assistance, when we stand in need of it. And so I might instance in all other virtues, the sincere practice whereof, though it be not in all cases certain and infallible, yet it is the best and wisest course that any man can take, to attain the greatest happiness which this world can afford, and to avoid the greatest miseries and calamities of it: as, on the contrary, there is no vice, no wicked practice, but is naturally productive of some great temporal mischief and inconvenience.

And then the practice of virtue and goodness, as it is the absolute and indispensable condition of our future happiness, in another world, so is it the necessary and only proper qualification for it, and the certain and infallible means of attaining it.

It is an absolute and indispensable condition of attaining it; and without this, it is in vain to hope for it. As God will certainly punish the transgressors of his laws, so nothing but obedience to them can pretend to his rewards. This God hath most expressly declared, *that without purity and holiness no man shall see him; that Christ is the author of eternal salvation only to them that obey him.* And if God had not declared this in his word, the consideration of God's essential holiness and justice would sufficiently assure us of it.

But besides this, in the very nature and reason of the thing, holiness and goodness is the necessary and only proper qualification for happiness. Without the blessed sight and enjoyment of God we cannot be happy, and holiness and goodness can only qualify us for this. For happiness is a state which results from a temper and disposition of mind suited to it; and where this is wanting, the man is no more capable of happiness, than he that is sick is of ease. Virtue and goodness are so essential to happiness, that where these are not, there is no capacity of it. These make us like to God, who is the fountain and pattern of all happiness; and if we be not like to
God,

God, we can have no enjoyment of him. And a wicked man, if he could steal into heaven, into the sight and presence of God, would, from the temper and disposition of his own mind, so unsuitable to that holy place and company, be extremely miserable, even in the mansions of the blessed. Such a temper of mind, such a polluted and guilty conscience, as a sinner carries with him out of this world, will accompany him, and remain with him in the other; and guilt is always restless and full of torment; and though God should not punish it with any positive infliction of pain, would of its own nature make a man for ever miserable. So that it is a vain dream and imagination, that any man, without the practice of holiness and virtue in this life, can be happy in the other. A sincere and thorough repentance of all our sins will indeed clear our consciences of guilt, and by the mercy of God make us capable of happiness; but it does this by changing our minds, and reconciling them to holiness and goodness, in firm purpose and resolution of a new life; and by changing our lives and actions too, if there be opportunity for it; but till this change be wrought, either in firm purpose, or in real effect, it is impossible we should be happy. And though I will not deny, but this may be done by a deep repentance, and such as God sees would prove sincere, in the last act of our lives; yet it is extreme madness, to run such a hazard, because we may be cut off from the opportunity of it; or if God should afford us time and grace to that purpose, it is the hardest thing in the world to have any comfortable and well-grounded assurance of the sincerity of it. So that very little hopes of heaven and happiness can be given upon any other terms, than the general and constant course of a holy and virtuous life; and least of all to those who have all their life long resolved to venture their everlasting happiness upon the infinite uncertainties of a deathbed-repentance at the last. But,

II. The truth of this proposition, That *they which have believed in God, should be careful to maintain good works*, or that faith and the virtues of a good life ought to go together; I say, the truth of this will yet be more evident, if we consider the great end and design

of the Christian religion in particular, which was to reform the world, to purify the hearts and lives of men from corrupt affections and wicked practices, to teach men to excel in all kinds of virtue and goodness.

And this is every where in the New Testament most expressly declared. The great promise of blessedness is made to the virtues of meekness, and patience, and peaceableness, and purity, and righteousness, as our Saviour expressly teacheth in that excellent sermon of his upon the mount, which is the summary of the Christian religion. Eph. iv. 17. 18. &c. *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth, that is, now that ye have embraced Christianity, walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ: if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts: and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on that new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members of one another. Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying; that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, &c.* So that you see, that unless there be an universal reformation of heart and life, we have *not so learned Christ as the truth is in Jesus*: we do not rightly understand the gospel, and the tendency of the Christian religion.

Gal. v. 22. 23. 24. *But the fruits of the Spirit, of that spirit which the Christian religion endows men withal, is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance; and they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts; that is, they that profess themselves Christians, are obliged to endeavour after all these virtues, and to put off the contrary lusts and vices. Phil. iv. 8. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. St James likewise declares to the same purpose the genuine effect of Christianity, which he calls the knowledge and wisdom which is from above: Jam. iii. 13. 14. 15. 17. Who is a wise man, and endowed with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above; but is earthly, sensual, devilish. And the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. To which I will add but one text more, which is the sum and comprehension of all the rest, and it is chap. ii. of this epistle to Titus, ver. 11. The grace of God, so he calls the doctrine of the gospel, the grace of God, which brings salvation unto all men, hath appeared, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.*

I might proceed particularly to shew, that the whole dispensation and doctrine of the gospel, and all the parts of them, are calculated to raise and exalt human nature to the highest pitch and perfection of virtue and goodness, and effectually to reform the spirits and lives of men.

The dispensation of the gospel, or the Christian religion, consists in God's merciful condescension to send his own and only Son in our nature, to live among us, and to die for us. The doctrine of the gospel consists in the

the things to be believed; the duties to be practised by us; and the arguments and encouragements to the practice of those duties. Now, I shall briefly shew, that the design of every part, both of the dispensation and doctrine of the gospel, is to reform the minds and manners of men, and to engage them to the practice of all virtue and goodness. And,

I. For the dispensation of the gospel, by which I mean the gracious method which the wisdom of God hath pitched upon for the salvation and recovery of mankind, by sending his only begotten Son into the world, in our nature, to live among us, and to die for us. So that the principal parts of this dispensation are these three.

1. His incarnation, or appearing in our nature.

2. His life.

3. His death and sufferings for us. And I shall shew that the great design of all this was to reform mankind, and make them better.

I. For his incarnation. The great design of his coming into the world, and appearing in our nature, was this; and this was the reason of the name Jesus, given him at his birth, as the angel tells us: Matth. i. 21. *His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.* Matth. ix. 13. he himself tells us, *that he came to call sinners to repentance*; that is, to reclaim them to a better and more virtuous course of life; and chap. xviii. 11. *The Son of man is come to save that which was lost*, that is, to recover mankind from a state of sin and misery, to a state of holiness and happiness. And St Peter, exhorting the Jews to repentance, useth this argument, that for this very end God sent him among them: Acts iii. 26. *Unto you first God sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquity.* Heb. ix. 26. *But now once in the end of the world he hath appeared to abolish sin*, that is, to destroy both the guilt and power of sin. 1 John iii. 5. *Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins.* And ver. 8. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, to destroy the works of the devil.*

2. This likewise was the great design of his life, of his dwelling and conversing with us so long, to teach us by

his doctrine in all holiness and virtue, and to give us the perfect pattern and example of it in his life. For his doctrine, I have spoke of that by itself: but besides that, one principal end of his living among us, was, that in the course of his life, and all the actions of it, he might give us a perfect and familiar example of all holiness and virtue, and therefore we are commanded to take him for our great pattern. *Learn of me*, saith he, *for I am meek and lowly of spirit*, Matth. xi. 29. John xiii. 15. after that great instance of his humility, in washing his disciples feet, he adds, *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you*.

3. This also was the great design of his death and sufferings. So the apostles every where teach: Gal. i. 4. speaking of Christ, *Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, that is, that he might rescue us from the vicious customs and practices of the world*. 1 Pet. i. 18. *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*. The death and sufferings of Christ did not only make expiation for our sins, but are proposed to us as a pattern of mortification to sin, and resurrection to a new life, and a most powerful argument thereto. Rom. vi. 1. 2. 3. &c. and 2 Cor. v. 14. 15. speaking of the love of Christ in laying down his life for us, *For the love of Christ*, saith he, *constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them*. From whence he infers, ver. 17. *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new*. And, ver. 21. *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*; that is, he hath made him who was without sin, a sacrifice for our sins, which should be a strong motive and argument to us, to endeavour after the righteousness of God.

II. As the whole dispensation of the gospel tends to this end, so more particularly does the doctrine of the gospel,

gospel, and every part of it, Now, the whole doctrine of the gospel may be referred to these three heads.

1. The things to be believed by us.

2. The duties to be practised. And,

3. The arguments and encouragements to the practice of these duties. And all these have a most direct and proper tendency to reform mankind, and effectually to engage us to the practice of holiness and virtue.

1. The matters of faith proposed in the gospel have a direct tendency to a good life, and immediate influence upon it. All the articles of our creed, and whatever the Christian religion proposeth to our belief concerning God the Father, the creator and governor of all things; and concerning Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour; and concerning the Holy Spirit of grace; the catholic church; the communion of saints; the resurrection of the dead, and everlasting life after death: all and each of these are so many arguments and reasons, motives and encouragements to a good life. In general, our hearts are said to be *purified by faith*, Acts xv. 9. 1 Tim. ii. 5. Faith is there reckoned among the principal sources and fountains of a good life: *The end of the commandment*, (the word is *κατασκευασις*), *the end of the gospel-declaration is charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned*. So that a sincere faith is the great principle of charity, which is the *fulfilling of the law*, and comprehends in it the duties of both tables. And here I might particularly shew, what influence the several articles of the Christian faith have upon the practice of holiness and virtue in our lives; but this would be too large a field of discourse; and the thing is very plain and obvious to every man's consideration; and therefore I shall content myself with what I have said in general concerning the influence of faith upon a good life.

2. The duties enjoined by the Christian religion do likewise tend more immediately to the same end and design; I mean the laws and precepts of the gospel, which are nothing else but so many rules of good life, and in the main substance of them are the laws of nature cleared and perfected. *For Christ came not to destroy the law*, which was in force before; but to explain

and clear it, where, through the corruption and degeneracy of mankind, it was grown obscure and doubtful, and to perfect it by superadding some rules and precepts of greater goodness and perfection, than seem to have been enjoined by it: as to abstain from all kind of revenge, to love our enemies, and not only to be ready to forgive them the greatest injuries they have done us, but to do them the greatest good, and even to be perfectly reconciled to them after the highest provocations, whenever they are in a meet capacity and disposition for it. So that the precepts of the Christian religion are a plain and perfect rule of all virtue and goodness, and the best and most absolute system of moral philosophy that ever was in the world, containing all the rules of virtue and a good life, which are scattered and dispersed in the writings of the philosophers, and the wise men of all ages, and delivering them to us with greater clearness and certainty; in a more simple and unaffected manner, with greater authority, force, and efficacy upon their minds, than any philosopher and lawgiver ever did; teaching us how to worship God in the best manner, and most suitable to his nature and perfections; how to demean ourselves towards others with all meekness and humility, justice and integrity, kindness and charity; and how to govern ourselves and our own unruly appetites and passions, and to bring them within the bonds of reason, much better than any law or institution that ever was in the world; and all these duties and virtues strictly commanded and enjoined in the name and authority of God, by one evidently impowered and commissioned by him, and sent from heaven on purpose to instruct us in the nature and practice of them. So that the doctrine of the gospel, in respect of the laws and precepts of it, is a plain and perfect rule of a good life. And then,

3. The Christian religion contains the most powerful arguments and encouragements to this purpose: and these are the threatenings and promises of the gospel.

(1.) The terrible threatenings of eternal misery and punishments to all the workers of iniquity, and wilful and impenitent transgressors of these laws. And this is an argument which taketh the fastest and surest hold upon

upon human nature, and will many times move and affect, when no other considerations will work upon us. Many men that could not be wrought upon by the love of God and goodness, nor by the hopes of everlasting happiness, have been affrighted and reclaimed from an evil course by the fear of hell and damnation, and the awe of a judgment to come. To think of lying under the terrible wrath and displeasure of almighty God to eternal ages, of being extremely and for ever miserable without intermission and without end, must needs be a very dismal consideration to any man that can think and consider: *For who knows the power of God's anger? who can dwell with everlasting burnings?* And yet to this horrible danger, to this intolerable misery, do all the workers of iniquity, every one that lives in the wilful contempt and disobedience of the laws of the gospel, expose themselves; and this is as expressly revealed and declared to us, as it is possible for words to declare any thing: *Matth. xiii. 40. 41. 42. So shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Matth. xxv. 41. there you have the very sentence recorded, which shall be pronounced upon sinners at the great day: Then shall the King say to them on his left hand, that is, to the wicked, Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And ver. 45. These shall go into everlasting punishment.* And this is that which, St Paul tells us, renders the doctrine of the gospel so powerful for the conversion and salvation of sinners: *Rom. i. 16. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth. And ver. 18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And chap. ii. 8. 9. To them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil. Eph. v. 6. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things, viz. the sins he had mentioned before, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. 2 Theff. i. 7.*

8. 9. *When the Lord Jesus, speaking of the judgment of the great day, shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* So that the gospel gives all imaginable discouragement to the transgression and disobedience of God's laws, by denunciation of the greatest dread and terror that can be presented to human nature, enough to make any sensible and considerate man willing to do or forbear any thing, to escape so horrible danger, to cut off a foot or hand, or to pluck out an eye, not only to restrain nature in any thing, but even to offer violence to it, rather than to be cast into hell-fire, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched, as our Saviour expresseth it, Mark ix. 48. This is the first argument from the threatenings. The

2. Is from the promises of the gospel, which are full encouragement to obedience; and there are three great promises made in the gospel to repentance, and the obedience of God's laws.

1. The promise of pardon and forgiveness.

2. Of grace and assistance.

3. Of eternal life and happiness. And these certainly contain all the encouragement we can desire; that God will pardon what is past, assist us in well-doing for the future, and reward our perseverance in it to the end with eternal life; and all this is expressly promised to us in the gospel.

1. The pardon and forgiveness of sins past: Acts. xiii. 38. 39. *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.* And this is a great encouragement to amendment, to be fully indemnified from all past sins and transgressions; and this promise is made to believing, which includes in it repentance and a better course.

2. The promise of grace and assistance, to enable us to all the purposes of holiness and obedience. And this our Saviour hath most expressly and emphatically promised

mitted to all that are sincerely resolved to make use of it; and that upon the easiest condition that can be, if we do but earnestly pray to God for it, telling us that we may, with the same confidence and assurance of success, (nay with much greater), ask this of God, as we can any thing that is good, of the kindest father upon earth, Luke xi. 9. And surely here is a mighty encouragement to well-doing, to be assured that God is most ready to afford his grace and assistance to us to this purpose, if we heartily beg it of him. So that neither the consideration of our own weakness, nor of the power of our spiritual enemies, can be any discouragement or just excuse to us from doing our duty, since God offers us so freely all the strength that we need, and to endue us with an inward principle of well-doing, more powerful and effectual to all the purposes of holiness and virtue, than any opposition that can be raised against it. So St John assures us, that we have God on our side, and the powerful assistance of his Holy Spirit, and therefore are sure of victory in this conflict: 1 John iv. 4. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* If the Spirit of God be more powerful than the devil, we are of the stronger side; and we have no just cause to complain of our inability and weakness to do the will of God, since that strength and assistance, which we may have for asking, is to all effects and purposes of our own power. And therefore St Paul made no scruple to call it so, and to say, he was able to do all things: *I am able to do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

3. The promise of eternal life: and this is the great promise of the gospel, and the crown of all the rest: 1 John ii. 25. *This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* And this is a reward so great and glorious, and so infinitely beyond the portion of our service and obedience, that nothing can be more encouraging. What should not men do *in hopes of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised to us?* The expectation of such a reward, so well assured to us, is sufficient to encourage us to do our utmost, and to strain all our powers for the securing and attaining of it, which we cannot

cannot do without holiness and obedience of life; for *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* So that all the promises of the gospel are to encourage and strengthen us in well-doing, *to make us partakers of the divine nature, that we should cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.*

Thus you see that the whole dispensation of the gospel, and the doctrines of it, and every part of them, are all calculated to reform the minds and manners of men. This is the great design of the Christian religion, and all the parts and powers of it, to clear, and confirm, and perfect the natural law, to reinforce the obligation of moral duties by severe threatenings, and greater promises, and to offer men more powerful grace and assistance to the practice of all goodness and virtue; and they do not understand the Christian religion, who imagine any other end and design of it. There is nothing that our Saviour and his apostles do every where more vehemently declare, than that hearing and believing the doctrine of Christ signifies nothing, without the real virtues of a good life. *Know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead,* saith St James. For men to think that the mere belief of the gospel, without the fruits and effects of a good life, will save them, is a very fond and vain imagination. And thus much may suffice to have spoken concerning the point.

S E R M O N CCVIII.

Of the necessity of good works.

TIT. iii. 8.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

The second sermon on this text.

From these words I have proposed to handle these two points.

First, The certain truth or credibility of this saying and proposition, *That they which have believed in God; ought to be careful to maintain good works.* This I have spoken to, and come now to the

Second, The great fitness and necessity of inculcating frequently upon all that profess themselves Christians, the indispensable necessity of the practice of the virtues of a good life. In the handling of this point, I shall do these two things.

First, I shall shew the great fitness and necessity of pressing upon people the indispensable necessity of the virtues of a good life. And,

Secondly, Answer an objection or two, to which the preaching of this kind of doctrine may seem liable. I begin with the

First of these, *viz.* to shew the great fitness and necessity of inculcating and pressing upon all Christians the indispensable necessity of the virtues of a good life. And this will appear to be very fit and necessary upon these two accounts.

I. Because men are so very apt to deceive themselves in this matter, and so hardly brought to that wherein religion mainly consists, *viz.* the practice of real goodness.

II. Because

II. Because of the indispensable necessity of the thing to render us capable of the divine favour and acceptance, and of the reward of eternal life and happiness.

I. Because men are so very apt to deceive themselves in this matter, and so hardly brought to that where in religion mainly consists, *viz.* the practice of real goodness. They are extremely desirous to reconcile, if it be possible, the hopes of eternal happiness in another world, with a liberty to live as they list in this present world; they are loath to be at the trouble and drudgery of mortifying their lusts, and subduing and governing their passions, and bridling their tongues, and ordering their whole conversation aright, and practising all those duties which are comprehended in those two great commandments, the love of God and our neighbour. They would fain get into the favour of God, and *make their calling and election sure*, by some easier way, than by giving *all diligence, to add to their faith virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and brotherly kindness, and charity.*

The plain truth of the matter is, men had rather religion should be any thing, than what indeed it is; the thwarting and crossing of our vitious inclinations, the curing of our evil and corrupt affections; the due care and government of our unruly appetites and passions, the sincere endeavour and constant practice of all holiness and virtue in our lives; and therefore they had much rather have something that might handsomely palliate and excuse their evil inclinations, than to extirpate them and cut them up; and rather than reform and amend their vitious lives, make God an honourable amends and compensation for them in some other way.

This hath been the way and folly of mankind in all ages, to defeat the great end and design of religion, and to thrust it by, by substituting something else in the place of it, which they hope may serve the turn as well, and which hath the appearance of as much devotion and respect, and perhaps of more cost and pains, than that which God requires of them. Men have ever been apt thus to impose upon themselves, and to please themselves with a conceit of pleasing God full as well, or better,

better, by some other way, than that which he hath pitched upon and appointed for them; not considering that *God is a great King*, and will be observed and obeyed by his creatures in his own way; and that obedience to what he commands is better and more acceptable to him, than any other sacrifice that we can offer, which he hath not required at our hands; that he is infinitely wise and good, and therefore the laws and rules which he hath given us to live by, are more likely and certain means of our happiness, than any inventions and devices of our own.

Thus, I say, it hath been in all ages. The old world, after that general deluge which God sent to punish the raging wickedness and impiety of men, by sweeping all mankind from off the face of the earth, excepting only one family, which was saved to be the seminary of a new and better race of men; I say, after this, the world in a short space fell off from the worship of the true God to the worship of idols and false gods; being unwilling to bring themselves to a conformity and likeness to the true God, they chose false gods like themselves, such as might not only excuse, but even countenance and abet their lewd and vitious practices.

And when God had made a new revelation of himself to the nation of the Jews, and given them the chief heads and substance of the natural law, written over again with his own finger in tables of stone, and many other laws concerning religious worship, and their civil conversation, suited and adapted to their present temper and condition; yet how soon did their religion degenerate into external observances, purifications, and washings, and a multitude of sacrifices, without any great regard to the inward and substantial parts of religion, and the practice of those moral duties and virtues, which were in the first place required of them; and without which all the rest found no acceptance with God? Hence are those frequent complaints in the prophets, that their religion was degenerated into form and ceremony, into oblations and sacrifices, the observances of fasts, and sabbaths, and new moons; but had no power and efficacy upon their hearts and lives; was wholly destitute of inward purity and holiness, of

all substantial virtues, and the fruits of righteousness in a good life. Thus God complains by the prophet Isaiah, chap. i. 11. &c. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, &c.* Upon these terms, God declares himself ready to be reconciled to them, and to have mercy on them. But all their external services and sacrifices, separated from real goodness and righteousness, were so far from appeasing God's wrath, that they did but increase the provocation. And to the same purpose, chap. lxvi. 2. 3. *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man: he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swines blood: he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighted in their abomination. Jer. vi. 19. 20. Hear, O earth; behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba? and the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me. They thought to please God with costly incense and sacrifices, whilst they rejected his law. And chap. vii. 4. 5. 6. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place. And ver. 8. 9. 10. Behold, ye trust in lying words*

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that cannot profit. *Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house; which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? This was to add impudence to all their other impieties; to think that the worship of God, and his holy temple, did excuse these gross crimes and immoralities. Micah vi. 6. 7. 8: there God represents the Jews, as desirous to please God at any rate, provided their lusts and vices might be spared, and they might not be obliged to amend and reform their lives: *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? All this they would willingly do: but all this will not do without real virtue and goodness. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?**

And in the time of our blessed Saviour, those who pretended to be most devout among the Jews, were wholly busied about their pretended traditions of *washing of hands, and the outsides of their cups and dishes, and about the external and lesser things of the law, the tithing of mint, and annise, and cummin, and all manner of herbs, omitting, in the mean time, the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, and the love of God, as our Saviour describes their religion, Matth. xxiii. 23.*

And after the clear revelation of the gospel, the best and most perfect institution that ever was, in the very beginning of Christianity, what licentious doctrines did there creep in, *turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and releasing men from all moral duties, and the virtues of a good life? by reason whereof the way of truth was evil-spoken of, as St Peter and St Jude expressly tell us concerning the sect of the Gnostics. And St John likewise describes the same sect by their arrogant pretences to extraordinary knowledge and illumination, whilst they walked in darkness, and allowed themselves in*

all manner of wickedness of life; they pretended to perfection and righteousness, without keeping the commandments of God.

And in the next following age of Christianity, how was it pestered with a trifling controversy about the time of the observation of Easter, and with endless disputes and niceties about the doctrine of the Trinity, and the two natures and wills of Christ! by which means the practice of Christianity was greatly neglected, and the main end and design of that excellent religion almost quite defeated and lost.

After this, when the mystery of iniquity began to shew itself, in the degeneracy of the Roman church from her primitive sanctity and purity, and in the affectation of an undue and boundless power over other churches, the Christian religion began to be over-run with superstition, and the primitive fervour of piety and devotion was turned into a fierce zeal and contention about matters of no moment and importance: of which we have a most remarkable instance here in our own nation, when Austin the monk arrived here to convert the nation, and preach the gospel among us, as the church of Rome pretended; but against all faith and truth of history, which assures us that Christianity was planted here among the Britons several ages before, and perhaps sooner than even at Rome itself; and not only so, but had got considerable footing among the Saxons before Austin the monk ever set foot amongst us: I say, when Austin the monk arrived here, the two great points of his Christianity were, to bring the Britons to a conformity with the church of Rome in the time of Easter, and in the tonsure and shaving of the priests, after the manner of St Peter, as they pretended, upon the crown of the head, and not of St Paul, which was by shaving or cutting close the hair of the whole head, as from some vain and foolish tradition he pretended to have learned: the promoting of these two customs was his great errand and business, and the zeal of his preaching was spent upon these two fundamental points; in which, after very barbarous and bloody doings, he at last prevailed. And this is *the conversion of England*, so much boasted of by the church of Rome, and for
which

which this Austin is magnified for so great a faint; when it is very evident from the history of those times, that he was a proud, ignorant, turbulent, and cruel man, who, instead of first converting the nation to the faith of Christ, confounded the purity and simplicity of the Christian religion, which had been planted and established among us long before.

In latter ages, when the man of sin was grown up to his full stature, the great business of religion was the Pope's absolute and universal authority over all Christians, even kings and princes, in order to spiritual matters; ecclesiastical liberties and immunities; and the exemption of the clergy, and all matters belonging to them, from the cognizance of the secular power; the great points which Tho. a Becket contended so earnestly for, calling it *the cause of Christ*, and in the maintenance whereof he persisted to the death, and was canonized as a faint and a martyr. And among the people, their piety consisted in the promoting of monkery, and founding and endowing monasteries; in infinite superstitions, foolish doctrines, and more absurd miracles to confirm them; in purchasing indulgences with money, and hearing of masses for the redemption of souls out of purgatory; in the idolatrous worship of saints, and their relics and images, and especially of the blessed Virgin, which at last grew to that height, as to make up the greatest part of their worship and devotion, both public and private. And indeed they have brought matters to that absurd pass, that one may truly say, that the whole business of their devotion is to teach men to worship images, and images to worship God. For to be present at divine service and prayers celebrated in an unknown tongue, is not the worship of men and reasonable creatures, but of statues and images, which though they be present in the place where this service is performed, yet they bear no part in it, being void of all sense and understanding of what is done. And indeed in their whole religion, such as it is, they drive so strict a bargain with God, and treat him in so arrogant a manner by their insolent doctrine of the merit of good works, as if God were as much beholden to them for their service and obedience, as they are to him for the reward of it, which

they challenge as of right and justice belonging to them. Nay, so high have they carried this doctrine, as to pretend not only to merit eternal life for themselves, but to do a great deal more in works of supererogation, for the benefit and advantage of others; that is, when they have done as much as in strict duty they are obliged to, and thereby paid down a valuable consideration for heaven; and as much as in equal justice between God and man it is worth, the surplussage of their good works they put as a debt upon God, and as so many bills of credit laid up in the treasure of the church, which the Pope by his pardons and indulgences may disperse and place to whose account he pleaseth. And thus by one device or other they have enervated the Christian religion to that degree, that it hath quite lost its virtue and efficacy upon the hearts and lives of men; and instead of the fruits of real goodness and righteousness, it produceth little else but superstition and folly; or if it bring forth any fruits of charity, it is either so misplaced upon these chimeras, (as hiring of priests to say so many masses for the dead, to redeem their souls out of purgatory), that it signifies nothing; or else the virtue of it is spoiled by the arrogant pretence of meriting by it. So apt have men always been to deceive themselves by an affected mistake of any thing for religion, but that which really and in truth is so. And this is that which the Apostle St Paul foretold would be the great miscarriage of the last times, that under a great pretence of religion men should be destitute of all goodness, and abandoned to all wickedness and vice, *having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it*, 2 Tim. iii. 5.

And though things have been much better since that happy reformation from the corruptions and errors of Popery, yet even among Protestants the malice and craft of the devil hath prevailed so far, as to undermine, in a great measure, the necessity of a good life, by those luscious doctrines of the Antinomians, concerning free grace, and the justification of a sinner, merely upon a confident persuasion of his being in a state of grace and favour with God, and consequently that the gospel discharge men from obedience to the laws of God, and all manner of obligation to the virtues of a good life; which doctrines,

doctrines, how false and absurd soever in themselves; and pernicious in their consequences, did not only prevail very much in Germany, a little after the beginning of the reformation, but have since got too much footing in other places, and been too far entertained and cherished by some good men, who were not sufficiently aware of the error and danger of them. But blessed be God, the doctrine of our church, both in the articles and homilies of it, hath been preserved pure and free from all error and corruption in this matter on either hand, asserting the necessity of good works, and yet renouncing the merit of them in that arrogant sense in which the church of Rome does teach and assert it; and so teaching justification by faith, and the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, as to maintain the indispensable necessity of the virtues of a good life.

And thus I have done with the first reason, why it is so fit and necessary to press frequently upon Christians the indispensable necessity of the virtues of a good life, *viz.* because men are and have ever been so very apt to deceive themselves in this matter, and so hardly brought to that wherein religion mainly consists, *viz.* the practice of real goodness. I shall be brief upon the 2^d reason, namely, because of the indispensable necessity of the thing to render us capable of the divine favour and acceptance, and of the reward of eternal life. And this added to the former, makes the reason full and strong. For if men be so apt to deceive themselves in this matter, and to be deceived in it be a matter of such dangerous consequence, then it is highly necessary to inculcate this frequently upon Christians, that no man may be mistaken in a matter of so much danger, and upon which his eternal happiness depends. Now, if obedience to the laws of God; and the practice of virtue and good works, be necessary to our continuance in a state of grace and favour with God, and to our final justification by our absolution at the great day; if nothing but holiness and obedience can qualify us for the blessed sight of God, and the glorious reward of eternal happiness; then it is matter of infinite consequence to us, not to be mistaken in a matter of so great importance; but that we *work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and give all diligence*

ligence to make our calling and election sure, by adding to our faith and knowledge, the virtues of a good life; that, by patient continuance in well-doing, we seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, and eternal life: and that we so demean ourselves in all holy conversation and godliness, as that we may with comfort and confidence wait for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. That this is indispensably necessary to our happiness, I have in my former discourse shewed at large, from the great end and design of religion in general, and of the Christian religion in particular; from the whole design and doctrine of the gospel; from the constant tenor of the Bible; and from the nature and reason of the thing.

I know it hath been the great design of the devil and his instruments, in all ages, to undermine religion, by making an unhappy separation and divorce between godliness and morality, between faith and the virtues of a good life, and by this means not only to weaken and abate, but even wholly to destroy the force and efficacy of the Christian religion, and to leave men as much under the power of the devil and their lusts, as if there were no such thing as Christianity in the world. But let us not deceive ourselves; this was always religion, and the condition of our acceptance with God, to endeavour to be like God in purity and holiness, in justice and righteousness, in mercy and goodness, *to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well.* And this you will find to be the constant doctrine of the holy scriptures, from the beginning of the Bible to the end. Gen. iv. 7. *If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted?* Psal. xv. 1. 2. *Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell upon thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth from his heart.* Psal. 1. 23. *To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.* II. i. 16. 17. 18. *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed,*

sed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. II. iii. 10. 11. Say ye to the righteous; that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him. Micah vi. 8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

And our blessed Saviour, in his sermon upon the mount, tells us plainly what manner of persons we must be, if ever we hope to be happy, and to enter into the kingdom of God; and wherein his religion consists, in righteousness, and purity, and meekness, and patience, and peaceableness; and declares most expressly, that if we hope for happiness upon any other terms than the practice of these virtues, we build upon the sand. Acts. x. 34. *Of a truth I perceive,* says St Peter there, *that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.* Gal. vi. 7. 8. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.* Eph. v. 6. *Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.* I John iii. 7. *Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.* And here in the text, *This is a faithful saying, &c.* These things are good and profitable to men, acceptable to God, and honourable to religion, and the only way and means to eternal life, through the mercy and merits of Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Saviour.

S E R M O N CCIX.

Of the necessity of good works.

TIT. iii. 8.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

The third sermon on this text.

I Come now to the second thing I proposed, which was to answer an objection or two, to which the preaching of this kind of doctrine may seem liable.

First, That this is to advance and set up morality.

Secondly, That this seems to contradict St Paul's doctrine of justification by the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, and by faith without the works of the law. I shall endeavour to answer both these.

First, That this is to advance and set up morality. To which I answer two things.

I. That if by morality men mean counterfeit virtue, and the specious shew of justice, and charity, and meekness, or any other virtue, without the truth and reality of them, without an inward principle of love to God and goodness, out of ostentation and vain-glory, or for some other by and sinister end, such as probably were the virtues of many Heathens, and it is to be feared of too many Christians; if this be that which the objectors mean by morality, then we do assure them that we preach up no such morality, but those virtues only which are sincere, and substantial, and real, the principle and root whereof is the love of God and goodness, and the end, the honour and glory of God, and a necessary ingredient whereof is sincerity and truth. It is *righteousness and true holiness*, the sincere love of God and

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our neighbour, real meekness, and patience, and humility; and sobriety, and chastity, and not the glittering shew and appearance, the vain and affected ostentation of any of these virtues, which we persuade and press men so earnestly to endeavour after.

Not that I believe that all virtues of the Heathen were counterfeit and destitute of an inward principle of goodness: God forbid that we should pass so hard a judgment upon those excellent men, Socrates, and Epicurus, and Antoninus, and several others, who sincerely endeavoured to live up to the light and law of nature, and took so much pains to cultivate and raise their minds, to govern and subdue the irregularity of their sensual appetites and brutish passions, to purify and refine their manners, and to excel in all virtue and goodness. These were glorious lights in those dark times, and so much the better for being good under so many disadvantages, as the ignorance and prejudice of their education, the multitude of evil examples continually in their view, and the powerful temptation of the contrary customs and fashions of the generality of mankind.

Nor were they wholly destitute of an inward principle of goodness; for though they had not that powerful grace and assistance of God's Holy Spirit which is promised and afforded to all sincere Christians, (as neither had the Jews, who were the peculiar people of God, and in covenant with him), yet it is very credible, that such persons were under a special care and providence of God, and not wholly destitute of divine assistance, no more than Job and his friends, mentioned in the Old Testament, and Cornelius in the New, who surely were very good men, and accepted of God, though they were Gentiles, and *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise*; but yet not excluded from the blessing of the Messiah, though they were ignorant of him, as many of the Jews likewise were, nor from the benefit of that great propitiation, which *in the fulness of time* he was to make for the sins of the whole world

So that there is no need so uncharitably to conclude, (as some of the ancients have done, not all, nor the most ancient of them neither), that there were no good
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men among the Heathen, and that the brightest of their virtues were counterfeit; and only in shew and appearance. For there might be several good men among the Gentiles, in the same condition that Cornelius was before he became a Christian: of whom it is said, whilst he was yet a Gentile, that *he was a devout man, and feared God, and that his prayer and his alms were accepted of God,* a certain sign that they were not counterfeit. And if he had died in that condition, before Christ had been revealed to him, I do not see what reasonable cause of doubt there can be concerning his salvation; and yet it is a most certain and inviolable truth, that *there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus; neither is there salvation in any other.* And good men in all ages and nations from the beginning of the world, both before the law, and under the law, and without the law, such as *feared God and wrought righteousness,* were accepted of him *in that name,* and by the meritorious sacrifice of *that Lamb of God,* which, in respect of the virtue and efficacy of it, is said to have been *slain from the foundation of the world.*

II. But if by moral virtues be meant those which concern the manners of men, from whence they seem to have taken their name, and which are in truth the duties commanded and enjoined by the natural or moral law, and are comprehended under those two great commands, as our blessed Saviour calls them, *the love of God and our neighbour;* I say, if this be the meaning of it, then we do advance this kind of morality, as that which is the primary and substantial part of all religion, and most strictly enjoined by the Christian. To which purpose our Saviour tells us, Matth. v. 17. that *he was not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them.* And ver. 19. *Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments, and teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven;* that is, under the dispensation of the gospel. So that this is a principal part of the Christian religion, to teach and practise the duties of the moral law. This the Pharisees were defective in, placing their religion in external and little things, but neglecting the great

great duties of morality, *the weightier matters of the law, mercy, and judgment, and fidelity, and the love of God.* And therefore he adds, ver. 20. *I say unto you, Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* It is not possible in more express and emphatical words to injoin the observation of the duties of the moral law. And then for that great principle and rule of moral justice, *To do to all men, as we would have them to do to us;* our Saviour injoins it as an essential part of religion, and the sum and substance of our whole duty to our neighbour, and of all the particular precepts contained in the law and the prophets, Matth. vii. 12. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.* And St Paul most expressly declares, that he was so far from weakening or making void the obligation of the law by his doctrine of *justification by faith*, that he did thereby confirm and establish it: Rom. iii. 31. *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

So that moral duties and virtues are the same with Christian graces, and with that holiness and righteousness which the gospel requires, and differ only in name and notion. They are called virtues, with relation to the intrinsecal nature and goodness of them; and graces, with respect to the principle from which they flow, being the fruits and effects of the gracious operation of the Spirit of God upon our minds. And it hath been a very ill service to religion, to decry morality, as some have done, not considering that moral duties are of primary obligation, and bound upon us by the law of nature; and that Christianity hath reinforced and seconded the obligation of them by more powerful motives and encouragements. But I proceed to the

Second objection, viz. That this discourse seems to be contrary to St Paul's doctrine of *justification by the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, by faith, without the works of the law.*

To which I answer, that St Paul, when he does so vehemently and frequently assert *justification by the free grace of God, and by faith, without the works of the law,*

does not thereby exclude the necessity of works of righteousness and obedience to the moral precepts of the gospel, as the condition of our continuance in the favour of God, and of our final and perfect justification and absolution by the sentence of the great day; but, on the contrary, does every where declare the necessity of a holy and virtuous life to this purpose. And this is most plainly the tenor and current of his doctrine throughout all his epistles. But whenever he contends that *we are justified by faith without works*, he denies one of these three things:

1. That the observation of the law of Moses is necessary to our justification and salvation. And this he does in opposition to those who troubled the Christian church, by teaching, that it was still necessary to Christians to keep the law of Moses; and that unless they did so, they could not be saved; of which we have a full account given, Acts xv. And this for the most part is the meaning of that assertion, so frequent in his epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, that *we are not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ*. And this is very evident from the tenor of his reasoning about this matter, in which he does so frequently urge this argument, and insist so strongly upon it, *viz.* That men were justified before the law of Moses was given, for which he instances in Abraham, and therefore the observance of that law cannot be necessary to a man's justification and salvation.

2. Sometimes he, in his discourse upon this argument, denies the merit of any works of obedience and righteousness to gain the favour and acceptance of God; so that we cannot challenge any thing of God as of debt, and as *a ground of boasting*, but we owe all to the free grace and mercy of God; and when we have done our best, have done but our duty. And this he likewise frequently insists upon in his epistle to the Romans, in opposition to an arrogant opinion, common among the Jews, of the merit of good works, and that God was indebted to them for their obedience. In this sense he says, Rom. iv. 4. *Now to him that worketh is the reward reckoned, not of grace, but of debt*; that is, he that claims justification, and the reward of eternal life, as due to him for

his obedience, does not ascribe it to the free grace of God, but challengeth it as a debt due to him.

3. Sometimes he denies the necessity of any works of righteousness, antecedently to our first justification, and being received into a state of grace and favour with God; and asserts on the contrary, that by the faith of Christ, and sincerely embracing the Christian religion, men are justified: and though they were never so great sinners before, all their past sins are forgiven, and God is perfectly reconciled to them. In which sense he says, chap. iv. 5. *That God justifies the ungodly upon their believing.* So that whatever sins they were guilty of before, and though they never did any one good action in their lives, yet if they sincerely embrace the Christian religion, and thereby engage themselves to reform their lives, and to obey the precepts of the gospel for the future, God will thereupon receive them into his favour, and pardon the sins of their former lives. And in this epistle to Titus, chap. iii. 5. 7. immediately before the text, *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life; that is, though their former life had been very bad, as he describes it before, ver. 3. For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice, and envy, and hatred of one another);* I say, notwithstanding this, though they had done no works of righteousness, but the contrary, yet upon their solemn profession of Christianity at their baptism, and declaration of their repentance and engagements to live better, they were *justified freely by God's grace, and saved by his mercy.* But then he does not say, that, after this solemn profession of Christianity, works of righteousness were not necessary, to continue them in this state of grace and favour with God, but quite contrary; he plainly declares the necessity of them in the very next words: *This is a faithful saying, &c.*

And the consideration of this will fully reconcile the seeming difference between St Paul and St James, in this matter of justification. St Paul affirms, that a sin-

ner is at first justified, and received into the favour of God, by a sincere profession of the Christian faith, without any works of righteousness preceding. St James affirms, that no man continues in a justified state, and in favour with God, whose faith doth not bring forth good works; and that it is not a true and lively faith, which doth not approve and shew itself to be so, by the works of obedience and a good life: James ii. 14. *What doth it profit a man, my brethren, if a man say that he hath faith, and hath not works; can faith save him? And ver. 17. Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.* And ver. 20. he repeats it again, *Know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead.* And ver. 22. speaking of Abraham, *Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect.* And ver. 26. *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.* The sum and result of all which is this, that though we be justified at first by faith without works preceding, yet faith, without good works following it, will not finally justify and save us; nay indeed, that faith which does not bring forth the fruits of a good life, was never a true, and living, and perfect faith; but pretended, and dead, and imperfect, and therefore can justify no man; and he that hath only such a faith, does but make an empty and ineffectual profession, but is really destitute of the true faith of the gospel.

And this is agreeable to that explication which was given by our first reformers here in England, of the nature of *justifying faith*; "That it is not a mere persuasion of the truths of natural and revealed religion, but such a belief as begets a submission to the will of God, and hath hope, love, and obedience to God's commandments joined to it. That this is the faith which in baptism is professed, from which Christians are called *the faithful*; and that in those scriptures, where it is said, *We are justified by faith*; we may not think that we be justified by faith, as it is a separate virtue from hope and charity, the fear of God, and repentance, but by it is meant faith, neither only nor alone, but with the aforesaid virtues, containing an engagement of obedience to the whole doctrine and religion of Christ. And that although all that are justified,

“stified, must of necessity have charity, as well as faith”
 “yet neither faith nor charity are the worthiness and
 “merit of our justification, but that is to be ascribed
 “only to our Saviour Christ, who was offered upon the
 “cross for our sins, and rose again for our justification;”
 as may be seen more at large in a treatise published at the
 beginning of our reformation, upon this and some other
 points. And I do not see what can be said upon this point
 with more clearness and weight.

All the application I shall make of this discourse shall
 be briefly this; that if we be convinced of the necessity
 of the virtues of a good life to all that profess themselves
 Christians, we would seriously and in good earnest set
 about the practice of them; if *this be a faithful saying*,
 then I am sure it greatly concerns us to be careful of our
 lives and actions, and that *our conversation be as becometh
 the gospel of Christ*; because if this be true, there is
 no possible way to reconcile a wicked life, no, nor a wil-
 ful neglect and violation of any of the duties and laws of
 Christianity, with the hopes of heaven and eternal life.
 In this the scripture is positive and peremptory, that *every
 man that hath this hope in him, must purify himself, even as he is
 pure: that without holiness no man shall see the Lord: but if we
 have our fruit unto holiness, our end shall be everlasting life.*

And here I might particularly recommend, to your
 careful practice, the great virtues of Christianity; those
 which St Paul tells us are the proper and genuine fruits
 of the spirit of Christ, *love, joy, peace, long-suffering,
 gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance.* But I
 have not time to insist particularly upon them. I shall
 content myself briefly to mention those duties which
 the Apostle in this epistle doth more especially press up-
 on the several conditions and relations of men. Those
 who are teachers and instructors of others, that they
 would not only be careful to *preach sound doctrine*, but in
all things to shew themselves patterns of good works. Those
 who are subject to others, and under their government,
 that they would pay all duty and obedience to their
 superiors, as children to their parents, servants to their
 masters, that they may *adorn the doctrine of God our
 Saviour in all things*, as the Apostle speaks, chap.

ii. ver. 10. And so likewise those who are subjects, that they live in all peaceable and humble obedience to princes and magistrates. This our Apostle speaks of as a great duty of Christian religion, and reckons it among good works, chap. iii. 1. *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates, and to be ready to every good work.*

And then those who are of an inferior condition, that they labour and be diligent in the work of an honest calling, for this is privately good and profitable unto men, and to their families; and those who are above this necessity, and are in a better capacity to maintain good works properly so called, works of piety, and charity, and justice; that they be careful to promote and advance them, according to their power and opportunity, because these things are publicly good and beneficial to mankind. And besides this, as St Peter exhorts, 2 Pet. i. 5. 6. &c. *And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins; that is, doth not consider that the design of Christianity is to renew and reform the hearts and lives of men. Wherefore the rather, brethren, as he goes on, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

I will conclude all with that excellent saying of St Paul in this epistle to Titus, which so fully declares to us the great design, and the proper efficacy of the Christian doctrine upon the minds and manners of men; chap. ii. 11. 12. 13. *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that*

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that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all glory and honour now and for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N CCX.

Of doing all to the glory of God.

I COR. X. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do,
do all to the glory of God.

THese words are a general conclusion inferred from a particular case, which the Apostle had been discoursing of before; and that we may the better understand the meaning of this general rule, it will not be amiss to look back a little upon the particular case the Apostle was speaking of; and that was concerning the partaking of things offered to idols, and that in two cases; either by partaking of the idol-feasts in their temples, after the sacrifices; or by partaking of things offered to idols, whether they were bought by Christians in the market, or set before them at a private entertainment, to which by some Heathens they were invited.

The first he condemns as absolutely unlawful; the other not as unlawful in itself, but in some circumstances upon the account of scandal.

The first case he speaks of from ver. 14. to 23. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, flee from idolatry. I speak to wise men: judge ye what I say.* As if he had said, You may easily apprehend what it is I am going to caution you against. And first he tells them in general, that they who communicated in the worship of any deity, or in any kind of sacrifice offered to him, did, in so doing,

doing, own and acknowledge that for a deity. To this purpose he instanceth in communicating in the Christian sacrament, and in the Jewish sacrifices: ver. 16. 17. 18. *The cup of the blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: that is, the Jews: are not they which eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar?* Thus it is in the Christian and the Jewish worship. And the case is the same, if any man partake of the idol-feasts in their temples. This he does not express, but takes it for granted they understood what this discourse aimed at.

And then he answers an argument, which it seems was made use of by some, particularly the Gnostics, of whom the Apostle speaks, chap. viii. and that was this. If an idol be nothing, and consequently things sacrificed to idols were not to be considered as sacrifices, then it was lawful to partake of the idol-feasts, which were celebrated in their temples. And that the Apostle speaks of these, is plain from his discourse against the Gnostics, who made use of this argument for the lawfulness of communicating at the idol-feasts: chap. viii. 4. *As concerning therefore the eating of things which are offered in sacrifice unto idols; we know that an idol is nothing in the world, &c.* And ver. 10. *If any man see thee which hast knowledge, alluding to the very name of Gnostics, if any man see thee which hast knowledge, sit at meat in an idol-temple.*

This then is that partaking of idol-feasts, which the Apostle here speaks of, which they pretended to be lawful, because *an idol is nothing*. This, says the Apostle, I know as well as you, that an idol is no real deity; but for all that, the devil is really worshipped and served by this means: ver. 20. *But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils.*

Having declared this way of partaking of things offered to idols, to be unlawful in itself, and a virtual renouncing of Christianity; then he proceeds to the consideration of the other case, of eating of things offered to idols out of their temples, which might happen several ways. Sometimes being sold by the priests, they were exposed to sale in the market. Sometimes the Heathens carried some remainders of the sacrifices to their houses, and inviting the Christians to a feast, might set these meats before them; what should Christians do in either of these cases?

First, He determines in general, that out of the temples it was lawful to eat these things, because in so doing they communicated in no act of worship with the Heathens: it is lawful, he says, in itself; but because it might be harmful to others, and give scandal, in such circumstances, it became unlawful by accident: Ver. 22. *All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.* Things which are lawful in themselves, may in some cases be very dangerous and destructive to others; and we should not only consider ourselves, but others also. *Let no man seek his own; but every man another's welfare.* And then he comes to the particular cases. *Whatever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.* We may take these things from God's hand, who is the true Lord of them and of all creatures. For this reason we may without scrupulous inquiry use those meats which are publicly exposed to sale.

And so likewise in the other case, if we be invited to the table of an Heathen, we may eat what is set before us, without inquiring whether it be part of an idol-sacrifice. But if any man tell us, that this meat was offered in sacrifice to idols, in that case we ought to abstain from eating of it, *for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake;* that is, out of regard to the opinion of those who think these meats unlawful: *for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.* Also in another sense, God hath made such abundant provision for us, that we may abstain from this or that meat without any
great

great inconvenience. *Conscience, I say, not thine own, but another's.* He had said before, we should eat of what was set before us, asking no question for conscience sake; that is, not making it a matter of conscience to ourselves: now he says, if we be told it was offered to an idol, we should not eat for conscience sake; that is, not as making a matter of conscience of it to ourselves, but out of regard to the conscience of another, to whom it might be a scandal. *For why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? and if I with thanksgiving be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?* that is, why should another man's conscience be a prejudice to my liberty? if another makes conscience of it as unlawful, why should his conscience govern mine, and make me think so too; or why should I be evil spoken of, for thinking it lawful to eat any thing set before me for which I give thanks? This is a little obscure; but the plain meaning of the Apostle's reasoning seems to be this: Though I have that regard to another man's weak conscience, as to abstain from eating what he thinks unlawful; yet am I not therefore bound to be of his opinion, and think it unlawful in itself: I will consider his weakness so far as to forbear that which I am persuaded is lawful to do, but yet I will still preserve the liberty of my own judgment; and as I am content to give no scandal to him, so I expect that he should not censure and condemn me for thinking that lawful, which he believes not to be so. And then from all this discourse, the Apostle establisheth this general rule in the text, *Wherefore whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* To which is parallel that other text, *1 Pet. iv. 11. That God in all things may be glorified.* So that this general rule lays a duty upon all Christians of designing the glory of God in all their actions; all the difficulty is, what is here meant by this, of *doing all things to the glory of God.* The Jews have a common saying, which seems to be parallel with this phrase of the Apostle, *That all things should be done in the name of God.* And this they make so essential to every good action, that it was a received principle among them, that he who obeys any command of God, and not *in his name*, shall receive no reward.

ward. Now, that to do things *in the name of God*, and to do them *to his glory*, are but several phrases signifying the same thing, is evident from that precept of the Apostle, Col. iii. 17. *And whatsoever ye do in word, or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, to his glory.* Now, for our clear understanding of the sense of this phrase, of *glorifying God*, or *doing things to God's glory*; we will consider the various use of it in scripture, and so descend to the proper and particular sense of it here in the text.

The glory of God is nothing else but the honour which is given to him by his creatures; and consequently, the general notion of *glorifying God*, or *doing any thing to his glory*, is to design to honour God by such and such actions; and this phrase is in scripture more especially applied to these following particulars.

I. We are said in scripture to glorify God by a solemn acknowledgment of him and his perfections, of his goodness and mercy, of his power and wisdom, of his truth and faithfulness, of his sovereign dominion and authority over us. Hence it is that all solemn actions of religion are called the worship of God, which signifies that honour and glory which is given to him by his creatures, signified by some outward expression of reverence and respect. Thus we are said to worship God, when we fall down before him, and pray to him for mercy and blessings, or praise him for favours and benefits received from him, or perform any other solemn act of religion: Psal. lxxxvi. 9. *All nations whom thou hast made, shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name.*

But especially the duty of praise and thanksgiving is most frequently in scripture called *glorifying of God*, or *giving glory to him*: Psal. lxxxvi. 12. *I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and will glorify thy name.* Matth. v. 16. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven;* that is, praise him upon that account. Luke 7. 25. it is said of the man sick of the palsy, that when he was healed, *he departed to his own house, glorifying God;* that is, praising God for his great mercy to him. And Luke xvii. 18. our Saviour speaking of the *ten lepers*

pers that were healed, says, that but one of them returned to give glory to God; that is, to return thanks to God for his recovery.

II. Men are said in scripture to give glory to God by the acknowledgment of their sins, and repentance of them: Josh. vii. 19. *And Joshua said to Achan, My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to him.* In like manner the Prophet Jeremiah, exhorting the people to repentance, useth this expression Jer. xiii. 16. *Give glory to the Lord your God, before he causeth darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dangerous mountains.* And Rev. xvi. 9. it is said, that those upon whom great plagues fell, *repented not to give God glory.* We glorify God by confession of our sins, and repentance because in so doing we acknowledge his authority, and the holiness of those righteous laws which we have broken.

III. We are said likewise in scripture, to glorify God by our holiness and obedience. Thus we are commanded to glorify God by the chastity of our bodies, and the purity of our minds: I Cor. vi. 20. *Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are his.* Thus our Saviour is said to have glorified God in the world, by his perfect obedience to his will: John xvii. 4. *Father, I have glorified thee upon earth.* And thus he tells us we may glorify God, by the fruits of holiness and obedience in our lives: John xv. 8. *Herein is my Father glorified if ye bring forth much fruit.* So likewise St Paul prays for the Philippians, that they may be filled with the fruit of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

IV. We are said likewise in an especial manner, to glorify God by our sufferings for his cause and truth: John xxi. 19. our Saviour foretelling St Peter's martyrdom, expresseth it by this phrase of glorifying God by his death, *This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.*

V. And lastly, And because religion is the solemn honour, and public owning and acknowledgment of the Deity; hence it is that in scripture we are said to glorify God in a peculiar and eminent manner, when in all our actions we consult the honour and advantage of religion. Upon this account St Peter exhorts the ministers

ministers of the gospel, so to preach to the people, and so to perform the public offices of religion, as may be for the honour of religion; and this he calls glorifying of God, 1 Pet. iv. 11. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified.* And because the peace and unity of Christians is so very much for the honour and advantage of religion, therefore we are said in an especial manner to glorify God, by maintaining the peace and unity of the church: Rom. xv. 5. 6. *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And here in the text, we are said to do all things to the glory of God; when in all our actions we have a regard to the promoting and advancing of religion and the edification of Christians. For here by *eating and drinking to the glory of God*, the Apostle plainly means, that when things offered to idols are set before us, we should refrain from them, when, by our eating, the interest of religion, and the edification of Christians, may receive any prejudice; that is, when our eating may be a scandal to others; that is, a stumbling block, or an occasion of falling into sin. And that this is the Apostle's meaning, is evident from ver. 22. *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient, ἡ πάντα συμφέρει, all things profit not; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not; that is, though I know it is a thing very lawful in itself, to eat things which have been offered to idols, if they be bought in the market, or accidentally set before me at a feast; yet in some circumstances it may not be for the advantage of religion, and be so far from edifying, that it may be an occasion of sin to them. For instance, I am invited to a feast, where things offered to idols are set before me, and one says, this was offered in sacrifice unto idols, a sufficient intimation to me that he thinks it unlawful; and therefore I will forbear, because of the inconvenience to religion, and the manifold scandal that might follow upon it, by hindering others from embracing religion; or by tempting weak Christians, either to the doing of a thing against their conscience, or to a-*

apostatize from religion. In this case he that abstains from these meats, and contents himself with others, *eats to the glory of God.*

And that this is the true notion of scandal and offence, not barely to grieve others, or do things displeasing to them, but to do such things as are really hurtful to others, and may be a prejudice or hinderance to their salvation, and an occasion of their falling into sin; I say, that this is the true and proper notion of scandal, is evident from what follows immediately after the text: *Give none offence to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God; as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Give no offence to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God;* the Apostle intimates that such an action as this we are speaking of, might be an occasion of sin to all these, and a hinderance of their salvation: it might hinder the Jew from turning Christian, and harden him in his infidelity; for he might say, See how well you Christians worship one God, when you can partake of things offered to idols: it might confirm the Heathen in his superstition, and keep him from embracing Christianity; for he might say surely, Why should the Christians persuade me to forsake the worship of idols, when they themselves will knowingly eat things offered to them? It might tempt the weak Christians either to sin against their consciences by following my example, or to apostatize from Christianity upon this offence taken against it; therefore, says the Apostle, *do all things to the glory of God;* that is, for the honour and advantage of the Christian religion, and the furtherance of mens salvation; for so, says he, I do in these, and all other actions of my life; I study the advantage of all men, in all things, not regarding mine own convenience, in comparison of the eternal salvation of others.

And thus I have, as briefly and clearly as I could, explained this phrase to you, of *doing things to the glory of God.*

The result of all is, that we glorify God by doing our duty, by all actions of worship and obedience to God, and by our repentance in case of sin and disobedience, by doing and by suffering the will of God, more especially

especially by using our Christian liberty, as to things lawful in themselves, so as may make most for the honour and advantage of religion, for the unity and edification of the church, and the salvation of the souls of men, which is the proper notion here in the text, *of eating and drinking, and doing whatever we do, to the glory of God.*

From all this discourse it will be evident, that three things much concur, that our actions may be said to be done *to the glory of God.*

1. Our actions must be materially good; we must do what God commands, and abstain from doing what he hath forbidden. Sin is in its nature a dishonour to God, a contradiction to his nature, and a contempt of his authority and laws; so that we cannot glorify God by transgressing our duty.

2. Our actions must not only be good, but they must be done with regard to God, and out of conscience of our duty to him, and in hopes of the reward which he hath promised, and not for any low, and mean, and temporal end. The best action in itself may be spoiled, and all the virtue of it blasted, by being done for a wrong end. If we serve God to please men, and be charitable out of vain-glory to be seen of men; if we profess godliness for gain, and are religious only to serve our temporal interest, though the actions we do be never so good; yet all the virtue and reward of them is lost, by the mean end and design which we aim at in the doing of them; because all this while we have no love or regard for God; and the authority of his laws; we make no conscience of our duty to him, we are not moved by the rewards of another world, which may lawfully work upon us, and prevail with us; but we are swayed by little temporal advantages, which if we could obtain as well by doing the contrary, we would as soon, nay perhaps much sooner do it.

And this is so essentially necessary, that no action, though never so good, that is not done with regard to God, and upon some of the proper motives and considerations of religion, such as are the authority of God, conscience of our duty to him, love of him, faith in his promises, fear of his displeasure; I say, no action that is not done

upon all, or some of these motives, can be said to be done to the glory of God. And this is the meaning of that saying among the Jews, which I mentioned before, *That he who obeys any command of God, but not in his name, shall receive no reward.* Moral actions receive their denomination of good or evil, as well from the end, as from the matter of them; and as the best end cannot sanctify an action bad in itself, so a bad end and design is enough to spoil the best action we can do; and as it is great impiety to do a wicked thing, though for a religious end, so it is great hypocrisy to be religious for mean and temporal ends.

2. That all our actions may be done to the glory of God, we must not only take care that they be lawful in themselves, but that they be not spoiled and vitiated by any bad circumstance; for circumstances alter moral actions, and may render that which is lawful in itself, unlawful in some cases: so that if we would *do all things to the glory of God*, we must in some cases refrain from doing that which is lawful in itself. As when such an action that I am about to do, may through the prejudice or mistake of men probably redound to the dishonour and disadvantage of religion, by causing factions and divisions, by hindering some from embracing the true religion, or making others apostatize from it, or by being any other way an occasion to men of falling into sin, or any impediment to their salvation; in these and the like cases, we are bound to have that consideration of religion, that regard to the peace and unity of the church, that tenderness and charity for the souls of men, as to deny ourselves the use of things otherwise lawful; and if we do not do it, we offend against a great rule both of piety and charity.

I shall only farther at present endeavour to give a brief resolution to two questions, much debated upon occasion of this rule of the Apostle, of *doing all things to the glory of God.*

First, How far we are bound actually to intend and design the glory of God in every particular action of our lives? To this I answer,

1. That it is morally impossible that a man should do every particular action with actual and implicit thoughts
and

and intentions of glorifying God thereby, and therefore here can be no obligation to any such thing.

2. It is not necessary, no more than for a man that takes a journey, every step of his way actually to think of his journey's end, and the place whither he intends to go. A constant resolution to go to such a place, and due care not to go out of the way; and in case of any doubt, to inform ourselves as well as we can of the right way, and to keep in it, is as much consideration of the end of a man's journey, as is needful to bring him thither, and more than this would be troublesome and to no purpose; the case is the very same in the course of a man's life. From whence it follows, in the

3. Place, That an habitual and settled intention of mind, to glorify God in the course of our lives, is sufficient; because this will serve all good purposes, as well as an actual intention upon every particular occasion. He that doth things with regard to God, and out of conscience of his duty to him, and upon the proper motives and considerations of religion, in obedience and love to God, in hopes of his reward, and out of fear of his displeasure, glorifies God in his actions. And if this principle be but rooted and settled in his mind, it is sufficient to govern his life, and is virtually, and to all purposes, as true and constant an intention of glorifying God, as if we did actually and explicitly propound this end to ourselves in every particular action of our lives.

Secondly, Whether a man be bound to prefer the glory of God before his own eternal happiness, as Moses and St Paul seem to have done; the one in being content to *have his name blotted out of the book of life*, the other to be *anathema from Christ*, for the salvation of Israel? To this I answer,

If we could admit the supposition, that the glory of God and a man's eternal happiness might come in competition, there could be no obligation upon a man to abuse eternal misery upon any consideration whatsoever. The preference of one thing before another, supposeth them both to be subjects of our choice; but the greatest evil, known and apprehended to be so, cannot be the object of a reasonable choice; neither the greatest mo-

ral nor natural evil of sin, or misery. Sin is not to be chosen in any case, no not for the glory of God. The Apostle makes the supposition, and answers it; that *if the truth and glory of God could be promoted by his lie,* yet we are not to do evil that good may come, Rom. iii. 7. 8.

Nor is the greatest natural evil the object of our choice. God himself hath planted a principle in our nature to the contrary, to seek our own happiness, and to avoid utter ruin and destruction; and then surely much more that which is much worse, as eternal misery is, whatever some learned men, in despite of nature and common sense, have asserted to the contrary, that it is better and more desirable to be extremely and eternally miserable, than not to be; for what is there desirable in being, when it serves to no other purpose but to be the foundation of endless and intolerable misery? and if this be a principle of our nature, can any man imagine that God should frame us so, as to make the first and fundamental principle of it directly opposite to our duty?

As to the instance of Moses, it does not reach this case; because the phrase of *blotting out of the book of life*, does in all probability signify no more than a *temporal death*. As to that of St Paul, it is by no means to be taken in a strict sense, but as a vehement and hyperbolical expression of his mighty affection to his brethren according to the flesh, for whom, says he, *I could wish to be an anathema from Christ*. Besides the reason of the thing, the form of the expression shews the meaning of it; *I could wish*, that is, I would be content to do or suffer almost any thing for their salvation, insomuch that *I could wish*, if it were fit, and lawful, and reasonable to make such a wish, *to be accursed from Christ for their sakes*. It is plainly a suspended form of speech, which declares nothing absolutely. But,

2. It is a vain and senseless supposition, that the glory of God and our eternal happiness can stand in competition. By seeking the glory of God, we naturally and directly promote our own happiness; the glory of God and our happiness are inseparably linked together; we cannot glorify God by sin; and so gracious hath God

God been to us, that he hath made those things to be our duty, which naturally tend to our felicity; and we cannot glorify God more than by doing our duty, nor can we promote our own happiness more effectually than by the same way. From whence it plainly follows, that the glory of God and our happiness cannot reasonably be supposed to cross and contradict one another; and therefore the question is frivolous which supposeth they may come in competition. 1 Cor. xv. 58. the Apostle exhorts Christians to be *stedfast and unmoveable, and abundant in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* And Tit. i. 1. 2. the Apostle calls himself, *a servant of Jesus Christ, in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised.* To serve God in hope of eternal life, is to glorify God; and therefore the glory of God, and our eternal happiness, are never to be opposed.

I shall briefly draw two or three inferences from this discourse, and so conclude.

I. See here the great goodness of God to mankind, who is pleased to esteem whatever is for the good of men to be for the glory of God; and whatever tends to the eternal salvation of ourselves, or others, to be a glorifying of himself.

II. We learn hence, likewise, the excellency of the Christian religion, which requires not only a conscientious care of ourselves, to do nothing but what is lawful; but likewise a charitable regard to others in the use of our liberty; in the doing or not doing of those things which we may lawfully do. After the securing of our own happiness by doing our duty, we are to consult the edification and salvation of others, in the charitable use of our liberty in those things which God hath left indifferent.

III. Here is a great argument to us to be very careful of our duty, and to abound in the fruits of holiness, because hereby we glorify God. *Herein is my Father glorified, says our Saviour, if you bring forth much fruit;* and the Apostle tells us, that *the fruits of righteousness are to the praise and glory of God.* We have all from God, our very being, our souls and bodies, and the powers and faculties of both; and therefore we should
give

give him the glory of his own gifts: our souls and bodies were not only made by him at first, but are likewise redeemed by him, and *bought with a price, and therefore, as the Apostle argues, we should glorify him in our bodies and in our souls which are his.*

IV. and lastly, We should in all our actions have a particular regard to the honour and advantage of religion, the edification of our brethren, and the peace and unity of the church; because in these things we do in a peculiar manner glorify God. In vain do men pretend to seek the glory of God by faction and division, which do in their own nature so immediately tend to the dishonour and damage of religion. Next to the wicked lives of men, nothing is so great a disparagement and weakening to religion, as the divisions of Christians; and therefore, instead of employing our zeal about differences, we should be zealous for peace and unity, *that with one mind, and one mouth, we may glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

S E R M O N CCXI.

Doing good, a security against injuries from men.

I PET. iii. 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

THE Apstle; in this and the former chapter, earnestly presseth Christians to an holy and unblameable conversation, that the Heathen might have no occasion, from the ill lives of Christians, to reproach Christianity; particularly he cautions them against that abuse of Christian liberty, which it seems too many were guilty of, casting off obedience to their superiors under that pretence; telling them that nothing could be a greater scandal to their religion, nor

raise

raise a more just prejudice in the minds of men against
 t; and therefore he strictly chargeth them with the du-
 y of obedience in their several relations; as of subjects
 o their governors, of servants to their masters, of wives
 o their husbands; and in short, to practise all those
 virtues, both among themselves and towards others,
 which are apt to reconcile and gain the affections of
 men to them; to be charitable and compassionate,
 courteous and peaceable one towards another, and to-
 wards all men; not only to abstain from injury and pro-
 vocation, but from revenge by word or deed; and in-
 stead thereof to bless and do good, and by all possible
 means to preserve and pursue peace: Ver. 8. 9. *Fi-
 nally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of
 another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not
 rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contra-
 riwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that
 ye should inherit a blessing.*

And to encourage them to the practice of those vir-
 tues, he tells them, that they could by no other means
 more effectually consult the safety and comfort of their
 lives: ver. 10. *For he that will love life, and see good
 days: let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips
 that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good;
 let him seek peace and ensue it.*

And this was the way to gain the favour of God,
 and to engage his providence for our protection: ver.
 12. *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and
 his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the
 Lord is against them that do evil.*

And that this would also be the best way to recon-
 cile men to us, and to gain their good-will, and to pre-
 vent injuries and affronts from them: ver. 13. *And who
 is he that will harm you, &c.*

In these words we have, *first*, a qualification suppo-
 sed, *If ye be followers of that which is good.*

Secondly, The benefit and advantage we may reason-
 ably expect from it, *viz.* security from the ill usage and
 injuries of men: *Who is he that will harm you?*

First, The qualification supposed is, that we be fol-
 lowers of that which is good. But what is that? The
 Apostle takes it for granted, that every body knows it,
 and

and he had given instances of it before. He does not go about to define or explain it, but appeals to every man's mind and conscience, to tell him what it is. It is not any thing that is disputed and controverted, which some men call good, and others evil; but that which all are agreed in, and which is universally approved and commended by Heathens as well as Christians, that which is substantially good, and that which is unquestionably so. It is not zeal for lesser things, about the ritual and ceremonial part of religion, and a great strictness about the external parts of it, and much nicety and scrupulousness about things of no moment, as the Pharisees tithing of mint, &c. about meats and drinks, and the observation of days, and the like; but a pursuit of *the weightier things of the law*, a care of the great duties of religion, *mercy, and justice, and fidelity*; those things *wherein the kingdom of God consists, righteousness, and peace*: such as these the Apostle had instanced in as substantial and unquestionable parts of goodness, things which admit of no dispute, but do approve themselves to the reason and conscience of all mankind; and the practice of these he calls *following of that which is good* *.

Be ye followers of that which is good; the word in *μιμηται*, if ye imitate the good you see in others; in one copy the word is *ζηλωται*, if ye be zealous of that which is good. And this is not amiss. Zeal about lesser and disputable things is very unsuitable and misbecoming; but we cannot be too earnest and zealous in the pursuit of things which are substantially and unquestionably good; it is good, and will become us to be zealously affected about such things. Some things will not bear much zeal; and the more earnest we are about them, the less we recommend ourselves to the approbation of sober and considerate men. Great zeal about little and doubtful things, is an argument of a weak mind, infatuated by superstition, or over-heated by enthusiasm: but nothing more becomes a wise man, than the serious and earnest pursuit of those things which are agreed on all hands to be good, and have an universal approbation among all parties and professions of men, how

* See more of this in sermon 102.

vide soever their differences may be in other matters. This for the qualification supposed, *If ye be followers of that which is good.* I proceed to the

Second thing in the text, the benefit and advantage which may reasonably be expected from it, and that is, security from the ill usage and injuries of men. *Who is he that will harm you, &c.* The Apostle doth not absolutely say, none will do it; but he speaks of it as a thing so very unreasonable, and upon all accounts so unlikely and improbable, that we may reasonably presume that it will not ordinarily and often happen. Not but that good men are liable to be affronted and persecuted, and no man's virtues, how bright and unblemished soever, will at all times, and in all cases, exempt him from all manner of injury and ill treatment: but the following of that which is good, as I have explained it, doth in its own nature tend to secure us from the malice and mischief of men, and very frequently does it; and, all things considered, is a much more effectual means to this end, than any other course we can take; and this the Apostle means when he says, *Who is he that will harm you?*

And this will appear, whether we consider the nature of virtue and goodness; or the nature of man, even when it is very much depraved and corrupted; or the providence of God.

I. If we consider the nature of virtue and goodness, which is apt to gain upon the affections of men, and secretly to win their love and esteem. True goodness is inwardly esteemed by bad men, and many times had in very great esteem and admiration, even by those who are very far from the practice of it: it carries an awe and majesty with it; so that bad men are very often withheld and restrained from harming the good, by that secret and inward reverence which they bear to goodness.

There are several virtues, which are apt in their own nature to prevent injuries and affronts from others. Humility takes away all occasion of insolence from the proud and haughty; it baffles pride, and puts it out of countenance. Meekness pacifies wrath, and blunts the edge of injury and violence. Suffering good for evil is

apt

apt to allay and extinguish enmity, to subdue the roughest dispositions, and to conquer even malice itself. And there are other virtues which are apt in their own nature to oblige men, and gain their good-will, and make them our friends, and tie their affections strongly to us as courtesy and charity, kindness and compassion, and readiness to do all good offices to all men; and the friendship and good-will of others is a powerful defence against injuries. Every man will cry shame of those who shall fall foul upon him that hurts nobody. He that obligeth many, shall have many to take his part when he is assaulted, to rise up in his defence and rescue, and to interpose between him and danger. *For a good man, says the Apostle, some would even dare to die.*

Besides, it is very considerable, that none of these virtues expose men to any danger and trouble from human laws. When Christianity was persecuted, because it differed from, and opposed the received religion and superstition of the world, it was commonly acknowledged by the Heathen, as Tertullian tells us, that *the Christians were very good men in all other things, saving that they were Christians.* When the laws were most severe against Christians for their meetings, which they called seditious, and for their refusal to comply with the received superstition of the world, which they called contempt of the gods, yet there were all this while no laws made against modesty, and humility, and meekness, and kindness, and charity, and peaceableness, and forgiveness of injuries. These virtues are in their nature of so unalterable goodness, that they could not possibly be made matter of accusation; no government ever had the face to make laws against them. And this the Apostle takes notice of as a singular commendation, and great testimony to the immutable goodness of these things, that, in the experience of all ages and nations, there was never any such inconvenience found in any of them, as to give occasion to a law against them: Gal. v. 22. *But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, fidelity, meekness, temperance. Against such things there is no law.* So that goodness from its own nature hath this security, that it brings men under the danger of no law.

II. If we consider the nature of man, even where it is very much depraved and corrupted. There is something that is apt to restrain bad men from injuring those that are remarkably good; a reverence for goodness, and the inward convictions of their own mind, that those whom they are going about to injure, are better and more righteous than themselves; the fear of God, and of bringing down his vengeance upon their heads, by their ill treatment of his friends and followers; and many times the fear of men, who though they be not good themselves, yet have an esteem for those that are so, and cannot endure to see them wronged and oppressed, especially if they have been obliged by them, and have found the real effects of their goodness in good offices done by them to themselves.

Besides that bad men are seldom bad for nought, without any cause given, without any manner of temptation and provocation to be so. Who will hurt a harmless man, and injure the innocent? for what cause, or for what end should he do it? he must love mischief for itself, that will do it to those who never offered him any occasion and provocation.

III. If we consider the providence of God, which is particularly concerned for the protection of innocence and goodness. *For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance will behold the upright.* This the Apostle takes notice of, in the verse before the text, as the great security of good men against violence and injury: *The eyes of Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.* So that if bad men were never so ill-disposed toward the good, and bent to do them all the injury and mischief they could devise, the providence of God hath a thousand ways to prevent it; and if he pleases to interpose between them and danger, who can harm them if they would? He can *ware the wicked in the works of their own hands*, and make *the mischief which they have devised* against good men, *to return upon their own heads*; he can weaken their hands and infatuate their counsels, so that they shall not be able to bring their wicked enterprises to pass; he can change their hearts, and turn the fierceness and rage of men against us, into a fit of love and kind-

ness, as he did the heart of Esau towards his brother Jacob; and their bitterest enmity against truth and goodness, into a mighty zeal for it, as he did in St Paul, when he came to Damascus, fell *a-preaching up that way* which he came thither on purpose to persecute. And this God hath promised to do for good men who are careful to please him. *When a man's ways please the Lord, he will make his enemies to be at peace with him.*

So that considering the nature of goodness, and the nature of man, and the providence of God, *who is like to harm us, if we be followers of that which is good?* none can reasonably do it, and he must be a very bad man that can find in his heart to do it, when there is no cause, no temptation or provocation to it; and the providence of God, *who hath the hearts of men in his hands, and can sway and incline them as he pleaseth,* particularly concerned to preserve good men from harm and mischief.

And yet we are not to understand this saying of the Apostle, as declaring to us the constant and certain event of things, without any exception to the contrary. For good men to appearance, nay those that are really so, and the very best of men, are sometimes exposed to great injuries and sufferings; of which I shall give you an account in these following particulars.

I. Some that seem to be good, are not sincerely so, and when they, by the just judgment of God, are punished for their hypocrisy, in the opinion of many, goodness seems to suffer. Some, under a great profession and colour of religion, have done very bad things, and when they justly suffer for great crimes, they call punishment persecution, and the party and church which they are of, call them saints and martyrs.

II. Some that are really good are very imperfectly so, have many flaws and defects, which do very much blemish and obscure their goodness; they are *followers of that which is good*; but they have an equal zeal for things which have no goodness in them, or so little that it is not worth all that stir and bustle which they make about them; and will contend as earnestly for a doubtful, and it may be for a false opinion, as for the article of the creed, and for *the faith which was once delivered to*

be saints; and will oppose a little ceremony with as much heat as the greatest immorality. In these cases, it is not mens goodness which raiseth enmity against them, but their imprudent zeal and other infirmities which attend it: but however, bad men are glad to lay hold of these occasions and pretences of enmity, which their indiscretion offers. Good men may be, and frequently are, mistaken in their own opinions and apprehensions of things; but it is a great mistake to have an equal zeal for little and doubtful things, as for the great and indispensable duties of the Christian life, and yet many times so as to neglect those to a great degree; and men must blame themselves for the inconveniencies that happen to them for their own indiscretion; for neither will the nature of the thing bear them out alike, nor will the providence of God be equally concerned to protect men in the following of that, which they through gross mistake, and a heady conceit of their own knowledge in religion, think to be good, as in the following of that which is really and unquestionably good.

III. The enmity of some men against goodness is so violent and implacable, that no innocency, no excellency of goodness, how great soever, can restrain their malice towards good men, or hinder the effects of it, when it comes in their way, and they have power to do them mischief. Against these the providence of God is our best safeguard, and it is wisdom, as much as possible, to keep out of their way, and to pray with St Paul; that we may be *delivered from wicked and unreasonable men*. Men of so absurd a malice against goodness, that it is not to be prevented by any innocency or prudence; and so implacable, that there is no way to gain and reconcile them, nor perhaps is it much desirable; their good word would be no credit to us, and their friendship would be pernicious when it cannot be had upon other terms, than of conniving at their faults, and being concerned in their quarrels, and at last quarrelling and breaking with them, unless we will *run with them to the same excess of riot*. The friendship of such men is more terrible than their enmity, and their malice much less to be dreaded than their kindness.

IV. The last and chief exception is that of the cross, when the sufferings and persecutions of good men are necessary for the great ends of God's glory, for the advancement of religion, and the example and salvation of others. And with this exception, all the declarations of scripture concerning the temporal prosperity and safety of good men, and all the promises of the New Testament, are to be understood. And this exception our Saviour himself expressly makes, Mark x. 29. 30. *Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecution; and in the world to come eternal life; that is, so far as a state of persecution would admit, all these losses should be recompensed to them in this present time; as they were to the Apostles in a remarkable manner: when they who had but little to part with for the gospel, had the estates of Christians laid at their feet and committed to their disposal, for the noblest purposes of charity, and common support of Christians, which was as much to them, as if they had been masters of the greatest estates; and whatever was wanting to any of them in the accomplishment of this promise, was abundantly made up to them in the unspeakable and eternal happiness of the world to come. And this exception the Apostle St Peter is careful to mention expressly, immediately after the text; for after he had said, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* he immediately adds, *But, and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; that is, in this case, fear God more than men, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you; that is, if ye be questioned for being Christians, be ready to own your profession, and to give a reason of it; so that the Apostle supposeth, that notwithstanding what he had said, that ordinarily it is not in the nature of men to persecute men for true goodness, yet they must not expect to be**

exempted

exempted from persecution, which was necessary for the establishment of the Christian religion.

In these cases God permits the devil to instigate and exasperate evil men against those that are good, to act beyond their usual temper. Thus God, when he designed an illustrious example of patience for all ages of the world, he lets loose the devil, not only to stir up his instruments the Chaldeans and Sabeans against Job, but to afflict him immediately himself with bodily pains and diseases. In these and the like cases, the best of men are exposed to the greatest sufferings. Thus God permitted Socrates, that great light among the Gentiles, and the glory of philosophy, to be cruelly treated and put to death, for an example of virtue; and a testimony against their impious and abominable idolatry. And thus likewise when it was necessary for the common salvation of men, and to give the world an example, beyond all exception, of the greatest innocency enduring the greatest indignities and sufferings with the greatest patience, that one should suffer for all mankind, he permitted the best man that ever was, God and goodness incarnate, by wicked hands to be crucified and slain; and afterwards when it was necessary for the propagation and establishment of Christianity in the world, that the truth of it should be sealed by the death of so many martyrs, God was pleased to suffer the rage of bad men to break out into all manner of violence and cruelty.

But yet, notwithstanding these exceptions; those who make it their business to do good, and to excel in those virtues which are apt to win and oblige mankind, may in ordinary cases and times expect great safety and protection against the injuries of the world, for an exemplary piety, and innocency, and goodness; for these sayings in the New Testament, that *through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God, and that whoever will live godly in Jesus Christ must suffer persecution*, are not equally to be extended to all places and times; but more peculiarly to be understood of the first times of Christianity, when the providence of God thought fit to establish the Christian religion upon the innocent lives and patient sufferings of the first professors of it.

The result from all this discourse is, that we should not be weary of well-doing; but mind and follow the things which are substantially and unquestionably good; not doubting, but, besides the infinite reward of it in the other world, it will ordinarily turn to our great security and advantage in this life, and save us harmless from a great many mischiefs and inconveniencies which others are exposed to. If we endeavour to excel in those Christian virtues which the Apostle mentions before the text, and which he means by our being *followers of that which is good*, we shall undoubtedly find the comfort of it, in those temporal benefits that will redound to us; for the scripture hath not said in vain, *Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Glory, and honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good. That the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that work peace; that by well-doing we shall put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; that the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and that he that in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men.*

But if we mistake religion, and place it in those things wherein it doth not really consist, in airy notions, and doubtful opinions, in superstitious conceits and practices, and in a fiery and furious zeal for things of no weight and substance, of no real virtue and goodness; if we be defective in the great virtues of meekness and humility, of peaceableness and charity, of kindness and courtesy, of forbearance and forgiveness, of *rendering good for evil*, and *overcoming evil with good*, qualities which will universally endear us and recommend us to the favour and protection of God, and to the esteem and goodwill of men; and if instead of these we abound in malice and envy, be proud and conceited, censorious and uncharitable, contentious and unpeaceable, rude and uncivil, impatient and implacable, we must not think it strange, if we be ill treated in this world, not for our goodness, but for our want of it; and we have no reason to wonder, if at every turn we meet with the inconveniencies

conveniencies of our own heat and indiscretion, of our
zevish and morose temper, of our factious and turbu-
lent disposition. For this is an eternal rule of truth,
*As we sow, so shall we reap; every man shall be filled
with his own ways, and eat the fruit of his own doings.*

S E R M O N C C X I I .

Of diligence in our general and parti-
cular calling.

Preached at Whitehall, 1685.

ECC L. ix. 10.

*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy
might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge,
nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.*

THese words of the royal preacher are a general
exhortation to diligence and industry, in that
work which is most proper for us to do in this
world. And I shall consider in them these two things.

First, The matter of this advice and exhortation,
and that is, that we would use great diligence about
those things which are the proper work and employ-
ment of this life. *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do,
do it with all thy might. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to
do; that is, the work which is before thee, which is
most proper for thee to propose to thyself, as the great
end and design of thy life, the province and charge
which is appointed thee. So that these words, in the
full compass and extent of them, may very well com-
prehend every reasonable purpose and undertaking, what-
ever is incumbent upon us as a duty, and is matter
of reasonable choice. Do it with all thy might; that
is,*

is, set about it with great care, use all possible diligence and industry for the effecting and accomplishing of it.

Secondly, Here is the argument whereby the wise preacher doth enforce this counsel and exhortation; because this life is the proper season of activity and industry, of designing and doing those things which are in order to a future happiness; and when this life is at an end, there will be no farther opportunity of working, there will nothing then remain, but to reap the fruit, and to receive the just recompense of what we have done in this life: *For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.* In the grave, this the LXX. render by the word *ἀδης*, by which the Greeks used to express the state of the dead, the condition of separate souls of good or bad men after they are departed this life, and entered into another world. In which state, Solimon does not mean that departed souls have no knowledge and sense of any thing, but that then there will be no place for any counsel and design, for any activity and industry in order to our happiness: what we do to this purpose, we must do whilst we are in this world, it will be too late afterwards to think of altering or bettering our condition.

These are the two parts of the text, and they shall be the two heads of my following discourse; and God grant, that what shall be said upon them, may be effectual to persuade every one of us seriously to mind our great interest and concernment, and to apply ourselves with all our might to that which is our proper work and business in this world.

First, We will consider the matter of this counsel and exhortation; and that is, that we would use great diligence and industry about that which is our proper work and business in this life; and this may very probably comprehend in it these two things.

I. Diligence in our great work and business, that which equally concerns every man, I mean the business of religion, in order to the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls.

II. Diligence in our particular calling and charge, whatever it be.

I. Diligence in our great and general work, that which equally concerns every man, the business of religion, in order to the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls; and this consists in these two things.

1. In a sincere care and endeavour of universal obedience to God, by the conformity of our lives and actions to his laws.

2. In case of sin and miscarriage, in a sincere repentance for our sins, and a timely care to be reconciled to God.

I. In a sincere care and endeavour of universal obedience to God, by the conformity of our lives and actions to his will and law. And this is a great work, and requires our greatest care and diligence to rectify our minds, to restrain our evil inclinations, to subdue and mortify our lusts, to correct the irregularity of our passions, to moderate and govern our appetites and affections, and to keep them within due and reasonable bounds, *to take heed to our ways, that we offend not with our tongue,* nor transgress our duty by word or deed; to serve God with true devotion of mind, both in public and private; to attend upon the duties of his worship, and to perform all acts of piety and religion, with care and constancy, in the sincerity and uprightness of our hearts, to be meek and humble, peaceable and patient, cheerful and contented with our condition; to be ready not only to forgive injuries, but to requite them with kindness and good turns, to do all offices of humanity and charity to all men, according to our ability and opportunity; to instruct the ignorant, and to reduce those that are in error to the knowledge of the truth, by wise counsel and good example; to endeavour *to turn men from the evil of their ways, and to save their souls from death;* to be ready to supply mens outward wants and necessities, to comfort them in their sorrows, and to relieve them in their affliction and distress.

And these works of compassion and charity are perhaps more particularly intended here in the text, for so the Chaldee paraphrase interprets these words of Solomon, as a precept of charity, rendering them thus, *Do all thou canst, according to thy utmost ability, in alms and charity:* for nothing but this will turn to our account

in another world; no other way of laying out our estate will be of any advantage to us in the future state. And though I do not think Solomon did here intend to exclude any part of religious practice, yet he might very well have a more especial eye and regard to this, as one of the principal instances and best evidences of a true and sincere piety, according to that of St James, chap. i. ver. last. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.* To be sure, our Saviour lays mighty weight upon it, by making it the great article upon which men shall be tried at the judgment of the great day. And indeed no religion is to be valued, that wants humanity and compassion; for so far as it departs from this, it departs from the true nature of God and religion.

So that it is a vast work which lies upon our hands, and which every one of us, from the highest to the lowest, are engaged in; this business of religion, this care of our whole man, and of our whole duty, of the inward frame and disposition of our minds, and of all our words and actions, *to keep our hearts with all diligence,* and carefully to observe and govern all the inclinations and motions of our souls, and *to order our whole conversation aright;* in a word, to do God all the services, and men all the good that possibly we can, while we are in this world. This is the first.

2. And because *in many things we offend all,* and *there is no man that sinneth not,* another part of our work and care is, in case of transgression and miscarriage in any part of our duty, to exercise repentance for it, that so we may be reconciled to God, and at peace with him.

And this is absolutely necessary, because our life and happiness depend upon it, *and except we repent we must perish,* and be miserable for ever. It cannot be denied but that this work of repentance is very harsh and unpleasant, like the taking of physic, and searching into a wound; but because it tends to our health and safety, and is the necessary way and means to a better condition, this severity must be submitted to, if we desire to be cured, and have a mind to do well; and the sooner we make use of this remedy the better, we shall find so much the less difficulty and pain in the cure.

And

And there is great reason why we should frequently exercise and renew our repentance, because our failings are frequent, and in one kind or other we offend and provoke God every day: especially when we are coming to the holy sacrament, in which we solemnly renew our covenant with God, and promise him better obedience for the future; we should examine ourselves more strictly, and call our sins more particularly to remembrance, and exercise a most solemn and deep repentance for them; this is the way to keep our accounts in a good measure even. And this surely is great wisdom. To provide that we may have no long account to make up, no great scores to wipe off, when we come to be overtaken by sickness, and to lie upon our deathbed; that innumerable transgressions unrepented of may not then compass us about, and stare us in the face, and fill our souls with fear and confusion, with horror and amazement in a dying hour.; that an insupportable load of guilt may not then lie upon our minds, and oppress our consciences, when we are least able to bear it, and most unfit to deal with it, when we may not have time to call our sins particularly to remembrance, and to exercise a particular repentance for them, and yet perhaps a general repentance may not be sufficient, and available with God, for the pardon and forgiveness of them.

Therefore we should exercise ourselves much in this work of repentance in the days of our health, when we are fittest for it, and when it will be most acceptable to God, and when the sincerity of it will be most evident and comfortable to us, when we may know it to be true by the real and certain effects of it, in the change and amendment of our lives. Whereas a deathbed-repentance is infinitely hazardous, because we may not perhaps have time and opportunity for the exercise of it; or if we should have that, yet hardly can we have opportunity for the trial of it, whether it be sincere or not, and consequently must needs die very uncomfortably, and in great doubt and anxiety of mind, what will be our fate and doom in another world.

So that it is a great work which lies upon our hands, and equally concerns every one of us. The business of religion, which consists in the strict care of our duty
to

to God and man, and in the frequent exercise of repentance for the sins and miscarriages of our lives; and we may consequently judge how great a care and diligence a work of so much difficulty, and of so great moment and importance does require and call for at our hands. But besides this, we must, in the

II. Place, likewise be diligent in our particular calling and charge, in that province and station which God hath appointed us, whatever it be; whether it consists in the labour of our hands, or in the improvement of our minds in order to the gaining of knowledge for our own pleasure and satisfaction, and for the use and benefit of others; whether it lie in the skill of government, and the administration of public justice; or in the management of a great estate, of an honourable rank and quality above others, to the best advantage, for the honour of God, and the benefit and advantage of men, so as by the influence of our power and estate, and by the authority of our example, to contribute all we can to the welfare and happiness of others.

For it is a great mistake to think that any man is without a calling, and that God does not expect that every one of us should employ himself in doing good in one kind or other. Some persons indeed, by the privilege of their birth and quality, are above a common trade and profession; but they are not hereby either exempted or excused from all business, and allowed to live unprofitably to others, because they are so plentifully provided for themselves: nay, on the contrary, they have so much the greater obligation, having the greater liberty and leisure to attend the good of others; the higher our character and station is, we have the better opportunities of being publicly useful and beneficial; and the heavier will our account be, if we neglect these opportunities. Those who are in a low and private condition, can only shine to few; but they that are advanced to a great height above others, may, like the heavenly bodies, dispense a general light and influence, and scatter happiness and blessings among all that are below them.

And as they are capable of doing more good than others, so with more ease and effect; that which persons of an inferior rank can hardly bring others to, by all the importunity

opportunity of counsel and persuasion, as, namely, to the practice of any virtue, and the quitting and abandoning of any vice, a prince and a great man that is good himself, may easily gain them to, without ever speaking a word to them, by the silent authority and powerful allurements of his example. So that though every man have not a particular profession, yet the highest among men have some employment allotted to them by God, suitable to their condition, a province which he expects they should administer and adorn with great care.

The great business of the lower part of mankind is to provide for themselves the necessaries of life, and it is well if they can do it with all their care and diligence; but those who are of a higher rank, their proper business and employment is to dispense good to others; which surely is a much happier condition and employment, according to that admirable saying of our Saviour, mentioned by St Paul, *It is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive.* Those of meaner condition can only give men to one another, and it were well if they would be so; but he that is highly raised and advanced above others, hath the happy opportunity in his hands, if he have but the heart to make use of it, to be a kind of *God to men.*

Let no man then, of what birth, or rank, or quality soever, think it beneath him to serve God, and to be useful to the benefit and advantage of men; let us remember the Son of God, a person of the highest quality and extraction that ever was, who spent himself wholly in this blessed work of doing good, toiled and laboured in it as it had been for his life, submitted to all the circumstances of meanness, to all the degrees of contempt, to all kind of hardship and sufferings, for the benefit and salvation of men, sweat drops of blood, and at last poured it all forth in full streams, to save us from eternal misery and ruin; and is any of us better than *the Son of God, the heir of all things, and the elder brother of us all?* shall any of us, after this, think ourselves too good to be employed in that work which God himself disdained not to do, when he appeared in the likeness and nature of man?

If we would esteem things rightly, and according to reason, the true privilege and advantage of greatness is, to be able to do good more than others; and in this the majesty and felicity of God himself doth chiefly consist, in his ready and forward inclination, and in his infinite power and ability to do good. The creation of the world was a great and glorious design, but this God only calls his work; but to preserve and support the creatures which he hath made, to bless them and to do them good, to govern them by wise laws, and to conduct them to that happiness which he designed for them, this is his rest, his perpetual sabbath, his great delight and satisfaction to all eternity; to do good is our duty and our business, but it is likewise the greatest pleasure and recreation, that which refresheth the heart of God and man.

I have insisted the longer upon this, that those who are thought to be above any calling, and to have no obligation upon them, but to please themselves, may be made sensible, that, according to their ability and opportunity, they have a great work upon their hands, and more business to do than other men; which if they would but seriously mind, they would not only please God, but, I dare say, satisfy and please themselves, much better than they do in any other course. I know it is a duty particularly incumbent upon the lower part of mankind, to be diligent in their particular calling, that so they may provide for themselves and their families; but this is not so proper for this place, and if it were, the necessity of human life will probably prompt and urge men more powerfully to this, than any argument and persuasion that I can use. I proceed therefore, in the

Second place, to offer some considerations to excite our care and diligence in this great work, which God hath given us to do in this world, I mean chiefly the business of religion, in order to the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls. And to this purpose, I shall offer five or six arguments, reserving the great motive and consideration in the text to the last, *Because there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.*

I. Let

I. Let us consider the nature of our work, which is such as may both excite and encourage our diligence and care about it. It is indeed a service, but such as is our perfect freedom; it is the service of God, whom to serve is the greatest honour that man or any other creature is capable of; it is obedience, but even obedience, considering our ignorance and frailty, is much wiser and safer for us, than a total exemption from all law and rule; for the laws which God hath given us, are not imposed upon us merely for his will and pleasure, but chiefly for our benefit and advantage. So that to obey and please God, is in truth nothing else but to do those things which are really best for ourselves.

Besides that this work of religion will abundantly recompense all the labour and pains it can cost, if we consider the fruit and end of it, which is the salvation of our souls. So St Paul assures us, Rom. vi. 22. that if we have our fruit unto holiness, our end shall be everlasting life. Nay, this work doth not want its present encouragement and reward, if we consider the peace and pleasure which attend it. *Great peace, saith David, have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.* Religion doth not design to rob men of the true delights of life, of any lawful pleasure and enjoyment; it only appoints them their due place, and season, and measure, without which they cannot be truly tasteful and pleasant: if we make pleasure and recreation our business, it will become a burden, and leave a sting behind it; but if we make it our great business to be good, and to do good, we shall then take true pleasure in our recreations and refreshments, we shall *eat our bread with joy, and drink our wine with a merry heart*, as Solomon expresseth it a little before the text. Religion doth not ordinarily debar men of any contentment, which they can wisely and safely take, in any of the enjoyments of this life; but directs us to do those things which will yield the truest and most refined pleasure, and so governs us in the use and enjoyment of worldly comforts, that there shall be no bitterness in them, or after them: and in truth, after all our search and inquiry after pleasure and happiness, we shall find that there is no solid and lasting pleasure, but in living righteously and

religiously; and the pleasure of this is so great, that Heathen philosopher, speaking of a virtuous life, according to the true precepts of philosophy, breaks out in this rapture and transport concerning the wonderful pleasure of it, *Vel unus dies vere et ex præceptis tui actus peccandi immortalitati est a. toferendus*: “ Even one day truly spent according to thy precepts is to be valued above an immortality of sinning.” There is no life so pleasant as that of the pious and good man who being contented with himself, every thing about him contributes to his chearfulness: *Gratior it dies, et soles melius nitent*; “ The day passeth more pleasantly, and the sun shines brighter to him;” and every object which he beholds is more delightful, because the man is at peace and ease within himself.

II. Let us consider how great our work is, and then we shall easily be convinced what care it requires, what diligence it calls for from us. Very few persons, I doubt, are sufficiently sensible, how much thought and consideration, how much care and vigilancy, how firm a resolution and earnest attention of mind is necessary to the business of religion, to the due cultivating and improving of our minds, to the mortifying and subduing of our lusts, to the mastering and governing of our passions, to the reforming of our tempers, to the correcting of all the irregularities of our appetites and affections, and to the reducing of our crooked wills, which have been long obstinately bent the wrong way, to the straightness of that rule which God hath given us to walk by.

Few, I fear, consider how much pains is necessary to the storing of our minds with good principles, and to the fixing and rivetting in our souls all the proper motives and considerations to engage us to virtue, that in all the occasions of our lives they may have their due force and influence upon us. Few of us take pains to understand the just bounds and limits of our duty, and so to attend thereto, as to be always upon our guard against the infinite temptations of human life, and the many malicious enemies of our souls, that we may not be circumvented by the wiles of the devil, nor caught in those snares which he lays before us in our ways,
that

that we may not be wrought upon by the insinuations, nor over-reached by the deceitfulness of sin.

How few consider what care and watchfulness of ourselves, what constancy and fervency of prayer to God, is necessary to the due discharge of every part of our duty; or to the right exercise of every grace and virtue! Besides an earnest imploring of the divine assistance, there is required likewise a particular care and application of mind, that we may fail in no point; and that, as St James expresseth it, *we may be entire, wanting nothing*; that our faith and our hope, our devotion and our charity, our humility and our patience, and every other grace may be exercised in the best manner, and have its proper work.

III. Consider, what incredible pains men will take, what diligence they will use for bad purposes, and for ends infinitely less considerable. *Ut jugulent homines, surgunt de nocte latrones; ut teipsum serves, non expetiscere?* "Thieves will rise and travel by night to rob and kill, and shall we use no care, no vigilance to save ourselves?" What drudges and slaves are many men to their sensual pleasures and lusts? how hot and fierce upon revenge? and what hazards will they run to satisfy this unreasonable and devilish passion; and thereby to make way for a speedy and bitter repentance, which always treads upon the heels of revenge? for no sooner hath any man executed his rage upon another, but his conscience presently turns it upon himself.

How industrious do we see men at their recreations and sports, taking really more pains for the sake of pleasure, than the poor man does that works for his living?

What a violent thirst, and insatiable covetousness possesseth some men after learning and knowledge? how will they toil and watch, wear out their eyes and waste their spirits, and pursue their studies, not only with the neglect of sitting diversion, but even of the necessary support and reparation of nature, by meat and sleep? nay, many times, to increase their learning, they weaken their understandings; and for the gaining

of more knowledge, do disable that power and faculty which should make use of it when they have it.

How will men attend for several hours to a lewd and extravagant play, and sit not only with patience, but with delight to hear things spoken, which are neither fit to be spoken nor heard?

And above all, how eager and earnest, how busy and industrious are a great part of mankind, in the pursuit of their ambitious and covetous designs? How sorely will they labour and travel? how hardly will they be contented to fare, and how meanly will they live themselves, to make they know not whom rich; even any body that happens to come in their way, when they make their last wills?

And are men at all these pains for compassing of their low and mean, of their vile and wicked designs, to do themselves no good; nay, for the most part, to hurt and destroy themselves; and are the present pleasures and satisfaction of our minds, and eternal life and happiness in another world, things of no value and esteem with us? is salvation itself so slight and inconsiderable a thing, that it deserves none of this care and diligence to be used for the obtaining of it?

IV. Consider that when we come to die, nothing will yield more true and solid consolation to us, than the remembrance of an useful and well-spent life, a life of great labour and diligence, of great zeal and faithfulness in the service of God; and on the contrary, with what grief and regret shall we look back upon all those precious hours which we have so fondly misplaced in sin and vanity? how shall we then wish that we could recall them, and live them over again, that we might spend them better? all that time which now lies upon our hands, and we know not how to bestow it and pass it away, will then most assuredly lie heavy upon our consciences. What anguish and confusion have I seen in the looks and speeches of a dying man, caused only by the grievous remembrance of an unprofitable and ill-spent life! So foolish are many men, as never seriously to think for what end they came into the world, till they are just ready to go out of it.

V. Consider,

V. Consider, that the degrees of our happiness in another world will certainly bear a proportion to the degrees of our diligence and industry, in serving God and doing good. And it is an argument of a mean spirit, nor to aspire after the best and happiest condition, which is to be attained by us. To be contented barely to live, when by our pains and industry we may become considerable, and raise ourselves above the common level of men, is a sign of a poor and degenerate mind; so is it in the business of religion, to be contented with any low degrees of virtue and goodness, and consequently of glory and happiness, when by a great diligence and industry in serving our generation according to the will of God, we may be of the number of those whose reward shall be great in heaven, and have a place there, among those righteous persons, who shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Besides, that it may prove a thing of dangerous consequence to us, to deal thus strictly with God, and to drive so near and hard a bargain with him; we may easily miss of happiness and come short of heaven, if we only design just to get thither; we may be mistaken in the degree of holiness and virtue, which is necessary to recommend us to the divine favour and acceptance, and to make us capable of the glorious reward of eternal life: for unto whomsoever much is given, saith our Saviour, of him much shall be required; to him that hath only one talent committed to him, it may be sufficient to have gained one; but he that hath many talents intrusted with him, may gain one, and yet be a wicked and slothful servant; proportionably to our advantages and opportunities, our duty increaseth upon our hands, and better and greater things may justly be expected from us. The consideration whereof should make us unwearied in our endeavours of doing good, *and steadfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

VI. and lastly, Let us consider the argument here in the text, *There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither we are going. Longe quiescendi tempora fata dabunt.* We shall then rest from

our labours, and our works will follow us. This life is the time of our activity and working, the next is the season of retribution and recompense; we shall then have nothing to do, but either to reap and enjoy the comfort of well-doing, or to repent the folly of an ill-spent life and the irreparable mischief which thereby we have brought upon ourselves: *There is no work nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest*; intimating that our life is a continual journey towards the grave, shorter or longer as God pleaseth; and many times when we think ourselves far from it, we may be just upon it, and ready to stumble into it. So that our time of working may be very short, to be sure it is very uncertain.

And it is very well worth our consideration, that as *there is no work nor wisdom in the grave*, so there is very little to be exercised when we come to draw near to it, whether it be by sickness or old age: sufficient surely *for that day will be the evil thereof*. We had need then to have nothing else to do, but to be old and weak, to be sick and die; we shall find that to be burden and trouble enough.

Let us therefore work the work of him that sent us into the world, while it is day: for the night cometh, saith our Saviour, (by which may probably be meant the time of sickness or old age), the night cometh when no man can work; so that what we do, we must do quickly, mind the work which is before us, and ply it with all our might, as if it were the last opportunity we should ever have; and so it may prove for ought we know, for it is ten to one but that some here present, and God knows which of us it may be, may now have the last opportunity in our hands, and that but a slippery hold of it, and may never have this counsel given us again, nor perhaps be long in a capacity to make use of it; for when death hath once overtaken us, it will fix us in an unchangeable state; *as the tree falls, so it shall lie*.

This is the time of our work and preparation for another world, and what we do towards it in this life, will avail us in the other; but if this opportunity be neglected, there is nothing to be done by us afterwards, but to inherit the fruit of our own folly and neglect; to sit down in everlasting sorrow, and to be immutably fixed

ked in that miserable state, which whilst we were in this world we could never be persuaded to take any tolerable care to avoid.

And if we can do nothing for ourselves to help and relieve us in that state, much less can we think it can be done to us by others, by the consigning of masses and prayers, of merits and indulgences, to our use and benefit in another world. No; so soon as ever we are passed into the other state, we shall enter upon a condition of happiness or misery, that is never to be altered, so that this life is the proper season for wisdom to shew itself, and to exercise our best industry for the attaining of happiness: it will be too late afterwards to think of altering or bettering our condition; for death will conclude and determine our state one way or other, and what we are when we leave the world, good or bad, fitted for happiness or misery, we shall remain and continue so for ever.

Therefore it infinitely concerns all of us, to exercise our best wisdom in this present life, and what we have to do for our souls, and for all eternity, *to do it with all our might*; to contrive and use the best means to be happy, while the opportunity of doing it is yet in our hands; we may easily let it slip, but no care, no wisdom, no diligence, no repentance, can retrieve it; when it is once lost, it is lost for ever.

Hear then the conclusion of the whole matter. Would we enjoy ourselves and the peace of our minds while we live? would we have good hopes and comfort in our death, and after death would we be happy for ever? let us lay the foundation of all this, in the activity and industry of a religious and holy life; a life of unspotted purity and temperance in the use of sensual pleasures, of sincere piety and devotion towards God, of strict justice and integrity, and of goodness and charity towards men.

And let us consider that many of us are a great way already on our journey towards the grave, that our day is declining apace, and the shadows of the evening begin to be stretched out: therefore that little of our life which is yet behind us, should be precious to us, *ut esse solis gratius lumen solet, jam jam cadentis*; we should improve

prove that which yet remains, as it were for our lives always remembering that our only opportunity of working, of deligning and doing great and happy things for ourselves, is on this side the grave, and that this opportunity will expire and die with us: *For there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither we are going.*

Now, God of his infinite mercy grant, that we may all of us know, in this our day, the things which belong to our present peace, and future happiness, before they be hid from our eyes, for his mercy's sake in Jesus Christ; to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, now and for evermore.

S E R M O N C C X H I.

Of the blessedness of giving, more than that of receiving.

ACTS xx. 35.

And to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive.

The whole verse runs thus :

I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive.

THE words which I have read to you have this particular advantage to recommend them to our more attentive consideration, that they are a remarkable saying of our Lord himself, not recorded by any of the evangelists among his other sayings and discourses, but remembered by the apostles, and by some
of

them delivered to St Paul, and by him preserved to us in his farewell-speech to the elders of Ephesus. In which after he had given them some needful advice, and commended them to the grace of God, he appeals to them concerning the integrity of his conversation among men; that he was so far from seeking his own advantage, and from coveting any thing that was theirs, that he had not only supported himself, but also relieved others by the labour of his own hands; giving them herein a great example of charity, which, it seems, he was wont to enforce upon them by an excellent saying of our Lord, *it is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

And it is really a particular endearment of this saying to us, that being omitted by the evangelists, and in danger of being lost and forgotten, it was so happily retrieved by St Paul, and recorded by St Luke. The common sayings of ordinary persons perish without regard, and are spilt like water upon the ground, which no body goes about to gather up; but the little and short sayings of wise and excellent men are of great value, like the dust of gold, or the least sparks of diamonds. And such is this saying of our Lord, which is not only valuable out of respect to its author, but for the sake of that admirable sense which is contained in it.

Some interpreters have needlessly troubled themselves to find these words, or something equivalent to them, in the gospel. That the sense of them may be inferred from several passages in the gospel, none will deny; but that they are either expressly to be found there, or that there is any saying that sounds to the same sense, I think no body can shew. Besides, that St Paul cites a particular sentence or saying of our Lord, that was *ἐν τῷ*, and in those very words spoken by him.

And there is no reason to imagine, that the gospels are a perfect and exact account of all the sayings and actions of our Lord, though St Luke calls his gospel, *A treatise of all things that Jesus did and spake*; that is, of the principal actions of his life, and the substance of his discourses, at least so much of them as is needful for us to know: for St Luke leaves out several things related by the other evangelists. And St John expressly tells

tells us, that Jesus did innumerable things not recorded in the history of his life: and there is no doubt but the disciples of our Lord remembered many particular sayings of his, not set down in the gospels, which upon occasion they did relate and communicate to others, as they did this to St Paul.

The words themselves are the proposition I shall speak to, *It is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive*. This, I know, seems a paradox to most men, who know no happiness but in hoarding up what they have, and in receiving and heaping up more; but as strange as this saying may appear, the sense of it is owned and assented to by those great oracles of reason, the wisest and most considerate Heathens; τῆς ἀρετῆς μᾶλλον τό ἐστι ποιεῖν ἢ τὸ εἶν πάσχειν, “It is a more virtuous thing to do than to receive good,” says Aristotle; which according to his opinion was to say, it is a greater happiness, because he placed happiness in the practice and exercise of virtue. To the same purpose is that saying of Plutarch, εἶν ποιεῖν ἢδίων ἐστίν ἢ πάσχειν, “There is more pleasure in doing a kindness, than in taking one.” And that of Seneca, *Malim non recipere beneficia, quam non dare*: “Of the two, I had rather not receive benefits, than not bestow them.” And that the Heathen have spoken things to the same sense of this saying of our Saviour’s, is so far from being any prejudice to this saying of our Saviour, that it is a great commendation of it, as being an argument that our Saviour hath herein said nothing, but what is very agreeable to the best notions of our minds, and to the highest reason and wisdom of mankind. In the handling of this proposition, I shall do these two things.

First, Endeavour to convince men of the truth and reasonableness of it.

Secondly, To persuade men to act suitably to it.

First, To convince men of the truth and reasonableness of this principle, that *it is more blessed to give, than to receive*. And this will fully appear by considering these three things.

I. That it is an argument of a more happy spirit and temper.

II. Of

- II. Of a more happy state and condition. And,
- III. That it shall have the happiness of a greater reward.

I. To be governed by this principle, is an argument of a more happy spirit and temper. To do good, to be useful and beneficial to others, to be of a kind and obliging disposition, of a tender and compassionate spirit, sensible of the straits and miseries of others, so as to be ready to ease and relieve them, (for to this kind of goodness and charity the Apostle applies this saying of our Saviour, as appears by the context), this certainly is the happiest spirit and temper in the world; and is an argument of a noble, and generous, and large heart, that is not contracted within itself, and confined to little and narrow designs, and takes care of nobody but itself, envying that others should share with it, and partake of its happiness; but is free and open, *ready to do good, and willing to communicate*, and thinks its own happiness increased, by making others happy.

It is the property of narrow and envious spirits to think their own happiness the greater, because they have it alone to themselves; but the noblest and most heavenly dispositions desire that others should share with them in it. Of all beings, God is the farthest removed from envy and ill-will; and the nearer any creature approacheth to him, the farther it is from this hellish disposition. For it is the temper of the devil to grudge happiness to others; he envied that man should be in paradise, and was restless till he had got him out.

Some perfections are of a more solitary nature and disposition, and shine brightest when they are attained to but by few, as knowledge and power: but the nature of goodness is to diffuse and communicate itself, and the more it is communicated, the more glorious it is. And therefore knowledge and power may be in a nature most contrary to God's; the devil hath these perfections in a high degree.

To receive good from others, is no certain argument of virtue or merit, for the unworthy and unthankful often receive benefits; but to be good and do good, is the excellency of virtue, because it is to resemble God in that which is the most amiable and glorious of all his

other perfections. And therefore when Moses desire to see God's glory, Exod. xxxiii. 19. he tells him, *that he will cause all his goodness to pass before him.* Without goodness the power and wisdom of God would be terrible, and raise great dread and superstition in the minds of men. Without goodness, power would be tyranny and oppression, and wisdom would degenerate into craft and mischievous contrivance. So that a being endowed with all power and wisdom, and yet wanting goodness, would be a dreadful and omnipotent mischief. We are apt to dread power, and to admire knowledge, and to suspect great wisdom and prudence but we can heartily love and reverence nothing but true goodness. It is not the infinite power and knowledge of God, considered abstractedly, and in themselves but these in conjunction with his great goodness, that make him at once the most awful and amiable being in the world; which is the reason why our Saviour Matth. v. 48. speaks of the mercy, and goodness, and patience of God, as the top and sum of the divine perfections. *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* How is that? in being good to the evil and unthankful, as God is, who makes his sun to rise, and his rain to fall, not only on the just but unjust. And therefore St Luke renders it, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful.* To be good and merciful as God is, is to be perfect as he is; because it is to imitate him in that which is his chief perfection.

Gratitude is one of the noblest virtues, and our goodness to men is gratitude in us to God. It is an acknowledgment of the blessings we have received from God; the best use we can make of them, and the best requital we can make to him for all his benefits. For we can give him nothing again, because he stands in need of nothing. But a truly grateful person, who hath a kindness done to him by one that is out of a capacity and reach of requital, will inquire whether there be any of his family and relations, to whom he may shew a kindness for his sake. Yea, benefits have often been requited by thankful persons, upon those who did but resemble their benefactors, though they were not wise related to them. Though we can do nothing for

od, yet we may do it to men, who are *made after the image of God*. We may shew kindness to his relations, and to those of his household and family, to his creatures, to his servants, to his friends, and to his children here in the earth.

Besides that our goodness to others like ourselves, is an argument of great consideration and prudence; is a sign that we know ourselves, and consider what we are and what we may be; it shews, that we have a true sense of the indigence and infirmity of human nature, and of the change and vicissitude of human affairs; it is a just sense and acknowledgment of our state, that we are insufficient for our own happiness, and must depend upon the kindness, and good-will, and friendship of other men; that we all either do or may stand in need of others one time or other: for he who is now in the greatest plenty and abundance of all things, and thinks *his mountain so strong, that he can never be moved*, may, by a sudden revolution of fortune, by a thousand accidents, be thrown down from his height of prosperity, into the depth of misery and necessity.

And as it is an argument of consideration, so of great prudence. He that is good to others, apt to commiserate their sad case, and to relieve them in their straits, takes the wisest and surest way that can be, to incline and engage others to be good to him, when it shall fall to his lot to stand in need of their kindness and pity. Upon this account our Saviour commends the *prudence of the unjust steward*, who laid in for the kindness of others, against himself should have occasion for it.

And though it should happen otherwise, and that we should have an uninterrupted tenor of prosperity, which few or none have, or that coming to stand in need of others, our kindness should meet with no equal returns, yet it would not be quite lost; for, as Seneca truly says, *delectat etiam sterilis beneficii conscientia*; though our charity should fall upon stony and barren ground, and we should find no fruit of it from those whom we have obliged, yet there is a pleasure in being conscious to ourselves, that we have done well, what was worthy and generous, and what became wise and considerate men to do, whatever the event and success.

be: for setting aside all selfish respects, purely out of humanity and charity, and a generous compassion, we should be ready, as we have opportunity, to do good to all that stand in need of our kindness and help.

So that a disposition to do good is the best and happiest temper of mind, because it is the nearest resemblance of the divine nature, which is perfectly happy: it is a grateful acknowledgment of our obligations to God, and all that we can render to him for his benefits: it is an argument of great wisdom and consideration; it gives ease and satisfaction to our minds: and the reflection upon any good that we have done, is certainly the greatest contentment and pleasure in the world, and a felicity much beyond that of the greatest fortune of this world: whereas the spirit contrary to this, is always uneasy to itself; the envious and malicious, the hard-hearted and ill-natured man, carries his own torment and hell about him, his mind is full of tumultuous agitations and unquiet thoughts: but, were our nature rectified, and brought back to its primitive frame and temper, we should take no such pleasure in any thing as in acts of kindness and compassion, which are so suitable and agreeable to our nature, that they are peculiarly called humanity, as if without this temper we were not truly men, but something else disguised under a human shape.

II. *To give*, is an argument of a more happy state and condition than *to receive*. To receive from others is an argument of indigency, and plainly shews that we are in want and necessity; either that we stand in need of something, or that we think we do; and either of these conditions is far from perfect happiness: but to give is an argument of fulness and sufficiency, that we have more than is necessary for ourselves, and something to spare.

To receive kindness from others, supposeth we stand in need of it; and to stand in need of it, is to be in a state of being obliged and indebted. Obligation is a dear thing, and a real debt which lies heavy and uneasy upon a grateful mind: so much obligation as any man hath to another, so much he hath lost of his own liberty and freedom; for it gives him that hath obliged

, a superiority and advantage over us. And what Solomon says of the borrower, that *he is a servant to the lender*, is in proportion true in this case, that *the receiver is a servant to the giver*.

But to be able to benefit others, is a condition of freedom and superiority, and is so far from impairing our liberty, that it shews our power: and the happiness which we confer upon others, by doing them good, is not only a contentment to ourselves, but we do in some sort enjoy the happiness we give, in being conscious to ourselves that we are the authors of it. And could we but once come to this excellent temper, to delight in the good that others enjoy, as if it were our own, (and it is our own, if we be the instruments of it, and take pleasure in it); I say, could we but once come to this temper, we need not envy the wealth and splendor of the most prosperous upon earth; for upon these terms the happiness of the whole world would in some sort be ours, and we should have a share in the pleasure and satisfaction of all that good which happens to any man in any way, especially by our means.

To depend upon another, and to receive from him, and to be beholden to him, is the necessary imperfection of creatures: but to confer benefits upon others, is to resemble God, and to approach towards divinity. Aristotle could say, that by narrowness and selfishness, by envy and ill-will, men degenerate into beasts, and become wolves and tygers to one another; but by goodness and kindness, by mutual compassion and helpfulness, men become gods to one another. To be a benefactor, is to be as like God as it is possible for men to be; and the more any one partakes of this divine quality and disposition, the liker and nearer he is to God, *who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works*.

The blessed angels, who behold the face of God continually, are, as it were, perfectly transformed into the image of the divine goodness, and therefore the work which with so much cheerfulness and vigour they employ themselves in, is to be *ministering spirits for the good of the elect*, to bring men to goodness, and to encourage, and assist, and comfort them in well-doing.

And our blessed Lord, when he was upon earth, did in nothing shew himself more like the Son of God, than in going about doing good. And the wonderful works which he did, gave testimony of his divinity, not so much as they were acts of power as of goodness, and wrought for the benefit and advantage of men. And the true advantage of greatness, and wealth, and power does not consist in this, that it sets men above others but that it puts them in a capacity of doing more good than others. Men are apt to call them their betters who are higher and richer than themselves: but in a true and just esteem of things, they only are our betters who do more good than we. From the meanest creature below us, up to God himself, they are the best and happiest, and most perfect beings, who are most useful and beneficial to others, who have the most power and the strongest inclinations to do good.

III. *To give*, that is, to be beneficial and to do good to others, hath the happiness of a great reward. There is no grace or virtue whatsoever, which hath in scripture the encouragement of more and greater promise than this, of happiness in general; of temporal happiness in this life; of happiness at death; and of everlasting happiness in the world to come.

I. For promises of happiness in general. *He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness endures for ever*, that is, shall never be forgotten, shall not pass unrewarded. Prov. xiv. 21. *He that giveth to the poor, happy is he.* Matth. v. 7. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* Luke vi. 38. *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together; and running over, shall men give into your bosom: for with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again;* that is, according to our goodness and compassion towards others, we must expect to find the charity of men, and the compassions of God towards us. Job speaks as if some eminent and peculiar blessing did attend and follow acts of charity, Job xxix. 12. *The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me.*

2. Promises of temporal happiness in this life. Psal. xxxvii. 3. *Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shalt thou dwell*

well in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed: Prov. xviii. 27. He that giveth to the poor, shall not lack. I say, God hath promised to have a particular respect to such as do good, in every condition, and all kinds of troubles that befall them. Psal. xli. 1. 2. 3. *Blessed is that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.*

2. Of happiness in death. The righteous, saith Solomon, Prov. xiv. 22. *hath hope in his death.* By the righteous in scripture is frequently meant the merciful and good man. And so it is to be understood, as appears from the context; *He that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth his maker: but he that honoureth him, hath mercy upon the poor. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.* If God design to send calamities upon the earth, upon the place where the good man lives, which it would grieve him to see, or which he might be involved in, so as either to make his life uncomfortable, or to cut him off by a violent death; God considers the merciful man, and removes him out of the way, into a better and safer place, II. lvii. 1. *The merciful man is taken away from the evil to come.*

4. The promises of eternal life and happiness in the world to come. Luke xiv. 13. 14. *But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind: and thou shalt be blessed. For they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* And chap. xvi. 9. *And I say unto you, saith our Lord, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that is, do good with what you have, that when ye fail, they may receive you unto everlasting habitations.* I Tim. vi. 17. 18. 19. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches; but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate,*

nicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. And the more to fix upon our minds the necessity of doing good, especially in ways of mercy and charity, our Lord represents this as the great matter of inquiry at the great day of judgment, how they have behaved themselves in this kind, what good they have done, or omitted and neglected to do; especially to those who are in misery and want; and as if the sentence of eternal happiness or misery would accordingly pass upon them. And this, methinks, should make a mighty impression upon us, to think that when we shall appear before the great judge of the world, we are to expect mercy from him, according to the measure that we have shewed it to others.

And now, if men be thoroughly convinced of the happiness of this temper, methinks it would be no difficult matter to persuade them to it. If we believe this saying of our Lord, that *it is more blessed to give, than to receive*; let us do accordingly.

I know that to carnal and earthly-minded men, this must needs seem a new and wrong way to happiness. For if we may judge of mens persuasions by their practice, which seems to be a reasonable and good sure way of judging, I am afraid it will appear, that few believe this to be the way to happiness. If we mind the course of the world, and the actions of men, it is but too evident that most men place their greatest felicity in receiving and getting the good things of this world; almost *all seek their own things, and but few the good of others.* Many say, *Who will shew us; who will do us any good?* but few ask that question, *What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* And when our Lord tells men that they must give to the poor, if they would have treasure in heaven; that they must be charitable, if they would be happy; that *it is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive*, these are sad and melancholy sayings to those who have great possessions; and most men are ready, with the young man in the gospel, to part with our Lord, and to break with him upon these terms.

But

But let us remember that this was *the saying of our Lord Jesus*, whom we all profess to believe; and to imitate in all things: but more especially let us do so in this, because it was not a bare speculation; a fine and glorious saying, like those of the philosophers, who said great and glorious things, but did them not; but his was his constant practice, the great work and business of his life. He who pronounced it the most blessed thing to do good, spent his whole life in this work, and *went about doing good*. To this end all his activity and endeavours were bent. This was the life which God himself, when he was pleased to become man, thought it to lead in the world, *giving us herein an example that we should follow his steps*. He made full trial and experience of the happiness of this temper and spirit; for he was all on the giving hand. He would receive no portion and share of the good things of this world. He refused the greatest offers. When the people would have made him a king, he withdrew and hid himself. He was contented to be worse accommodated than the creatures below us. *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head*. He would not so much as have any fixed abode and habitation, that he might be at liberty to go about doing good. He received nothing but injuries and affronts, base and treacherous usage from an ungrateful world, to whom he was so great and so universal a benefactor. The whole business of his life was to do good; and to suffer evil for so doing. So fixed and steady was he in his own principle and saying, *It is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive*. He gave away all that he had to do us good, he parted with his glory and his life, *emptied himself, and became of no reputation; and being rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich*.

So that he adviseth us nothing, but what he did himself; nor imposeth any thing upon us, from which he himself desired to be excused. And surely we have great reason to be in great love with this pattern, when that very goodness which he propounds to our imitation, was all laid out upon us, and redounds to our benefit and advantage; when our salvation and happiness

ness are the effects of that goodness and compassion which he exercised in the world. He did it all purely for our sakes; whereas all the good we do to others, is a greater good done to ourselves.

So that here is an example and experiment of the thing in the greatest and most famous instance that the whole world can afford. The best and happiest man that ever was, the Son of God and the Saviour of men and who is the most worthy to be the pattern of all mankind, *went about doing good*, and governed his whole life, and all the actions of it, by this principle, that *it is more blessed to give, than to receive.* *Let the same mind be in us that was in Jesus Christ: let us go and do like him.*

S E R M O N C C X I V .

The evil of corrupt communication.

3. Dec

EPHES. iv. 29.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.

AS discourses against sin and vice in general are of great use, so it is likewise very necessary to level them against the particular vices of men, and to endeavour by proper and intrinsic arguments, taken from the nature of that vice we treat of, to dissuade and deter them from it; because this carries the discourse home to the consciences of men, and leaves them no way of escape. For this reason, and in compliance with their Majesties pious proclamation, for the discountenancing and suppressing of profaneness and vice, I have chosen to treat upon this subject, of corrupt and filthy communication, as being one of the reigning vices of this wicked and adulterous generation; of the evil
whereof

hereof the generality of men are less sensible than almost of any other, that is so frequently and so expressly branded in scripture. And to this purpose I have touched upon the words which I have read unto you, as containing a plain and express prohibition of this vice, *et no corrupt communication, &c.*

I remember St Austin in one of his epistles tells us, that Tully, the great master of the art of speaking, says of one of the great orators, *Nullum unquam verbum quod revocare vellet, emisit*: "That no word ever fell from him, that he could wish to have recalled." This, doubt, is above the perfection of human eloquence, for a man always to make such a choice of his words, and to place them so fitly, that nothing he ever said could be changed for the better. But the greatest faults of speech are not those which offend against the rules of eloquence; but of piety, and virtue, and good manners: and who can say that his tongue is free from all faults in this kind, and *no word ever proceeded from him, which he could wish to have recalled?* In many things, says St James, chap. iii. 2. *we offend all*; and in this kind as much perhaps, and as often as in any. He is a good and a happy man indeed, that seldom or never offends with his tongue. *If any man, as St James goes on, offend not in word, the same is a perfect man*; that is, he hath attained to an eminent degree of virtue indeed, and is above the common rate of men, and may reasonably be presumed blameless in the general course of his life and practice; and able, as it follows, *to bridle the whole body*; that is, *to order his whole conversation aright*.

To govern the tongue is a matter of great difficulty, and consequently of great wisdom, and care, and circumspection; and therefore one of the great endeavours of a wise and good man, should be to govern his words by the rules of reason and religion; and we should every one of us resolve and say, as David does, Psal. xxxix. 1. *I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.* For as the virtues, so the vices of the tongue are many and great. In respect of the virtues of it, David calls it the best member we have; because, of all the members and instruments of the body, it is capable

capable of giving the greatest glory to God, and of doing the greatest good and benefit to men. And in respect of the vices of it, it may be as truly said to be the worst member that we have; because it is capable of doing the greatest dishonour to God, and the greatest mischief and harm among men. So that, upon all accounts, we ought to have a great care of the government of our tongue, which is capable of being so useful and serviceable to the best and worst purposes, according as we restrain it and keep it in order, or let it loose to sin and folly.

And among all the vices of the tongue, as none is more common, so none is more misbecoming, and more contrary to the modesty of a man, and the gravity of a Christian, than filthy and obscene talk; of the odious nature, and the evil and mischievous consequences thereof, both to ourselves and others, I design, by God's assistance, to treat at this time, from the words which I have read unto you, *Let no corrupt communication, &c.*

That by *corrupt* or *rotten communication*, is here meant filthy and obscene talk, is generally agreed among interpreters. By *that which is good to the use of edifying*, is meant such discourse as is apt to build us up in knowledge and goodness, to make the hearers wiser and better. *That it may minister grace unto the hearers*, that is, such kind of discourse as is acceptable to all; not nauseous and offensive to sober and virtuous persons, not apt to grate upon chaste and modest ears, and to put the hearers out of countenance.

So that the Apostle doth here strictly forbid all lewd and filthy discourse among Christians; and enjoins them so to converse with one another, that all their discourses may minister mutual benefit and advantage to one another, and tend to the promoting of piety and virtue; and may likewise be grateful to the hearers, carefully avoiding every thing that might put them to the blush, or any wise trespass upon modesty and good manners, as all filthy communication does.

This sort of argument, though it be frequently mentioned in scripture, yet it is very seldom treated of in the pulpit, because it is a matter hard to be handled in

a cleanly manner, and the preacher must always take good heed to himself, that his discourse be free from the contagion of that vice, which he reproveth, and designs to correct and cure. And therefore to dissuade and deter men from this evil practice, so rife and common in the world, and that not only among the profane and dissolute sort of persons, but those likewise who would seem to be more strict and religious, I hope it may be sufficient to all considerate persons, plainly to represent to them the hainous nature of the thing itself, together with the evil and dangerous consequences of it, both to ourselves and to others. And this I shall endeavour to do in the most general and wary terms, keeping all along, as much as is possible, aloof and at distance from any thing that might either offend the chaste and modest, or infect lewd and dissolute minds, which like tinder are always ready to take fire at the least spark.

Having premised this in general, my work at this time shall be to offer such particular considerations, as may fully convince men of the great evil and danger of his practice; and I hope may effectually prevail with them to leave it, and break it off. And they shall be these following.

I. That all filthy and corrupt communication is evidently contrary to nature, which is careful to hide and suppress whatever in the general esteem of the sober part of mankind hath any thing of turpitude and uncomeliness in it: and where-ever nature hath thought fit to draw a veil, we should neither by words nor actions expose such things to open view. *Quæ natura occultavit, cæcavit, et ab omni quod abhorret ab oculorum auriusque approbatione fugiamus:* "Those things which nature hath thought fit to hide, all men that are in their wits endeavour to keep out of sight." *Nos autem naturam sequamur,* says the same excellent moralist, *ibid.* "Let us, says he, follow nature, and flee every thing that is offensive either to the eyes or ears of men." And this is so plain a lesson of nature, that an actor in a play will never fall into that absurdity, as to represent a grave and virtuous person offering any obscene or immodest word: and as the same author rea-

sons, *Histrion hoc videbit in scena, quod non videbit sapiens in vita?* “ Shall an actor see this to be improper upon the stage, and a wise man not discern the absurdity and indecency of it in his life and conversation?”

II. All corrupt and filthy communication is a notorious abuse of one of the greatest and best gifts which God hath given us, and does directly contradict the natural end and use of speech. Our tongue is our glory as the holy psalmist often calls it, who had duly considered the excellency and use of this faculty; and too great care to employ it to the purposes to which God gave it, and is herein an admirable pattern to us.

And next to our reason and understanding, our speech doth most remarkably distinguish us from the beasts, and sets us above them. *Hoc uno præstamus vel maxime feris quod colloquimur inter nos, & quod exprimere dicendo sensus possumus*, says the great Roman orator, Cicero, de oratore lib. i. “ By this one thing we excel the beasts in a very high degree, that we can talk together, and by our speech declare our minds to one another.” By our understandings we know God, and by our tongues we confess and praise him: but to use our tongues to lewd and filthy discourse, is to pervert and abuse one of the best and noblest faculties which God hath given us; it is to affront him with his own gifts, and to fight against him with his own weapons. *Do we thus requite the Lord? foolish creatures and unthankful!*

The two great ends for which this faculty of speech is given us, are to glorify God our maker, and to edify man our neighbour: but all *corrupt communication* contradicts both these ends; because, instead of praising God with pure hearts and lips, we do greatly dishonour him, by polluting our tongues with lewd and filthy talk: for hereby we offer a direct affront to his holy nature and laws. This renders us altogether unfit for the worship and service of almighty God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and impurity of any kind. For how can we think that he will accept those prayers and praises, which are offered to him by such impure and unhallowed lips? when we dishonour God with the same mouth that we pretend to glorify him; and commit sin with the same tongue that we confess it? How can

Can we hope that he will accept the sacrifice of such polluted lips, out of which proceed things so contrary and consistent?

Those who thus pervert the use of speech, and instead of glorifying him who gave them this excellent gift, and setting forth his praise, defile their tongues with filthy and impure language, give just occasion to complain of them, as Elihu does of the wicked in his time, Job xxxv. 10. 11. *None saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night? Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven.* His meaning is, that they did not glorify God their maker, by singing his praises; which, by being endued with this noble faculty of speech, (which he had denied to the creatures below man, the beasts and birds), they only were capable of performing. The consideration of this high privilege, by which we do so much excel the creatures below us, ought to be a mighty obligation upon us, to employ this gift of God in the service, and to the glory of the giver, and make us very careful not to offend him by it, or by any defilement of it, to render it unfit for one of the principal uses for which God bestowed it upon us.

Another great end of speech is to edify our neighbour. So the Apostle here tells us in the text, that nothing should proceed out of our mouths, but what is good for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. But instead of that, corrupt communication offends the chaste and virtuous, and corrupts them who have vitious inclinations, by exciting and cherishing lewd imaginations in them, and making *them that are filthy more filthy still.*

III. Corrupt communication is an evidence of a corrupt and impure heart, as polluted streams are a sign that the fountain is impure from whence they came. An impure mind may be covered and disguised by natural shame and outward reverence, in regard to the company, or from some other particular design; but when it breaks out at any time in lewd talk, our speech betrays us, and discovers the inward thoughts of our hearts, and makes them visible to every eye. For, as our Saviour says, *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth*

speaketh, Matth. xii. 34. 35. How can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.

“There is not,” says an excellent divine of our own Dr Barrow, “a more certain sign of a mind utterly debauched from piety and virtue, than affecting such talk. A vain mind naturally venteth itself in frothy discourse; and lust, boiling within, foams out in filthy talk.” It is St Jude’s metaphor; when he describes that impure sect of the Gnostics, he says of them, that they were continually foaming out their own shame, ver. 23.; that is, by their lewd words and deeds they discovered the inward filthiness of their hearts. And therefore it is Tully’s advice to him that would be perfectly virtuous, and not defective in any part of his duty, *Imprimis provideat, ne sermo vitium aliquod indicet inesse moribus*; de offic. lib. i. “Let him in the first place, says he, take great care, that his speech betray not some vice or fault in his manners.” Ἀνδρὶ χαρακτήρ ἐκ λόγου γνωρίζεται, “A man’s character is commonly taken from his talk.” Οἷος ὁ τρόπος, τοῦτος ὁ λόγος, says Aristides, “Such as are the manners of a man, such is his discourse;” and Quintilian, lib. xi. c. 1. *Profert enim mores plerumque oratio, et animi secreta detegit, nec sine causa Græci prodiderunt, ut vivit quemquam etiam dicere*: “Our speech, for the most part, declares our manners, and discovers the secrets of our hearts; so that not without cause was it become a proverbial saying among the Greeks, that as the man lives, so also he speaks.” And to the same purpose the wise son of Sirach, Eccclus xxvii. 6. 7. *The fruit declareth, if the tree hath been dressed; so is the utterance of a conceit in the heart of man. Praise no man before thou hearest him speak: for this is the trial of men.* And ver. 12. *The discourse of fools is irksome, and their sport is in the wantonness of sin.*

Immodest speech is not only an indication of an unchaste mind; but draws likewise a great suspicion upon a man’s life. So strict a connection commonly is there between a man’s thoughts and words, and between his words

words and actions, that they are generally presumed to be all of a piece, and agreeable to one another

IV. Corrupt communication doth debauch and defile the minds of men, and that not only of the speaker, but likewise of the hearer of such discourse; because it gratifies and feeds a corrupt humour, and a vitiated appetite, beside that it disposeth and inclines to lewd and filthy actions: a smutty tongue and unchaste deeds are seldom far asunder, and do very often go together; for filthy talk and lewd practices seem only to differ in the occasion and opportunity; and he that makes no conscience of the one, will hardly stick at the other, when it can be done with secrecy and safety. The law of God forbids both alike, and his eye beholds both: *For there is not a word in my tongue,* says David, Psal. cxxxix. *but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.* So that whatever may deter us from lewd practice (the authority of God forbidding it, or the awe of his presence, who continually stands by us, and hears and sees all that we say and do) is of equal force to restrain us from lewd and filthy words: for they both proceed from the same disposition of mind, and are done in equal contempt of the divine presence and authority.

V. It is uncivil and unmannerly, very disagreeable, and highly displeasing to all sober and modest persons. It is a clownish and rude thing; says Tully, de offic. lib. *Si rerum turpitudini adhibetur verborum obscenitas:* "If to things which are immodest in themselves, we add the obscenity of words."

Nothing that trespasses upon the modesty of the company, and the decency of conversation, can become the mouth of a wise and virtuous person. This kind of conversation would fain pass for wit among some sort of persons, to whom it is acceptable; but whatever favours of rudeness, and immodesty, and ill manners, is very far from deserving that name; and they that are sober and virtuous, cannot entertain any discourse of this kind with approbation and acceptance: A well-bred person will never offend in this way; and therefore it cannot but be esteemed as an affront to modest company, and a rude presuming upon their approbation,

impudently taking it for granted that all others are lewd and dissolute as themselves.

This sort of conversation was not only offensive to righteous Lot, but was a perpetual vexation to him and grieved him at his very heart. So St Peter tells us, 2 Pet. ii. 7. 8. that Lot was vexed with the conversation of the wicked. For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds. In seeing and hearing, that is, in seeing their lewd actions and hearing their filthy talk, his life became a burthen to him; and therefore God singled him out, and delivered him both from that wicked company, and from that dreadful judgment of fire and brimstone, which came down from heaven upon them, and consumed them with an utter destruction, for an example to all ages and an admonition to all good men, that they ought to be in like manner affected, as righteous Lot was with the filthy conversation of the wicked.

VI. As by this practice we offend against nature, against reason and true morality; so it is likewise a direct contempt and defiance of the Christian religion, which does so strictly forbid, and so severely condemn it in Christians. Our blessed Saviour seems more particularly to censure and condemn this vice, when he says, Matt. xii. 36. 27. That every idle word that men shall speak they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment. Every idle word, *ἑῆμα ἀργόν*, every vain and unprofitable word, that nowise tends to edification; that is the very lowest sense the words can bear. But then how much more shall we give an account in that day of every lewd word, which tends to corrupt and debauch the mind and manners of men? Some copies have it, *ἑῆμα πονηρόν*, every naughty and wicked word, every false, and malicious, and calumniating word. "An idle word," says St Basil, "is that which is not for edification, and such words shall come under examination in that great assembly of the whole world; and what then," says he, "shall be done to words of scurrility, and calumny, and obscenity?"

But that which will best direct us to the meaning of this phrase, is what the Jewish masters observed, that by

by an idle word the Jews did commonly understand *immodest and unchaste speech, scurrilous and obscene words.* and then it follows, *For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

Men are commonly apt to make a very light matter of such words; but because they shew the mind and manners of the man, his inward temper and disposition, therefore men shall be called to a strict account for them in the day of judgment, and be condemned for lewd and dissolute words, as well as for acts of filthiness and uncleanness; because *these come from the heart, and defile the man,* they proceed from an impure spring and fountain; and though we only perceive them to come out of the mouth, yet they proceed *out of the abundance of the heart,* from an evil disposition of mind.

So that our judge hath expressly warned us of this fault, and declared to us the danger of it. And therefore whosoever believes this declaration of our Saviour, and dreads the judgment of the great day, ought to take heed that he offend not with his tongue, in this or any other kind. Men make but little account of such words now, but they shall all be strictly accounted for another day; and what we utter now so freely and without blushing, will then strike us dumb, and be matter of greatest shame and confusion to us, in the presence of God and his holy angels.

And so St Paul likewise, not only here in the text, does forbid and reprove this practice, when he says, *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers:* but in several other places of his epistles he most severely condemns it, as utterly misbecoming Christians, and most directly contrary to our most holy profession. Eph. v. 3. 4. *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.* Here he forbids all lewd and filthy talk, as utterly misbecoming the conversation of Christians, who should give no occasion to have the vices of this nature so much as once mentioned, much less practised among Christians: *Let not these things,* says he, *be*
once

once named among you, as becometh saints; but rather giving of thanks. Here he directs us to that which is the proper employment of the tongue, and one of the chief ends of speech; which is to praise and glorify God, and not to dishonour him by lewd and filthy talk. And this he urgeth again, as the proper fruit of our lips, ver. 20. *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And, at the 5th verse of this chapter, he appeals to Christians, whether they had not been constantly taught and instructed, that all lewdness and filthiness, not only in act but in word, will certainly shut men out of the kingdom of heaven. *For this, says he, ye know that no whoremonger, nor unclean person* (referring to those several sorts of uncleanness he had mentioned before, among which is *filthy and foolish talk*) *hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God.* The Apostle here speaks to the Gentile Christians, who were newly converted from Heathenism, and had been accustomed to make slight of these kinds of sin, which were so common among the idolatrous Heathen, and part of the worship of their obscene deities: but he tells them, that the Christian religion, which they had embraced, required another sort of conversation, and did strictly injoin all manner of purity, both of heart and life, in all our words and actions; and that *as he that has called us is holy, so we should be holy in all manner of conversation.* And whatever false teachers might insinuate, as if the Christian religion did allow a greater liberty in these things, and made that a *cloak for licentiousness, hereby turning the grace of God, that is, the doctrine of the gospel, into lasciviousness,* as St Jude speaks, ver. 4. yet they would certainly find things quite otherwise in the issue, and that God, who punished the Heathen for these vices, and sent such terrible judgments upon them, would much less let Christians go unpunished, that should be found guilty of them. Eph. v. 6. *Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience,* that is, the Heathen world, who continued still in their infidelity, and lived in the practice of those sins; and would fall much more heavily
upon

non Christians, if after they had embraced this holy religion, they should allow themselves in any of those lewd and impure practices, which they had been guilty of before, and which they had so solemnly promised to renounce and put off in their baptism.

And so likewise, Col. iii. 5. 6. 7. *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience, or unbelief; in the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them; that is, whilst ye were Heathens, and conversed among them, ye practised these vices: but now, that is, now that ye are become Christians, put off these, anger, wrath, malice, evil-speaking, filthy communication.* Ye see that *filthy communication* is reckoned amongst those sins of the Gentiles, which Christians were utterly to quit and forsake, as contrary to the purity of the Christian profession. And so St Paul tells the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. iv. 7. *God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.* And he gives the same precept to the Colossians, chap. iv. 6. *Let your speech be always with grace, that is, acceptable and useful, something that is worthy the hearing, seasoned with salt, that is, with prudence and discretion, which should always govern our speech, and keep it within the bounds of sobriety and modesty.* As our talk should not be insipid and foolish, so much less rotten and unfavoury, immodest and lewd.

And in his epistle to the Philippians, chap. iv. 8. he earnestly recommends the virtues that are directly contrary to this vice. *Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are honest, ὅσα σεμνά, whatsoever things are grave or venerable, ὅσα ἀγνά, whatsoever things are pure or chaste, think on these things; that is, have great regard to them in your conversation and behaviour, there being no sort of virtue which the Christian religion does not strictly injoin and exact from us; and consequently whatsoever is light and frothy, and much more whatsoever is lewd and filthy, ought to be banished from the conversation of Christians, as utterly inconsistent with the gravity and purity of that holy profession.*

And

And the same Apostle tells us, that all the promises of the gospel are so many arguments and obligations to purity and holiness, 2 Cor. vii. 1. *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting, practising, holiness in the fear of God.* And on the contrary, St John tells us, that all impurity will be an effectual bar to our entrance into heaven. Rev. xxi. 27. speaking of the new Jerusalem, says he, *The unclean shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination.* So that if either the promises or threatenings of the gospel have any influence upon us, they will effectually restrain this vicious practice.

VII. and lastly, All impure and filthy communication grieves the Holy Spirit, and drives him away from us. And therefore after he had forbidden this vice here in the text, that *no corrupt communication proceed of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers;* he immediately adds, *and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption;* hereby intimating, that all corrupt and filthy communication grieves the Holy Spirit of God, that blessed Spirit which is *the seal and earnest of our redemption;* that is, as the Apostle himself explains it, *of the redemption of our bodies from the bondage of corruption, by the resurrection of them to eternal life.* For it is the Spirit of God dwelling in us, which shall raise our bodies at the last day, and make them partakers of a blessed immortality. So the Apostle says expressly, Rom. viii. 11. *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* If we defile our bodies, or any members of them by uncleanness, we grieve the Spirit of God which dwells in us, and force him out of his habitation; that blessed Spirit, which should quicken our mortal bodies and is both the earnest and the cause of their resurrection to eternal life. For our bodies, as well as our souls are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit of God
 dwell

dells in them; and we banish him out of his temple whenever we profane it by lewd and filthy speech.

And the Apostle useth this argument more than once, to deter Christians more especially from the sins of uncleanness. 1 Cor. iii. 16. 17. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye see.* The Holy Spirit of God sanctifieth the place where he more especially resides, and makes it his temple; and so are our bodies as well as our souls; as the same Apostle expressly tells us, chap. vi. ver. 18. 19. 20. where he argues against the sins of uncleanness, which are committed in the body, and by the members and instruments of it, from this consideration, that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. *Flee fornication,* says he. *Every sin a man doth, is without the body: but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body; that is, the body is not the immediate instrument of other sins, as it is of those of uncleanness; and then it follows, What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* Under the name of fornication the Apostle comprehends all the sins of uncleanness, of which any member of the body is an instrument; so that the lasciviousness of the eye, or ear, or tongue, is a polluting and profaning this temple of God, and drives the Holy Spirit of God out of his possession.

And whenever the Spirit of God departs from us, we cease to be children of God, and forfeit the earnest of our eternal inheritance. *Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ,* says the same Apostle, Rom. viii. 9. *he is none of his;* that is, he does not belong to him; in plain English, he is no Christian. So that, as we would not forfeit the title of Christians, and the blessed hope of a glorious resurrection, we must be very careful that *no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth,* lest hereby we grieve the Holy Spirit

of

of God, by which we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

I have now done with this argument; and what I have said concerning immodest and unchaste words, is of equal force against lascivious books, and pictures, and plays, all which do alike intrench upon natural modesty, and for that reason are equally forbidden and condemned the Christian religion; and therefore it may suffice to have named them. I shall only speak a few words concerning plays, which, as they are now ordered among us, are a mighty reproach to the age and nation.

To speak against them in general, may be thought too severe, and that which the present age cannot well brook, and would not perhaps be so just and reasonable; because it is very possible they might be framed, and governed by such rules, as not only to innocently diverting, but instructing and useful, to purge some vices and follies out of countenance, which cannot perhaps be so decently reprov'd, nor so effectually expos'd and corrected any other way. But as the stage now is, they are intolerable, and not fit to be permitted in a civilized, much less in a Christian nation. They do most notoriously minister both to infidelity and vice. By the profaneness of them, they are apt to insert still bad principles into the minds of men, and to lessen the awe and reverence which all men ought to have for God and religion: and by their lewdness they teach vice, and are apt to infect the minds of men, and dispose them to lewd and dissolute practices.

And therefore I do not see how any person, pretending to sobriety and virtue, and especially to the pure and holy religion of our blessed Saviour, can, without great guilt, and open contradiction to his holy profession, be present at such lewd and immodest plays, much less frequent them, as too many do, who yet would take it very ill to be shut out of the communion of Christians, as they would most certainly have been in the first and purest ages of Christianity.

To conclude this whole discourse: Let us always remember that gravity and modesty in all our behaviour and conversation, in all our words and actions, are duties indispensably required by the Christian religion, and

the great fences of piety and virtue; and therefore ought, with great conscience and care, to be preserved and kept inviolable: and when these fences are once broken down, there is a wide gap made for almost any sin and vice to enter in. Immodest words do naturally tend to corrupt good manners, both in ourselves and others.

There is none of us, but would reckon it a very great felicity to be deprived of that noble and useful faculty of speech, which is so peculiar to man, and which, next to our reason and understanding, doth most remarkably distinguish us from the brute beasts: but it is much greater unhappiness to have this faculty, and to abuse it to vile and lewd purposes. The first may be only our misfortune: but this can never be without great fault, and gross neglect of ourselves; and much sadder had it been for us to have been born dumb, than thus to turn our glory into shame and guilt, by perverting this excellent gift of God, to the corrupting of ourselves and others.

This, I hope, may be sufficient to restrain men from this vice, which I have all this while been speaking against; at least to preserve those which are not yet infected, from the contagion of it; and, I hope, to reclaim many from so bad a practice. And if any be so hardened in their lewd course, that no counsel of this kind can make impression on them, what remains, but to conclude in the words of the angel to St John, Rev. xxii. 1. *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*

S E R M O N C C X V .

The true remedy against the troubles of life

JOHN xiv. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

1^o Dec

The first sermon on this text.

IN which words our blessed Saviour does, upon a particular occasion, prescribe an universal remedy against trouble. And the particular occasion of this consolatory discourse, which our Saviour here makes to his disciples, was this. He had often told them of his sufferings: but the conceit which they had entertained of his temporal reign, would not suffer them to admit any thought of such a thing, as the sufferings or death of the Messiah; and therefore it is said, that *these things did not sink into them*, and that *they understood them not*, men being generally very slow to understand what they do not like, and have no mind to. At last our Saviour tells them plainly, that how backward soever they were to believe it, the time of his sufferings and death was now approaching, and that he should shortly be betrayed into the hands of men, and be crucified and slain. At this his disciples were struck with great fear and exceedingly troubled, both in contemplation of his sufferings, and of their own invaluable loss. To comfort them upon this occasion, our Saviour directs his disciples to that course, which was not only proper in the present case, but is an universal antidote and remedy against all trouble whatsoever, and will not only serve to mitigate our trouble, and support our spirits under the fear and apprehension of future evils, but under present afflictions and sufferings; and to quiet and comfort

set our minds under the saddest condition, and forestall calamities that can befall us. *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

He does not only forbid them to be troubled, and counsel them against it; such advice is easily given, but not so easily to be followed: but he prescribes the proper remedy against trouble, which is trust and confidence in God the great Creator and wise Governor of the world; and likewise in himself, the blessed Son of God, and Saviour of mankind: *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

The words are variously translated: by some indicatively, *Ye do believe in God, and ye do believe in me, therefore be not troubled;* by others imperatively, *Believe in God, and believe likewise in me;* and then you can have no cause of trouble. Or else the first clause may be rendered indicatively, and the latter imperatively; and so our translation renders the words, *Ye do believe in God, believe also in me;* as you believe in God the Creator and Governor of the world, so believe also in me the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. But which way soever the words be rendered, the sense comes all to one; that faith in God, and in our blessed Saviour, are here prescribed as the proper and most powerful remedies against trouble: *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

In the handling of these words, I shall do these two things.

First, I shall consider what sort of trouble is here forbidden, or with what reasonable limitations this general prohibition of our Saviour is to be understood; *Let not your heart be troubled.*

Secondly, I shall endeavour to shew what virtue and force there is in the remedy here prescribed by our Saviour, to mitigate and allay our trouble, and to support and quiet our minds under it.

First, We will consider what sort of trouble is here forbidden, and with what due and reasonable limitations we are to understand this general prohibition of our Saviour to his disciples, *Let not your hearts be troubled.* And this we shall best find out by considering the various objects of trouble, together with the several causes or

grounds of them. And these may all be ranged under these three heads; evils past, present, or to come. For the ground of all trouble is some evil, either really and in itself so, or what is apprehended by us under that notion: and the several kinds of trouble, are either the reflection upon evils past, or the sense of an evil that is present, or the fear and apprehension of some future evil which threatens us and hangs over us.

I. For the first, The trouble caused by reflection upon evils past, this must either be the evil of affliction or sin. The former of these, when it is past, is seldom any cause of trouble, the remembrance of past sufferings, and the evils which we got over, being rather delightful than grievous; so that it is only the evil of sin, the reflection whereof is troublesome. And this is that which we call guilt; which is an inward vexation, and discontent, and grief of mind, arising from the consciousness that we have done amiss, and a fearful apprehension of some vengeance and punishment that will follow it; and there is no trouble that is comparable to this, when the conscience of a sinner is thoroughly awakened.

Now upon this account our hearts ought to be troubled, and we can hardly exceed in it, provided our trouble do not drive us to despair, but to repentance; but there can be no suspicion that this comes within the compass of our Saviour's prohibition.

II. As for the troubles caused by the sense of the present evils, either of loss or suffering, though this do properly enough fall within the compass of our Saviour's prohibition, *Let not your heart be troubled*, yet it admits of several limitations; therefore, in order to the fixing of its due and proper bounds, I shall briefly shew, what trouble for present evils and afflictions which are upon us, is not forbidden, and what is.

I. We are not here forbidden to have a just and due sense of any evil or calamity that is upon us; because this is natural, and we cannot help it: for there is a real difference of things in themselves; some things are in their nature good and convenient for us, and agreeable and delightful to our senses; and other things are in themselves evil, that is, naturally displeasing and
grievous;

ievous; and we must not only be Stoics, but even
 licks and stones, if we have not a just sense and resent-
 ment of this difference. Our blessed Saviour had so;
 and as he was afflicted more than any man, and suffered
 more than any of the sons of men, so was he likewise
 very sensible of his sufferings, and had a natural dread
 and horror of them; insomuch that he himself tells us,
 that *his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even to death*, upon
 the apprehension of what he was to undergo; which
 made him pray so earnestly, and to repeat that petition
 so often, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from
 me*. Nay, the very anguish of his mind, caused by the
 dread and horror of his sufferings, was so great as to force
 his blood through the pores of his body, so that *he sweat
 it were thick drops of blood falling upon the ground*.

And this is not to be wondered at, because our blef-
 sed Saviour, as he had the greatest endowments of hu-
 man nature in their greatest perfection, so he had a per-
 fect sense of the evils, and pains, and sufferings of it.
 And all philosophy that will not acknowledge loss, and
 pain, and suffering, to be evils, and troublesome and
 terrible, is either obstinate fullness, or gross hypo-
 crisy.

2. Nor doth this prohibition of our Saviour exclude
 natural affection. This is a plant which God himself
 hath planted in human nature, and that for very excel-
 lent ends and purposes: and having made us men, and
 endowed us with such passions, he does not expect that
 we should put off our nature, and transform ourselves
 into another sort of creatures than what we were when
 we came out of his own hands. To be without natu-
 ral affection, and to have no afflictive sense of the loss
 of nearest relations, is condemned in scripture, as a
 mark of the greatest degeneracy and depravation of hu-
 man nature. And therefore we cannot imagine that our
 Saviour did intend to forbid such a moderate and well-
 regulated degree of trouble upon these occasions, as is
 the proper and genuine issue of those natural affections,
 which God himself hath implanted in us.

3. When our Saviour forbids us to be troubled, he doth
 not forbid us to have a just sense of God's judgments,
 or of his hand, in procuring or permitting the evils

which befall us; much less of our own sins, which are the meritorious cause of them; nay, on the contrary, he expects that we should acknowledge his providence and the justness of it, in his severest dealings with us: that we should be *humbled under his mighty hand, and turn to him that smites us, and bear the indignation of the Lord patiently, because we have sinned against him.* Whatever is a sign of God's displeasure against us, is a just and reasonable cause of trouble to us.

But when our Saviour here forbids us to be troubled, he plainly intends to prohibit these three things.

I. Immoderate grief and sorrow for any present affliction or loss, without any restraint upon ourselves, so as to let the grief loose, and to give full scope to it, to let the reins fall out of our hands, so that the considerations of reason and religion have no manner of power and command over us; to sorrow, as Rachel did for her children, *refusing to be comforted.* This is unreasonable, and usually of pernicious consequence: for no man knows, when he once abandons himself to melancholy, and gives way to grief, and lets it pierce his heart, and enter into his soul, how it may overwhelm his spirit, and sink it past recovery. And to this pitch the trouble of some men for worldly losses and disappointments, because it was not restrained and governed at first, hath brought them; and it often happens, as St Paul hath observed, *the trouble of the world worketh death.*

I think hardly any man did ever die of grief for his sins, and killed himself by laying them to heart. It is well if our sorrow for sin proceed to that degree, as to work real repentance and amendment. And the reason why our sorrow for sin is commonly moderate and within bounds, is because the sorrow and trouble of repentance is always reasonable, and reason keeps our grief within bounds: but *the sorrow of the world*; that is, of covetous and worldly-minded men, who have unreasonably set their affections upon this world, hath nothing to set bounds and give limits to it. And therefore, by the just judgment of God, it sometimes proceeds so far as to work death. Many mens hearts have been broken for the loss of an estate, or some great cross and disappointment

pointment in their worldly affairs and designs. Thus Abal, upon the very apprehension of the danger that he and his estate were in, and had so narrowly escaped, was struck with grief to the degree of stupidity, so that *his heart died within him, and he became as a stone*; and in few days he died of that grief.

2. We are not to be troubled for present afflictions and sufferings to the degree of impatience and discontent, as to fret and murmur in our hearts against God, and charge him *foolishly*, as if he dealt hardly with us, and had not a due regard for us, and an equal consideration of our case. For we are all sinners, and always deserve to suffer; and therefore whatever temporal evils befall the best men in this world, they are always *less than their iniquities have deserved*: and yet men are very prone to censure and find fault with God, for the evils and calamities which they draw down upon themselves. Solomon observes, Prov. xix. 3. *The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord.* We suffer for our own sins and follies, and men are angry with God because we suffer. God is angry with us for our sins; and when he is angry with us, and *lifts up his hand against us*, it becomes us to *humble ourselves under his mighty hand*; for *who can stand before him when once he is angry?* But we have no cause to fret against him, for the evils which we bring upon ourselves: besides, that fretting is not the way to relieve and ease us, but to vex and gall us the more.

3. As to the fear and apprehension of future evils, though we ought to have a just sense of them, yet we ought not to be dejected and troubled for them to the degree of despondency, so as to conclude ourselves miserable and forsaken, utterly lost and undone, and that our case is past all help and remedy: we should not be dejected, as if we were destitute of all comfort, and utterly without hope. Hope lies at the bottom of the worst condition; for while we are not *without God*, we can never be *without hope*; so long as the government of the world is in so good hands, our case can never be desperate; and therefore we ought to rebuke the despondency of our spirits, as David did, Psal. xliiii. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou dis-*
quieted

quieted within me? hope in God. And we should suppose ourselves in the greatest dangers and fears, as he did Psal. iii. 1. 2. 3. *Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? how many are they that rise up against me? Man there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter up of my head.*

And this cause of trouble, upon the fear and apprehension of future evils, was the case of the disciples who were mightily dejected and disturbed, upon the apprehension of the destitute condition they should be in upon our Saviour's departure from them; that they should be exposed to a malicious world, without a manner of protection from those innumerable evils and dangers which threatened them. And this I shall have most particular respect to in my following discourse, it being more particularly intended by our Saviour, and being one of the most common causes of trouble in the world. I proceed therefore, in the

Second place, to consider, what force there is in the remedy here prescribed by our Saviour, to mitigate and allay our troubles, both in respect of our present evils and sufferings, and the danger and apprehension of future evils, and to support and comfort our minds under them. *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

In which words our Saviour prescribes a double remedy against trouble.

First, Faith in God, the great Creator and wise Governor of the world: *Ye believe in God, or, Believe ye in God;* to which he adds, in the

Second place, Faith likewise in himself, the Son of God, and the Saviour of men: *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.* Not as if faith in God were not a sufficient ground of consolation and support of our minds; but to acquaint us, that a firm faith in him who is the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, would very much tend to confirm and strengthen our trust and confidence in God; as will clearly appear, when I come to shew what peculiar considerations of comfort and support the Christian religion offers to us, beyond what the common light and reason of mankind, from the considera-

tion of the divine nature and perfections, does suggest thus. And to explain the full strength and force of these two considerations, I shall do these two things.

First, I shall endeavour to shew, what considerations of comfort and support the belief of a God, and the natural notions and acknowledgments of mankind concerning him, do afford to good men, for the allaying and mitigating of their fears and troubles. And,

Secondly, What farther considerations faith in Christ, and the firm belief of the Christian religion, do afford to this purpose. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

First, To shew, what considerations of comfort and support the belief of a God, and the natural notions and acknowledgments of mankind concerning him, do afford to good men, for the allaying and mitigating of their fears and troubles; which I shall briefly deduce thus.

The firm belief and persuasion of a God does necessarily infer the belief of his infinite power, and wisdom, and holiness, and goodness; for these are necessary and essential perfections of the divine nature, without which we cannot conceive such a being as God is. Now, from these essential perfections of the divine nature, these two principles do naturally result.

I. That his providence governs the world, and administers the affairs of it, particularly of mankind, with great goodness and wisdom.

II. That his providence is more peculiarly concerned for good men, and that he hath a very tender and peculiar care of them, and regard to them.

Now, these two principles, concerning which I have discoursed at large upon another occasion *, afford us this fourfold ground of comfort, under all the evils that we labour under, and are afraid of.

I. If God govern the world, then we and all our interests and concernments are certainly in the best and safest hands; and where, if we know how to wish well and wisely for ourselves, we should desire to have them; and therefore why should our heart be troubled at any thing that doth or can befall us †?

* See Vol. 6. sermon 138.

† See this matter also handled at large in the same sermon.

II. Another ground of comfort is, That if the providence of God have a particular regard to good men, and favour for them, then we may be assured, that if we be careful of our duty to God, and rely upon his goodness and refer ourselves to his pleasure, in the final issue and result of things, all shall turn to our good, and consist in our happiness: nay, if we make the best use of our evils and afflictions which befall us, and bear them as we ought, we ourselves may do a great deal to turn them to our benefit and advantage; to the bettering of our minds, and the improvement of our virtues, and the increase of our reward. And why should we be troubled so much at things which may prove so many ways beneficial to us, if it be not our own fault? which tend to our good, and will end in it, if we will but with patience have its perfect work, as St James shews, chap. v. II. in the instance of Job, whose admirable patience had a glorious end and reward, even in this world. *You have heard, says he, of the patience of Job, and the end God made with him; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.* Job, upon a dunghill, is but whit inferior to the most glorious prince that ever sat upon a throne. Some men have been more illustrious and, according to the true rate and value of things, more considerable for their patience, and courage, and constancy of mind in great afflictions and sufferings, than the greatest pomp and prosperity in the world could possibly have made them. Some have borne poverty, and sickness, and reproach, and persecution, and exquisite pains and torments, with so much decency, with such greatness of mind, and firmness of resolution, as might justly provoke the envy of the greatest and wealthiest, and, to all outward appearance, the happiest persons that ever were in the world. M. Antoninus was an excellent good man, and perhaps the greatest Emperor that ever was, for in his time the Roman empire was at its greatest extent; and yet it is hard to say whether Epictetus, whose example I proposed before and who lived about the same time with this great and good Emperor, I say, it is not easy to say, whether this poor man Epictetus, who was depressed into the lowest and most afflicted condition, that human nature is al-

most capable of, were not, by reason of those admirable virtues which shined so brightly in that dark and dismal condition, his invincible patience, his perfect submission to the providence of God, the perpetual cheerfulness and serenity, the unmoveable constancy and equality of his mind, according to a right estimation of things, the greater and more glorious person of the two.

So that good men are always secure, as to the main end the essentials of happiness; under all outward afflictions and sufferings of the body, they may still retain a wise and virtuous mind, which is *that good part which cannot be taken from them*; and if they retain that, they are sure of the favour of God, and the countenance of heaven, which alone is sufficient to make any condition happy.

III. Another ground of comfort is, That if God govern the world, he can either prevent and divert the greatest evils that threaten us, or if they come upon us, he can support us under them, and deliver us out of them: and if we be good, and it be for our good, he will do one of these for us; either he will prevent the evil, that it shall not come, if that be best for us; or if affliction fall heavy upon us, he will support us under it; and if our strength be increased in proportion to the weight of our burden, it is as well as if we had escaped it, may perhaps much better, considering the benefit and reward of it. But how grievous soever it be, he can, when he pleaseth, deliver us from it; and he will do it presently, if it be for our good; and if it be not, it is not really desirable to us to be so soon freed from it.

IV. and lastly, which is consequent upon the former particulars, It is certain upon the whole matter, and upon the balancing of all accounts, that in every condition good men have much more cause of comfort and joy, than of dejection and trouble. Let our fears be as great, and our present sufferings as heavy as they can, there are considerations of so great moment to be put into the other scale, as will infinitely outweigh them, and make them seem light. The consideration of our immortal duration in a future state, and of the endless and unspeakable happiness of another world, are of that solidity and weight, that *these light afflictions,*

afflictions, as the Apostle calls them, *which are but a moment, are in no wise worthy to be compared with the*

What though our passage through this world be ever so stormy and tempestuous, we shall at last arrive at a safe port. Heaven is a sure sanctuary and refuge from all the evils and afflictions which we are liable to and which many times pursue us so close in this mortal state. It is but exercising our faith and patience for a very little while, and all will be well with us; much better than if we had never been afflicted, and had been wholly exempted from all sorts of sufferings in this world. We have no pretence to *the crown of life* we do not overcome; and there can be no conquest without some conflict.

But because the Christian religion does give us the greatest, if not the only firm assurance of the happiness of another life, which, when all is done, is the great support and cordial of our fainting spirits, under the troubles and afflictions of this life, therefore I shall now enlarge farther upon it, but refer it to the second head of my discourse, which I proposed to speak to in the next place, *viz.* What farther considerations of comfort and support, faith in Christ, and the firm belief of the Christian religion, do afford to good men, for the allaying and mitigating of their fears and troubles. *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.* But this I shall refer to some other opportunity.

S E R M O N CCXVI.

The true remedy against the troubles of life.

JOHN xiv. I.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

The second sermon on this text. *17 Dec*

Have considered these words as an universal remedy against trouble: and in shewing what virtue and force there is in this remedy, I have considered,

First, That faith in God is a proper and most powerful means to mitigate and allay our trouble, and to support and quiet our minds under it.

I now proceed, in the second place, to shew what farther considerations of comfort and support, faith in Christ, and the firm belief in the Christian religion, do afford good men, for the allaying and mitigating of their greatest fears and troubles. *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.* I shall mention these five.

I. Faith in Christ, or the belief of the Christian religion, gives us full and perfect assurance of immortality, and of the glorious and eternal rewards of another world.

II. It promiseth to every sincere Christian the inward assistance, and support, and comfort of God's Holy Spirit, to bear up the weakness of human nature under its heaviest pressures of fear, or grief, or pain.

III. It assures us of the special efficacy of our prayers with God, either for our deliverance from trouble, or for the aids and supports of his grace under it.

IV. It propounds to us the best and most admirable pattern that ever was, of patience and constancy of mind under the apprehension of approaching evils, or

the sense of present sufferings ; and of a contented and chearful submission to the will of God in the sadder condition to which human nature is incident.

V. It assures us of a most compassionate, and prevalent, and perpetual patron, and advocate, and intercessor with God for us.

I. Faith in Christ, or the doctrine of the Christian religion, gives a full and perfect assurance of immortality, and of the glorious and eternal rewards of another world. Of this the world was very doubtful and uncertain before, and had but obscure and wavering apprehensions about it. And though the generality of mankind had naturally some glimmering apprehensions of another life after this, and secret hopes and expectations of a future reward for good men that were hardly used in this world ; yet the philosophers had wrangled and disputed the matter into so much uncertainty, that mankind was very much staggered about it, and the doubts and difficulties that were raised about it did very much break the force, and weaken the influence of so great and weighty a consideration.

Thus it was among the Gentiles. And under the law of Moses, though the Jews had such apprehensions of their own immortality, and of a future state of reward and punishments, as natural light suggested to them ; yet that covenant and dispensation added but very little to the clearing of these notions, and the strengthening of this persuasion in the minds of men ; it did rather suppose it, than add any new strength and force to it. For under that dispensation the eyes of men were generally fixed upon temporal promises and threatenings ; though as the time of the Messias grew nearer, and the sufferings of that people sharper, they began to have clearer apprehensions of a resurrection to another and better life ; it being natural to men, when they are destitute of present comfort, to cherish and make much of the future hopes of a better condition.

And therefore we find that the people of the Jews when they had been long exercised with great afflictions began to comfort and support themselves with the hopes of a blessed resurrection to a better life ; as is evident from the history of the seven brethren in the

accabees, who with great patience and courage bore under the most exquisite torments, in confidence of being raised again to a blessed state in another world. And of these it is that the Apostle certainly speaks, Heb. . 35. when he says, *that some were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.*

But the Apostle tells us expressly, 2 Tim. i. 10. that the clear and certain discovery of a future state is owing to the Christian religion, and *made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ; who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.* Not only natural light, but all the revelations which God had made to the world before, had this weakness and imperfection in them, that they did not give men the clear discovery and full assurance of another life; and consequently had but little efficacy in comparison to engage men to their duty, or to support and comfort them under sufferings: and therefore the Apostle to the Hebrews calls the gospel, in opposition to the law, *the power of an endless life*, Heb. vii. 16. intimating to us, how great a force and influence the clear apprehensions of another life are apt to have upon the minds of men. For which reason the same apostle tells us, ver. 8. 19. that the law was too weak to raise men to the perfection of virtue and goodness, because it did not work strongly enough upon the hopes of men, by the greatness and clearness of its promises; and that for this weakness it was removed, and a more powerful and awakening dispensation brought in the place of it: *For verily, says he, there is an annulling of the commandment going before, meaning the law of Moses, which by the gospel was abrogated and made void, for the weakness and unprofitableness of it; for the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did.* For which reason, chap. viii. 6. he calls the covenant of the gospel, *a better covenant*, because *it was established upon better promises, viz. the promise of an eternal inheritance*, as the same apostle speaks, chap. ix. 15. All the express promises of the law were only of temporal good things, but the promises of the gospel are of eternal life and happiness: *This is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life*, says St John, 1 John ii. 25.

Now, the firm persuasion of another life does not only answer that great difficulty and objection against the providence of God, from the seeming injustice and inequality of his dealings with good and bad men in this world, because the eternal rewards and punishments of another world will set all things straight, and make abundant amends to good men, for all their sufferings and afflictions here; and will render the prosperity of bad men one of the greatest aggravations of their misery: as it is said of Babylon, Rev. xviii. *How much she hath glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her.* In like manner God will deal with wicked men in another world; the torments shall rise in proportion to the pleasure and prosperity they have enjoyed and abused in this world. This remarkable change of condition which shall befall good and bad men, in another world, is set forth to us in a very lively and affecting manner in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 25. where Abraham is represented speaking thus to the rich man, *So remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* He is comforted in proportion to his sufferings in this world; and thou art tormented in proportion to the sensual pleasures and luxuries of thy former life. Men, under great want and sufferings are apt to think their lot in this world very hard; and yet upon the whole matter, and taking all things into consideration, who would not much rather chuse to be Lazarus with his hard fortune in this world, and everlasting consolation in the other, than the rich man drowned in pleasure in this world, and tormented in flames in the other? I say, the firm belief of another life does not only answer this objection against the divine providence but does likewise minister abundant comfort and matter of joy to good men, under all their fears and troubles in this world. Nay, this consideration alone of a blessed immortality in another world, of which only the Christian religion hath given us full and undoubted assurance, is of that weight and moment, as to contribute more to the support of our spirits under the evils

evils and calamities of this life, than all the considerations of philosophy put together. They are many of them pleasant and pretty, and fit enough to entertain and divert a man's mind under a slight trouble; but they are too speculative and refined for common capacities, too thin and weak to bear any great stress, and to support and relieve a man's mind under a sore and heavy affliction: but this is a consideration which hath strength and substance in it, that all things will end in an unspeakable happiness, and that this happiness shall have no end. This the Apostle St Paul speaks of as a proper consideration of comfort, of which we are assured by the Christian religion, that all the evils of this life shall in the last issue and result of things co-operate to our happiness: Rom. viii. 28. *We know, says he, that all things work together for good to them that love God.* And 2 Cor. iv. 16. 17. 18. *For which cause we faint not, &c.* The Apostle gives us an account, how they were afflicted and persecuted, and what it was that supported them under all their sufferings, ver. 8. 9. 10. 11. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of our Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus's sake.* And then he tells us what it was that kept up the spirits of Christians under these sharp sufferings, viz. the assurance which the Christian religion gives us of a resurrection to a better and happier life, ver. 14. *Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus.* And then it follows, ver. 16. *For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day; that though our bodies be wasted and weakened, yet everyday we grow stronger in the resolution of our minds, because our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal.* And then, at the beginning of the next

chapter, he still urgeth the same consideration of comfort, that so soon as we pass out of the troubles of this life, we shall enter upon the happiness of the other. *For we know, that is, we Christians are assured, that our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* Here you see is the great ground of the confidence and comfort in the worst condition, and under the most grievous persecutions which they were continually exposed to.

And therefore our Saviour and his apostles make no scruple to pronounce those persons blessed, who, in respect of their sufferings, seemed to be of all men in the world the most miserable; and they pronounce them happy, upon this very account of their suffering. Matth. v. 10. 11. 12. *Blessed are they, says our Saviour, which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.* Great sufferings for God, in this world, do intitle us, by virtue of this gracious promise of our Lord, to a glorious reward in the other. So likewise St James exhorts Christians to rejoice in their sufferings, James i. 2. *My brethren, account it all joy when ye fall into divers trials.* And, chap. v. 11. *Behold, says he, we count them happy which endure.* And St Peter, to the same purpose 1 Pet. iv. 14. *If ye be persecuted for righteousness sake, happy are ye.* So solid a comfort to men under all the troubles and afflictions of this world, is that firm assurance which the Christian religion gives us of a future happiness, as to bring even the greatest miseries, which in this life we are liable to, in some sense under the notion of blessedness.

And this was not only fine talk, like the glorious brags of the Stoics; but the primitive Christians, infinite examples, gave the real proof and evidence of it, in their constant and chearful behaviour under the most cruel and intolerable torments. *Non magnamur, sed vivimus,* says Tertullian, in the name of the Christians: "We do not talk great things, but we
" then

them; and demonstrate the real effect of our words and profession in our lives and actions." Never did the arguments fetched from another world, and the assurance of a blessed immortality, display their force and virtue more, than in the joyful sufferings of the first Christians, and their generous contempt of all that was dear to them in this world, *in hope of that eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised*; and which the Son of God had ensured to them, by his resurrection from the dead.

II. The Christian religion promiseth to every sincere Christian, the inward assistance, and support, and comfort of God's Holy Spirit, to bear up the weakness of human nature under its heaviest pressures of fear or suffering. And this is peculiar to the Christian religion: for though the providence of God did take particular care of good men in all ages, and he did always in some good measure assist them to do their duty, and afford comfort and support to them under great trials and sufferings; yet God never made so express and general a promise of this to all good men, as he hath done by the Christian religion. Never was so constant a presence and influence of the divine Spirit vouchsafed and assured to men under any dispensation, as that of the gospel, wherein the Spirit of God is promised to all that sincerely embrace the Christian religion, to reside and dwell in them, not only to all the purposes of sanctification and holiness, but of support and comfort under all troubles and suffering; for which reason the gospel is called *the ministration of the Spirit*; and is upon this account said to be more glorious than any other revelation which God had ever made to mankind. And therefore this is said to be essential to every Christian, to have the Spirit of God dwell in him. Rom. viii. 9. 10. speaking of all true Christians, *Ye are, saith St Paul, not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* So that every sincere Christian is made partaker of the promise of the Spirit through faith; that is, by his belief of the Christian religion, he is under the immediate conduct and influence of God's Holy Spirit, and hath this blessed guide and Comforter

forter always present with him, nay, continually dwelling and residing in him, if we do not grieve and quench, and drive him away from us by our ill treatment of him and resistance of his blessed motions.

And this promise of the Spirit our Saviour had a very particular respect to, when he prescribes faith in himself as a special remedy against that trouble which possessed their minds, upon the apprehension of his departure from them; and therefore he tells them so often, that when he was gone from them, he would send them another Comforter or Advocate, who should undertake their cause, and would stand by them in their greatest troubles and temptations: He tells them, that he himself would be an Advocate for them in heaven: but because that was at a great distance, and might not be so sensible a comfort to them, he promiseth to send them another Advocate, that should be present with them here on earth, and upon all occasions undertake their patronage and defence. So that all things considered, he assures them there was so little reason to be troubled at his departure from them, that they had cause rather to be glad of it, because it would turn to their great advantage; and instead of the benefit of his outward teaching and presence, they should have the inward presence and teaching of his Spirit, and the continual aids and supports of his grace.

I go my way, says he, John xvi. 5. 6. 7. I go my way to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? but because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And so the evangelist tells us before, chap. vii. 29. that *the Spirit was not to be given, till Jesus was first glorified.* This, says he, *spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified;* plainly declaring, that, according to the wise dispensation of God, it was so ordered, that the sending of the Holy Ghost for the propagating of the gospel, by those miraculous powers which were to be conferred upon the first publishers

thers of it, and for the supporting and comforting of Christians under the sharp trials and sufferings to which they were to be exposed, was the fruit of *Christ's ascension into heaven*, and *his sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high*, and the first boon which he should obtain of his Father, by the virtue and power of his intercession. *I will pray the Father*, says he, ver. 16. of this chapter, *and he shall send you another Advocate, the Spirit of truth, and he shall abide with you for ever. He will send you another Comforter*; so our translation renders the word *παράκλητος*, but it most properly signifies *advocate or patron*, that undertakes our defence, and pleads our cause for us. And this the Holy Ghost, in a most eminent and remarkable manner, was to the apostles and first Christians, when they were called to answer for themselves before kings and governors. They were generally men of low condition and mean proceeding, easily dashed out of countenance before great men; and therefore our Saviour promised that the Holy Ghost should be their Advocate, and should prompt and assist them in the pleading of their cause. Matth. 18. 19. 20. *Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak: for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father, which speaketh in you.* Or, as it is in St Luke, chap. xii. ver. 12. *The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.* And yet more fully, chap. xxi. ver. 12. 14. 15.; where, speaking again of their being brought before kings and rulers for his name's sake, he gives them this charge: *Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, nor resist.*

And this promise we find remarkably made good to St Stephen, Acts vi. 10. of whom it is there said, that *his enemies were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.* And to St Paul likewise, when he was first called to answer for himself at Rome, as he himself tells Timothy, 2 Tim. iv. 16. 17. *At my first answer*

answer no man stood with me; but all men forsook me notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.

And though this was extraordinary, yet all Christians have, by virtue of this promise, the ordinary assistance and comfort of God's Holy Spirit in all their troubles and afflictions. By this Spirit we may in all our distresses with confidence make our addresses to God, *having access by one Spirit to the Father*, as St Paul speaks, Eph. 18. By the same Spirit we are assisted in our prayers and directed many times what to ask of God, suitable to the condition which his providence designs to bring into; which seems to be the Apostle's meaning, Rom. viii. 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us; that is, suggesteth to us such requests as are fit for us to put up to God.* By the same Spirit is secretly infused into our souls *peace and joy in believing, great consolation and good hope through grace.* Hence are those expressions in scripture, *the consolation of the Spirit*, and of *joy in the Holy Ghost*, the best cordial in the world in all cases of trouble.

And in extraordinary cases, good men, by virtue of this promise of the Spirit, may expect to be borne up and comforted in a very extraordinary and supernatural manner, under the greatest tribulations and sufferings *for righteousness sake.* This was very signal and remarkable in the primitive Christians, who were exposed to the most fierce and cruel persecutions; and may still be expected in like cases of extraordinary suffering for the testimony of God's truth. *If ye be reproached, saith St Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 14. for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.* The Spirit of God is there promised, to strengthen and support all that suffer for the name of Christ, in a very conspicuous and glorious manner; according to that prayer of St Paul, Col. i. 11. *that Christians might be strengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power, unto all long-suffering with joyfulness.* For when God exerciseth good men with trials more than human, and sufferings which are beyond the ordinary rate of human strength and patience to bear, he hath engaged himself

himself to assist and endow them with more than human courage and resolution. So St Paul tells the Corinthians, who had not yet felt the utmost rage of persecution, 1 Cor. x. 12. *No temptation, or trial, hath yet befallen ye, but what is common to men; nothing but what is frequently incident to human nature, and what, by an ordinary assistance of God's grace, men may grapple with; but in case God calls men to extraordinary sufferings, He is faithful that hath promised, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* And why should we be daunted at the weight of an affliction, if we be well assured that our strength shall be increased in proportion to our burden?

And where-ever this promise is not made good, there is some defect on our part; either men are not sincere in the profession of the truth, and then no wonder if they fall for fear of suffering; or they have been too confident of themselves, and have not, with that earnestness and importunity they ought, prayed to God for his grace and assistance, and thereupon God hath justly left them to try their strength against a violent and powerful temptation: as he did Peter, who, for all his confidence, did, upon no very great temptation, deny his Saviour; but even in this case, where there is truth and sincerity at the bottom, God gives to such persons, as he did to Peter, the opportunity of recovering themselves by repentance.

There are three particulars more remain, but I shall proceed no farther at this time.

S E R.

S E R M O N CCXVIII

The true remedy against the troubles of li

JOHN xiv. I.

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, belie
also in me.*

24 Du

The third sermon on this text.

From these words I proposed to shew, what for
and virtue there is in the remedy propos
by our Saviour, to mitigate and allay our tro
bles; and I told you that our Saviour here prescrib
a double remedy.

First, Faith in God, the great Creator and Govern
of the world.

Secondly, Faith in himself, the Son of God and Sa
viour of men. I have spoken to the first, and hav
likewise entered upon the

Second; And here I propounded to shew, what farthe
considerations of comfort and support, faith in Christ
and the firm belief of the Christian religion, do affor
to good men, for the allaying and mitigating of thei
greatest fears and troubles. And I mentioned five.

I. Faith in Christ gives us full assurance of immorta
lity, and the rewards of another world.

II. It promiseth to every sincere Christian, the in
ward assistance and support of God's Holy Spirit. Thu
far I have gone. I now proceed.

III. It assures us of the special efficacy of our prayers
with God, either for our deliverance from trouble, or
for the aids and supports of his grace under it.

Now, concerning the great efficacy of our prayers
with God, there are several very particular and remark
able promises and declarations in the New Testa
ment.

nant, Matth. vii. 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* Matth. xxi. 22. *And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* John xv. 7. *I will abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* But then he directs us to put up our petitions to God in his name, as the way to make them prevalent. John xiv. 13. *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* And chap. xi. 23. 24. he repeats this promise again for their support and comfort under the tribulations which they should endure. *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, and your joy may be full.* And again, ver. 26. 27. *At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you.* He assures them of God's merciful inclination towards them; and if it would add any thing to their comfortable assurance of having their prayers heard, he could have told them, *that he would pray the Father for them.* St James particularly comforts the Christians under their trials upon this consideration, that God is ready to give wisdom and strength to us when we mean ourselves as we ought under sufferings, if we heartily beg it of him, James i. 2. 3. 4. 5. *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience: but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* And since this requires great wisdom, to bear great afflictions with patience, therefore he adds, that God is always ready to grant this wisdom and grace to those that heartily beg of him. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.* I John iii. 22. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.* And chap. v. 14. 15. *And this is the confidence*

that we have in him, that is, we Christians: for he has said before, *These things have I written unto you, that ye believe on the name of the Son of God; and then it follows, And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired him;* that is, though we have not presently the thing we prayed for, yet we are as sure of it as if we had it. The earnest prayer of every sincere Christian is very powerful and available with God. So St James assures us, chap. v. 16. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much; much more the united prayers of the faithful.* So our Saviour declares, Matth. xviii. 19. *Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching the thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

All these promises and declarations do certainly signify a more special efficacy and prevalency of the prayers of Christians. And though there was a miraculous power of prayer in the primitive times, which is not ceased, and of which St James plainly speaks, chap. v. 14. 15. *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up:* Yet it is certain that these promises extend farther to the efficacy of the prayers of the faithful in such cases. And so our Saviour extends this promise, Matth. xx. 22. for after he had said in the verse before, *Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree; but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done.* After that he immediately subjoins, *And all things whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;* hereby declaring that the efficacy of the prayers of Christians was not limited only to those miraculous effects, which were but to continue for a time, but that this promise was to be extended to the prayers of the faithful in all cases and all times.

And indeed all the grounds and reasons of the efficacy and prevalency of our prayers, which are mentioned in the New Testament, do equally concern Christians in all times; as that we pray to God in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, upon which our Saviour very frequently, when he makes this promise, lays great stress, and seems to render it as the reason of the special efficacy of our prayers. John xiv. 13. 14. *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, at the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* And chap. xvi. 3. 24. *Verily, verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive.*

Another reason of the acceptance and prevalency of our prayers, is, that the Spirit of God which dwells in all true Christians does help our weakness, and secretly directs us to ask of God those things which are according to his will, and does, as it were, intercede for us. Rom. viii. 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we shall pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.* And ver. 17. *And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.* And no wonder if those petitions are very prevalent, which we are assisted and directed to put up to God, according to his will.

And this certainly is a great comfort under any trouble, that we can have free access to God by prayer, in confidence that he will grant us those requests which we put up to him according to his will. And this the Apostle to the Hebrews mentions more than once, as an argument to them to continue stedfast in the profession of their religion, notwithstanding the persecution that attended it, because we may, at all times, address ourselves to God in confidence of his gracious help and assistance, Heb. iv. 16. After he had exhorted them to hold fast their profession, as an encouragement thereto, he adds the free access we may have to God for his help and support: *Let us therefore, says he, come boldly:*

or with great freedom and confidence, *to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find favour with him for our seasonable help and succour.* And to the same purpose, chap. x. 19. 20. *Having therefore, brethren, freedom to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; that having access to God in prayer by Jesus Christ; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; that is, in perfect confidence that our prayers will be graciously heard and answered: upon which he adds, Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that hath promised:* if we continue stedfast to God, and the profession of his truth, he will manifest good all that he hath promised, both of present support under our sufferings, and of the glorious reward of them in another life: he will hear our prayers, and grant us the aids and supplies of his grace as we stand in need of them.

IV. The Christian religion propounds to us the best and most admirable pattern that ever was of patience and constancy of mind under the apprehension of approaching evils, or the sense of our present suffering, and of a contented and chearful submission to the will of God in the saddest condition to which human nature is incident; and that is the pattern of our blessed Saviour, who, for this reason among others, was so great a sufferer in so many kinds, that he might go before us in the rough and difficult way, and *leave us an example that we should follow his steps,* that we might learn from him how to calm and quiet our spirits, to appease and subdue the tumults of our passions, under the severest dispensations of God's providence towards us, and to bend our wills to a patient submission to the will of our heavenly Father, under the sorest afflictions and sharpest sufferings. For though our blessed Saviour prayed so earnestly to his Father, that *that bitter cup might pass from him,* yet how quietly and chearfully did he resign and yield himself to the will of God, saying, *Yet not my will, but thine be done?* Human nature shrunk and gave back at the sight of his dreadful sufferings: but his reason overruled the inclinations of nature, and kept him to a steady resolution of submitting to the will of God. And therefore when Peter attempted his rescue, he commanded

he to desist, saying, *Put thy sword into the sheath: the sword which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* *Jan xviii. 11.* And though he had as quick a sense of suffering as any man, yet with what *patience did he possess his soul!* with what meekness and humility of spirit did he bear and yield to it! *He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, he opened not his mouth. When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; he committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* And thus it became the Captain of our salvation, that he might be a perfect pattern to us of patience and submission to the will of God, of a meek and undisturbed mind, under the greatest bodily pains, and the extreme anguish of his soul, *to be made perfect by sufferings.*

So that under the greatest present evils, or the most fearful apprehension of future evil and suffering, we should fix our eye stedfastly upon this great and glorious example of patience, and constancy, and meekness; of a true sense, and yet of a most decent behaviour under the heaviest load of affliction, that was ever laid upon any of the sons of men; looking, as the Apostle exhorts, *Heb. xii. 2. 3. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame; and considering him, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be weary and faint in our minds.*

And surely, if we would but let our minds dwell a while upon this consideration of the sufferings of the Son of God, and his great meekness, and patience, and submission to the will of God under them, it would rightly conduce to the mitigating of our trouble, and bringing us to *possess our souls in patience*, in the saddest condition that can befall us.

And what consideration more proper for us than this, when we are going to receive the blessed sacrament, wherein the sufferings of the Son of God are represented to us, in the symbols of his body broken, and his blood shed for the remission of our sins? and there are many considerations which this sight is apt to suggest to us, which are so many powerful arguments to quiet and

comfort our minds under the greatest troubles and sufferings which we are liable to; such as these.

1. The grievous sufferings, which the Son of God was exposed to, do clearly shew us that the good things of this life are not so valuable, nor the evils and sufferings of it so considerable, as we are apt to fancy and imagine; when the best man that ever lived was so destitute even of the common comforts and conveniences of human life, and had so large a share of the calamities and sufferings of it. If we could but rectify our opinion of things, it would go a great way in making any of the evils and afflictions of this life tolerable. God see good to reduce us to poverty and want, let us think of him, who *being Lord of all, had not where to lay his head*; who *being rich, for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might be made rich*. To be destitute of worldly accommodations cannot seem dismal and despicable a sight, when we consider what a lot it was to live in a low and indigent condition; the very consideration whereof doth not only make poverty tolerable, but even glorious.

So likewise, when we are *persecuted for righteousness sake*, and exercised with sufferings and reproaches when we are ready to be discouraged in well-doing, the opposition we meet withal from the ingratitude of men, and the malicious interpretation of our good actions, perverting the best things, done with the best mind and to the best end, to some ill purpose and design: let us *look to Jesus*, and consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, and this will help to abate the hideous apprehension of these things.

2. The sufferings of the Son of God are a demonstration to us, that the love and favour of God, wherein the chief happiness of man consists, are not to be estimated and measured by outward prosperity in this world; much less can it be concluded from temporal afflictions and sufferings, that God hath no favour and kindness for those whom he thinks fit to exercise with them. For we see plainly, by this instance of the grievous sufferings of his Son, that God may most deeply wound and afflict those whom he most dearly loves; and if we can be secure of the favour of God, and his loving-kindness

ess, why should our hearts be troubled and dismayed at the apprehension of any evil that can befall us?

God may love his children, and yet chasten them very severely: nay, that he does so, is rather an argument that they are his children, and that he loves them, and is concerned for them. So I am sure the Apostle teacheth us to argue, Heb. xii. 6. 7. 8. *For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.* The heaviest and most grievous load of sufferings that ever was laid on any man, God permitted to be laid on his only begotten Son, the dearly beloved of his soul, in whom he was well pleased. The greater our afflictions are, and the more we suffer for righteousness sake, so much the liker are we to the Son of God, and so much the more likely to be the sons and children of God. It is true, as the Apostle tells us, that *no affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous*: but surely it is a great mitigation of it, to consider what a glorious example and argument of patience our religion proposeth to us, for our encouragement under sufferings: that the best man that ever was, lived in the most afflicted condition; and the greatest sufferer that ever was, or can be, was the dearly beloved Son of God.

3. In the victorious sufferings of the Son of God, we see the world conquered to our hand, all the terrors and temptations of it disarmed, and all its force baffled and broken. This consideration our Saviour makes use of to support the faint spirits of his disciples, under the melancholy apprehensions which they had of sufferings, John xvi. 33. *In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.* The great work is done to our hands; affliction and death are vanquished and overcome by him. That conquest which the *Captain of our salvation* hath already made of all the powers of darkness, renders our victory over them cheap and easy.

4. The temptations and sufferings of our Lord were greater than ours are or can be; for he bore the heavy and

and insupportable load of all the sins of all mankind and of the wrath and vengeance due to them. *The Lord hath laid on him, saith the Prophet, II. liii. 6. ; the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all; he was oppressed and afflicted.* And well might he be oppressed with affliction, who had such an intolerable burden as the sins of all mankind to press him down. That passage is commonly applied to him, and well might he cry out in that manner, *Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.* Such were the sufferings of our Lord so great and so grievous, as none of us are in any degree able to undergo. That weight under which he crouched, would crush us; that which he was hardly able to sustain, would certainly sink us; and do we complain and faint in our minds, when but a very little part of the punishment due to us only for our own sins is inflicted upon us? The consideration of the heavy and unknown sufferings of the Son of God should make all our afflictions not only tolerable, but light.

5. And yet we have in effect the same support that he had. We are apt to be very much disheartened and discouraged at the apprehension of sufferings, from the consideration of our own weakness and frailty; but *the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, and the same glorious power that raised up Jesus from the dead, works mightily on them that believe.* St Paul useth very high expressions in this matter, Eph. i. 19. 20. *That ye may know, says he, speaking in general of all Christians, what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him on his own right hand.* So that every sincere Christian is endowed with a kind of omnipotency, being able, as St Paul says of himself, *to do all things through Christ strengthening him.* We are of ourselves very weak, and the temptations and terrors of the world are very powerful; but there is a principle residing in every true Christian, that is able to bear us up against the world and the power of all its temptations. *Whatsoever is born of God, says St John, overcometh the world: for greater*

greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. The Holy Spirit of God which dwells in all true Christians is a more powerful principle of resolution, and courage, and patience, under the sharpest trials and sufferings, than that evil spirit which rules in the world to stir up and set on the malice and rage of the world against us. *Ye are of God, and have overcome the world; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

6. Let us consider farther, for whom and for what our blessed Lord suffered. Not for himself; but for our sake: not for any fault of his own; for *he had no sin*; but for our sins. He was perfectly innocent: but we are great and grievous offenders. We suffer upon our own account: but he only for our sakes, and for our salvation. So that the example of our Lord's sufferings hath an irresistible force and virtue in it, to argue us into patience and submission. Did he bear the load of our sins so willingly? did he *who had no sin* suffer so patiently, to free us from eternal sufferings? and shall we who are guilty think much to bear a small part of that burden, which he so cheerfully underwent for us, and which falls so much short of the due punishment of our fault? The penitent thief upon the cross urged the equity and force of this argument to patience, to his fellow-criminal, that they who had been guilty of such great crimes, and were justly condemned for them, ought to be patient under their sufferings. *We indeed, says he, are justly condemned; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.*

7. and lastly, If we consider the transcendent excellency and dignity of the person who underwent so great sufferings with so much meekness and patience, and with so even and undisturbed a mind, this will calm and allay our passions, and mitigate the troubles which befall us pitiful and inconsiderable creatures, in comparison of this *Prince of glory, and heir of everlasting bliss.* When we consider the meekness of this excellent person, *the eternal Son of God*, and with what submission and serenity of mind he demeaned himself under so great and continual provocations from his own creatures and beneficiaries, those whom he had made, and
whom

whom he came to save; shall we think much to be the indignities and affronts of our fellow-creatures? When we behold how contented this great person was in the meanest condition, how he welcomed all events and was so perfectly resigned to the will of his heavenly Father, that whatever pleased God, pleased him; shall we murmur at any condition which the providence of God allots to us, and repine at any event whatsoever?

Shall we resent injuries, and affronts, and calamities so hainously, as to be out of all temper and patience, when we consider with what meekness of temper, and how little emotion of mind the Son of God bore all these? *how he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to the that plucked off the hair, and with-held not his face from shame and spitting; how he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, he opened not his mouth; being reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not?*

To conclude, can we entertain thoughts of revenge towards the instruments of our sufferings, when we have such a pattern of forgiving before us, who poured out his blood for the expiation of the guilt of them that shed it, and spent his last breath in a most fervent and charitable prayer for his betrayers and murderers?

Thus we should propose to ourselves the pattern of our Lord's spirit and demeanour under sufferings, in whom meekness, and submission, and *patience had the perfect work; that the same mind may be in us, that was in Christ Jesus, and that as we have him for an example we may follow his steps.*

The last consideration of comfort and support under trouble, which the Christian religion gives us, remains yet to be spoken to, namely, that we are assured of a most compassionate, and prevalent, and perpetual patron, and advocate, and intercessor with God for us.

But this, together with the application of this whole discourse, I shall refer to the next opportunity.

S E R M O N CCXVIII.

The true remedy against the troubles of life.

JOHN xiv. I.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

The fourth sermon on this text.

Come now to the fifth and last ground of comfort, which the Christian religion affords to good men, for their support under trouble, namely, that it affords us of a most compassionate, and prevalent, and perpetual Patron, and Advocate, and Intercessor with God in heaven for us, namely, our blessed Saviour, who for the suffering of death was crowned with glory and honour, advanced at the right hand of God, where he sits in great majesty and glory, having all power in heaven and earth committed to him, and where he lives continually to make intercession for us.

And this is another consideration mentioned by our Saviour for the comfort of his disciples, who were sorrowful at the thoughts of his departure from them, that though he should leave the world, yet he should be highly advanced in heaven, where he would certainly employ all his favour, and power, and interest, for their benefit and advantage, and be an everlasting Patron and Advocate for those whose salvation he had purchased with so much sweat and blood, presenting our requests and prayers to God, in virtue of his most meritorious sacrifice and sufferings continually presented to his Father, perpetually soliciting our cause, and procuring for us all those blessings by his intercession in heaven, which he had purchased for us by his blood upon earth. For which reason, saith the Apostle, Heb.

vii. 25. *he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us; that is, he is able to perfect the work of our salvation, which he began here upon earth; and to procure for all those who address their prayers to God in his name, whatever is needful and convenient for us, because he is always at the right hand of God to second our prayers by his powerful intercession for us.*

And this is a ground of comfort, though not great and more substantial in itself than the other; yet more accommodated to our apprehensions, who are naturally apt to dread the majesty of God, and to seek out to some in favour with him, to be mediators and intercessors with God for us, and to present our prayers and requests to him. And this was the original of the addresses of the Heathens to the angels and souls departed as a kind of intermediate and inferior deities, to present their prayers, and intercede with the great God in their behalf. And as, in compliance with the general apprehension of mankind concerning the appeasing of a Deity by all sorts of sacrifices, God was pleased to provide one sacrifice, which by being once offered should obtain eternal redemption for us, and perfect for ever them that are sanctified, and by this means to put an end both to the carnal sacrifices of the law, and the barbarous inhuman sacrifices of the Pagan worship; so, in his condescension to the general inclinations of mankind to address themselves to God by several mediators and intercessors, God hath appointed *one only Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all*, thereby to put an end to the infinite superstition, which had obtained in the world for so many ages, of addressing their prayers to God by the mediation of good angels, and departed souls of their heroes and great men, who were, as I may so call them, the Pagan saints.

So that as under the gospel God hath appointed but one sacrifice for sin, that should be of eternal efficacy, so but one Mediator in heaven for sinners, to offer up our prayers to God, and to intercede continually for us in the power and virtue of that *one sacrifice once offered*

for the redemption of mankind. And therefore it is ever
 so whit as contrary to the genius and design of the
 Christian religion, to apply ourselves to other interces-
 sors with God in heaven for us, whether saints or angels,
 even the blessed virgin herself, as it would be to con-
 tinue still the Jewish sacrifices, not to say the Heathen.
 It is not clearer that there is but one proper sacrifice
 under the gospel, viz. that of Christ upon the cross,
 than that there is but one Mediator and Intercessor with
 God in heaven for us. Nay, St Paul speaks as if the
 Christian religion did no more admit of more mediators
 than one, than of more Gods than one, 1 Tim. ii. 5.
There is one God, and one Mediator between God and
men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for
all. Nor is the force of this plain text to be avoided,
 by saying that the Apostle here speaks of a mediator of
 redemption, as appears by the following words, *who gave*
himself a ransom for all. For it is plain likewise, that he
 speaks also of a mediator of intercession, and affirms him
 to be but one, as is evident from what goes before.
 The Apostle directs prayers and supplications to be made
 for all men, and then, at the 5th verse, to whom Chris-
 tians should address these prayers, and by whose me-
 diation, viz. to God, in the name and mediation of Je-
 sus Christ. For, says he, *there is one God, and one Me-*
diator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. So
 that the Apostle's discourse does as plainly infer, that
 there is but one mediator of intercession, as that there is
 but one mediator of redemption.

And indeed whosoever considers that quite throughout
 the New Testament our Saviour and his apostles do con-
 stantly direct Christians to make their prayers to God in the
 name and mediation of Jesus Christ, and no where give so
 much as the least intimation of applying ourselves to any
 other intercessors with God in heaven for us, may justly
 wonder how this superstition of praying to angels and
 saints departed, which hath no manner of countenance,
 and is by necessary consequence so clearly forbidden,
 should ever prevail among Christians; especially since
 it is a plain diminution of the virtue and efficacy of
 our Saviour's intercession; or if it add nothing to it, is
 perfectly vain and endless, and to no purpose. For

what need of any other intercessors with God in heaven for us, if that be true which the Apostle to the Hebrews most expressly affirms, that *Christ is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them?*

The prevalency and efficacy whereof may justly minister to us, in all our distresses and troubles, some peculiar ground of comfort above what springs from the bare contemplation of the divine nature; that we have powerful a friend to intercede with God for us, one dearly beloved of him, and so highly in his favour; and that is advanced *far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come*; and consequently able to do more for us, than all the blessed saints and angels in heaven, and more than all the powers of darkness can do against us.

And this is matter of great comfort to us upon the three considerations.

1. That our Advocate is so nearly related to us, having condescended, by assuming our nature, to be allied to us, to become *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh* so that we may address ourselves to him with great freedom and confidence, and as the Apostle expresseth Heb. iv. 16. *We may come with boldness to this throne of grace, for seasonable mercy and help in time of need.* For we may most assuredly believe, that he who stooped to be made man, and to become one of us, will, upon all occasions, most heartily be concerned for us, and ready to help us.

2. Considering that he hath already given the great demonstration of his kindness and compassion to us, we may be sure that he who hath done and suffered such things for our sakes, hath a very tender love and affection for us; he who was contented to die for us, will do for us any thing else that may do us good.

3. And that we might have no doubt of his forwardness and inclination to pity and relieve us, he suffered the most grievous things himself that any man could suffer, that from the experience and remembrance of his own sufferings, he might learn to compassionate us. And this the Apostle particularly insists upon, as

very comfortable consideration to us in all our trials and sufferings: Heb. iv. 15. 16. *For we have not an high priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are; yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* And chap. ii. 17. 18. *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest: for that he himself suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* So that we may rest assured of his pity and support in all our afflictions and trials, who knows both the infirmity of our nature, and hath himself had experience of greater sufferings than any of us either shall or can be exercised withal.

And as for the general concernment of his truth and religion, and church upon earth, that which all good men are with so much reason solicitous about, this is his proper care, and the great business that he is intent upon, now that he is in heaven, to protect and defend his truth and religion, and the church which professeth it, so that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* This is *his kingdom*, for the effectual administration whereof *all power in heaven and earth is committed to him.* And as he intercedeth with his Father for every particular Christian, so much more for *his church, which is his body*; to preserve her from all dangers that threaten her ruin, and to guard her against the power and malice of all her enemies. For to this end was he advanced to the right hand of God, that he might continue there, *till he had made his enemies his footstool.* And this kingdom of his shall continue in his hands, *till he have put down all rule, and all authority, and power that sets itself against him: for he must reign, till he have put all things under his feet.*

So that though truth may be obscured and clouded for a time, and the professors of it grievously harassed and oppressed, yet it shall not finally be borne down, but shall at length prevail against all opposition; because he who hath undertaken the protection of it is mighty, the *King of kings, and Lord of lords*, the chief favourite of heaven, who is continually *at the right*

hand of God, and lives for ever to make intercession for us.

And thus I have, as briefly as I well could, represented to you, what force and virtue there is in the two remedies here prescribed by our Saviour, for the mitigating and allaying of our troubles, *viz.* faith in God the great Creator and Governor of the world; and faith likewise in himself, the Son of God and Saviour of men. *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

And now to apply this discourse to ourselves; the inferences I shall make from it shall be these three.

I. That in all our troubles and adversities, of what kind soever, we should support and comfort ourselves with the firm belief of the providence of almighty God and of his tender and compassionate care of mankind especially of those that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy.

II. We should put a high value upon the Christian religion; and hold fast the profession of it without wavering; which affords to us such firm and solid grounds of comfort and support under all troubles and afflictions, as are no where else to be found; such as neither the light of nature, nor any other revelation that God ever made of himself to mankind, do give us the notice and knowledge of.

III. Since the prayers of Christ are so effectual and prevalent with God, let us, by frequent and fervent prayers, make our requests known to God; and let us, with confidence and full assurance of faith, address ourselves to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find favour with him for our seasonable help and support in the time of need. I shall speak briefly to these, and so conclude this discourse.

I. In all troubles and adversities, of what kind soever, under all afflictions and sufferings that may befall us, of loss or pain, of poverty and sickness, of reproach and persecution for righteousness sake, and under the most fearful apprehensions of danger and distress, to all human appearance inevitably threatening us in our persons and private concerns, or with relation to the public peace or tranquillity, or to that which ought to be

be infinitely dearer to us than all these, our religion, which is the great concernment of our souls, and of all eternity, when we have no hope any where else, no visible means of help and redress, when we are almost in despair of avoiding the danger, and warding off the blow that is made at us, when ruin and destruction seem to have overtaken us, and are ready to devour us with open mouth, and to swallow us up quick; in a word, when we are reduced to the greatest extremity and distress that can be imagined, even in this case, if ever it should happen, we should support our minds with a firm belief of the providence of almighty God, and of his tender and compassionate care of mankind, especially of those that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy; and comfort ourselves, as the holy and divine Psalmist does, in all our fears and troubles: *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee*, Psal. lvi. 3. And he tells us, that every good man hath ground and reason for this confidence: Psal. cxii. 7. 8. speaking of the righteous and good man, *He shall not, says he, be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid.* And Psal. xxvii. 1. *The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* Psal. lxii. 5. 6. 7. 8. *My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence, I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us.* And Psalm xlvi. 1. 2. 7. *God is our refuge and strength; and a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed; and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.* To which I will add that comfortable promise, Is. xxvi. 3. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.*

Thus we may, in all conditions that may befall us, in our greatest fears and troubles, ease our hearts, by reposing ourselves upon God, in confidence of his sup-

port and deliverance, of his care and providence, to prevent and divert the evils we fear; or of his gracious help to bear us up under them; and of his mercy and goodness to deliver us from them, when he sees best provided always that we be careful of our duty to him, and do what becomes us, and nothing else. For our more particular direction herein,

1. Let us depend upon God, and entirely confide in his goodness and care, and trust his wisdom and power for our protection and deliverance; for here is our great security. In all our difficulties and troubles, the providence of God is infinitely more to us, than any prudence and conduct of our own. He hath a thousand ways to divert and put by the evils which are levelled against us, to turn the counsels of men backward, and make their devices of none effect. When we can do nothing to help and save ourselves, his right hand, and his arm, and the light of his countenance can do it, if he have a favour for us.

2. Let us so trust God, as to neglect no prudent and lawful means for our security and preservation from evil. Let us not, by our rashness and folly, provoke trouble and danger, and bring them upon ourselves.

Let us, according to our Saviour's counsel, *be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves*. Let us use all that care and prudence which is consistent with innocence and a good conscience: and when we have done that, let us be no farther solicitous, but resign up ourselves, and all our concernments, to the good pleasure of God, and the disposal of his wise providence; and leave it to him who made the world, to govern it, because he certainly understands it best.

3. Let us be sure to keep within the bounds of our duty, trying no unlawful ways for our ease and preservation, and rescue from the evils which we fear and lie under; by loosening the bonds of subjection and obedience to authority, or by any other sinister and indirect means. For let us assure ourselves, that God is never more concerned to appear for us, than when, out of conscience of our duty to him, we are contented rather to suffer, than work our deliverance by undue means. Let us commit ourselves to him in well-doing, and do nothing,

thing, no, not for the cause of religion, which is contrary to the plain rules and precepts of it.

II. We should put a high value upon the Christian religion, and hold fast the profession of it without wavering, which affords to us such firm and solid grounds of comfort and support under all troubles and afflictions, as are no where else to be found; such as either the light of nature, nor any other revelation that God ever made of himself to mankind, do give us notice and knowledge of.

We should highly value the Christian religion, which hath brought life and immortality to light, and hath made clear a discovery to us of the glorious and eternal rewards of another world, for the encouragement of our faith, and support of our patience, under the evils and vexations of this life; and which promiseth, and is ready to afford to every sincere Christian, the precious aids and comforts of God's Holy Spirit, to sustain the weaknesses of human nature under the greatest tribulations and sufferings; and does likewise assure us of the special efficacy of our prayers with God; and sets before us the best and most admirable pattern that ever was, of a contented and cheerful submission to the will of God, in the saddest condition incident to human nature, and of perfect patience and composure of mind under the apprehension of approaching evils, and the sense of present sufferings; and lastly, which assures us of a most compassionate, and prevalent, and perpetual patron, and advocate, and intercessor with God in heaven for us. All these are peculiar advantages of the Christian religion, and ought to be so many endearments of it to us, and engagements to hold fast the profession of it. This builds our comfort and hope upon a rock, which will abide firm against all rains, and winds, and storms. And if we suffer ourselves to be removed from it, we quit the only foundation of all our comfort in this life, and happiness in the next. So that if we would hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of hope, firm unto the end, we must take heed, as the Apostle to the Hebrews, chap. iii. 12. cautions the Christians in his time; we must, I say, take heed, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, that is,

to

to fall off from the profession of his truth and religion. A religion worthy of all men to be received and adhered to; because as it calls us to sufferings, so it affords the greatest comforts and supports under them, as is evident from the chearful and joyful behaviour of the primitive Christians and martyrs, under the greatest extremities of sufferings and torments, the like instances whereto of patience and constancy, under so long and repeated persecutions, no other religion that ever was in the world is able to produce.

III. and lastly, Since the prayers of Christians are effectual and prevalent with God, let us, by frequent and fervent prayer, *in every thing make our requests known to God: and let us, with confidence and full assurance of faith, address ourselves to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find favour with him for our seasonable help and support in the time of need.* Let us, as our Saviour exhorts his disciples, *watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation.* And, as the Apostle likewise exhorts, let us *be sober, and vigilant, and watch unto prayer* taking all opportunities for it, and spending much time in this duty; than which none of all the duties enjoined by the Christian religion, will turn to a better and more comfortable account, if our hearts and lives be but answerable to our prayers.

Let us earnestly beg of God, that his watchful and merciful providence would undertake the care of us; that he would fit and prepare us for every condition which he hath designed to bring us into; and that he would teach us to demean ourselves in it as we ought; that he would consider our frailties, and *lay no greater load of affliction upon us, than he will give us grace and strength to bear*; that if he sees it good to exercise any of us with afflictions and sufferings in any kind, he would make us *able to stand in that evil day, and where we have done all to stand.*

And if instead of vain murmurings, and complaints and terrifying ourselves with fears of what may never happen, we would, after the example of holy David *betake ourselves to prayer*, and by this means engage the providence of God for our protection from evil, or for our support under it; we should certainly do much bette

for ourselves, and contribute much more, than we can do any other way, to the prevention of any evil that we can fear, or to the mitigating or shortening of it, as to God's infinite wisdom and goodness shall seem fit.

And let us always be mindful of that caution which our Saviour gives to his disciples, that they might always be in a due preparation for the coming of our Lord to judgment, Luke xxi. 34. 35. 36. *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.* This caution and counsel does proportionably hold, as to our preparation for any other evil day of affliction and suffering in this world; that we should beware of sensuality, and an inordinate love to the things of this world, and care about them; because these soften and effeminate our spirits, and render them unfit for the day of adversity: and that we should *watch and pray*; because these are the best preparations against an evil day, and perhaps may prevent it, at least as to ourselves, if God think it fit for us, and *count us worthy to escape it.*

To conclude then this whole discourse: In all our cares and troubles, in all afflictions and adversities that may happen to us in this world, let us *encourage ourselves in the Lord our God, the Father of mercy, and the God of all consolation*; and in his blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord, *the high priest of our profession, and the author and finisher of our faith*; whom God hath exalted far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, *not only in this world, but in that which is to come, and hath given him to be head over all things to his church*; remembering that we and all our concerns are in the hands of his providence, where we are infinitely safer than in any counsel and wisdom of our own. And therefore, after all, it be the will of God to exercise any of us with more than ordinary trials, *to lay affliction upon our sins, and to suffer men to ride over our heads, as the*

Pfalmist expresseth it, let us, as St Peter exhorts, *commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, as to faithful Creator, who is able to keep that which is committed to him, and to preserve us to his heavenly kingdom* which let us all humbly and earnestly beg, for the sake of Jesus Christ: *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour, and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, now and for ever.*

S E R M O N C C X I X .

Of the nature of faith in general.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impossible to please God.

The first sermon on this text.

BEfore I come to the words themselves, in order to our better understanding of them, we will take into consideration the design of this epistle that so we may see more clearly the relation that the words have to the foregoing discourse. Who the person of this epistle was, I shall not tell you, because I do not know, nor is it much material to know it but whoever wrote it, he had this very good design in the writing of it, to persuade the Jews to hold fast the profession of the gospel, notwithstanding all the sufferings and persecutions it exposed them to. And for this purpose he shews at large, what prerogatives the gospel hath above the legal administration. *The law was given by the disposition of the angels, in the hand of mediator, that is, Moses; but the gospel is revealed to us by the Son of God; a person, not only above Moses, who was a mere man; but above angels. The gospel is the substance and reality of the types and ceremonies*

onies, and the very good things themselves, that were obscurely represented by those shadows. It is a *testament established upon better promises*, the clear promises of eternal life, which were but darkly revealed in the Old testament, that being established either solely or principally upon temporal promises; and it is a perfect and complete dispensation, that hath in it all things requisite to attain its end, and therefore shall never stand in need of any further change or alteration. These are the heads of those arguments which the author of this epistle does largely discourse upon.

Now, the gospel having in these respects the advantage of the legal dispensation, the Apostle doth all along this epistle earnestly exhort the Jews to a constant profession and stedfast belief of the gospel, and not to return back from Christianity to Judaism, which was a far less perfect institution. Chap. ii. 1. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, $\pi\alpha\sigma\epsilon\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\epsilon\nu$, lest we should fall away*, so the word may be rendered. And chap. iii. 12. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.* And chap. iv. 1. *Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* And chap. x. 23. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.*

After which he declares the danger of apostasy, or falling off from the belief and profession of the gospel which they had entertained: ver. 26. *For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.* He tells them they would be shrewdly tempted to apostasy by the reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions that they would meet withal: but the promises of the gospel were sufficient to support and bear up good men under these, if they were but firmly persuaded of the truth of them: and though they did not for the present receive the things promised, yet a firm belief of them would carry them through all sufferings, and make them hold out under them. *The just shall live by faith*, ver. 38.

And

And having mentioned the power of faith, that is of a confident persuasion of the truth and reality of the promises of the gospel to support men under sufferings, he gives an account how faith uses to have this influence, ver. 1. *Faith is the substance of things hoped for*, so we render the word ὑπόστασις: but it might be much better rendered, both according to the frequent use of it in the Septuagint, and in the New Testament, *a confidence of things hoped for*, that is, a confident expectation of things hoped for, or a firm persuasion that our hopes will not be frustrated. And as this is more agreeable to the scope and design of the Apostle, so likewise to the common acceptation of this word in the New Testament, for which I will appeal to two places, 2 Cor. ix. 4. *That we be not put to shame in this confidence of boasting*, ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει τῶν πραγμάτων. The other text is in this epistle, chap. iii. 14. *That we hold fast the beginning of our confidence*, τὴν ἀρχὴν ὑποστάσεως, which is of the very same sense with παρρησία, at the 6th verse. *If we hold fast the confidence, παρρησίαν, and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. And the evidence of things not seen, ἐλεῖχος, the conviction*, as being convinced, or persuaded of the truth of those things, for which we have no ocular or sensible demonstration. Now, if faith in the promises of the gospel do persuade us and give us satisfaction that we shall receive a reward, which will outweigh and countervail our present sufferings, then faith is likely to support us under sufferings.

And that this is no strange thing which the Apostle speaks of faith, he shews, that, in all ages, faith hath been the principle of all holy and heroic actions. *By it the elders obtained a good report*; it is that which made the holy men of the Old Testament so famous: and this he proves throughout this chapter, by a large induction of particular instances, in which we see the power of faith, the wonderful effects of it, and the mighty works it hath done in the world.

But because he said before, that *faith is the evidence, or conviction of things not seen*, as well as *a confident expectation of things hoped for*, before he comes to instance in the effects of faith upon particular persons in the Old

Old Testament, he proves it to be the evidence of things not seen, that is, being convinced and persuaded of things of which we have no sensible and ocular demonstration, ver. 3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear; that although we were not present at the making of the world, nor did see it framed; yet we are satisfied, and believe that it was made by the powerful word of God, and that all those things which we see were not produced out of things which do now appear, but either immediately out of nothing, or a dark confused chaos.*

And having thus proved that we may be persuaded of things we do not see, of things past or future, he comes to the particular instances of the holy men of the Old Testament, in whom the power of faith did appear. It begins with Abel, who being persuaded of the being of God, and the perfection and excellency of the divine nature, and consequently that he was worthy to be served with the best, by virtue of this faith offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. The second instance is in Enoch, who being persuaded of the being of God, and of his goodness to reward them that love him, was a righteous man, and studious to please God; and as a reward of this faith and obedience, God translated him that he should not see death: upon which the Apostle assumes, ver. 6. *But without faith it is impossible to please God:* As if he had said, Unless a man do believe, and be persuaded of some principles, it is impossible any man should be religious, or endeavour to do any thing that is pleasing or acceptable to God: for religion, and the service of God, and an endeavour to please him, do suppose at least that I believe and am persuaded of these two things, of the being, and of the goodness of God, that there is such a being as I serve and seek to please, and that his goodness is such, that it will not be in vain to serve him, he will not let me be a loser by it.

And that here by pleasing we are to understand in general the performing any action of religion, is evident from the equivalent terms which are used in the next words, *For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is,*

and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him; when coming to God, and seeking of him, are of the same importance with *pleasing him*. Now, to come to God, and seek him, in scripture-phrase signify the sum of religion; it being usual, in the language of scripture, to express the whole of religion by any eminent principle, or part or effect of it, as by the knowledge, remembrance, or fear of God in the Old Testament; by the love of him and faith in him, in the New; by coming to him, seeking him, calling upon his name, and pleasing of him.

Now, that *coming to God*, and *seeking him*, are of the same importance here with *pleasing of him*, will be clear to any that consider the Apostle's reasoning here in the text, which supposeth these to be the same, otherwisethere would be no force in his argument. For the proposition which he proves, is, *That without faith it is impossible to please God*. The argument he useth is this: *If every one that comes to God must believe that he is, &c. then without faith it is impossible to please him; but every one that comes to God must believe that he is*. Now, unless *coming to God*, and *seeking him*, be the same thing with *pleasing him*, this would be no good argument; for there would be four terms in it; but if these phrases be made equivalent, then the argument is good. Thus, if *every one that comes to God*, that is, that will *please him*, *must believe that he is, &c.* then *without faith it is impossible to please him*; but *every one that comes to God*, that is, that will *please him*, *must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, or that endeavour to please him*: therefore *without faith it is impossible to please him*.

Which proposition doth not only signify that faith necessary to religion, and a condition without which cannot be; but implies likewise, that it is a cause or principle of it; not only the foundation upon which all religion must be built, but the fountain from whence it springs. For this I take to be implied in the words, not only that there can be no religion unless we believe a God; but supposing this truth firmly believed, that there is a God, it will have a great influence upon men to make them religious. For the Apostle having before spoken of the power of faith upon

upon Abel and Enoch, that it put them upon *pleasing* God, he assumes in the next words, *But without faith, &c.* As if he had said, That ye may know what was the principle of their religion, of their holiness and obedience, let us imagine that a man should believe nothing concerning the being of a God, or the blessedness of those that serve him; what would be the issue? Why, 'tis certainly, there would be no religion, no such thing as serving of God, or endeavouring to please him; for unless we believe that he is, and that he will reward those that seek to please him, it is impossible, that is, it is unreasonable, to think men should attempt to please him. So that faith is the cause and principle of religion; it is the thing, *quo posito, ponitur effectus; et eo sublato, tollitur.* Do but suppose and admit that a man truly believes there is a God; and he will seek to please him: but if you suppose a man believes no such thing; he will cast off all religion. This is the plain meaning of the words; not, as some have thought, that without faith a man may perform religious actions; but when they would not be accepted, or pleasing to God: that which the Apostle means is, Without faith it is impossible there should be any religion: not that religious acts should be performed in an acceptable manner; as if Cain had offered as good a sacrifice as Abel, only faith made the difference; but Cain did not believe, was not persuaded of the being of God and his excellency, therefore thought to put off God with any thing: Abel believed, and did offer a more excellent sacrifice, not more excellent because it was mixed with faith, but it was more excellent in itself.

The observation therefore from these words is this, that faith is one great principle of all religious actions.

In the handling of this, I shall endeavour,

First, To fix and settle the true notion of faith, whereby we may come to understand the general nature of it.

Secondly, To confirm the truth of the proposition.

Thirdly, Draw some inferences from hence.

First, To settle and fix the true notion of faith, whereby we may come to understand the general nature of it. I find that most who write upon this subject have marvellously puzzled themselves with the various

acceptations of this word πισις, and the verb πισιθε infomuch that some have undertaken to enumerate above twenty distinct significations of this word. I can not find so many, it may be others may; but here instead of clearing the notion of faith, they have involved it, and made it more intricate, and have made men believe, that it is a notion very remote from common understanding: whereas there is not any word that in common use, that is more plain and easy, and which any one may understand better than this of faith and believing. Therefore, in the explication of it, I shall attend to the use of it in common speech, and in all authors, as well profane as sacred; and I shall not guide myself by terms of art, which have been received in the school and have confounded the meaning of words, by distorting them from the common and received use of them; but shall govern myself by the nature of things to which this word in common use is applied.

I shall remove two acceptations of it which are less usual, and then fix the common and general notion of it, to which all the other more particular significations may be referred. The two less usual acceptations are these.

First, It is sometimes put for the particular grace or virtue which is called fidelity, or faithfulness in our promises and contracts; and in this sense it is sometimes used in common discourse, and in all sorts of writers. I shall only mention a text or two where it is so taken. Matth. xxiii. 23. *And have omitted the weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith, that is, fidelity.* And Rom. iii. 3. with relation to God, *if their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect? that is, his faithfulness in his promises.* Tit. ii. 13. *No purloining, but shewing all good fidelity, πισις πασαν, a faith.*

Secondly, It is sometimes put for spiritual gifts, and particularly the gift of miracles, which were wrought by the power of faith. Rom. xii. 3. *According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith; that is, spiritual gifts of prophesying, or ministry, or exhortation as it is explained afterward.* I Cor. xii. 9. *To another given faith by the same spirit; that is, a power of miracles in general, as learned interpreters think.* No dot

doth that which is added afterward, that *to another is given the working of miracles*, prejudice this interpretation; for *ἐπισηματα δυναμεων*, the operation of powers, which we render of *miracles*, seems to signify some special sort of miracles, not the power of miracles in general. And this seems to be favoured by the acceptance of it in the next chapter, ver. 2. *And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains*; where faith is undoubtedly taken for the power of miracles.

These being removed, as very alien and remote from the common and usual acceptance of the word, I come now to fix the general notion of faith, to which all other acceptations of it may easily be reduced: and it is this.

Faith is a persuasion of the mind concerning any thing; concerning the truth of any proposition, concerning the existence, or futurity, or lawfulness, or convenience, or possibility, or goodness of any thing, or the contrary; or concerning the credit of a person, or the contrary. And this notion is not only agreeable to the proper notion of the word *πιστις*, which comes from *πειθο*, to persuade, but is warranted from the common use of it in this latitude. It is ordinary for men to say, they believe or are persuaded such a proposition is true or false, such a thing is or is not, such an event will be or will not be, that such an action is lawful or unlawful, such a thing is good or bad, convenient or inconvenient, possible or impossible to be done; or that they believe such a person, or do not believe him. And I could shew from scripture, that believing is applied to all these matters, and many more; I will only instance in one or two.

That faith is frequently used for the persuasion of the truth of a doctrine, or of the veracity of God or Christ, I shall not need to produce any texts, there are so many.

That faith is used for a persuasion of the lawfulness of an action, the 14th chapter to the Romans doth abundantly testify. Ver. 2. *One believeth that he may eat all things*; that is, is persuaded in his mind, that all sorts of meat are lawful without distinction. Ver. 22. *Hast thou faith?* that is, art thou persuaded or satisfied

tified in thy mind of the lawfulness of those indifferent things he had been speaking of? Ver. 22. *He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin; that is, whatsoever is not done with the persuasion and satisfaction of our minds that we may lawfully do it, is sin.* I shall trouble you with no more instances.

Now, this being the general notion of faith, that it is a persuasion of the mind concerning any thing, from hence by a metonymy it comes to be put for the argument whereby this persuasion is wrought in us. Hence it is, that among the rhetoricians *πίστις* are any kind of argument or proof which orators make use of to persuade men; and there is one place in the New Testament, where *πίστις* seems to be used in this sense, or very near it, Acts xvii. 31. *Because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world, &c. whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead, πίστιν παρασχών πᾶσι* having offered faith to all men: that is, having given us this argument for the proof of it, that he raised Christ from the dead.

Sometimes *is* is put for the object of this persuasion or the matter or thing whereof we are persuaded. And thus, frequently in the New Testament, the gospel which is the object of our faith, the thing which we believe, is called faith. And thus you find it used in the phrase of *obedience to the faith*, that is, to the gospel Acts vi. 7. Rom. i. 5. xvi. 26. And in this sense faith that is, the gospel, is frequently opposed to the dispensation of the law, Rom. iii. 27. 31. and x. 16. Gal. 23. *He that persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.* Gal. iii. 2. *the hearing of the gospel is called the hearing of faith; ver. 2: Before faith came; and ver. 25. But after that faith come.* Eph. iv. 5. *There is one faith*, that is, one gospel which we believe. 1 Tim. iv. 6. *Nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine.*

The opposites to faith are unbelief and credulity. Unbelief, which is a not being persuaded of a thing, the deficient extreme; or doubting, if it prevail to degree of unbelief: and credulity, which is an easine

to believe things without any probable argument to induce our persuasion, is the redundant extreme.

The seat or subject of faith is the mind, or the heart, as the scripture usually calls it. *With the heart man believes*, that is, *with the soul*: for I do not understand any real distinction of faculties; but if you will distinguish them, the proper seat of this persuasion is the understanding; the immediate effect of it is upon the will; by which it works upon the affections and the life.

And faith in this general notion is not opposed to error, and knowledge, and opinion; but comprehends all these under it. For if a man be persuaded of that which is false, he believes a lie, as the scripture expresseth it; a man may be certainly persuaded of a thing, that is, firmly believe it, which is knowledge; a man may be probably persuaded of a thing, that is, believe it with some diffidence and uncertainty, and that is opinion.

But for our better understanding of this general notion of faith, we will take into consideration these four things.

I. The cause of it, or the argument whereby it is wrought.

II. The degrees of it, and the difference of them.

III. The natural efficacy and operation of it.

IV. The several kinds of it.

I. We will consider the cause of faith, or the argument whereby it is wrought. Now, all the arguments whereby faith may be wrought in us, that is, a persuasion of any thing, will, I think, fall under one of these four heads; sense, experience, reasons drawn from the thing, or the authority and testimony of some person.

I. Sense. Hence it is commonly said, that *seeing is believing*, that is, one of the best arguments to persuade us of any thing. That faith may be wrought by this argument, appears both from the nature of the thing, nothing being more apt to persuade us of any thing than our senses; and from several expressions in scripture. I will instance in one for all, John xx. 8. *Then went in also the other disciple into the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.* And whereas scripture opposeth faith to sight;

fight; as 2 Cor. v. 7. *We walk by faith, and not by sight*; Heb. xi. 1. *It is the evidence of things not seen*; we are to understand that only concerning a belief of the things of another world, which are futurities, and invisible, which the Apostle is there speaking of; or of things which are of the same nature with these, as things past: not but that a man may very well be induced to believe a thing by his senses.

2. Experience; which though it may be sensible and then it is the same argument with sense; yet sometimes it is not, and then it is an argument distinct from it. As for example, a man may by experience be persuaded or induced to believe this proposition, That his will is free, that he can do this, or not do it; which is a better argument than a demonstration to the contrary, if there could be one.

3. Reasons drawn from the thing; which may either be necessary and concluding, or else only probable, and plausible.

4. The authority and testimony of some credible person. Now, two things give authority and credit to the relation, or testimony, or assertion of a person concerning any thing; ability, and integrity. Ability, if he can be presumed to have a competent knowledge of what he relates, or asserts, or testifies; and integrity, if he may be presumed to be honest in his relation, and free from any design, or will to deceive. And to these heads, I think, all arguments of belief may be reduced.

II. The second thing to be considered is the degrees of faith, and the difference of them. And that there are degrees, I take for granted, though I shall afterwards have occasion to prove it in a divine faith; and these depend perfectly upon the capacity of the person that believes, or is persuaded. Now, the capacity, or incapacity of persons are infinitely various, and not to be reduced to theory; but supposing a competent capacity in the person, then the degrees of faith or persuasion take their difference from the arguments, or motives, or inducements which are used to persuade. Where sense is the argument, there is the highest and firmest degree of faith, or persuasion. Next to that is experience, which is beyond any argument or reason from
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the thing. The faith, or persuasion which is wrought in us by reasons drawn from the thing, the degrees of it are, as the reasons are: if they be necessary and concluding, it is firm and certain in its kind: if only probable, according to the degrees of probability, it hath more or less of doubting mixed with it. Lastly, the faith which is wrought in us by testimony or authority of a person, takes its degree from the credit of the person, that is, his ability and integrity. Now, because *all men are liars*, that is, either may deceive, or be deceived, their testimony partakes of their infirmity, and so does the degree of persuasion wrought by it: but God being both infallible and true, and consequently it being impossible that he should either deceive, or be deceived, his testimony begets the firmest persuasion, and the highest degree of faith in its kind. But then it is to be considered, that there not being a revelation of a revelation *in infinitum*; that this is a divine testimony and revelation, we can only have rational assurance; and the degree of the faith, or persuasion which is wrought by a divine testimony, will be according to the strength of the arguments which we have to persuade us that such a testimony is divine.

III. For the efficacy or operation of faith, we are to consider that the things we may believe or be persuaded of, are of two sorts. Either, 1. They are such as do not concern me: and then the mind rests in a naked and simple belief of them, and a faith or persuasion of such things has no effect upon me; but is apt to have, if ever it happen that the matter do concern me: or else, 2. The thing I believe or am persuaded of doth concern me; and then it hath several effects, according to the nature of the thing I am persuaded of, or the degree of the persuasion, or the capacity of the person that believes or is persuaded. If the thing believed be of great moment, the effect of the faith is proportionable, *ceteris paribus*; and so according to the degree of the persuasion: but if the person be indisposed to the proper effects of such a persuasion by the power of contrary habits, as it often happens, the effect will be obtained with more difficulty, and may possibly be totally defeated, by casting off the persuasion: for while it remains,

mains, it will operate, and endeavour, and strive to work its proper effect. For example, a man may believe that wine is very pernicious to him; and yet a strong inclination to it may render it very difficult for this persuasion to work its proper effect upon him, which is to leave off wine, and may, at length, wholly defeat it, by furnishing him with some colour of argument that may persuade him otherwise.

IV. For the kinds of faith, they are several, according to the variety of objects or things believed. I shall reduce them all under these two general heads.

1. Faith is either civil or human; under which I comprehend the persuasion of things moral, and natural, and political, and the like: or,

2. Divine and religious, that is, a persuasion of things that concern religion. I know not whether these terms be proper, nor am I very solicitous, because I know none fitter, and tell you what I mean by them.

The first kind of faith concerning things human and civil, I shall not speak of, it being beside my design.

The second, which I call a religious and divine faith, comprehends three things under it, which are distinctly to be considered.

1. A persuasion of the principles of natural religion, which are known by the light of nature, as the existence of a God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state.

2. A persuasion of things supernatural, and revealed.

3. A persuasion of supernatural revelation. These I design fully to handle. Thus I have prepared materials for a large discourse, which, though it be necessary, is, I am sensible, but too tedious, and yet possibly more tedious to me than you.

S E R M O N CCXX.

Of a religious and divine faith.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impossible to please God.

The second sermon on this text.

IN my last discourse I came to treat of a religious and divine faith, which, I told you, comprehends under it three things, which I now proceed to consider distinctly.

First, A persuasion of the principles of natural religion, which are known by the light of nature.

Secondly, A persuasion of things supernatural and revealed.

Thirdly, A persuasion of supernatural revelation.

First, A persuasion of the principles of natural religion, such as the light of nature could discover; such are the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state. The things to be inquired concerning this kind of faith are these.

I. Whether this be truly and properly called faith.

II. What are the arguments whereby it is wrought.

III. Whether it admit of degrees or not, and what differences are observable in them.

IV. What are the proper and genuine effects of it.

V. In what sense it may be said to be divine faith.

I. Whether it may truly and properly be called faith, or not? If the general notion of faith which I have fixed before, *viz.* that it is a persuasion of the mind concerning any thing, be a true notion of faith, then there is no doubt but this may as properly be called faith as any thing can be; because a man may be persuaded in his mind concerning these things, that there

is a God, that our souls are immortal, that there is another state after this life.

But besides this, if the scripture speaks properly, as we have reason to believe it does, especially when it treats professedly of any thing, as the Apostle here does, then this question is fully decided: for it is evident to any one that will but read this verse, out of which I have taken my text, that the Apostle doth here in this place speak of this kind of faith, that is, a belief or persuasion of the principles of natural religion. For after the Apostle had said, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*; he immediately instanceth in the belief of the principles of natural religion, as necessary to the pleasing of God, that is, to make a man religious. *He that cometh to God must believe that he is*; there is the existence of God, the first principle of natural religion: *and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*: which implies the other two, the immortality of the soul, and a future state; for, if good men shall be rewarded, there must be a subject capable of such rewards, which brings in the immortality of the soul; and there must be a season for these rewards, which, because they are seldom bestowed in this world, there must be a season when they shall, which brings in a future state after this life. So that whoever denies that a persuasion of these principles of natural religion may properly be called faith, he quarrels with the Apostle, and does not correct me, but the scriptures.

II. What are the arguments whereby this faith or persuasion of these principles of natural religion is wrought? You may remember that I reduced all those arguments, whereby any kind of faith or persuasion is wrought in us, to these four heads; sense, experience, reasons drawn from the thing, and the testimony or authority of some person. Now, a faith or persuasion of these principles cannot be wrought in us by sense: for *no man hath seen God at any time*, and being a pure spirit, he cannot be the object of any corporeal sense. Nor can the soul, or any mode of its existence, fall under any of our senses; nor a future state; because sense is only of things present. Nor can it be wrought in us merely by experience: for no man can conclude

from

from any thing he experienceth in himself, that there is a God, unless he be first persuaded of it by other arguments; and the immortality of the soul, and a future state, are things which none in this life can experience. Nor can the authority or testimony of any person be the argument that induceth that persuasion. Not any human authority: for these things are of such consequence, and so much depends upon them, that is, the belief of them puts us upon so many things, which men would not do if they did not believe them; as particularly the venturing of our lives upon the account of religion, and all our worldly interests, if occasion call for it; that it were a fond thing to take matters of such moment and importance upon any man's bare word, without other assurance of them. Nor can the testimony or authority of God be the argument that persuades me of the existence of a God. I grant, that for the other two, the immortality of the soul, and a future state, it is an excellent, and may be a sufficient argument. Though that these may be proved likewise by other arguments without a revelation, is evident in the Heathens, who by the light of nature did assent to them without a revelation. But a divine revelation cannot possibly be an argument inducing me to believe the existence of a God, for this plain reason; because a divine revelation can be no argument to any that is not persuaded that it is a divine revelation: but before I can be persuaded that any revelation is from God, I must be persuaded there is a God; and if so, there is no need of this argument to prove to me that there is one: and therefore you do not find it any where revealed in all the scripture, that there is a God. The scripture often declares that *Jehovah is the true and living God*, and that *besides him there is no other*: but it doth not reveal, but every where suppose, that there is one.

It remains then, that it must be another kind of argument whereby we must be persuaded of the existence of a God, and that is by such reasons as may be drawn from things themselves to persuade us hereof; as either from the notion and idea which we have of a God, that he is a being that hath all perfections, whereof necessary existence is one, and consequently that he must

be; or else from the universal consent of all nations and the generality of persons agreeing in this apprehension, which cannot be attributed reasonably to any other cause, than to impressions stamped upon our understandings by God himself; or, which is most plain of all, from this visible frame of the world, which we cannot, without great violence to our understandings, impute to any other cause than a being endowed with infinite goodness and power, and wisdom, which is what we call God.

As for the other two principles of natural religion the immortality of the soul, and a future state; after we believe a God, we may be persuaded of these from divine revelation; and that doth give us the highest and firmest assurance of them in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Yet I do not find but that these also are rather supposed, than expressly revealed in the Bible. Indeed the immortality of the soul may be inferred from several places of scripture, and the tenor of the whole Bible: and so a future state, which, as for the thing itself, seems to be supposed as a thing acknowledged by natural light; only the scripture hath revealed the circumstances of it more particularly to us, and given us higher assurance of the thing: but if there were no revelation, men might be persuaded of these; and so the Heathens were by arguments drawn partly from the operations of the soul, which will almost persuade any man that the soul is immortal; it being altogether unimaginable how a principle that is nothing else but matter, can either understand, or determine itself by its own will; all the motions of matter that we know of or can imagine, being necessary: and partly from the justice and goodness of God. The consideration of God's goodness would persuade a man, that as he made all things very good, so he made them of the longest duration they were capable of: and the justice of God would easily induce a man to believe, seeing the providence of God doth generally, in this life, deal promiscuously with good and bad men, that there shall be a day which will make a difference, and every man shall receive according to his works.

But I do not intend to insist upon these arguments: all that I design, is to shew what kind of arguments d

work a faith and persuasion in men concerning these principles of natural religion; and they are reasons drawn from the thing.

And it is not always necessary to the working of this faith or persuasion, that these reasons should necessarily, yea, or truly conclude the principle to be believed: if they do it probably, and it appear so to me, it is enough to beget a persuasion in me of such a thing. There are many men entertain the greatest truths, and are firmly persuaded of them, upon an incompetent argument, and such as might persuade them of any thing else as well; and such persons, if they have capacity and understanding, they are rather happy than wise in their religion. It falls out well that they happen to be in the right; for they might have been in the wrong upon the same terms. But if the persons who believe the principles of religion on insufficient arguments, and their belief have a real effect upon them, as it will, if it be true and permanent; if they be ignorant, and such as want the ordinary advantages of improving their knowledge, they are wise enough; that is, they are as wise as God's providence hath made them, and the circumstances of their education, and the condition of their life, will let them be.

The third thing to be inquired is, Whether this faith or persuasion of the principles of natural religion admit degrees, or not? and what differences are observable in them? That it does admit degrees, that is, that a man may be more or less persuaded of the truth of these principles, is evident from the Heathens: some of whom did yield a more firm and unshaken assent to them; others entertained them with a more faint persuasion of them, especially of the immortality of the soul, and a future state, about which most of them had many qualms and doubts. Of all the Heathens, Socrates seems to have had the truest and firmest persuasion of these things; which he did not only testify in words, but by the constancy, and calmness, and sedate courage which he manifested at his death. Indeed in his discourse before his death, he says, "He did not know whether his soul shall remain after his body, and whether there be a happiness reserved for good men in another world; but

“ he thought so, and had such hopes of it, that he was very willing to venture his life upon these hopes.” Which words, though they seem to be spoke doubtfully, as the manner of the academy was; yet considering his manner of speaking, which was modest, and not peremptory and dogmatical, they signify as great a confidence as he had of any thing, and they are high expressions of assurance. For we may believe that the man who dies for any thing, how modestly soever he may express himself, is very well assured of the truth of it. So that this faith and persuasion admits of degrees, the difference whereof is to be resolved partly into the capacity of the persons who believe, and partly into the strength, or at least appearance of strength in the arguments whereby it is wrought.

The fourth thing to be inquired is, What are the proper and genuine effects of this faith or persuasion? Now, that, in a word, is natural religion, which consists in apprehensions of God suitable to his nature, and affections towards him suitable to these apprehensions, and actions suitable to both. He that believes there is such a being in the world as God, that is, one infinitely good, and wise, and powerful, and just, and holy, and, in a word, clothed with all excellency, will have a great esteem and reverence for him, and love to him, which he will testify in those outward expressions of respect which we call worship. He that believes that this being is the original of all good, that he made the world, and all the creatures in it, and preserves and governs them, he will depend upon him, and seek to him for every good thing, and acknowledge him for the author of them; which brings in prayer and thanksgiving. He that believes that he owes his being to God, and all the blessings of his life, will think it reasonable that he should be at his disposal, will be willing to be governed by his laws, and ready to submit to his pleasure; which brings in obedience and submission to the will of God. He that believes there is another life after this, wherein men shall be rewarded or punished, according as they have demeaned themselves well or ill in this world, he will be encouraged to piety and virtue, and afraid to do any thing which his own
reason

ason tells him is displeasing to the Deity, as he cannot but believe every thing is, that is contrary to the nature of God, or the perfection of his own nature, or the good order and happiness of the world; which things in temperance, and justice, and all other real virtues. And that the belief of these principles had its effect upon several of the Heathens; to make them to a good degree religious and virtuous, I doubt not; the moral and honest lives of many of them give real testimony of this; which natural religion and morality of theirs, how far it may avail them for their good; we are not concerned to determine. This we are sure of, that it will make their condition more tolerable in another world; and if they fall under condemnation, it will mitigate and allay their misery.

V. In what sense this faith or persuasion of the principles of natural religion may be said to be divine. In these two respects.

1. In respect of the object of it; or matters to be believed, which are divine, and do immediately concern religion, in opposition to that which I call a civil and human faith, which is of such things as do not immediately concern God and religion.

2. In respect of the divine effects of it, which are to make men religious, and like God. And a faith may properly be said to be divine in respect of the object of it; as in respect of the argument whereby it is wrought; so that a faith of the principles of natural religion is as truly divine, though it be not wrought in us by the arguments of divine testimony and authority, as a faith of the matters of divine revelation contained in the holy scriptures: for why a faith may not as well be said to be divine for its relation to God as the object of it, as for its relation to the testimony of God as the cause of it, I cannot understand.

Secondly, The second sort of faith, which I call divine or religious, is a persuasion of things supernaturally revealed, of things which are not known by natural light, but by some more immediate manifestation and discovery from God. Thus we find our Saviour, Matth. xvi. 15. 16. 17. opposeth divine revelation to the discovery of natural reason and light. He asks his disciples,

scip'es, whom they believed him to be: *Whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter, answered and said, Thou art the Christ, that is, the Messias, the Son of the living God.* And Jesus answered and said unto him, *Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee; but my Father which is in heaven; where a revelation or discovery from flesh and blood, is opposed to revelation from God; flesh and blood being a Hebrew phrase or manner of speaking, signifying a man, or something merely human.* So we find the phrase used, *Eph. vi. 12. We wrestle not against flesh and blood; but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness;* that is, the enemies we are to contend with are not only men, but devils; and which is nearer to our purpose, *Gal. i. 16.* where the Apostle would express to us, that he received not his commission from men, but immediately from the Lord Jesus Christ. he tells us, that *when it pleased God, who separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace, to reveal his Son in him, that he might preach him among the Heathen, immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood.* the word is *προσάειδιμνν*, *I did not apply myself to flesh and blood;* that is, I did not go to men to receive my commission from them: for so he explains it in the next words, *Neither went I up to Jerusalem, to them that were apostles before me;* that is, I did not apply myself to the apostles, to derive any authority from them to preach the gospel, because he had no need of that, being called immediately by Christ to this work. which words are nothing else but a farther explication of what he had said before, *ver. 11. 12. I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me, is not after man: for I neither received it of man, neither was taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* So accordingly here our Saviour tells Peter, that this truth, that *Christ was the Messias, the Son of the living God* was not revealed to him by man, nor by any mere human principle or testimony, but by his Father which was in heaven; that is, by the testimony which God himself gave of him, in the holy and divine gospel which he taught, and those miracles which he wrought in confirmation of it.

So that this kind of faith is a persuasion of such things as are not known by natural light, nor discovered to us by men, but some way or other revealed by God; I say, some way or other, for the ways of God's revealing and manifesting himself to us are various and arbitrary. God may chuse what ways he pleaseth to discover himself to us by. So the Apostle tells us, Heb.

1. God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. God revealed himself as at several times, by several steps and degrees; so in various manners; sometimes by visions, sometimes by dreams, sometimes by oracles; sometimes by a spirit of prophecy, and sometimes by a voice from heaven, sometimes by a secret and gentle inspiration. Now; it matters not which of these ways God chuseth to reveal himself to us, provided we have sufficient evidence and grounds of assurance that the thing is revealed by God.

As to us, these extraordinary ways of revelation are now ceased, and we have a fixed and standing revelation, that is, the records of those revelations which God formerly made to holy men; and this is the holy scriptures, or the Bible, which is a system or collection of things supernaturally revealed.

Now, if this faith be considered as restrained to a part of divine revelation, *viz.* the doctrine of the gospel, revealed to the world by Jesus Christ, then it is properly *Christian faith*, which frequently in the New Testament is called faith, *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, by way of excellency and eminency, this being the most eminent and perfect revelation which God hath made of himself to the world, which the Apostle at the beginning of this epistle advanced above all those former revelations which God hath made of himself to the fathers, those being by his servants and ministers, prophets and angels: *But in these last days God hath revealed himself to us by his Son, whom he hath made heir of all things, and advanced to a dignity above that of men or angels.*

And with relation to this faith of the gospel, Christians are peculiarly and eminently called believers. **I** Thess. ii. 10. *You know how unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe, that is, among you Christians.*

ans. 2 Theff. i. 10. *When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe,* meaning the Christians that entertained the gospel. And upon the same account the Apostle calls the whole society, or body of Christians, the household of faith, Gal. vi. 10.

But now I am considering faith, not in this more narrow and restrained sense, for a belief or persuasion of the doctrine of the gospel; but in a more large and comprehensive sense, for a persuasion of all things that are supernaturally revealed, that is, of all things contained in the holy scriptures.

Now, all the matters of divine revelation, which are contained in the book of holy scripture, may, I think, be reduced to one of these six heads.

1. They are either history, or relation of some person, or matter of fact: and a faith of the historical part of scripture is nothing else but a persuasion, that those narrations, or relations, are true. Or,

2. A prophecy, or prediction of some event: Now, a faith of the prophetic part of scripture is a persuasion, that the event foretold will certainly come to pass. Or,

3. A doctrine: such as are all those propositions in scripture, which declare to us the nature or properties of God, the nature and office of Christ, that he is the eternal Son of God, that is, true God, the Messias, or Saviour of the world, the King, Priest, and Prophet of his church, and the like. Now, a faith of the doctrinal part of scripture is a persuasion, that those propositions, which contain these doctrines, are true. Or,

4. Laws for the ordering and governing of our spirits and lives, under which I comprehend all the precepts and prohibitions of scripture, which are the matter of our duty. Now, a faith of these is a persuasion, that God hath commanded, and forbidden such things; and consequently that they are necessary to be observed by us. Or,

5. Promises of good things, either with relation to this life, or the other. Now, a faith of the promises is a persuasion, or a confident expectation that they will be accomplished. And thus the Apostle describes the faith of the promises of another world, at the first verse

this chapter, that it is the *substance of things hoped for, ὑπόστασις*, that is, a *confident expectation* that the promises of the gospel, which are the matter of our hope, all be accomplished; and the *evidence of things not seen*, a being convinced of the certainty and reality of future and invisible things. And thus likewise the Apostle explains to us the faith of Abraham, in reference to the promises of God, to give him a son, Rom. iv. 21. *He was fully persuaded, that what God had promised, he was able to perform.* Or,

6. Threatenings. Now, a faith of the threatenings is a persuasion of the danger we incur, if we neglect our duty: that is, a belief that God justly may, and will have confirmed his threatenings with an oath, which is a sign of the immutable determination of the divine will) inflict those punishments upon us, which he hath threatened, in case we disobey his law. These six heads, I think, contain all, I am sure, the most principal matters of divine revelation; which I have more carefully distinguished, because some of them are of a distinct and peculiar consideration from the rest, as will afterwards appear.

Having thus, as plainly and briefly as I could, opened to you, what I mean by this second sort of divine faith, which is a persuasion of things supernaturally revealed, I now come to satisfy such inquiries about this, as may be most material. And here I shall proceed upon those heads of inquiry which I handled when I spake of the first sort of divine faith.

I. Whether this may truly and properly be called faith?

II. What is the argument whereby this faith is wrought?

III. Whether it admit of degrees, and what are the differences of them?

IV. What are the proper and genuine effects of this faith?

V. In what respects it may be said to be divine?

I. Whether this may truly and properly be called faith? And that it may, is evident, because the general definition of faith agrees to it: for a man may be persuaded in his mind concerning things supernaturally revealed; and the scripture every where calls a persuasion of

of these matters, by the name of *faith*. But besides that it seems this is the adequate and only notion of faith as it hath been fixed by the schools, and it is become a term of art. For the definition that the schools give of faith is this; that it is *an assent to a thing credible, credible*. Now, say they, that is credible which rests upon the testimony of a credible person; and consequently a *human faith* is that which relies upon human testimony; and a *divine faith*, that which relies upon the testimony or authority of God: which definition though it be short and imperfect, (being indeed not a definition of faith in general, but of a particular kind of faith, *viz.* that which is wrought by the argument which we call *testimony or authority*, and consequently excludes a belief of the principles of natural religion and a belief that the scriptures are the word of God from being faith), yet this shews thus much, that we agree in this, that a persuasion of things supernatural revealed is truly and properly faith.

II. What is the argument whereby this faith, or persuasion of things supernaturally revealed, is wrought in us? And this, by the general consent of all, is the testimony or authority of God, some way or other revealing these things to us; whose infallible and unerring knowledge, together with his goodness and authority gives us the highest assurance, that he neither can be deceived himself, nor will deceive us in any thing that he reveals to us. I say, the testimony or authority of God, some way or other revealing things to us, is the argument whereby a faith of any supernatural revelations is wrought in us: but if we restrain all supernatural revelations to the Bible, as I told you we know of no other, then the particular kind of testimony whereby this faith is wrought in us, is the written word of God.

III. As to the degrees of this faith. Supposing men sufficiently satisfied that the scriptures are the word of God, that is, a divine revelation; then all those who are sufficiently satisfied of this, do equally believe the things contained in the scriptures. For if men be once fully satisfied that God hath spoken any thing, I think no man makes the least doubt but what God says is true. Now, there can be no degrees of faith, where

there is no doubt to the contrary; all the degrees that are in faith, arising from a greater or less mixture of doubting. So that those who do not at all doubt but that the scriptures are the word of God, have the same degree of persuasion concerning the matters contained in them: and that no man doubts whether what God says is true, arising from the fixed and constant notion which men universally have of God, that he is infallible and true. Therefore we find, Matth. xxi. 25. when our Saviour puts the dilemma to the Pharisees, concerning the baptism of John, *Whether it were from heaven, or of men? that they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, from heaven; he will say unto us, why did ye not then believe him? Which kind of reasoning imports thus much, that it is universally acknowledged, that no man can in reason make the least doubt of that which he believes to be from God.* Therefore a man would wonder what Becanus the Jesuit meant, unless it were to abuse the prophets and apostles, when he says, tom. 3. of his school-divinity, that the prophets and apostles had *evidentiam revelationis, non autem evidentiam primæ veritatis: tametsi enim evidenter cognoscerent Deum esse, qui ipsis revelabat mysteria fidei, non tamen evidenter cognoscebant Deum esse summe veracem, nec falli potuit, nec fallere;* that is, “Though it was sufficiently evident to the Prophets and Apostles, that those revelations which they had were from God; yet it was not evident to them, that divine revelations are true: for though they did evidently know that there was a God, who revealed to them the mysteries of faith; yet they did not evidently know that God was infallible and true, who could neither deceive, nor be deceived.” By which he doth not only make the prophets and apostles idiots, and destitute of one of the most common notions of human nature, which is, *that God is infallible and true;* but he doth likewise make all divine revelation useless, and to no purpose. For to what purpose is it for a man to be satisfied, that God reveals such a thing to him, if he be in the mean time unsatisfied, whether what God reveals is true? for no man that is unsatisfied, whether what God reveals be true, can, upon any tolerable ground of reason,

reason, yield a firm assent to a divine revelation. But it is pity to spend time in confuting any thing which confutes itself by its own absurdity, and its direct contradiction to the common notions of human nature. proceed therefore.

Supposing any man be unsatisfied, and do make a doubt whether those books called the holy scriptures, or any of them, be the word of God, that is, a divine revelation; proportionably to the degree of his doubting concerning the divine authority of the scriptures, there will be an abatement of his faith, as to the things contained in them; for he that believes a thing merely upon the credit or testimony of such a person; so much reason as he hath to doubt, whether such a person do speak, or testify such a thing; so much reason he hath to doubt whether the thing be true.

And upon this account I think it is, that the scripture speaks of degrees of faith, of growing and increasing faith, of a strong faith, that is, such a faith as was, either wholly or in a great measure, free from doubting; and of a weak faith, that is, such a faith as had a great mixture of doubting, by which we are not to understand, that they doubted of the truth of any thing which they were satisfied by a divine revelation; but that they doubted whether such things were divine revelations, or not. So that the great doubt of the disciples was, whether Christ were the true Messias, and really the Son of God: for so far as they were satisfied of that, they could not doubt of any thing he said.

IV. What are the proper and genuine effects of the faith? The proper and genuine effects of the belief of the scriptures, in general, is the conformity of our hearts and lives to what we believe; that is, to be such persons, and to live such lives as it becomes those who do heartily believe, and are really persuaded of the truth of the holy scriptures. And if this be a constant and abiding persuasion, it will produce this effect; but with more or less difficulty, according to the disposition of the subject, and the weakness or strength of contrary habits and inclinations. More particularly, the effects of this faith are according to the nature of the matter believed. If it be a history or relation of things past, or prophecy

things to come, it hath an effect upon men so far as the history or prophecy doth concern them. If it be a doctrine, it hath the effect which the particular nature and tendency of such doctrine requires. For instance, the doctrine of God's goodness is apt to inflame us with love to him; of his power and justice, with a fear and love of him. This doctrine, that Christ is the Saviour of the world, the proper effect of it is to make men fly upon him for salvation; and so of the rest. If it be a precept, the proper effect of it is obedience: and hence it is that unbelief and disobedience are frequently set for one another in scripture; and disobedience is opposed to faith, 1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, he is precious.* And so likewise those who neglect any duty of religion, and do any thing notoriously unworthy of their profession, are said to *deny the faith*, 1 Tim. 8. *But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith.* Now does he *deny the faith*? In disobeying the precepts of the Christian religion, which chargeth us with such natural and moral duties. If it be a promise, the proper effect of it is encouragement to obedience by hopes of the thing promised. If a threatening, the proper effect of it is to restrain men from sin and disobedience.

V. In what sense this faith of things supernaturally revealed, may be said to be a *divine faith*? *Ans.* Not only in respect of the matter and object of it, which are divine things, such as concern God and religion; and in respect of the divine effects it hath upon those who believe these things; (for in these two respects a persuasion of the principles of natural religion may be said to be a *divine faith*): but likewise in respect of the argument whereby it is wrought, which is a divine testimony. As for the efficient cause, the Spirit of God, that does not immediately belong to this: for the Spirit of God doth not, speaking properly, persuade us immediately of the truth of things supernaturally revealed; but mediately, by persuading us of the truth of the revelation: for to believe a thing to be true, which

we are persuaded is revealed by God, is so natural and consequent upon such a persuasion, that it doth not seem to require any new work of the Spirit. And if this be all the work of the Spirit, to persuade men that such a revelation is divine; it will be most proper to speak of this, when I come to the third sort of faith, which is a persuasion of a divine revelation, that it is such which, because it hath many difficulties in it, deserve a more large and particular consideration.

S E R M O N CCXXI.

Of the faith or persuasion of a divine revelation.

21 Jan^r

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impossible to please God.

The third sermon on this text.

I Have observed that a religious and divine faith comprehends under it three things.

First, A persuasion of the principles of natural religion, which are known by the light of nature.

Secondly, A persuasion of things supernatural and revealed.

Thirdly, A persuasion of supernatural revelation.

The two former of these I have considered, and now proceed to the

Third sort of faith, which I call divine or religious *viz.* a persuasion concerning a divine revelation, that it is such; which I distinguish from the former thus. The former is a persuasion concerning the things which are revealed from God, that they are true: this is a persuasion concerning the revelation itself, that it is divine and from God.

For the opening of this there are many things to be taken into consideration.

I. What we understand by a divine revelation.

II. The several kinds of it.

III. Whether a persuasion concerning a divine revelation be properly faith.

IV. How we may come to be assured of a divine revelation, or by what arguments a faith or persuasion of a divine revelation is wrought in us.

V. The degrees of this persuasion or assurance.

VI. The effects of it.

VII. In what sense it may be said to be a divine faith; under which I shall speak something concerning the testimony of the Spirit.

I. What we are to understand by a divine revelation.

Ans. A supernatural discovery, or manifestation of things to us. I say supernatural, because it may either be immediately by God, or by the mediation of angels; as most, if not all the revelations of the Old Testament were; a supernatural discovery, or manifestation, either immediately to our minds, and inward faculties; (for I do not so well understand the distinction between *understanding* and *imagination*, as to be careful to take notice of it); or else mediately to our understandings, by the mediation of our outward senses, as by an external appearance to our bodily eyes, or by a voice and sound to the sense of hearing. But of this I have discoursed in a former sermon*, and therefore shall add no more here.

II. For the several kinds of divine revelation; of this also I have formerly † discoursed at large.

III. Whether a persuasion of a divine revelation may properly be called faith? To this I answer, that according to the straight and narrow notion of faith, which the schools have fixed, which is an assent to any thing grounded upon the testimony and authority of God revealing it, a persuasion of a divine revelation cannot properly be called faith; because it is irrational to expect that a man should have another divine revelation to assure him, that this is a divine revelation: for then,

* See sermon 127.

† See *ibid.*

for the same reason, I must expect another divine revelation to assure me of that, and so without end. But I have sufficiently shewn, that this is not the true notion of faith in general, but only of a particular kind of faith; *viz.* that which is wrought by the argument, which we call testimony, or authority. But according to the true and general notion of faith, which is a *persuasion of the mind concerning any thing*, a persuasion of the mind concerning a divine revelation, may as properly be called faith, as any thing else, if men will but grant, that a man may be so satisfied, concerning a divine revelation, as verily to believe and be persuaded that it is so.

IV. How we may come to be persuaded of a divine revelation, that it is such; or by what arguments this persuasion is wrought in us? For answer to this, it will be requisite distinctly to consider,

First, The persons to whom a divine revelation is immediately made, what assurance they can have of it. And,

Secondly, What assurance other persons can have of it. I say, these are distinctly to be considered, because there is a very different account to be given of them.

First, As to those persons to whom the revelation is immediately made, the question is, By what arguments or means they come to be assured, that any revelation which they have, is really and truly such, and not a delusion or imposture? The Jewish doctors tell us, that some kind of divine revelations do not carry full assurance along with them, that they are divine; such are dreams and visions, as they are distinguished from prophecy: and as to that kind of revelation, which they strictly call prophecy, they give several characteristical notes to distinguish true divine revelation from delusion; such as these; that the spirit of delusion only works on the imagination, and the lower faculties; the divine spirit of prophecy upon the understanding and reasonable part of the soul: that delusive inspirations were accompanied with alienation of mind, which did discover itself either in rage and fury, or melancholy; but the true prophetic spirit is always consistent with the use of reason and understanding. They distinguish them likewise by the manner of their seiz-

ing upon them; that in the beginning of inspirations the prophets used to have some apparition, or to hear some voice, either articulate in words, or inarticulate by thunder, or the sound of a trumpet, which in the Revelations doth frequently precede St John's visions; and by these they were assured that they were divine. And lastly, that a divine inspiration did always carry along with it a strong evidence of its original, and that, by the vigour and strength of its impression, they were fully assured and satisfied beyond all doubt and hesitation: thus they. But all that I shall say, by way of answer to this question, shall be in these two propositions.

1. If we believe any such thing as divine revelation, we cannot doubt but those who have it, are some way or other fully satisfied of it. The reason is evident; because otherwise it would be in vain, and to no purpose, and could not possibly attain its end. A divine revelation cannot possibly signify any thing, or in reason have any effect upon a man, unless he be satisfied it is such: for so long as he does not know but that it is a delusion, he will not attend to it, or regard it. So that the distinction of the Jewish doctors between dreams and visions, and prophecy, that this carries always full assurance with it, the other not, is vain and unreasonable.

2. The means whereby this assurance of a divine revelation is wrought, is most probably the evidence it carries along with it, whereby it did fully satisfy the person that had it of its divine original. That God can accompany his own revelations with such a clear and overpowering light as shall discover to us the divinity of them, and satisfy us beyond all doubt and scruple, I think no man can doubt; that considers the vast power and influence which he must needs have over our understandings, who made them, and knows the frame of them: and if this be granted, it is not necessary to explain the particular way how it is done, it being a thing not to be expressed in words, but to be felt and experienced. So that the argument, whereby this persuasion of a divine revelation is wrought in those that have it, is inward experience of the full satisfaction and assurance, which they find to be supernaturally wrought

in them, that is, of which they can give no account from themselves. And this is not a stubborn belief, and an obstinate conceit of a thing: but a good man, who is inspired, when he reflects upon himself, and this assurance which he finds in himself, he can give a rational account of it to himself. Thus he finds that it is a foreign impression, and doth not spring from himself, nor hath its rise from thence; therefore he ascribes it to some spirit without himself; and he believes that there is a God that can communicate himself to the mind and spirits of men; and that his goodness is such, that he will not suffer them to be under a necessity of delusion, which they must be, if when they have the highest assurance and satisfaction, that such a thing is a divine revelation, they may be deceived. And then likewise he considers the matter of the revelation, which if it do not contradict any essential and necessary fundamental notion of his understanding, he thinks himself bound to entertain it upon this assurance.

I say, good men may give themselves this rational satisfaction: for I grant a wicked man, that rejects and disobeys the truth of God, may so provoke him, as to give him up to strong delusions, to believe lies; and he may be as confident of a lie, as a good man is of truth. But as this is not unjust from God in reference to the person, so it is no prejudice to the assurance which good men may have of divine revelation.

And this assurance is such, as it is not in the power of any evil spirit to convey to us, concerning a delusion; or if it be in his power, he is not permitted to do it to any who have not highly provoked God, by rejecting the truth, to give them up to strong delusions, to believe lies: and that such persons should be obnoxious to such delusions, as it is not unjust in reference to them, so neither is it any prejudice to the assurance which good men may have of such revelations, which are truly and really divine.

But for the other ways of discerning true revelation from false, which the Jews mention; as that the Spirit of God always works upon the understanding, as well as the imagination, and in consequence with the use of reason and understanding, and gives some sensible notice

tice of its seizing upon men, I think all these to be uncertain, if they be examined. And if the last which they mention, *viz.* this that I have insisted upon, be true, all the other are superfluous. For what need any other sign to assure a man that that is a divine revelation which carries along with it a clear satisfaction and full assurance that it is such?

So that it remains now, that we fix upon some particular ways, whereby the person that hath a divine revelation, may be assured of it; and this I shall do by these propositions.

First, That God can work in the mind of man a firm persuasion of a thing, by giving him a clear and vigorous perception of it; and if so, then God can accompany his own revelations with such a clear and overpowering light, as shall discover to us the divinity of them, and satisfy us thereof beyond all doubt and scruple. And this no man can doubt of, that considers the vast power and influence which God, who made the soul of man, and perfectly knows the frame of it, must needs have upon the mind and understanding of man.

Secondly, God never persuades a man of any thing that contradicts the natural and essential notions of his mind and understanding. For this would be to destroy his own workmanship, and to impose that upon the understanding of a man, which, whilst it retains its own nature, and remains what it is, it cannot possibly admit. For instance, we cannot imagine that God can persuade any man that there is no God; for he that believes any thing as from God, must necessarily believe there is a God; therefore it is impossible that he can be persuaded of this as from God, that there is no God; and that he is not wise, and just, and good, and powerful; and that he is not to be honoured and loved by all reasonable creatures: because these do clearly and immediately contradict the most essential and fundamental notions of our minds concerning God, and the respect which is due to him: not only because it is unworthy of God to go about to persuade a man of a falsehood; but because it is impossible in the nature of the thing, that the mind of man, which is naturally
prepossessed

prepossessed with contrary notions, should, whilst it retains its own nature, admit of such as do clearly and immediately contradict them. For if these be natural notions, that there is a God, that he must be wise, and just; and good, and powerful, and ought to be honoured and loved by his creatures; the mind of man cannot possibly admit of any contrary persuasions and impressions: for the former persuasions being natural to us, will always remain while our nature remains, and if any persuasions contrary to these could be wrought upon our minds, they would signify nothing, but would mutually destroy one another. For if any man that is persuaded that God is good, (as every man is, that is persuaded he is at all), could, during the persuasion, be likewise of a contrary persuasion, that he is not good; this latter persuasion would signify nothing: for he is not persuaded that God is not good, whilst he retains this persuasion that he is good.

Thirdly, Supposing the thing revealed do not contradict the essential notions of our minds, no good and holy man hath reason to doubt of any thing, whether it be a revelation from God or not, of which he hath a clear and vigorous perception, and full satisfaction in his own mind that it is such. For if a man may have reason to doubt of any thing whereof he hath a clear perception, then no man can be certain of any thing. Now, that there is such a thing as certainty, is now supposed, and not to be proved. I say, a good and holy man can have no reason to doubt: for a wicked man, I grant, may, by a sinful rejection of, and disobedience to the truth, so far provoke God, *as to give him up to strong delusions, to believe lies*; and he may be as confident of a lie, as any good man is of the truth.

And as this is not unjust from God, in reference to wicked men, so it is no prejudice to the assurance which good men may have concerning a divine revelation.

Fourthly, A good and holy man reflecting upon this assurance and persuasion that he hath, may be able to give himself a reasonable account of it, and satisfy himself that it is not a stubborn belief, and an obstinate conceit of things without any ground or reason. A good man is secretly, and within himself, persuaded that

at God hath revealed to him such a thing: reflecting on this persuasion, he finds that it is a foreign impression, and doth not spring from his own mind. Now, believing that there is a God, who can, and probably doth communicate and reveal himself to the minds of good men; and being withal satisfied that his goodness is such, that he will not suffer good men, who heartily and sincerely desire to know his will, to be under a necessity of delusion, (which they unavoidably are, if they may then be deceived, when they have the greatest assurance, and clearest satisfaction that such a thing is revealed to them of God); from hence he reasonably concludes, that he ought not to question the matter any further. I might instance in the revelation made to Abraham, concerning the sacrificing of his son, which hath the greatest difficulty in it of any case I know of: but of that I have elsewhere discoursed at large †. Thus much for the first.

Secondly, What assurance can other persons, who have not the revelation immediately made to them, have of a divine revelation? To this I shall answer by these propositions.

1. That there are some means whereby a man may be assured of another's revelation that it is divine. For, (1.) Otherwise it would signify nothing, but only to the person that immediately had it; which would make void the chief end of most revelations, which are seldom made to particular persons for their own sakes only, but for the most part, on purpose that they may be made known to others; which could not effectually be done, unless there be some means whereby men may be assured of revelations made to another.

(2.) None could be guilty of unbelief but those who had immediate revelation made to them. For no man is guilty of unbelief that is not obliged to believe: but no man can be under an obligation to believe any thing, who hath not sufficient means whereby he may be assured that such a thing is true.

2. The private assurance and satisfaction of another concerning a revelation made to him, can signify nothing at all to me, to assure me of it. For what satisf-

† See Sermon 56.

faction is it to me, that another may say he hath a revelation, unless I have some means to be assured that what he says is true? For if I must believe every spirit, that is, every man that says he is inspired, I lie open to all possible impostures and delusions, and must believe every one that either foolishly conceits, or falsely pretends that he hath a revelation: for both the conceited and pretended enthusiast will say they have revelations, with as much confidence as those who are truly and divinely inspired: and to take every man's word in matters of such huge consequence and importance as revelation from God ought to be presumed to be would not be faith, but credulity, that is, an ungrounded persuasion; which how severely God punishes you may see in that famous instance, 1 Kings xi where the prophet that was sent to Bethel, is upon his return torn in pieces by a lion, because of his credulity and easy belief of a pretended revelation. I confess this case is somewhat different from theirs who simply believe a pretended revelation, as being complicated with some other aggravating circumstances. For he had an immediate revelation from God, *not to eat, nor drink at Bethel; nor to return the same way that came*: upon his return, an old prophet meets him, and tells him that an angel had appeared to him, and had bid him bring him back, and to cause him to eat and drink; he believes him, and turns in with him. Now, this was the aggravation of his credulity, that when he himself had had an express revelation from God, concerning which he was satisfied, he hearkened to the pretended revelation of another, concerning which he had no assurance, in contradiction to a divine revelation, which he knew to be such. Not but that the command which God had given him was, in its own nature, revocable, and God might have countermanded it by another immediate revelation to him, by an equivalent, that is, a miracle wrought by the prophet, who pretended to countermand it from God. *Unumquodque dissolvitur eo modo quo ligatur*; the obligation which was brought upon him by an immediate revelation, could not be dissolved but by another immediate revelation, or evidence equivalent to it. How

er, this instance serves in the general to my purpose, that a man may be faulty by credulity, as well as by disbelief; and as a man ought not to disbelieve, where there is sufficient evidence; so neither ought he to believe any thing without sufficient grounds of assurance.

3. That miracles wrought for the confirmation of any divine testimony or revelation made to another, are sufficient means, whereby those who have not the divine revelation immediately made to them, may be assured that it is divine; I say, these are sufficient means of assurance in this case. I do not say they are the only means, (for it does not become men to limit the power and wisdom of God); but I do not know of any other means of assurance, upon which men can securely rely; and it is a great presumption that this is the best and fittest, if not the only means, because the wisdom of God hath always pitched upon it, and constantly made use of it, and no other. Under miracles I comprehend the prediction of future events, which God claims as a peculiar prerogative to himself, because such things are out of the reach of any created understanding; and therefore in the Prophet Isaiah, he challengeth the idols of the Heathens to give this testimony, or argument of their divinity; *Shew us things that are to come, that we may know that ye are gods.*

But here we must distinguish between doubtful and unquestionable miracles. I call those doubtful miracles, which, though a man cannot tell how they can be done by any natural power, yet do not carry that full conviction with them, as to be universally owned and acknowledged for arguments of a divine power. Such were those which the magicians did by their enchantments. I call those unquestionable, which, considering their quality and number, and the public manner of doing them, are out of all question. Such were the miracles of Moses, and our Saviour. Now, a doubtful, and a single, and a private wonder, or miracle, as I may call it, can give no confirmation to any thing in opposition to a revelation, or a doctrine confirmed by many, and public, and unquestionable miracles. Upon this account Moses forbids the children of Israel to hearken to any prophet that should come to seduce them to idolatry;

latry; yea, though *he should give thee a sign or wonder and the sign or wonder should come to pass*, Deut. xiii. 1. 3. 4. Now, here lies the strength of the reason, *because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage; that is, because he contradicts the great revelation which God made himself, and confirmed by such a succession of so many and so great miracles; the credit of which revelation ought not in reason to be called in question upon the working of a single and a private wonder, which we could not distinguish from a miracle.* Upon the same account, St Paul, Gal. i. 8. says, *Though an angel from heaven should preach any other doctrine than that which had been preached unto them, he should be accused; that is, after so clear and great confirmation, which was given by the gospel, a contrary doctrine, though it should come from an angel, should be rejected as execrable.*

But you will say, Suppose such a prophet as Moses speaks of here, such an angel as St Paul mentions, should work as many and as great miracles as Moses and Christ wrought, should we then believe them?

I answer, This is not to be supposed: for supposing the providence of God in the world, it cannot be imagined that an equal attestation should be given to a false doctrine and a true. But that the greatest and most unquestionable miracles are to carry it, is evident; because this is all the reason why Moses was to be credited above the magicians, because he wrought more and greater wonders than they did. But if it could be supposed that any one could work as great miracles for the confirmation of idolatry, as were wrought by way of attestation to the true worship of God, then there would be no difference, but what the reason of the thing makes; the belief of one God being more reasonable than many; and not to make an image or sensible representation of a spirit, being more reasonable than to make one. But if this could be supposed, the natural issue and consequence of it would be atheism, a man would believe neither that nor the other, nor that there is any God at all.

But a farther account of the nature and difference of miracles, I reserve to some † particular discourses on that subject. At present, for the fuller opening of this matter, it will be proper to shew,

1. That the divine authority both of the doctrine of Moses and Christ is resolved into miracles.

2. What assurance of miracles is sufficient to persuade men to believe that testimony, for the confirmation of which they are wrought.

3. What assurance they give us, that the scriptures are a divine revelation.

But the consideration of these I refer to the next opportunity.

S E R M O N CCXXII.

Of the faith or persuasion of a divine revelation.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impossible to please God.

The fourth sermon on this text.

[*N* discoursing of the faith or persuasion of a divine revelation, I proposed the considering these seven things.

I. What we understand by a divine revelation.

II. The several kinds of it.

III. Whether a persuasion concerning a divine revelation be properly faith.

IV. How we may come to be assured of a divine revelation; or by what arguments a faith or persuasion of divine revelation is wrought in us.

† See sermons on Heb. ii. 4. in this volume.

V. The degrees of this persuasion or assurance.

VI. The effects of it.

VII. In what sense it may be said to be a divine faith.

I was upon the fourth of these, *viz.* considering by what arguments faith or persuasion of a divine revelation is wrought in us; which led me to consider the evidence of miracles; and I proposed to shew particularly these three things.

1. That the divine authority both of the doctrine of Moses and Christ is resolved into miracles.

2. What assurance of miracles is sufficient to persuade men to believe that testimony, for the confirmation of which they are wrought.

3. What assurance they give us, that the scriptures are a divine revelation.

I proceed to treat of these in their order.

1. I shall shew that the divine authority both of the doctrine of Moses and of Christ is resolved into miracles. We find the scripture lays the whole weight of the divine authority both of the law and gospel, of the revelation of the Old and New Testament, upon this evidence. *Exod. iv. 1. 2. 3.* When God sends Moses he objects, *That they will not believe him, nor hearken to him, but will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto him.* Thereupon God gives him a power of miracles that they may believe *that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, hath appeared unto them:* and by the evidence of those miracles which he wrought, he prevailed over the magicians. And generally throughout the story of the Old Testament, we find all persons yielding to the evidence of miracles, as a sufficient attestation to a prophet and his message. When Elijah had prevailed with God in a miraculous manner to confirm his own worship, and confute the worship of Baal, by sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, the people yielded to this evidence, and cry out, *The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God,* *1 Kings xviii. 39.* When Elijah raised the woman's son, then she owned him for a prophet *1 Kings xvii. 24.* *Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is true.* So likewise Naaman was convinced by the miraculo

aculous cure which the Prophet Elisha wrought on him, Kings v. 15. *Behold! now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel.*

And so likewise the divinity of our Saviour and his doctrines is resolved into the evidence of his miracles. This is the evidence Christ gives of himself, when John sent his disciples to inquire whether he was the Messias, Matth. xi. 2. &c. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me. So John v. 36. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. Chap. x. 25. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed it not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. Verse 37. 38. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe the Father is in me, and I in him. Chap. xiv. 11: Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works sake. Chap. xx. 30. 31. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name. And from hence our Saviour aggravates the unbelief and impenitency of the Jews, because they resisted this highest evidence, Matth. xi. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Wo unto thee, Chorazin, wo unto thee, Bethsaida: for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of*

judgment, than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. John xv. 24. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen, and hated both me and my Father. And so the Apostle tells us, that miracles are the great confirmation of the gospel, and are so clear an evidence of the truth of it, that they render all unbelievers inexcusable: Heb. ii. 2. 3. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?

In particular, the great weight of the gospel is laid upon the miracle of Christ's resurrection from the dead, which our Saviour mentions as the only sign that should be given to that generation, that is, the clearest. And the Apostle, Rom. i. 4. saith, that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. This put it out of all question. And St Paul, in his sermon to the Athenians, Acts xvii. 30. 31. insists upon this as the great evidence: And the times of their ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. And this was the proper work of the apostles, to be witnesses to the world of this great miracle, Acts i. 21. 22. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. So St Peter, in his sermon, Acts ii. 32. Him hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. And to mention no more, Acts x. 38. 39. 40.

41. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

2. What assurance of miracles is sufficient to persuade men to believe the revelation or testimony, for the confirmation of which they are wrought. Of this assurance there are three degrees, all which do oblige men to believe the divine revelation for which they are wrought.

(1.) If we have the evidence of our own senses for it, that is, if we see them wrought. This evidence the disciples of our Lord had, and the Jews; and therefore their unbelief was inexcusable; and the blaspheming the Spirit whereby they saw such miracles to be wrought, was the sin against the Holy Ghost.

(2.) If we have the credible report of eye-witnesses of those miracles, who are credible persons, and we have no reason to doubt of their testimony; that is, if we have the reports of them immediately from the mouth of those who were eye-witnesses of them. That this lays likewise an obligation on men to believe, appears by our Saviour's reproof of Thomas, who would not believe except he himself saw: but most expressly from that text, Mark xvi. 14. *He upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.*

(3.) If the credible report of eye-witnesses concerning such miracles be conveyed to us in such a manner, and with so much evidence, as we have no reason to doubt of it. For why should we not believe a credible report conveyed to us in such a manner, as we have no reason to question, but that it hath been faithfully conveyed and transmitted to us? St John thought this to be assurance sufficient to induce belief, John xx. 31. *But these things were written that ye might believe, &c.* And this is that assurance which we, who live at this

distance from the age of Christ and his apostles, have of the miracles wrought in confirmation of the gospel I shall have occasion to enlarge upon these heads hereafter.

3. What assurance miracles give us, that the scriptures are a divine revelation. And this contains four distinct questions in it.

1. What assurance we have from hence, that the doctrine contained in the scripture is from God? To which the answer is easy; because these miracles were wrought for the confirmation of this doctrine.

2. The question is, What assurance miracles give us that those persons who are said to be the penmen of the several books of scripture, were really so? To this I answer, none at all: for I do not know of any miracle that was wrought to prove Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or that St Matthew wrote the gospel which goes under his name. But if the question be, How then am I assured of this? I answer, by credible and uncontrolled report. It bears his name, and hath always been received for his; and if this will not satisfy, I cannot prove it farther; it is too late now to prove it by any other argument. St Matthew is dead, and those who saw him write it, and those who received it from them so that we cannot go to inquire of them in order to our satisfaction: but the best of it is, that as it cannot now be proved at this distance otherwise than by constant uncontrolled report, so no man at this distance can have any reason to doubt of it; and so long as no man can have any reason to doubt of it, there can be no need of proving it, especially considering that it is by no means necessary to salvation, to believe that St Matthew wrote the history of the gospel; but only to believe what he wrote.

3. The question is, What assurance miracles give that those persons who are said to be the penmen of the books of scripture were divinely inspired? The miracles (under which I comprehend the prediction of future events) which Moses, and the prophets, and the apostles wrought, were testimonies from heaven, that they were divine persons, and that what they said was to be credited; and consequently if they gave out them-

selves

ives for such, that they were such. That the penmen of the New Testament were persons endowed with miraculous power, is plain, because they were most of them apostles: and for the rest, we have no reason to doubt of it; those extraordinary gifts being so common in the primitive times: however, so long as there is nothing in the rest, that is dissonant from, or contrary to what those wrote, of whose inspirations we are assured, and these their writings have always been received in the church as of divine inspiration, which we may well presume was not rashly done, and without grounds, we have no reason to doubt as to them: or that they were, so long as they contain nothing that is contrary to those who were unquestionably inspired, the matter is of no dangerous consequence. And as for the penmen of the Old Testament, we are assured that they were all inspired, by one in the New Testament, that was unquestionably so, St Paul, who tells us, *that all scripture is of divine inspiration*, meaning the books of the Old Testament which were called by that name, *κατ' ἐξοχὴν*, or by way of eminency.

But if any one inquire farther, how far the penmen of scripture were inspired in the writing of those books? whether only so far as to be secured from mistake in the delivery of any message or doctrine from God, or in the relation of any history, or matter of fact; yet so, as they were left every man to his own style and manner of expression? or that every thing they wrote, was immediately dictated to them, and that not only the sense of it, but the very words and phrases by which they express things, and that they were merely instruments or penmen, I shall not take upon me to determine; I shall only say this in general, that considering the end of this inspiration, which was to inform the world certainly of the mind and will of God, it is necessary for every man to believe that the inspired penmen of scripture were so far assisted as was necessary to this end: and he that thinks upon good grounds that this end cannot be secured, unless every word and syllable were immediately dictated, he hath reason to believe it was so; but if any man upon good grounds thinks the end of writing the scripture may be sufficiently secured without

without that, he hath no reason to conclude, that God who is not wanting in what is necessary, is guilty of doing what is superfluous. And if any man is of opinion that Moses might write the history of those actions which he himself did or was present at, without an immediate revelation of them; or that Solomon by his natural and acquired wisdom might speak those sayings which are in his Proverbs; or the evangelists might write what they heard and saw, or what they had good assurance of from others, as St Luke tells he did; or that St Paul might write for his cloak and parchments at Troas, and salute by name his friends and brethren, or that he might advise Timothy to drink a little wine, &c. without the immediate dictate of the Spirit of God, he seems to have reason on his side. For that men may, without an immediate revelation, write those things which they think without a revelation seems very plain. And that they did so, there is the probable argument for it, because we find that the evangelists, in relating the discourses of Christ, are very far from agreeing in the particular expressions and words, though they do agree in the substance of the discourses: but if the words had been dictated by the Spirit of God, they must have agreed in them. For when St Luke differs from St Matthew, in relating what our Saviour said, it is impossible that they should both relate it right as to the very words and form of expression but they both relate the substance of what he said. And if it had been of concernment, that every thing that they wrote should be dictated *ad apicem*, to a tittle, by the Spirit of God, it is of the same concernment still that the providence of God should have secured the scripture since to a tittle from the least alteration which that it is not done, appears by the various readings both of the Old and New Testament, concerning which, no man can infallibly say, that this is right and not the other. It seems sufficient in this matter to assert, that the Spirit of God did reveal to the penmen of the scriptures what was necessary to be revealed: and as to all other things, that he did superintend them in the writing of it, so far as to secure them from

an material error or mistake in what they have desired. Or,

If the question be, what assurance we have from oracles, that all those books which we receive are canonical? To this I answer, I do not know of any miracle that ever was wrought on purpose to confirm the canon of the scriptures: but as for the books of the Old Testament, we have sufficient assurance, that those which we now receive, are those which the Jews receive for such in our Saviour's time; and he doth not anywhere find fault with any of them as not canonical, which we have no reason to doubt but he would have done, if any one of them had been otherwise. And that these are the same the Jews then received, appears sufficiently, because both Jews and Christians to this day agree in them. As for the books of the New Testament, we are sufficiently assured, that these, and no other, are the books which the ancient church received for canonical and of divine authority; and though some of them were for a time controverted, yet upon further inquiry and examination they were received.

V. Whether this faith concerning a divine revelation made to others, do admit of degrees? That it doth, is evident from these expressions which the scripture uses, of *increasing faith*, of *growing in it*, of *a weak and young faith*, all which plainly suppose degrees. And that these degrees of faith which the scripture speaks of, are to be understood of a higher and lower degree of assurance concerning a divine revelation as such, and concerning the things revealed, I shewed before. For all the doubts which the disciples had concerning what our Saviour taught, did resolve itself into this, Whether he was the Messiah, and sent by God to teach those things; which if they been fully satisfied of, they could have made no doubt of any thing that he taught.

And here it will be proper to inquire, what is the highest degree of assurance which we can have concerning a divine revelation made to another, that it is such; whether it be an infallible assurance, or only an undoubted certainty. The difference between them is this; an infallible assurance is such as excludes all possibility of error and mistake; an undoubted certainty doth

doth not exclude all possibility of mistake, but only just and reasonable cause why a prudent and considerate man should doubt. And the reason why I make this inquiry, is in order to be satisfied of a clear and firm way to the resolution of our faith against the Papists, who say it is impossible for us to give any satisfactory account of our faith, because we do finally resolve it into fallible grounds, and consequently our faith must be fallible, and consequently cannot be divine, because all divine faith is infallible: for, say they, when we inquire how you believe the doctrines of the Christian religion; say, upon divine authority, or the revelation of God in scripture. This is granted to be an infallible ground, where we can be infallibly assured that the scriptures are a divine revelation; therefore they inquire in the second place, Why do you believe the scriptures to be a divine revelation? we say, because the persons who discovered the doctrines contained in them, had the great attestation from God, that they were employed by him to reveal and make known his mind; and this attestation was miracles. But then they ask, What assurance have you that such miracles were wrought? Have you infallible assurance, or not? If not, then it cannot be a sufficient ground for a divine faith, which is always infallible. In opposition therefore to them, I shall not attempt to shew the insufficiency of their way of resolving faith; but vindicate ours as sufficient, by laying down and proving, if I can, these propositions.

1. That infallibility is not essential to divine faith, and necessarily included in the notion of it; which I shall prove thus. Divine faith admits of degrees, as I have shewed before: but there can be no degrees of infallibility. Infallibility is an impossibility of being deceived; but there are no degrees of impossibility, one thing not more impossible than another; but all things that are impossible, are equally so.

2. That the assurance which we have of the miracles wrought for the confirmation of the gospel, is not infallible assurance. I shewed before that there are three ways whereby we may be assured of matter of fact, as the working of miracles is.

irst, By our own senses.

secondly, By the report of credible witnesses.

thirdly, By credible history. But none of these give us infallible assurance. That it is possible our senses may deceive us, I think no body will deny; and if so, then the testimony of witnesses, and the report of history, which likewise depends originally upon our senses, may deceive us. I do not know a fourth way whereby we may be assured of matter of fact.

3. That an undoubted assurance of a divine revelation, that it is such, is as much as in reason can be expected. I deny not but that a divine revelation is an infallible ground of faith; because whatever God says infallibly true, and a faith built upon a divine revelation would be infallible, if we could be infallibly assured that it is a divine revelation; but that we cannot be without another divine revelation to assure us infallibly that this is one, and that other would require a third, and so without end; which being absurd and unreasonable, it remains that an infallible assurance of a divine revelation is impossible; and consequently, that we can have no more than an undoubted assurance; and this is as much as in reason we can expect to have: for it is unreasonable to expect that we should have any greater assurance that such a revelation is from God, than we have that there is a God; because that there is a God, is the first and most fundamental principle of religion, and it is unreasonable to expect greater assurance of any thing in religion, than we have of that which is the first principle of it. And indeed it is impossible; for no man can be infallibly assured, that a revelation is from God, unless he be first infallibly assured that there is a God, but no man hath more than an undoubted assurance that there is a God. No man pretends to a divine revelation that there is a God; but only to have rational satisfaction of it, such as leaves no just or reasonable cause to doubt of it. And why then should any desire greater assurance of a divine revelation, than he hath of God?

4. An undoubted assurance is sufficient to constitute a divine faith. Mark xvi. 14. it is said, *Christ upbraided his disciples with their unbelief, because they believed*

not them who had seen him after he was risen. Suppose now the disciples had believed, which they ought to have done, this faith of theirs would have been a true divine faith; but by no means infallible. For this cannot be an infallible faith which is built but upon fallible grounds: now, the ground upon which they ought to have believed, was the report of credible witnesses; but the report of credible witnesses is by no means infallible; it is indeed undoubted, for I have no reason to doubt of a credible report; for that is credible which I have just cause to believe; but I can have no just cause to doubt of that which I have just cause to believe.

As an undoubted assurance is sufficient to constitute divine faith, so it is sufficient to all the ends and purposes of a divine faith. To instance in the faith of the promises of eternal life: What is the end and design of this faith, but to encourage our obedience, and make us continue in it, notwithstanding the hazard of anything in this world? Now, I say, an undoubted assurance is abundantly sufficient to this end. Do not men venture their estates in traffic to places they never saw because they have it from credible persons, that there are such places; and they have no reason to doubt their testimony: and why should not the same assurance serve us in greater matters? If an undoubted assurance of a lesser benefit and advantage will make men venture as much, why should any man desire greater assurance of any thing, than to have no just reason to doubt of it; why more than so much as the thing is capable of? I cannot possibly understand why every man should not be contented with sufficient assurance, or for what reason a man should desire more than enough; and why a man should not be satisfied that a thing is so, when he hath as great assurance of it, and as good evidence for it as he could have, supposing it were.

And for men to say, nothing less than infallible assurance can satisfy a man's mind, that men will always doubt so long as there is a possibility of the contrary; and there will be a possibility of the contrary, until we have infallible assurance, is as unreasonable as

can be imagined. I ask any man, whether he be infallibly assured that there was such a man as William the Conqueror? or that there is such a country as Spain? If he say he is, I ask, where is his infallible evidence for this? He will cite several historians: but all this is human testimony, and that is fallible. It seems then he is not infallibly certain there was such a man, or there is such a country; and consequently there is a possibility of the contrary. It is granted there is; but is any sober man unsatisfied in his mind about these things? I would fain meet with the man that will tell me in good earnest, that he hath reason to doubt, whether there was such a man, or not; and whether there be such a place as Spain, or not. So that it is fond for any man to alledge a bare possibility of the contrary, as a reasonable cause of doubting concerning any thing, for which we have as good evidence as the thing is capable of.

Upon these grounds we can easily resolve our faith. We believe the doctrine of Christian religion, because it is revealed by God; we believe it to be revealed by God, because it was confirmed by unquestionable miracles: we believe such miracles were wrought, because we have as great assurance of this, as any matter of fact, at such a distance from the time it was done, is capable of. Now, if the Papists say, this doth at least amount to no more than moral assurance; I grant it doth not: but then I have proved this assurance to be as much as in reason can be expected, and as much as is sufficient to the nature and ends of a divine faith, and that an infallible assurance is not agreeable to a human understanding; but an incommunicable attribute and prerogative of the divine nature, which whoever pretends to, he hath not the modesty of a creature, but does by a sacrilegious ambition attempt the throne of God, and equal himself to the Most High. And therefore it is no wonder that the popes of Rome, after they had once assumed to themselves to be infallible, did presently arrogate to themselves the titles of God, there being such strict connection between the attribute of infallibility and the divine nature, that whoever challengeth the first, may with equal reason claim the other.

I shall only add this, that nothing hath been more pernicious to Christian religion, than the vain pretence of men to greater assurance concerning things relating to it, than they can make good; the mischief of which is this; that when discerning and inquisitive men find that men pretend to greater matters than any can prove this makes them doubt of all they say, and to call in question the truth of Christianity itself. Whereas, men would be contented to speak justly of things, and pretend to no greater assurance than they can bring evidence for; considerate men would be apt to believe them. Every knowing man being more ready to listen to a modest man, whose confidence bears a proportion to the reasons and arguments he brings for what he says; than to a confident pretender, who calls every weak saying a demonstration. And indeed such men are but justly dealt withal, since the experience of the world hath sufficiently taught us, that usually those who speak modestly of things, are furnished with the best argument for their assertions; and that those who have made the strongest pretences to infallibility in any thing, have the weakest reasons for what they have said; of which this account may be given, that good reasons and arguments are requisite to beget in a man a rational assurance; but a strong conceit is sufficient to beget in men an opinion of infallibility.

VI. What is the proper and genuine effect of this faith of a divine revelation? I answer, a compliance with the design and intention of it.

VII. In what respect this may be called a divine faith? To this I answer; not only in respect of the object of it, and the argument whereby it is wrought and the effect of it; but likewise in respect of the author and efficient of it, which is the divine Spirit. And here, if time would permit, I should speak of the testimony of the Spirit; not as an argument whereby a persuasion of a divine revelation, *viz.* that the scriptures are the word of God, is wrought: but also as he is the author and efficient cause of it. I do most readily grant the great influence that the Spirit of God hath upon the minds of men in this work of faith, as well as in every spiritual act: but it is to be inquired, how the Spirit of

God may be said to work this faith in us; whether by strengthening the faculty; or by holding the mind intent upon the argument, whereby this persuasion is wrought; or discovering the object; or removing the impediments; or furthering and helping forward the efficacy of it upon our hearts and lives. But of this, God willing, in my next discourse.

S E R M O N CCXXIII.

Of the testimony of the Spirit, to the truth
of the gospel.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impossible to please God.

The fifth sermon on this text.

IN discoursing of the faith or persuasion of a divine revelation, I came to inquire, in what respects this may be called a divine faith. To which my answer was, that it is a divine faith, not only with respect to the object of it, and the argument whereby it is wrought, and the effect of it; but likewise in respect of the author and efficient of it, which is the divine Spirit. I proceed therefore to consider the testimony of the divine Spirit, not only as an argument whereby a persuasion of a divine revelation, *viz.* That the scriptures are the word of God, is wrought; but also as he is the author and efficient cause of it. The scripture doth in a peculiar manner ascribe the belief of a divine revelation, especially of the revelation of the gospel, to the Spirit of God. In this sense the scripture saith, *That no man can say, that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Spirit of God.* And though every good persuasion that we have, be in some sort or other to be ascribed to

God, yet I observe it to be the phrase of the New Testament, to attribute the belief of the gospel, in a more peculiar manner, to the Spirit of God. When any man believes the principles of natural religion, that there is a God, that the soul is immortal, and that there are rewards after this life, as the Heathens did; even this is from God, who hath planted these principles in our natures; or, which comes all to one, hath given us such faculties, by the use and improvement of which, we may come to the knowledge of these principles: but it is not usual, in the phrase of scripture, to attribute this natural knowledge in such a peculiar manner to the Spirit of God.

When any man believes the matters of divine revelation, for instance, the doctrines contained in the gospel; this faith is to be attributed to the Spirit of God; but not as immediately persuading us of the truth of these doctrines, but by persuading us, that the gospel which contains these truths, is a divine revelation; or, which is all one, that the Lord Jesus Christ, who delivered these doctrines to the world, was a divine person, and came from God: and if we once firmly believe and entertain this, that Jesus was the Messias, and sent from God to acquaint the world with his mind and will; we can make no doubt of the truth of any thing which he hath delivered. So that the faith which the scripture doth in a peculiar manner attribute to the Spirit of God, is this persuasion, *that Jesus is the Christ*; that is, that he was the true Messias, and sent from God.

So that the question is, how the Spirit of God doth concur to the begetting of this faith or persuasion? Or, by this faith is in such a peculiar manner attributed to the Spirit of God?

I answer, upon these two accounts.

First, In respect of the outward evidence which the Spirit of God gives us to persuade us to believe.

Secondly, In respect of the inward efficacy and operation of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men in believing.

First, In respect to the outward evidence which the Spirit of God gives us to persuade us to believe. And if this be not that which divines mean by the testimony

ty of the Spirit in this matter, yet, I think, it is that which may most properly be so called. Now, the Spirit of God did outwardly testify concerning Jesus, that he was the Messias, and came from God; and that the doctrine which he taught was divine.

1. In the voice from heaven, which accompanied the descending of the Spirit upon him, in the form of a dove, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,* Matth. iii. 17.

2. In those miracles which Christ himself wrought by the Spirit of God; which were so eminent a testimony of the Spirit of God, that the resisting of the evidence of those miracles, and the attributing of them to the devil, is by our Saviour called a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and such a sin as shall never be pardoned: because miracles being the highest attestation that can be given to the divinity of any person, or his doctrine: whoever resists this evidence, resists his last remedy; and such a person must needs remain in his infidelity, because there is nothing more that can be done for his conviction.

3. The third eminent testimony which the Holy Spirit gave to Christ, was in the great miracle of his resurrection from the dead; and hence it is that the great miracle of Christ's resurrection, which was the highest attestation to the divinity of his person, and the grand confirmation to his doctrine, is frequently in scripture, in a most peculiar manner, ascribed to the Spirit of God, Rom. i. 4. *And was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness,* that is, by those miracles which he wrought by the Holy Ghost, and by his resurrection from the dead. And so, Rom. viii. 11. *The Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead.* I Pet. iii. 18. *Being put to death in the flesh; but quickened by the Spirit.*

4. In the effusion of the Spirit upon the apostles who were to preach Christ and his doctrine to the world: and that it might carry its evidence along with it, God poured forth his Spirit upon those who were to be the publishers of it; by which Spirit they were endowed with several miraculous powers and gifts, to convince the world of the truth of the doctrine which they preached.

And with relation to this, I think, it is that the Apostle saith, 1 Cor. ii. 4. 5. *And my speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom: but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God;* that is, they did not use human eloquence to persuade men, but delivered the gospel with all plainness: and that which made those plain discourses so powerful, were those powerful demonstrations of the divine Spirit, which appeared in those miraculous gifts wherewith they were endowed. I am sure Origen understands this text so. And so likewise the Apostle, 1 Thess. i. 5. speaks to the same purpose, that *the gospel came not unto you in word only; but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;* that is, they did not only speak words to men, but the doctrine which they preached was attested in a powerful manner by the Holy Ghost, in those extraordinary gifts, which were bestowed upon them, which was a great evidence to their hearers, and gave them great assurance of the truth of what they delivered. I think this is the meaning of those two places, but I will mention two others which are more unquestionable, Acts v. 22. where Peter, and the rest of the apostles, tell the high priests and their officers, what evidence they had for what they preached concerning the resurrection and ascension of Christ. *We are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.* Not only they themselves had seen what they preached; but to confirm their testimony, the Holy Ghost was poured forth upon them in miraculous gifts. And Heb. ii. 3. 4. *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?* So the Holy Ghost gave testimony to the truth of the doctrine which the Apostles preached, by those gifts which he endowed them withal, and those miracles which he enabled them to work.

And I doubt not but with relation to the testimony which the Spirit of God gave to Christ by the miracles he

wrought by Christ and his Apostles, I say, I doubt not, but that with relation to his testimony it is, that the Apostle saith, he was *justified in the Spirit*, 1 Tim. i. 16. *Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit:* that is, the miraculous power of the Spirit which appeared in him, and did accompany his doctrine, did justify him to the world, and vindicate him from being an impostor and deceiver.

From all which it appears, that the testimony which the Holy Spirit gives to Christ and his doctrine, was the miracles which he and his apostles wrought by the Spirit of God: and if we will take our forms of speaking from scripture, this is that which may most properly be called the testimony of the Spirit to the truth of the gospel. But I deny not but besides this outward evidence, which the Spirit of God gives to the truth of the gospel, with respect to which the faith of the gospel is in a peculiar manner attributed to the Spirit of God, there is likewise an inward efficacy and operation of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men. Therefore,

Secondly, Faith is in a peculiar manner attributed to the Spirit of God; in respect of the inward efficacy and operation of the divine Spirit upon the hearts and minds of those who sincerely and effectually believe and entertain the gospel; I say, who sincerely and effectually believe and entertain the gospel; that is, who so believe and entertain the gospel as to obey it, and comply with it in their hearts and lives. For I doubt not but that there is so much evidence for the truth and divine authority of the gospel, as is in itself sufficient, without any peculiar operation of the Spirit of God, to silence all opposers, and to convince them so far as that they cannot have any sufficient reason to disbelieve it: but withal, I do not think that this faith doth become an abiding and effectual persuasion in any person, without the special operation of the Holy Ghost. Now, that the Spirit of God can work this effectual persuasion in the mind of man, cannot be doubted by any man who considers the vast power and influence which the Spirit of God, who made our souls, and knows the frame of them, can have upon the mind of man: all
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the difficulty is about the manner of it; how this faith is wrought in us by the Spirit of God. Now, although it were sufficient for us to know the thing, though we were ignorant of the manner how it is done, and we might very well rest satisfied in this, that the Spirit of God works this faith in us, though we did not know how he does it; yet because many have taken upon them to state and determine the particular manner how it is done, it will be requisite, in order to the rectifying some mistakes about it, to inquire more particularly in to this matter.

Now, all the ways that have been assigned, or which I think, we can easily imagine, may be reduced to one of these six heads. When we say the Spirit of God works faith in us, we must conceive it to be done some or all of these ways.

1. By strengthening the faculty, that is, raising and enabling our understanding to yield assent to the gospel. Or,

2. By enlightening and discovering the object, that is, the conclusion to be believed.

3. By propounding to us the arguments, or evidence whereby we may be persuaded of it. Or,

4. By holding our minds intent upon this evidence till it have wrought its effect upon us. Or,

5. By removing the impediments which hinder our assent. Or,

6. By furthering and helping forward the efficacy of this persuasion upon our hearts and lives.

That the Spirit can work faith in us, any, or all of these ways, so far as they are consistent with one another, I make not the least doubt. For what man, who believes the infinite power of the divine Spirit, can make the least question, whether it can raise and heighten our faculties above their natural and ordinary pitch? or whether it can discover an object to us, with the greatest clearness and satisfaction? or whether it can offer to our minds the best arguments, and the highest evidence that a thing is capable of? or whether it can hold our minds intent upon the consideration of any thing; or whether it can remove all hinderances and impediments?

pliments? or whether it can make the persuasion of any truth effectual? No man in reason can doubt of the possibility of these. But the question is, what reason we have to assert this or that particular manner? and what necessity and convenience there is from experience, or evidence of scripture, so to do?

First of all, there seems no necessity of asserting the first; though I will not contend with any man that will. For if this be true, that our understandings are naturally endowed with a sufficient power to assent to any truth that is sufficiently propounded to them; then there can be no necessity to assert, that the Spirit of God doth, in the work of faith, raise and elevate our understandings above their natural pitch. But, I think, it may easily be proved, that our understandings are naturally endowed with a sufficient power to assent to any truth that is sufficiently propounded to them; and that, in such a case, nothing hinders the assent of men, but their own perverseness and obstinacy, which usually proceeds from opposition of their lusts, or passions, or interest, to the truth which is propounded to them. For if mens understandings be not naturally endowed with a sufficient power to yield assent to the gospel, when it is sufficiently propounded to them, how can it be mens duty to believe it? or what justice can condemn them for unbelief? But though there be no necessity of asserting, that God doth always strengthen and elevate the understanding of those who believe; yet there is no reason to deny but that God may do this when he pleaseth, and possibly he often doth it.

God is said, in scripture, *to enlighten the eyes of our understandings*, which we may, if we please, understand in this sense; although that may be done by propounding such truths to us as we were ignorant of before, and could not have discovered, unless they had been revealed.

Secondly, The second way whereby the Spirit of God may be conceived to work faith in us, is by enlightening and discovering the object, or thing to be believed. In the case we are speaking of, the object or thing to be believed, is the gospel: now, we may imagine the Spirit of God may work a faith or persuasion of this in

us, by revealing or discovering to us this proposition. That the gospel is true. But this I need not speak much to, because I do not know any that pretend to have particular and immediate revelation from God, that the gospel is true. So that though God may do this when he pleaseth, yet I do not know any who assert this to be the way whereby faith is wrought in men.

Thirdly, The Spirit of God may be conceived to work faith in us, by propounding and offering to us such arguments and evidence as are apt to persuade us of the truth of the gospel. And this the Spirit of God, which inspired the writers of the scripture, doth immediately by the scriptures, and those characters of divinity which are in the doctrines contained in them; and by those miracles, which are there credibly related to be wrought by the Spirit of God, for the confirmation of that doctrine. And besides this, the Spirit of God may, when he pleaseth, and probably often doth, immediately suggest those arguments to our minds, and bring them to our remembrance.

Fourthly, The Spirit of God may be conceived to work faith in us, by holding our minds intent upon the evidence, till it hath wrought its effect upon us. And in this, I do not doubt, but the Spirit of God, out of his abundant grace and goodness to men, often doth; and I believe, many men have found their minds kept intent upon such considerations, as have mightily prevailed upon them, and been effectual to persuade them to entertain and obey the gospel; and must acknowledge that their minds were awakened by such considerations, and made attentive to them, beyond their own inclinations to think upon such things; and in such a strange and unaccountable manner, as they cannot but reason but attribute to some superior influence, *viz.* to the Holy Spirit of God.

Fifthly, By removing the impediments which hinder our effectual assent to the gospel. And in this, and the last particular, I conceive the work of the Spirit of God in the producing of faith, principally to consist. I say in these principally, not absolutely excluding the former. The great impediment to the belief and entertainment of the gospel, is the prejudice which the minds

men are apt to conceive against it, either upon account of their education in a contrary religion, or upon account of their lusts, or some worldly interest, to which the gospel is opposite. Now, these are so many bars upon the understandings of men, to keep out the truth from entering into them. The prejudice of a contrary education is a monstrous obstacle to religion. When men have believed otherwise from their youth, and have had contrary principles implanted in them in their tender years, and have all their lives been possessed with contrary apprehensions of things; the clearest truths that can be offered to them, come upon infinite disadvantage; their understandings are tinctured, and put false colours upon every thing that is represented to them. And this was the case of the Jews, when the Messias came: they were possessed with prejudices against his mean appearance, and had fashioned to themselves another kind of Messias, that should be a glorious temporal prince; and had been brought up in this apprehension; and this made them so invincibly obstinate against the reception of him, though the whole nation, when he came, were in expectation of him. And this was also the case of the Gentiles, when the gospel was first preached to them: they had been educated in a contrary religion, and were possessed with quite other apprehensions, which made the passage of the gospel infinitely difficult. And I doubt not, but that in the first publishing of the gospel, the Spirit did remarkably work upon the minds of men, for the removing of these prejudices, and thereby making way for the entertainment of the gospel. And though this prejudice be not now upon us in these parts of the world, who are brought up in the Christian religion; yet the lusts and interests of men are now great obstacles to the effectual entertainment of the gospel; and the Spirit of God doth many times eminently appear in the restraining and conquering the lusts of men, and removing those other prejudices which hinder them from embracing the truth.

Sixthly, The last way whereby the Spirit of God may be said to work in us an effectual belief of the gospel, is by furthering and helping forward the efficacy of

of this persuasion upon our hearts and lives, in the first work of conversion and regeneration, and in the progressive work of sanctification afterward, both which the scripture doth every where attribute to the Spirit of God, as the author and efficient cause. The faith which *purifies the heart, and conquers the world, and works by love*, hath this effect from the Spirit of God. Hence we are said to be *sanctified by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and the belief of the truth, and to be kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto salvation.*

Thus I have shewn you, as briefly and clearly as I could, how the Spirit of God doth concur to the beginning of this divine faith and persuasion in us, and consequently in what respects faith may be said to be the gift of God. I shall only draw two or three inferences from this discourse.

I. We may learn from hence to attribute all the good that is in us, or that we do in any kind, to God. Every good thing is from God; so St James tells us that *every good and perfect work comes down even from the Father of lights.* Much more are we to ascribe to the free grace of God all the revelation of supernatural truth, which we cannot possibly come to the knowledge of, unless God, of his free grace and goodness, be pleased to discover it to us. And so likewise are we to ascribe to God, and the operation of his Holy Spirit upon our hearts, our belief of those truths, and assent to them. Considering the corruption and degeneracy of human nature, and the opposition of the lusts and prejudices of men to divine truth, we stand in need of the grace of God, and the operation of his Spirit upon our hearts, to bring us to a firm assent to the gospel; for a *flesh and blood could not reveal these truths to us*, so neither is it very apt to assent to them when they are revealed.

In the phrase of scripture, all good is attributed to God; and all spiritual good to the Holy Spirit of God working in us, and assisting us to the doing of it. As, on the other hand, the scripture attributes all those sins that are committed in the world, to the influence of evil spirits. *He that committeth sin, is of the devil.* And though we do not know many times, how the Spirit

of God worketh a good inclination in us, yet it is to follow the phrase of scripture, and to ascribe all glory to God, as in some way or other the author of it.

II. This doth not excuse the infidelity of men, that *faith is the gift of God*. For though no man doth believe without some influence of the divine Spirit upon his heart, yet this does by no means excuse those who believe not, any more than it is an excuse to the infidelity of men, that the scripture attributes it to the devil, as in some sort the cause of it. He is said to *blind the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them*. But the unbelief of men is a fault for all this; because the devil cannot blind our minds, unless we consent to it: he can only suggest false principles to us; but we may chuse whether we will entertain them or not: he can only tempt us to reject the truth; but we may chuse whether we will do so or not. In this we are faulty, because we may resist the devil, and quench or repel those fiery darts which he casts into our minds: but if we will consent to his temptations, and suffer ourselves to be blinded by him, the fault of our unbelief is our own, as well as his; and we are guilty of the infidelity which we suffer him to tempt us to.

So, on the other hand, though faith be the gift of God; yet those that believe not are faulty upon this account, that they quench and resist the blessed motions of God's Spirit, and the influence and operation of the Spirit of God, which accompany the truth of the gospel to the minds of men, and produce their effect wherever they are not opposed and rejected by the prejudice and perverseness of men.

III. Let us depend upon God for every good gift; and earnestly beg the assistance and influence of his Holy Spirit, which is so necessary to us to beget faith in us, and to preserve and to make it effectual upon our hearts and lives. Bread is not more necessary to the support of our natural life, than the Holy Spirit of God to our spiritual life.

For our encouragement to ask this gift of God's Holy Spirit, our Saviour hath told us, that God is very ready bestow him upon us. No father upon earth is more

ready to give bread to his children that cry after him than God is to give his Spirit to those that heartily and earnestly beg it of him. So our Saviour assures us, *Luxi. II. 12. 13. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye that are evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

And now I have done with the first thing that I propounded, which was to open the nature of faith to you in general. I have been the longer upon this, because I thought it very material, and important to the settling of right apprehensions in us concerning religious and divine things; and I have all along endeavoured to make things as easy and plain as the nature of the subject would permit. And though probably many things that I have said, might not be within the reach and comprehension of all capacities, yet because I hoped they might be useful and beneficial to some, at least, I could not think the other consideration a sufficient reason why I should wholly omit them, and pass them by; remembering what St Paul says, that *he is a debtor to the wise, as well as the unwise.* And St Peter tells us, that St Paul in his epistles wrote *many things which were hard to be understood* by some persons; and because those things might be of use to others, the Spirit of God did not think fit to omit the writing of them. What remains I shall reserve for another discourse, with which I shall conclude this subject.

S E R M O N CCXXIV.

the efficacy, usefulness, and reasonableness
of divine faith.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impossible to please God.

The sixth sermon on this text.

IN discoursing on these words, I have dispatched the first thing which I proposed, *viz.* to give an account of the notion and nature of faith in general; under which I have largely treated of a religious or divine faith in particular.

The second thing which I proposed, and to which I now proceed, is to confirm the truth of the proposition which I laid down from the words, *viz.* That faith is the great principle of religion. I told you that these words, *Without faith it is impossible to please God*, do not only imply that faith is a necessary condition, without which men cannot be religious; but likewise that it is a cause and principle of religion. Without faith a man cannot be religious: and where there is true faith, it will have this effect upon men to make them religious. Therefore I shall distinctly speak to these two things.

First, That without faith there can be no religion.

Secondly, That where there is a true faith, it will have this influence upon men to make them religious.

First, That without faith there can be no religion. And this will appear by inquiring into the nature of all human actions, whether civil or religious; and this is common to both of them, that they suppose some kind of faith or persuasion. All human actions have an order and reference to some end, and consequently sup-

pose some knowledge of the end, and of the means whereby it may be attained. So that unless a man do believe and be persuaded that such a thing is some way or other good for him, and consequently desirable, it will not fit to be propounded as an end, and that this end is attainable, and the means which he useth are probable and likely for the attaining of this end, he will sit still and do nothing at all about it. So that without faith is impossible to do any thing: he that believes nothing will do nothing.

To instance first in civil actions, and the common affairs and concernments of life: All these are done by virtue of some faith or persuasion concerning them. For example, husbandry, or merchandize; no man will apply himself to these but upon some belief or persuasion of the possibility and necessity, or at least usefulness and convenience of these to the ends of life. No man would plough or sow if he did not believe that there were such a thing as the growing of corn, and that it is necessary for the support of our lives, and if he were not persuaded of the probability of reaping some fruit and benefit of his pains and industry. No man would traffic to Turkey or the Indies, if he did not believe there were such places, and that they afforded such commodities, and that he might have them upon such terms as might recompense the adventure of his charge and pains. And so in all other actions of life.

So it is in divine and religious things; nothing is done without faith. No man will worship God unless he believe there is a God; unless he be persuaded there is such a being, which, by reason of its excellency and perfection, may challenge our veneration; and unless he believe the goodness of this God, that *he will reward those that diligently serve him*. For all acts of religion being reasonable, they suppose at least an object and an end; that there is a God to be worshipped, and that it is not in vain to serve him. This faith is necessary to natural religion. And in case God do discover and reveal his will to men, no man can obey the will of God unless he be persuaded that God hath some way or other made known his will; and be persuaded likewise

to the particular instance wherein his obedience is required, that this is God's will. For instance, no man will obey the precepts of the Bible, as divine laws and commands, unless he be persuaded that the doctrine contained in the holy scriptures is a divine revelation. So likewise no man can entertain Christ as the Messiah and Saviour of the world, and yield obedience to his laws, unless he believes that he was *sent of God*, and *ordained by him to be a Prince and a Saviour*. So that you see the necessity of faith to religion.

Secondly, I shall shew the influence that a divine faith hath upon men to make them religious. A true divine faith supposeth a man satisfied and persuaded of the reasonableness and necessity of being religious; that it is reasonable for every man to be so, and that it is necessary to his interest. Now, there needs no more to be done to put a man upon any thing, but to satisfy him of these two things; that the action you persuade him to is reasonable; that is, possible and fit to be done; and that it is highly his interest to do it: that is, if he do it, it will be eminently for his advantage; if he do not do it, it will be eminently to his prejudice, and he is a lost and undone man. If you can once possess a man, that is in any degree sober and considerate, with these persuasions, you may make him do any thing of which he is thus persuaded. Now, a true divine faith supposeth a man satisfied and persuaded of all this.

1. Of the reasonableness of religion. He that verily believes there is a God, believes there is a being that hath all excellency and perfection, that is infinitely good, and wise, and just, and powerful; that made and preserves all things. Now, he that believes such a being as this, cannot but think it reasonable that he should be esteemed, and honoured, and adored by all those creatures that are sensible and apprehensive of these excellencies; that seeing he is infinitely good, and the fountain of all being, and all the blessings we enjoy, we should love so great a benefactor, and thankfully acknowledge his goodness to us; not only by constant praise of him, but by an universal obedience to his will, and a cheerful submission to his pleasure. For what more reasonable than gratitude? that seeing he

is infinitely wise and powerful as well as good, we should trust in him, and depend upon him in all conditions, and seek to him for what we want? For what more reasonable than to place our confidence in him, who is able and willing to do us good; and to sue to him who knows our wants, and is ready to supply them? And seeing he is truth itself, and hath been pleased to reveal his will to us; what can be more reasonable than to believe all those discoveries and revelations which God who cannot lie, hath made to us, and to comply with the intentions of them? And seeing he is the original pattern of all excellency and perfection; what can be more reasonable than to imitate the perfections of the divine nature, and to endeavour to be as like God as we can? And these are the sum of all religion. So that whoever firmly believes God, and that he hath revealed and made known his will to the world; cannot but be fully satisfied and persuaded of the reasonableness and equity of religion, and all those duties which religion requires of us; and consequently of the possibility of performing all those duties which religion requires of us, by the assistance of the grace and strength which God is ready to afford us if we beg it of him. For no man that believes the goodness of God, (which every man does that believes a God), can think that he will make it our duty to do any thing which he hath left us in an utter impossibility of doing.

2. A true divine faith supposeth a man satisfied and persuaded of the necessity of religion; that is, that it is necessary to every man's interest to be religious; that it will be highly for our advantage to be so, and eminently to our prejudice to be otherwise; that if we be so, we shall be happy, if we be not, we shall be miserable, and undone for ever. And every man that believes a God, and the revelations which he hath made, cannot but be fully satisfied of this.

And this will appear upon these two accounts.

1. From the nature and reason of the thing. And
 2. From the promises and threatenings of God's word

1. From the nature and reason of the thing. Every man that believes a God, must believe him to be the

suprem

supreme good; and the greatest happiness to consist in the enjoyment of him; and a separation from him to be the greatest misery. Now, God is not to be enjoyed, but in a way of religion. Holiness makes us like to God; and likeness will make us love him; and love will make us happy in the enjoyment of him; and without this it is impossible to be happy. There can be no happiness without pleasure and delight; and we cannot take pleasure in any thing we do not love; and there can be no love, without a likeness and suitability of disposition. So long as God is good, and we evil; so long as he is pure, and we unholy; so long as he hates sin, and we love it; there can be no happy intercourse, no agreeable communion, and delightful society between God and us. So that if we be holy, happiness will result from this temper; and if we be wicked, we are necessarily and unavoidably miserable. Sin separates between God and us, and hinders our happiness; and it is impossible that a wicked man should be near God, or enjoy him. God and a sinner are such two unequal matches, that it is impossible to bring them together; for *what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? or what communion hath light with darkness?*

2. Every man which believes the revelations which God hath made, cannot but be satisfied, how much religion is his interest from the promises and threatenings of God's word. God in his word hath in plain and express terms promised everlasting glory and happiness to them that obey him; and hath threatened wicked men with dreadful and eternal punishments; *to them that by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, he hath promised eternal life; but to them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, he hath threatened indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.* Now, if we believe the gospel, which assures us of another life after this, and a future judgment which will determine all men to a state of everlasting happiness or misery, we cannot but know it to be our interest, by all possible means to endeavour to attain the happiness which God hath promised, and to avoid the misery which he hath threatened. All men naturally

rally desire happiness, and dread misery and destruction; and these desires and fears are intimate to our natures and can never be separated from them; because they flow immediately from those principles of self-love, and self-preservation, which are deeply rooted in every man's heart, and are woven into the very make and frame of his nature, and will last as long as our beings. And so long as these principles remain in us, there is no man that is firmly persuaded of the promises and threatenings of the gospel, but must believe it to be his highest interest to be religious. Fear and hope are the two passions which govern us; hope is as it were the spur that quickens us to our duty, and fear is the curb that restrains us from sin; and the greater the good hoped for, or the evil that is feared, the greater power and influence these passions have upon us. Now, there cannot be a greater good, than complete and everlasting happiness; nor a greater evil, than extreme and eternal misery. So that whoever believes the promises and threatenings of the gospel, hath his hope raised to the expectation of the greatest good and happiness in case of obedience; and his fears extended to the expectation of the greatest evil and misery in case of final impenitency and disobedience. And a true divine faith doth contain in it both this hope and fear: for a faith in the promises of the gospel is nothing else, but the hopes of eternal life; and a belief of the threatenings of the gospel is nothing else, but the fear of hell and eternal misery. So that a firm belief of the promises and threatenings of the gospel, must needs have as great influence upon men to make them religious, as the highest hopes and greatest fears can have: and those men that are not moved by the hopes of the greatest good, nor by the fears of the greatest danger, are not to be wrought upon in human ways, nothing will prevail with them.

Thus I have shewn you, what influence a divine faith hath upon religion; for as much as whoever believes there is a God, and that the scriptures are the word of God; is fully satisfied and convinced how reasonable it is, and how much it is his interest to be religious. I come in the last place to the application of this discourse.

First,

First, This shews why there is so little of true religion in the world; it is for want of faith, without which it is impossible for men to be religious. Men are not firmly persuaded that there is a God, that there is a being above them that is omniscient, and knows every thing that they do, and takes notice of every word, and thought, and action; that is so good, and so powerful, as to make those happy that love and obey him; and so just and powerful, as to make those miserable who hate him, and rebel against him. Men are not persuaded that their souls are immortal; and that there is another life after this, in which men shall be happy or miserable to all eternity, according as they demean themselves in this world. Men are not firmly persuaded that the scriptures are the word of God, and that the precepts and prohibitions of the Bible are the laws of a great King, who will amply reward the observances of his laws, and severely vindicate the breach and violation of them. Men do not believe that the promises and threatenings of God's word are true, and that every jot and tittle of them shall be accomplished. For did men believe these things, they would be religious; they would not dare to live in any known sin or impurity of life; unless we can presume that a man can be seriously unwilling to be happy, and have a longing desire to be miserable, and undone for ever. For whoever believes the principles of religion, and the precepts, and promises, and threatenings that are contained in his holy book, and yet after all this can continue in sin, he must not only put off the principles of a reasonable creature, but must quit the very inclinations of his nature; that is, he must knowingly refuse that which he naturally desires, which is happiness; and must embrace that which of all things that can be imagined he most abhors, and that is misery.

So that if men were verily persuaded; that the great, and holy, and just God looks continually upon them, and that it is impossible to hide from him any thing that we do, they would not dare to commit any sin in his sight, and under the eye of him who is their Father and Master, their Sovereign and their Judge, their friend and Benefactor, who is invested with all these titles,

titles, and stands to us in all these relations which may challenge reverence and respect. Did men believe the holiness and justice of God, that he hates sin, and will not let it go unpunished, would they venture to make him a witness of their wickedness, who they believe will be the avenger of it? Did men believe that they shall live for ever, and that after this short life is ended, they must enter upon eternity; that when they leave the world, there are but two ways which a man must go, either into life everlasting, or into eternal and intolerable torments; did men believe this would they not with all possible care and diligence endeavour to attain the one, and avoid the other? Were men possessed with a belief of eternity, how would they despise temporal and transitory things? How would they neglect the concernments of this life, and overlook the little impertinencies of time, and refer all their thoughts and cares, and endeavours, to eternity? This great and important interest would so fill their minds, and take up their thoughts, and employ their utmost cares, and endeavours, and diligence, that they would scarce regard or speak, or think of any else; they would be restless and impatient, till they had secured this grand affair as a concernment; they would subordinate all the interests of this world to that of the other, and make all the concernments of time to stoop to the grand concernment of eternity. Thus men would do, were they but firmly persuaded that there is another life after this, to which this bears no proportion.

Did men believe the scriptures to be the word of God and to contain matters of the highest importance to our everlasting happiness; would they neglect it and lay it aside, and study it no more than a man would do an antique manack out of date, or than a man, who believes the attaining the philosopher's stone to be impossible, would study those books that treat of it? If men did believe that it contains plain and easy directions for the attaining of eternal happiness, and escaping eternal misery they would converse much with it, make it their companion and their counsellor, *meditate in it day and night* read it with all diligence, and put in practice the directions of it.

So that whatever men pretend, it is plain, that those who neglect God and religion, and contradict the precepts of his word by their lives, they do not firmly believe there is a God, nor that this book is the word of God. If this faith and persuasion were firmly rooted in men, they could not live wickedly. For a man that desires happiness, can no more neglect those means which he is convinced are necessary for the obtaining of it, than a man that desires life can neglect the means which he knows to be necessary for the preservation of it.

Secondly, If faith have so great an influence upon religion, then the next use shall be to persuade men to believe. No man can be religious that doth not believe these two things.

First, The principles of natural religion; that there is a God; that his soul is immortal; and that there are future rewards.

Secondly, That the scriptures are the word of God; or, which comes all to one, that the doctrine contained in them is a divine revelation. Therefore whoever would persuade men to be religious, he must begin here; and whoever would improve men in religion and holiness, he must labour to strengthen this principle of faith. Faith is the root of all other graces; and they will flourish, or decay, according to the degrees of our faith. Now, he that would persuade a man, or prevail with him to do any thing, must do it one of these three ways; either by intreaty, or authority, or argument; either he must intreat him as a friend, or command him as subject to him and under his power, or convince him as a man. Now, he that should go about to intreat men to believe any thing, or to charge them so to do, before he hath convinced them by sufficient arguments, that it is reasonable to do so, would, in my opinion, take a preposterous course. He that intreats or chargeth a man to do any thing, supposeth that he can do the thing if he will: but a man cannot believe what he will; the nature of a human understanding is such, that it cannot assent without evidence, nor believe any thing to be true, unless it see reason so to do, any more than a man can see a thing without light. So that if the dearest friend

friend that I have in the world should beg of me with the greatest importunity; or any man that hath the greatest authority over me, should lay his severest commands upon me to believe a thing, for which I see no reason, I could not do it; because nothing can command assent, but evidence. So that he that would persuade men to believe either the principles of natural religion, or any divine revelation, must convince them of the truth of them; for it is unreasonable to desire a man to believe any thing, unless I give him good reason why he should.

And this being the proper course which is to be taken, there are two sorts of persons to whom I shall apply myself in this exhortation; those who do not believe these things; and those who are persuaded of them: to the former, in order to the begetting of faith in them; to the latter, in order to the strengthening and confirming of their faith.

Those who do not believe, are of two sorts; either such as do positively disbelieve these things, and make it their business to arm themselves against them with all the arguments they can; who are so far from believing a God, or any divine revelation, that they endeavour to persuade themselves of the contrary, that there is no such thing; or else they are such as are indifferent about these matters. They have received the principles of religion by their education, and they have nothing to say against them, nor for them; they never considered them, nor the proper consequences of them; they neither believe nor disbelieve them upon any reasonable account.

Now, all these are to be dealt withal in the same way: for whatever will convince the disbeliever, will much more persuade the indifferent, and confirm the weak. For faith is to be strengthened by the same arguments whereby it is wrought. Therefore I shall apply myself to convince unbelievers; and every one may apply those arguments which I use to this purpose, for the strengthening of their own faith.

But before I come to those arguments I intend to offer for the conviction of those that do not believe, I think it convenient to endeavour, if possible, to remove a
violent,

olent, and, I think, unreasonable prejudice which men have received against all those who endeavour to make religion reasonable. As if Bellarmine had been in the right, when he said, *That faith was rather to be defined ignorance than by knowledge.* The plain English of which is, that it is for want of understanding that men believe the gospel; and if the world were but a little more knowing and wise, no body would be a Christian. I know not how it comes to pass, whether through the officiousness of the Popish party; *who hate the light, lest it should reprove them, and make them manifest*; or through the ignorance of too many well-meaning Protestants; I know not how it comes to pass, but so it is, that every one that offers to give a reasonable account of his faith, and to establish religion upon rational principles, is presently branded for a Socinian; of which we have a sad instance in that incomparable person Mr Millingworth, the glory of this age and nation, who for no other cause that I know of, but his worthy and successful attempts to make Christian religion reasonable, and to discover those firm and solid foundations upon which our faith is built, hath been requited with this black and odious character. But if this be Socinianism, for a man to inquire into the grounds and reasons of Christian religion, and to endeavour to give a satisfactory account why he believes it, I know no way but that all considerate, inquisitive men, that are above fancy and enthusiasm, must be either Socinians or Atheists.

I cannot imagine how men can do greater disservice to religion, than by taking it off from the rational and solid basis upon which it stands, and bearing the world upon their hands, that men ought to believe without reason; for this is to turn faith into credulity, and to level Christian religion with the vilest and most groundless enthusiasms that ever were in the world. Indeed, if we had only to deal with Henry Nicholas, and Jacob Behmen, who fight against us in the dark, not with reasons and arguments, but with insignificant words, and obscure phrases; we might make a shift to bear up against them with our principle, and we might charge them to believe, as they do us to believe them, without giving them any reason for it: but if we were to deal with Celsus,

or Julian, or Prophyry, or some of our modern Atheists we should soon find how vain it would be to go about to cajole them with phrases, and to gain them over to Christianity, by telling them that they must deny the reason, and lay aside their understandings, and believe they know not why. If the great pillars of Christianity, the ancient fathers, had taken this course in the apologies for Christian religion, it had never triumphed over Judaism and Paganism as it did; and whoever hath read over those defences and vindications of Christian religion against Jews and Heathens, which were written in the first ages of the church, especially the books of Origen against Celsus, and Eusebius his *book de Demonstr. and Preparat. Evangel.* shall find that they did very solicitously endeavour to satisfy the world, by all rational ways, both of the truth and reasonableness of Christian religion. And if that was a good way then it is so now; and never more necessary than in this age which I fear hath as many Atheists and infidels, that go under the name of Christians, as ever were in any age since Christian religion was first planted in the world.

But my design at present is not to persuade me particularly to the belief of Christianity, (that I intend hereafter, by God's assistance, to speak to), but to persuade men to the belief of religion in general. So that all that I shall do at present, shall be, as briefly as I can to offer some arguments and considerations to persuade men to the belief of the principles of natural religion and of the revelation which God hath made of his mind and will in the scriptures.

I. To persuade men to believe the principles of natural religion, such as the being of a God; the immortality of the soul; and future rewards after this life; I shall offer these two considerations.

First, That it is most reasonable so to do.

Secondly, That it is infinitely most prudent.

First, As to the being of God. Do but consider the two things which are undeniable; that there is a world however it came; and that mankind do generally consent in a confident persuasion that there is a God, whatever be the cause of it. Now, these two things being certain, and not liable to any question, let us inquire

whether

Whether a reasonable account can be given of these without a God.

I. Supposing there be no God, how came this vast and orderly frame of the world? There are but two ways that can be imagined. Either it was from eternity always of itself; or it began some time to be. That it should be always of itself; though it may be imagined of the heavens, and the earth, which, as to the main, are permanent, and continue the same; yet in things that succeed one after another, it is altogether unimaginable. As in the generation of men, there can be no doubt, whether every one of them was from another, or some of themselves. Some of them must be of themselves; for whatever number of causes be imagined in orderly succession, some of them must have no cause, but be of themselves. Now, that which is of itself, and the cause of all others, is the first. So that there must be a first man; and the age of man being finite, this first man must have a beginning. So that an infinite succession of men should have been, is impossible; and consequently that men were always. But I need not insist much upon this, because few or none of our modern Atheists pitch upon this way. Besides that Aristotle, who is reputed the great assertor of the eternity of the world, doth acknowledge an infinite progress and succession of causes to be one of the greatest absurdities.

Suppose then the world began sometime to be; it must either be made by counsel and design; that is, produced by some being that knew what it did, that did contrive and frame it as it is; which it is easy to conceive a being that is infinitely good, and wise, and powerful, might do; but this is to own a God: or else the matter of it being supposed to have been always, and in continual motion and tumult, it at last happened to fall into this order, and the parts of matter, after various agitations, were at length intangled and knit together in this order, in which we see the world to be. But can any man think this reasonable to imagine, that in the infinite variety which is in the world, all things should happen by chance, as well and as orderly as the greatest wisdom could have contrived

them? Whoever can believe this, must do it with his will, and not with his understanding.

But seeing it must be granted that something is of itself; how easy is it to grant such a being to be of itself, as hath other perfections proportionable to necessary existence, that is infinitely good, and wise, and powerful. And there will be no difficulty in conceiving how such a being as this could make the world.

2. This likewise is undeniable, that mankind do generally consent in a confident persuasion that there is God, whatever was the cause of this. Now, the reason of so universal a consent in all places and ages of the world, must be one and constant: but no one and constant reason of this can be given, unless it be from the frame and nature of man's mind and understanding which hath the notion of a Deity stamped upon it, or which is all one, hath such an understanding, as will in its own free use and exercise find out a God. And what more reasonable than to think, that if we be God's workmanship, he should set this mark of himself upon us that we might know to whom we belong? And I dare say, that this account must be much more reasonable and satisfactory to any indifferent man, than to resolve this universal consent into tradition, or state-policy, both which are liable to inexplicable difficulties, as * I have elsewhere shewn at large.

II. As to the immortality of the soul. Supposing a God, who is an infinite spirit, it is easy to imagine the possibility of a finite spirit: and supposing the goodness of God, no man can doubt, but that when he made all things, he would make some best: and the same goodness which moved him to make things, would be a reason to continue those things for the longest duration they are capable of.

III. As to future rewards. Supposing the holiness and justice of God, that *he loves righteousness, and hates iniquity*; and that he is the magistrate and governor of the world, and concerned to countenance goodness and discourage sin; and considering the promiscuous dispensation of his providence in this world, and how all

* See vol. 1. serm. 1. where the arguments here briefly named are handled at large.

things

things happen alike to all; it is most reasonable to conclude, that, after this life, men shall be punished and rewarded

Secondly, It is infinitely most prudent. In matters of great concernment a prudent man will incline to the safest side of the question. We have considered which side of these questions is most reasonable: let us now think which is safest. For it is certainly most prudent to incline to the safest side of the question. Supposing the reasons for and against the principles of religion were equal, yet the danger and hazard is so unequal, as would sway a prudent man to the affirmative. Suppose a man believe there is no God, nor life after this; and suppose he be in the right, but not certain that he is; for that, I am sure, in this case is impossible; all the advantage he hath by this opinion, relates only to this world and this present time: for he cannot be the better for it when he is not. Now, what advantage will it be to him in this life? He shall have the more liberty to do what he pleaseth; that is, it furnisheth him with a stronger temptation to be intemperate, and lustful, and unjust, that is, to do those things which prejudice his body and his health, which cloud his reason, and darken his understanding, which will make him enemies in the world, and will bring him into danger. So that it is no advantage to any man to be vitious: and yet this is the greatest use that is made of atheistical principles, to comfort men in their vitious courses. But if thou hast a mind to be virtuous, and temperate, and just, the belief of the principles of religion will be no obstacle, but a furtherance to thee in this course. All the advantage a man can hope for by disbelieving the principles of religion, is to escape trouble and persecution in this world, which may happen to him on account of religion. But supposing there be a God, and a life after this; then what a vast difference is there of the consequences of these opinions! As much as between finite and infinite, time and eternity.

Secondly, To persuade men to believe the scriptures, I only offer this to mens consideration. If there be a God, whose providence governs the world, and all the creatures in it, is it not reasonable to think that he

hath a particular care of men, the noblest part of this visible world? And seeing he hath made them capable of eternal duration; that he hath provided for their eternal happiness, and sufficiently revealed to them the way to it, and the terms and conditions of it: now let any man produce any book in the world, that pretend to be from God, and to do this; that for the matter of it, is so worthy of God, the doctrines whereof are so useful, and the precepts so reasonable, and the arguments so powerful, the truth of all which was confirmed by so many great and unquestionable miracles, the relation of which hath been transmitted to posterity, in public and authentic records, written by those who were eye and ear witnesses of what they wrote, and free from suspicion of any worldly interest and design; let any produce a book like this, in all these respects; and which, over and besides, hath, by the power and reasonableness of the doctrines contained in it, prevailed so miraculously in the world, by weak and inconsiderable means, in opposition to all the wit and power of the world, and under such discouragements, as no other religion was ever assaulted with; let any man bring forth such a book, and he hath my leave to believe it as soon as the Bible. But if there be none such, as I am well assured there is not, then every one that thinks God hath revealed himself to men, ought to embrace and entertain the doctrine of the holy scriptures, as revealed by God.

And now having presented men with such arguments and considerations as are proper, and, I think, sufficient to induce belief, I think it not unreasonable to intreat and urge men diligently and impartially to consider these matters; and if there be weight in these considerations to sway reasonable men, that they would not suffer themselves to be biassed by prejudice, or passion, or interest, to a contrary persuasion. Thus much I may with reason desire of men: for though men cannot believe what they will, yet men may, if they will, consider things seriously and impartially, and yield or withhold their assent, as they shall see cause, after a thorough search and examination.

If any man will offer a serious argument against any the principles of religion, and will debate the matter soberly, as one that considers the infinite consequences of things one way or other, and would gladly be satisfied, he deserves to be heard what he can say: but if a man will turn religion into raillery, and confute it with two or three bold jests; he doth not make religion, but himself ridiculous, in the opinion of all considerate men; because he sports with his life.

So that it concerns every man that would not trifle away his soul, and fool himself into irrecoverable misery, with the greatest seriousness to inquire into these things, whether they be so or no, and patiently to consider the arguments that are brought for them.

And when you are examining these matters, do not take into consideration any sensual or worldly interest; but deal fairly and impartially with yourselves. Think with yourselves that you have not the making of things true or false; that the principles of religion are either true or false, before you think of them. The truth of things is already fixed; either there is a God, or no God; either your souls are immortal, or they are not; either the scriptures are a divine revelation, or an imposture; one of these is certain and necessary, and they are not now to be altered: things will not comply with your conceits, and bend themselves to your interests. Therefore do not think what you would have to be; but consider impartially what is*.

And if, upon inquiry, you be convinced that it is the greatest reason and prudence to believe that there is a God, and a future state, and that the scriptures are the word of God; then meditate much of these things; attend to the proper consequences of such a persuasion; and resolve to live as becomes those who believe there is a God, and another life after this, and that it is best for you to obey the precepts of his word, being persuaded that whatever is there promised in case of obedience, or threatened in case of disobedience, will certainly be accomplished.

And labour to strengthen yourselves in this belief; because faith is the spring of all rational actions, and

* Of this see more in the sermon above mentioned.

the root of all other graces; and according to the strength and weakness of faith, your holiness, and obedience, and graces, will flourish or decay.

And because the matters of faith do not fall under our senses, and the things of another world are invisible and at distance, and consequently not so apt to affect us, as present and visible things, we should take the more pains with ourselves, that by revolving frequently in our minds the thoughts of God, and representing ourselves the happiness and misery of another world they may have as great an effect upon us, as if they were present to us, and we saw them with our bodily eyes.

S E R M O N CCXXV.

Of the Christian faith, the means of its conveyance, and our obligation to receive it

JOHN XX. 31.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The first sermon on this text.

I Have largely discoursed concerning the general nature of faith, and more particularly concerning the faith which is truly divine and religious; in the latitude of which is contained a persuasion concerning the principles of natural religion, the being of God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state; and a persuasion of the divine revelation of the scriptures, and the matters contained in them. Now, among matters of divine revelation, the doctrine of the gospel is a principal part; which is the last and most perfect revelation, which God hath made to the world, by his Son Jesus Christ; and a firm belief and persuasion of this is that

that which is called Christian faith, or the faith of the gospel; and which, by way of eminency, is usually called faith in the New Testament.

Now, Christian faith is not opposed to a divine faith; but is comprehended under it; as being a principal and eminent part of divine faith, but not all that which may be called divine faith. Christian faith supposeth a belief of the principles of natural religion; and a belief of those revelations which God formerly made under the Old Testament: but it doth only formally contain in it a belief of the gospel, *viz.* that revelation which God hath in these last days made to the world by his son Jesus Christ. The Heathens who were destitute of divine revelation, did only believe the principles of natural religion; and the generality of them did not believe those but in a very imperfect manner. The Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, did superadd to the belief of the principles of natural religion, the belief of such revelations as God was pleased to make to them under that dispensation. Christian faith superadds to both the former; a belief of the revelation of the gospel.

I shall now therefore, by God's assistance, endeavour to open to you the nature of Christian faith from these words; in which you have these three things considerable.

First, The end of committing the gospel to writing, which was to persuade men to believe in Christ, to propagate and continue Christian faith in the world; *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;* and by faith to bring men to a participation of those benefits, and the salvation which Christ was the author of; *and that believing ye might have life through his name. These are written; $\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$, these;* which may either refer to $\sigma\upsilon\mu\phi\epsilon\iota\alpha$, *these signs or miracles,* referring to the former verse, and *many other signs, &c.* but *these signs or miracles are written* to confirm Jesus to be the person he pretended to be, the Messias, the Son of God, and consequently to confirm the truth of the doctrine which he delivered; that, by this confirmation, men might be induced to believe him

him to be the true Messias, and to give entertainme
to his doctrine.

Or else, which is very probable, the word *ταύτα* may refer to the whole history of the gospel, in which you have an account of the life of Christ, and the doctrine which he taught, and the miracles which were wrought for the confirmation of it. And so we may look upon these two verses as a conclusion of the whole history of the gospel writ by the four evangelists. For as for the chapter following, it seems not to be written by St John himself, but by the church, probably, Grotius conjectures, by the church of Ephesus, where he had resided, and whom he had acquainted with the particulars which are there set down; the principal of which is, the prediction of our Saviour concerning his long life, for the sake of which the rest of the story seems to be brought in; which particular was not fit to be recorded till after his death; I say, it seems probable that St John ended his gospel here, and that the last chapter was added by others, as the last chapter of the Pentateuch was added by some other after the death of Moses; and the last chapter of Joshua after his death. And this seems very evident from the 24th verse of the chapter; where, after a relation of our Saviour's prediction, concerning *the disciple whom Jesus loved*, is added, *This is the disciple which testifieth of these things and wrote these things*, that is, the foregoing history of the gospel, *and we know that his testimony is true*; which seems plainly to be spoken by some other persons: for it were improper for him to say this of himself, *We know that his testimony is true*.

So that here seems to be the end of the history of Christ which St John wrote; and these two verses seem to be the conclusion of the whole gospel written by the four evangelists, and then the sense of them will be this: *Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book* that is, the disciples were witnesses of many other miracles which Christ wrought, which they did not think necessary to set down in this book, that is, in the history of Christ written by the four evangelists: *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus*

*the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might
 see life through his name; that is, these things which
 are recorded in this history, this account which is here
 given of the life, and actions, and doctrine, and miracles
 of Christ, is sufficient to bring men to the faith of
 the gospel, to satisfy men that Christ was the Messias,
 the Son of God, and consequently that his doctrine is
 true.*

And that this conclusion doth refer to the whole history of the gospel written by the four evangelists, I am induced to believe, upon these two accounts.

1. Because St John's gospel doth not seem to be intended for a history of the life and actions of Christ; but an appendix to the history which had been written before by the other evangelists, and to supply only what they had omitted. Therefore you shall find that he gives no account of the genealogy or birth of our Saviour, nor of his sermon upon the mount, which did contain the sum of his doctrine, nor of any of his miracles, or his other discourses, which are related by the other evangelists; nor doth he relate any more of the history of his life, than was just necessary to bring in, and connect those things which he thought fit to super-add to the former history. So that considering how defective this gospel, taken by itself, is in the most essential parts of the history of the life, and doctrine, and actions of Christ; no man can think that St John did intend this for a full and sufficient account of the life, and doctrine, and miracles of Christ; or that upon this imperfect relation, in which he had knowingly omitted many of the most material and considerable things belonging to the history of Christ, he could expect that men should receive full satisfaction concerning him. Therefore, I think, it is highly reasonable, and almost necessary to conclude, that when he says, *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;* he does not solely refer to the gospel which was written by himself; but to the whole history of the gospel, which was put together into one book or volume, which was completed by this appendix.

2. Another reason I have for this, which doth much strengthen this conjecture, is what I find in Eusebius,

in the 18th chapter of the third book of his history where he tells us to this purpose, "That St John, who lived the last of the apostles, did revise what they had written of the history of Christ, and added his gospel as an appendix to the rest."

I have insisted the longer upon this, that no man might think, when St John says, *These things were written that ye might believe*, that his gospel taken alone and by itself, is a sufficient account of Christ, and contains all that was requisite to bring men to believe on him. This is the first thing in the words, the end of committing the gospel to writing.

Secondly, You have here the nature of Christian faith described; it is *a believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*; that is, that he is the true Messias prophesied of in the Old Testament, and promised as the Saviour of the world; and that he is the Son of God, who came from the Father into the world; and took our nature upon him, that he might teach us and go before us in the way to eternal happiness.

Thirdly, The blessed effect of this faith, or the benefit that redounds to us upon believing; *that believing ye might have life through his name*; that is, that upon these terms and conditions you might be made partaker of all those blessings and benefits which Christ, the Saviour of the world, hath purchased for us, which are here set forth to us in the name of life; it being usual, in the phrase of scripture, to express to us those things which are most excellent and desirable by life. Now, the principal benefits which Christ hath purchased, and which in scripture we are said to be made partakers of by believing, are regeneration, justification, or pardon of sin, and eternal life and salvation; and the two first of these, as well as the last, are called life in scripture. Regeneration, (in which I include the continuance and progress of this work, which is sanctification), that is, a new life; Rom. vi. 4. it is called *newness of life*. And we are said to have this life by faith, Gal. ii. 20. *And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God*. And Col. ii. 12. *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him*; that is, regenerated and born to a new life. How? *By the faith*

in the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead; that is, by believing the power of God, who raised up Christ from the dead, for the confirmation of the truth of the gospel: 1 John v. 1. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* So likewise justification is called life. While we are under sentence of condemnation, we are dead in law: but being justified and pardoned, we are restored to life. So the Apostle expresth it, Rom. v. 18. *So by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.* And that we are justified by faith, the scripture tells us so frequently, that I shall not cite any texts for it.

And then eternal life and salvation; and this is the consummation of all, and I doubt not but is here principally intended in the text by the word *life*. So that the meaning of this expression, *that believing ye might have life through his name*, is, that, by faith of the gospel, ye might be renewed, and pardoned, and saved; though, I think, that the last, *viz.* eternal life and salvation, is principally, though not solely intended; as will appear by comparing this place with these parallel texts: John iii 15. *That whatsoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.* And ver. 36. *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life.* John v. 24. *He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.* 1 Pet. i. 9. *The end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*

Thus I have, as briefly as I well could, explained to you the meaning of the words, which I have done the more fully, that you may see how these observations, which I shall raise from them, are contained in them. The observations are these.

First, That writing is the way which the wisdom of God hath pitched upon, as the standing way to convey the knowledge of the gospel to the world. *These things are written.*

Secondly, That all things necessary to be believed in order to salvation, are contained in the gospel. *These things are written, that ye might believe, and believing might have life:* but if any thing necessary to be believed by Christians, in order to eternal salvation,

were omitted, then the gospel would be written to no purpose, and would fail in the end for which it was written.

Thirdly, That the miracles related in the gospel are a proper and sufficient means or argument, to bring men to Christian faith. For this is the narrowest and most restrained sense in which we can take the words *These things*, that is, *these miracles, are written, that ye might believe*, &c. Now, if St John, by the Spirit of God, did record miracles to this end, we may conclude that they are proper and sufficient for this end.

Fourthly, That a credible history does give men sufficient assurance of matter of fact, and such as we may safely build a divine faith upon. For if these miracles were recorded for this end, *that men might believe*, then a credible history or relation that such miracles were done, is sufficient to assure us that such miracles were wrought; and upon this assurance we may build our faith: otherwise it had been in vain to have recorded these miracles to this end.

Fifthly, That we are not now-a-days destitute of a sufficient ground of faith; because we have these writings credibly conveyed to us, which contain the doctrine of the gospel, and the relation of the miracles written for the confirmation of it.

Sixthly, That men now-a-days, those to whom the gospel comes, are under an obligation to believe; or, which is all one, that now-a-days men may be guilty of such a sin as unbelief: for now-a-days we may have sufficient grounds of faith.

Seventhly, That to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is truly and properly Christian faith. This is the description which is here given of it, that it is a *believing, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*.

Eighthly, That to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is truly and properly sanctifying, and justifying, and saving faith; by this faith we have life. *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name*.

These observations are all virtually contained in the words. The greatest part of them I shall very lightly

ightly pass over, and speak but briefly to them, because I intend mainly to insist upon the two last; in the handling of which, I shall open to you the nature of Christian faith, and shew you, that the faith which is here described, is that which is truly and properly justifying and saving.

First, That writing is the way which the wisdom of God hath pitched upon, as the standing way of conveying the knowledge of the gospel to the world. This is matter of fact, and for the proof of it we have the evidence of the thing. The gospel *de facto* was written, and this writing is conveyed down to us, and is the instrument which God hath in all ages since the apostles times, that is, since the eye and ear witnesses of the miracles of Christ and his doctrine ceased, made use of to convey to the world the knowledge of the gospel. And here it were proper to shew what advantage this way of conveyance of the gospel hath above oral tradition: but that I have already done in some former discourses *, where I shewed at large, that this way of conveyance is a more universal and diffusive, a more certain, and liable to less imposture and falsification, a more equal and uniform, and a more human way of conveyance than oral tradition; so that I shall not insist longer upon this.

Secondly, That all things necessary to be believed by Christians in order to salvation, are contained in the written gospel: or else how could St John in reason say, that *these things were written*, to this end, *that men might believe and be saved*, if these things be not sufficient to this end? which certainly they are not, if any thing necessary to be believed, in order to salvation, be left out. The Papists being urged with this text, to prove the sufficiency of the written word, in opposition to those traditional doctrines which they pretend to be necessary over and besides the written word, tell us, that St John doth not here speak of the doctrine of Christ, but only of his miracles; these were written to confirm our faith of the Messias; but the doctrine of Christ was not all written, but left to the apostles to be delivered by mouth to their successors, and so down

* See the foregoing sermons in this volume.

to posterity. But I have shewn before, that the necessary doctrines of the gospel, as well as the miracles, are comprehended in these things which St John says were written. Besides that, it will be very hard for any man to devise a convenient reason, why miracles, as well as doctrines, might not have been left to the apostles, to have been traditionally delivered down to posterity without writing. For doctrines may as well be committed to writing, as relations of miracles: and miracles may be, with as much ease, and certainty, and convenience in all respects, delivered down to posterity by an oral tradition, as doctrines may.

Thirdly, That the miracles related in the gospel are a proper and sufficient means to bring men to Christian faith. That they are so, it is a good sign that God did work them to this end, and afterwards commit them to writing for this very reason, that the knowledge of them might be conveyed to posterity, and there might still remain in the world a proper and sufficient argument to persuade men to believe; and we may well imagine, that God would not do any thing but what is very proper and sufficient for its end. Now, that miracles were wrought by the divine power purposely to this end, and that they are in reason a very sufficient attestation to a person, and confirmation of the doctrine which he brings, I have largely shewn elsewhere*; and that all along, both in the Old and New Testament, God did empower Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, to work miracles, to bring men to faith; and that this was the principal argument whereby those who did believe were wrought upon.

Fourthly, That credible history doth give men sufficient assurance of matter of fact; and such assurance as we may safely build a divine faith upon. We freely believe innumerable things, which are said to have been done many ages before we were born, and make not the least doubt of them, only upon the credit of history: so that if the relation of miracles be but granted to be a credible history, we may, upon the credit of the relation, safely believe that such miracles were wrought; and if such miracles were wrought, we may safely believe

* See the foregoing sermons in this volume.

the doctrine to be from God, for the confirmation of which they were wrought; and consequently, a divine faith may be safely built upon such an assurance of miracles, as we may have from a credible history and relation.

Fifthly, That we are not now-a-days destitute of a sufficient ground of faith; because the doctrine of the gospel hath still the same confirmation that it had, *viz.* miracles: only we who live at this distance from the time when, and the place where, they were wrought, have the knowledge of them conveyed to us, and come to be assured of them in another way. Those who lived in the age of Christ and his apostles had assurance of miracles from their own senses: and we are now assured of them by credible history and relation. Now, though these ways be not equal, yet they are both sufficient to beget in us an undoubted assurance, and such as no prudent man hath any reason to doubt of. For a man may be as truly and undoubtedly certain, that is, as well satisfied, that a thing was done, from the credit of history, as from his own senses. I make no more doubt whether there was such a person as Henry the Eighth King of England; than I do whether I be in this place.

Sixthly, That now-a-days those to whom the gospel comes, are under an obligation to believe; or that now-a-days there is such a sin as unbelief of the gospel. And I the rather note this, because there are some well-wishers to Atheism, who, out of prudence and regard to their own safety, chuse rather secretly to undermine religion, than openly to deny it. I grant indeed, that in our Saviour's time, when such great miracles were wrought, those who saw those miracles, which they think no body did, were under an obligation to believe, and guilty of a great sin in not believing the gospel: but now-a-days, when we see no such miracles wrought for the confirmation of the gospel, there lies no obligation upon any man to believe it; and that now there is no such sin as unbelief. Now, any man may, with half an eye, see the consequence of this assertion: for being once admitted, it doth as certainly destroy Christian religion, as if men should deny that there was any

such person as Jesus Christ, or that he ever wrought any miracles: for, if to disbelieve the gospel be no sin and consequently brings a man into no danger; but on the other hand, dangers and persecutions do attend the belief and profession of it, it were the greatest folly in the world for any man to believe; unless this possibly may be greater, for a man who does believe it, not to obey and live according to it. And if this were true, it were the greatest imprudence that can be, for any man to be a Christian. And if that were once admitted, there is all the reason in the world that Christianity should be banished and extirpated; not only as useless and impertinent, but as a thing dangerous and pernicious to the welfare of mankind.

I shall therefore briefly prove to you, that it is now one of the greatest sins that men are capable of, (except the sin against the Holy Ghost), for those who have the gospel sufficiently propounded to them, to disbelieve it; I say, except the sin against the Holy Ghost, which, our Saviour tells us, was *blaspheming the Spirit of God*, whereby he wrought his miracles, and saying it was the spirit of the devil; and this sin, men in a lower degree and proportion may now-a-days be guilty of: for as the Pharisees who saw the works that Christ did, and acknowledged them to be miracles, did commit the sin against the Holy Ghost, in ascribing those miracles which were really wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, to the power of the devil; so men now-a-days, who own the history of Christ's miracles as true, may be guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, in a lower proportion, by maliciously imputing those miracles to the power of the devil.

But, excepting the sin against the Holy Ghost, the greatest sin that men are now capable of, is to disbelieve the gospel, when it is sufficiently propounded to them. Now, the gospel is then sufficiently propounded, when there are sufficient grounds offered to persuade men to the belief of it; and I have already proved, that we now have sufficient ground to believe the gospel; and if so, then whosoever hath these grounds offered to him, is under an obligation to believe it: for every man is bound to believe that, for which he hath sufficient

ufficient ground and reason: and every man sins who neglects his duty, that is, does not do that which he stands bound to do.

And not only whoever disbelieves the gospel, sins in so doing, but farther, he commits the greatest sin that now men are capable of. I say, now capable of; for I doubt not but that it was a sin of a higher degree, for those who saw Christ's miracles to disbelieve, than it is for us who have only the relation of them. For, by the same reason, that *he is more blessed that believes, and hath not seen; a greater curse belongs to him, who hath seen, and yet doth not believe;* and consequently such a person is guilty of a greater sin. But because we cannot now see the miracles of Christ, the greatest sin that men in this age are capable of, is to disbelieve the gospel confirmed by miracles, whereof we are assured by credible relation. For the sin of disbelieving hath now these two aggravations.

1. It is a sin against sufficient light and evidence; and in this it is equal to the sins which are committed against natural light.

2. It is a sin against the greatest mercies and blessings that ever were offered to the world; and in this it exceeds the sins against natural light. Whoever disbelieves the gospel, he rejects the offer of eternal life and happiness. And these two aggravations the Apostle puts together, Heb. ii. 3. *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?* And if this be thus, it highly concerns us to inquire into the nature of this faith; and this brings me to the

Seventh observation, That to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is truly and properly Christian faith. But the consideration of this I shall leave to the next opportunity.

S E R M O N CCXXVI.

Of the Christian faith, which sanctifies
justifies, and saves.

JOHN XX. 31.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The second sermon on this text.

IN my former discourse upon these words, I proposed eight observations from them, six of which I have already dispatched, designing to discourse of the remaining two more at large. I proceed therefore to the

Seventh observation which I laid down, *viz.* That to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is truly and properly Christian faith. This is the description which is here given of Christian faith.

In prosecution of this, I shall do these two things.

First, Shew you what is included in *believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*

Secondly, Prove that this is truly and properly Christian faith.

First, What is included in *believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?* It signifies a firm and effectual persuasion, that Jesus, that is, the person the history of whose life and death is related in the gospel, is the Christ that is, the true Messias, promised and prophesied of in the Old Testament to be the Saviour of the world; and that he is *the Son of God*, that is, *the only begotten of the Father*, who was sent by him into the world, and took our nature upon him, that he might purchase eternal happiness for us, and instruct us, and go before

ain the way to it. So that faith is a firm and effectual persuasion of, or assent to the whole gospel. Faith signifies Christian religion, which comprehends an assent to the doctrines of the gospel, and a suitable life and conversation.

I say, a firm persuasion of this; for in the phrase of the New Testament, none are accounted true believers, who are said to have a true faith in Christ, who do not firmly continue in this persuasion; and the owning and profession of it, notwithstanding all the sufferings and persecutions it might expose them to. And an effectual persuasion, for none are said truly to believe in Christ, who do not shew forth the proper and genuine effects of this faith, who do not live as they believe, and conform their lives to that doctrine, to the truth whereof they profess an assent.

And hence it is, that true Christians, that is, those who do fashion their lives according to the gospel, are called believers, and the sum of all Christianity is usually contained in this word *believing*, which is the great principle of a Christian life; as in the Old Testament, the religion is expressed by the *faith of God*; so in the New, by *faith in Christ*.

Now, whosoever doth firmly and effectually enter into this truth, that that Jesus whom the gospel declares to us, is the true Messias, and Saviour of the world, and the very Son of God, sent by him into the world for this purpose, that he might by his doctrine instruct, and by the example of his life go before us in the way to eternal happiness, and by the merit and satisfaction of his death and sufferings, appease and reconcile God to men, and purchase for them the pardon of their sins and eternal life, upon the conditions of faith, and repentance, and sincere obedience; I say, whosoever doth firmly and effectually entertain these truths, will consequently endeavour to obey the precepts of his doctrine, and to imitate the example of his life, and will expect salvation, that is, the pardon of his sins, and eternal life from no other; because he is verily persuaded he is a teacher, and a Saviour sent from God, that his doctrine is true, and his satisfaction available, and that the rewards which he hath promised to those

those who believe and obey him, and the punishment which he hath threatened to the unbelievers and disobedient, shall all certainly be fulfilled and accomplished. All this is included in *believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God*. So Christian faith, or the faith of gospel, contains plainly in it these particulars.

1. An assent of the understanding to this truth, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was a person commissioned from heaven, and employed by God to bring men to eternal happiness. And this fundamental is necessary to all the subsequent acts of faith, and that upon which they depend.

2. An assent of the understanding to the truth of those things which this person delivered to the world. So that if he tells us, that his death hath made expiation for the sins of men, upon the conditions of faith, a repentance, and obedience, and that God by him doth command the world to do such and such things, and in case of obedience will confer such and such rewards upon men, but in case of disobedience will inflict such punishments upon them; we are to believe all this to be true; because the person who acquainted us with these things was sent by God, and employed from heaven upon this message.

3. And consequently, a relying and depending upon him, and no other, for the conferring of these benefits and making good these promises to us.

4. Obedience to all his laws and commands; because believing them to be from God, we cannot but assent to them as good, and as laying an obligation upon us to yield obedience to them; and if we do not obey them, we are presumed to disbelieve them; for if we did truly and heartily believe them to be the commands of God, we would obey them.

Now, that obedience of heart and life to the precepts and commands of the gospel, as well as an assent of the understanding to the truth of the gospel-revelation, and a trusting and relying upon the merits of Christ, is included in the scripture-notion of faith, will evidently appear to any that will consider these texts. Rom.

5. *By whom we have received grace and apostleship for our obedience to the faith among all nations for his name*

where

were the belief of the gospel is called *the obedience of faith*. Rom. x. 16. *But they have not all obeyed the gospel, for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?* But if faith doth not include obedience, how could he prove that there were some that did not obey the gospel, because Isaiah said, there were some that did not believe it? And so likewise by comparing 1 Tim. 10. where he is said to be *the saviour of them that believe*, with Heb. v. 9. where he is said to be *the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*. As also by comparing Gal. v. 6. where it is said, *For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love*; with 1 Cor. 7. 19. *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God*. And likewise by those texts, where unbelief and disobedience are equivalently used. I will but mention one, Heb. iii. 12. The Apostle, from the example of the Israelites, cautions Christians against unbelief: *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*. And in repeating the same caution in the next chapter, at the 17th verse, he varies the phrase a little, *Lest any man fall after the same example of disobedience*; the word is *πειρασμος*, which indeed our translators render *unbelief*, but that confirms that which I bring it for, that disobedience and unbelief are the same. And so likewise we find faith and disobedience opposed frequently in scripture. John iii. 36. *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life*. In the Greek it is, *he that obeyeth not the Son*, as you will see in the margin of the Bible. 1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner*. And this doth likewise appear in all those texts, wherein repentance, and our forgiving of others, and several other acts of obedience, are made the conditions of our justification; or the omission of them, sins, as well as faith. So that we cannot be said to be *justified by faith alone*, unless that faith include in it obedience. I have insisted the longer upon this, because
the

the right understanding the scripture-notion of faith in Christ, doth very much depend upon this: and if this be one thing, that the scripture-notion of faith doth include in it obedience to the precepts of the gospel, we but well understood and considered, it would silence and put an end to those infinite controversies about faith and justification, which have so much troubled the Christian world, to the great prejudice of practical religion, and holiness of life.

Secondly, That this is truly and properly Christian faith. Which I shall prove by these two arguments.

1. Because it includes a belief of the whole gospel or of all the revelation which God hath made to the world by Jesus Christ. And certainly, there cannot be a more proper notion of Christian faith, than to believe the revelation which God hath made by Jesus Christ: but to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, doth include this. For whosoever believes him to be the Messiah, and the Son of God, believes him to have come from God, and to be authorised and commissioned by him to make known his mind to the world and consequently will believe whatever he delivers. For whoever believes the goodness and veracity of God, every man does that believes a God, cannot but assent to the truth of every thing which he is satisfied come from God.

2. That *to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, is truly and properly Christian faith, or the faith of the gospel, will appear, by considering how the scriptures of the New Testament do constantly describe to us the faith of the gospel; and you shall find they do it, either by the very phrase in the text, or other phrases and metaphors equivalent to them, or else by belief of that which is the great argument and confirmation of Christ's being the Messiah, the Son of God. Very often the faith of the gospel is described by the very phrase in the text, *believing that Jesus is the Christ and that he is the Son of God*. John iv. 41. 42. *And many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.* John vi.

69. *And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.* John xi. 27. says Martha to Christ, *Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* Acts viii. 37 *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* 1 John iii. 23. *And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment; that is, that we should believe on him under this name and title of Jesus Christ the Son of God.* 1 John v. 1. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* And ver. 5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* And ver. 10. *He that believeth on the Son of God, that is, believeth Jesus to be the Son of God.* And ver. 13. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

Sometimes the faith of the gospel is described to us by other phrases that are tantamount to these; such as signify that he *came from God*, and was sent by him into the world, and was the Messias whom they expected. John iii. 2. Nicodemus describes his faith in Christ thus, *I know that thou art a teacher come from God.* John vi. 29. *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent, that is, that ye believe me to be sent from God.* John viii. 24. *For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins; that is, if ye believe not that I am the Messias, whom you expect and look for.* And so John xiii. 19. *That ye may believe that I am he.* And John xi. 42. *That they may believe that thou hast sent me.* And John xvi. 30. *By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.* And John xvii. 8. *They have believed that thou didst send me.*

Sometimes the faith of the gospel is expressed by metaphors equivalent to these expressions; as by *coming to Christ*, and receiving him as the true Messias, in several places; and sometimes by believing that which is the great argument and confirmation that Christ was the true Messias, the Son of God, that is, believing his resurrection from the dead. Rom. iv. 24. *To whom it is all be*

imputed for righteousness, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. Rom. x. 9. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Col. ii. 12. Through the faith of the operation of God, who raised him up from the dead. Where faith is described by a belief of the power whereby Christ was raised from the dead. And to mention no more, 1 Pet. i. 21. *Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead.* Now, the reason why the faith of the gospel is described by the belief of Christ's resurrection, is, because whoever believes that Christ was raised from the dead, cannot but be satisfied, that this great miracle was a sufficient attestation that he was no impostor, but that he was what he pretended to be, *viz. the Son of God*; and consequently that he ought to be believed and obeyed in all things. And thus much may suffice to have spoken to this seventh observation.

Eighth observation, That to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is truly and properly sanctifying, and justifying, and saving faith. So the text tells us, that this faith gives us life: *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*; that is, as I explained this phrase in the opening of the text, that upon these terms and conditions ye might be made partakers of all those blessings and benefits, which Christ, the Saviour of the world, hath purchased, which are here set forth under the name of life; it being usual in the phrase of scripture to set forth to us those things which are most excellent and desirable, by life, which men value above all other things. Now, the principal benefits which Christ hath purchased, and which we are said to be made partakers of by believing, are,

1. Regeneration; under which I include the continuance and progress of this work, which is sanctification.

2. Justification; by which I cannot find that the scripture means any more than pardon or remission of sins.

3. Eternal

3. Eternal life; and this I think is principally, though not solely intended here in the text, as I have shewn, by comparing the text with other parallel texts in the same evangelist. John iii. 15. *That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.* And ver. 36. *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life.* I say, I think eternal life is here principally intended, though this suppose the other, regeneration, and justification, before we can attain it, which may also very well be included here in the term *life*. My reasons are these.

I. Because I find in scripture, that regeneration and justification are expressed by the name of *life*. Rom. vi. 4. our regeneration is called *newness of life*, because before we were *dead in sins and trespasses*; and Rom. v. 18. justification is called *justification of life*, because while our sins are unpardoned, and we are under the sentence of condemnation, we are dead in law; but being justified and pardoned, we are, as it were, restored to life again.

2. Because in the phrase of scripture we are said to be regenerate, and sanctified, and justified by faith, as well as saved. I John v. 1. *He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* Gal. ii. 20. *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God*; speaking of the new life of sanctification. And Col. ii. we are said to be *risen with Christ*, that is, born to a new life, *by the faith of the operation of God, that raised up Jesus from the dead*; and *to be justified by faith*, in innumerable places. So that it is very probable upon these accounts, that the evangelist here, when he says, *that believing you might have life in his name*, doth intend to take in regeneration and justification, as well as eternal life, which is the consummation of all the blessings of the gospel. I come now to the observation, *viz.*

That this faith of the gospel, which I have described, is truly and properly a sanctifying, and justifying, and saving faith.

I. I shall shew that it is properly a sanctifying faith.

II. A justifying and saving faith.

I. It is truly sanctifying. I know that this term of a sanctifying faith is not much in use among divines,

and therefore it may seem a little more strange: but they might have used it if they had pleased, for it is every whit as proper to call faith *sanctifying*, as *justifying* or *saving*. It is true indeed, this express term of *sanctifying faith* is no where in scripture; no more are the very terms of *justifying* and *saving faith*: but we are said to be *justified* and *saved by faith* in scripture which is as much as if the terms had been used. And we are said also to be *sanctified by faith*, as well as *justified* and *saved*. Acts xv. 9. our hearts are said to be *purified by faith*. And so likewise, our *victory over the world*, that is, our conquering and subduing of our covetous, and ambitious, and sensual lusts and desires, are in a peculiar manner ascribed to this faith, which I have described. I John v. 4. 5. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

II. That this faith is truly and properly justifying and saving faith. I put these, *justification* and *salvation* together, partly because they are of the same consideration, as to the influence which faith hath upon them; and the latter follows upon the former; for if we be *justified by faith*, that is, have our sins pardoned, by the same act of faith we are saved from hell, and consequently made capable of eternal life; I say, by the very same act of faith that we obtain the pardon of our sins, we are saved from hell, that is, the punishment due to sin; for pardon removes the guilt, and guilt is nothing else but an obligation to punishment: and partly because I find the scripture useth them promiscuously. When St James disputes about justification by faith, he useth the term of being *saved by faith*, Jam. ii. 14. *Can faith save him?* Sometimes of being *justified*, ver. 24. *So that a man is not justified by faith only.*

In speaking to this proposition, that the faith of the gospel, which I have described, is properly justifying and saving faith, I shall do these six things.

1. Shew that justification in scripture signifies no more than the pardon and remission of sins.

2. That faith can in no propriety of language be said to be the instrument of our pardon.

3. That

3. That the influence that the faith of the gospel, which I have described, hath upon the pardon of sin, is this, that it is the whole and entire condition required on our parts, upon the performance of which God hath promised to pardon our sins, and to save us.

4. That the scripture, where it treats of justification by faith, speaks of this faith which I have described, and no other.

5. That no metaphorical descriptions of justifying faith are allowable, any further than as they serve to illustrate and make clear the plain and simple notion of the thing. For if metaphors once come to be insisted on, and strained, and consequences come to be drawn from them, and doctrines founded, and theories built upon them, they are of very ill consequence, and serve to no other purpose but to blind and obscure the plain and simple notions of things, and to seduce and mislead the understandings of men, and to multiply controversies without end.

And I the rather take notice of this abuse of metaphors upon this subject, because I do not know any other head of divinity which hath suffered so much by them as the doctrine of justifying faith; whereby the plain truth hath been very much obscured, and occasion ministered to many endless disputes.

6. That if this plain and simple notion of justifying faith were admitted, it would supersede all those controversies about justification, which have so much troubled the church. These particulars I shall by God's assistance speak to, not out of a mind to oppose and contradict others; (what a pitiful design is that! and how much below one that is to speak to men, in the name and fear of God!), but out of a hearty desire to bring the truth to light, and to contribute something to the clearing of that, which is of so great importance and concernment to Christian religion.

1. That justification of a sinner in scripture signifies no more than the pardon of sin. That there are several acceptations of the word justification in the New Testament, I deny not. Sometimes it signifies approbation in general of a thing, or person. So the word is used, Luke vii. 29. *And all the people that heard him, and*

the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. Justified God; how is that? that they approved and followed his counsel, as appears evidently by the opposition in the next words; *But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.* Those that rejected the counsel of God, are opposed to those that justify God. And so at ver. 35. *But wisdom is justified of her children,* that is, is approved. And so very probably it may be understood in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other;* that is, of the two, God did rather approve of his humble carriage, than the Pharisee's proud and insolent behaviour. Sometimes it signifies any proof or declaration of a thing. So Rom. iii. 4. *Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightst be justified in thy sayings, and mightst overcome when thou art judged;* that is, that all thy words or promises might be proved and declared to be true, and that thou mayst prevail whenever thou art impleaded by men of unfaithfulness and unrighteousness. And so 1 Tim. iii. 16. Christ is said to be *justified in the Spirit;* that is, by the testimony of the Spirit concerning him; as also by the miracles which he wrought by the Holy Ghost, and the miraculous gifts of the Spirit which were poured forth on the apostles, he was proved and declared to be the true Messiah, and the Son of God. And this phrase of Christ's *being justified by the Spirit,* seems to be of the same sense with that expression, Rom. i. 4. *Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;* that is, he was evidently proved to be the Son of God, by the great miracle of his resurrection, which was wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost. But most frequently, to justify in scripture, signifies to pardon.

Thus the word *justify* doth signify variously, according to the subject or matter it is applied to: but when it is applied to a sinner, it signifies nothing else but pardon of his sin. Nor can I possibly apprehend what other notion men can frame to themselves of a sinner's being justified, distinct from pardon and remission.

Indeed,

indeed, if a person be not really guilty, that is, unjustly accused of a crime, he may be said to be justified, when he is cleared from the charge and accusation which is brought against him: but if a man be guilty, he cannot otherwise be said to be justified than by having the guilt removed; that is, by being pardoned. And that the scripture understands the same thing by justification, and pardon, or remission of sins, is, I think, very evident from these two texts, Acts xiii. 38. 39. *That through his man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; that is, in and through Jesus Christ the way of pardon and forgiveness is declared; and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses;* that is, according to this declaration, all that do believe, are by him, that is, by the virtue of his sacrifice, acquitted and cleared from the guilt of all those sins, for which there is no way of expiation provided by the law of Moses, that is, of presumptuous sins, for which there was no sacrifice, but the man was to be cut off. Now, if the meaning of this text be this, that in and through Christ the way of pardon and forgiveness is declared, and accordingly all that do believe in him are pardoned, then to be justified and pardoned are all one in this place; but this is the meaning of the text, if by the phrase of being *justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses*, be meant the pardoning of such sins and transgressions, for which by the law of Moses there was no way of expiation; but this must of necessity be the meaning of this phrase; for what are those things, for which it is said, *we could not be justified by the law of Moses*, but sinful transgressions and violations of the law? and how can a man be said to be *justified from any sin and transgression*, otherwise than by the pardon and forgiveness of it? The other text is Rom. iv. 6. 7. 8. *Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* The man unto whom God imputeth righteousness, is the man whom God justifies. Now, how does David describe the blessedness

sedness of the man whom God justifies? Thus, *Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*, which is a metaphorical expression of the same thing, *covering of sin* being the pardoning of it. From whence I reason, if according to the Apostle those propositions be equivalent, *Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven*, and, *Blessed is the man whom God justifies*, then according to the Apostle, justification and forgiveness of sins are all one: but those propositions are equivalent if the Apostle cite the text out of the Psalms pertinently

2. That faith can in no tolerable propriety of language be said to be the instrument of our pardon, and consequently not of our justification. An instrument is something subordinate to the principal efficient cause and made use of by it to produce the effect; and this in natural and artificial causes may be understood; but what notion to have of a moral instrument, I confess I am at a loss. But to bring the business out of the clouds we may thus conceive of the pardon of sin. God, in the gospel, hath entered into a covenant of grace and mercy with sinners; one of the benefits promised by God in the covenant, is pardon of sin. The conditions upon which we shall be made partakers of the benefit, are comprehended in this one word, *faith*, which signifies the whole of the Christian religion, *viz.* such an effectual assent to the revelation of the gospel, as doth produce repentance, and sincere obedience, and a trust and confidence in Christ alone for salvation. The procuring or meritorious cause of this benefit, *viz.* the pardon of our sins, is the death of Christ, which is called his blood or sacrifice. The principal efficient cause of our pardon is God, in the sentence of the law, or, which is all one, in the tenor of this covenant, declaring us pardoned upon these terms and conditions. Now, how can faith, which is an act on our parts, and the condition to be performed by us, be said to be an instrument in the hand of God of our pardon? unless men will think fit to call a condition an instrument, which, I think, no propriety of language will allow.

I should now proceed to the third particular which I proposed, but shall refer that to my next discourse on this argument.

S E R M O N CCXXVII.

Of justifying faith.

3 *March*

JOHN XX. 31.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The third sermon on this text.

THE observation I am discoursing upon is this, That to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is truly and properly sanctifying, and justifying, and saving faith. I have entered upon the latter part of the observation, *viz.* to shew that this is truly and properly justifying and saving faith. In speaking to which, I proposed to shew six things.

1. That justification in scripture signifies no more but the pardon and remission of sins.
2. That faith can in no propriety of language be said to be the instrument of our pardon. Thus far I have gone, and now proceed to what remains, *viz.* to shew,
3. That the influence which faith hath upon the pardon of sin, is this, that it is the whole and entire condition, required in the gospel, of our pardon, upon the performance of which God hath promised to pardon sin; which appears thus. All the conditions the gospel requires on our part in order to pardon, may be reduced to these four heads.

- (1.) An assent to the truth of the gospel.
- (2.) A trust and confidence in Christ as our only Saviour.
- (3.) Repentance from dead works.

(4.) Sincere

(4.) Sincere obedience and holiness of life. But we have already proved at large, that all these are comprehended in the New-Testament notion of faith, which signifies the whole of Christian religion. And that repentance and obedience are conditions of our pardon and consequently of our justification, appears from these texts. Acts iii. 19. *Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* Doth not this imply that upon condition we do repent and be converted, God will pardon our sins? 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, (that is, with a resolution to leave them; as is said elsewhere, he that confesseth and forsaketh his sins), he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Matth. vi. 14. 15. *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* And to the same purpose, Matth. xviii. 35. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.* Luke vi. 37. *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.* Luke xi. 4. *And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.* Where doth the scripture make any thing more plainly a condition of pardon than it here does our forgiving of others? upon condition of the performance whereof he promises to forgive us; and without which he threatens not to forgive us. I know not what a condition is, if it be not that which if we perform, we shall receive the benefit promised; if we do not, we shall fall short of it.

4. That the scripture, where it speaks of justification by faith, speaks of this faith, and no other, of such a faith as takes in the whole of Christian religion. The principal places where the scripture designedly treats of justification by faith, are the third and fourth chapters of the epistle to the Romans, the second and third to the Galatians; and the second to St James. In the Romans and Galatians, St Paul doth plainly oppose faith to the law, and the righteousness of it to the works of the law; and it will clearly appear to any one that will carefully read over these discourses of St Paul's, that

hat by faith is meant the dispensation of the gospel, and by the law the Mosaical administration; and the result of all those discourses is, that men are not justified by performing the works which the legal dispensation required; but by assenting and submitting to the revelation of the gospel. And this is agreeable to what he says, Acts xiii. 38. 39. *Through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins; and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

It is true likewise, that the Apostle, in the epistle to the Romans, doth not only dispute against those who simply contended for justification by the legal dispensation; but were fallen also into the gross error and mistake, that they did merit justification and pardon at God's hand, which is impossible: for pardon is free, and of grace, or else it is not pardon. Therefore the Apostle asserts, that we are so justified by faith, that neither our assent to the gospel, nor our obedience to the commands of it, do merit this at God's hands; for this would directly contradict justification by the faith of the gospel. For how can any man possibly think, that he merits pardon by his believing and obeying the gospel, when this is part of the gospel which we believe, that Christ died for our sins, and purchased our pardon at so dear a rate? which had been very unjust, if we ourselves could have done any thing to have merited it.

And that faith is taken for the revelation of the gospel, in opposition to the legal administrations, will appear by considering these texts: Gal. iii. 23. *But before faith came, we were kept under the law;* by which the Apostle plainly means this, that before the revelation of the gospel to the world, we were under the legal administration; for he adds afterwards, *We were shut up unto the faith that should afterwards be revealed;* and what is the faith that should afterwards be revealed, but the gospel? which in the fulness of time was to be revealed to the world, till which time we were held under the dispensation of the law: and ver. 24. *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith;* that is, the law was a discipline preparatory for the gospel, that when that came, we might

might be justified by it: and ver. 25. *But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster,* is, after the gospel was revealed, we were set free from the severe and harsh dispensation of the law; and assent and submission to that revelation, is that which we are said to be justified. Rom. iii. 23. *Even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, that by the gospel, unto all, and upon all them that believe.* ver. 26. *That he might be just, and the justifier of which believeth in Jesus; τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ, the just of him that yields assent and submission to the gospel of Christ.* And this faith is said to be *imputed to us righteousness*, chap. iv. 24. *But for us also, to whom shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; that is, if we assent and submit to the revelation of the gospel, which God has confirmed by that eminent miracle of raising up Christ from the dead.*

St James tells us most expressly, that the faith which justifies doth contain obedience in it: and if it do not, it is dead, and false, and ineffectual to all purposes of pardon and salvation: and that if any man pretend to have faith, and that faith be destitute of the proper and necessary effects of true faith, it will be unprofitable to him, and not at all avail to his justification and salvation. The sum of his discourse is, that the faith which justifies and saves us, must not only be a bare assent of the understanding to the truths of the gospel; but must include in it obedience to all the commands of the gospel; and if it does not, it does no more deserve the name of faith, than good words to a man in war deserve the name of charity. Chap. ii. ver. 14. 15. 16. 17. *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, ye warmed, and filled: notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body: what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.* And to this purpose he instanceth in Abraham, and Rahab, and shews that the faith which justified them, did include in it the effects of faith, *viz.* obedience

obedience and good works, ver. 21. 22. *Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?* And ver. 23. *And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.* But if Abraham were justified by works, viz. by offering up his son upon the altar, in obedience to God's command, as he says before, at the first verse, how was the scripture fulfilled, which saith, *that faith was imputed to him for righteousness*, that is, he was justified by faith; unless faith take in the works of obedience? From whence he concludes, *that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*; not by a naked assent to the truth, but by such a faith as includes obedience; which he farther illustrates by a similitude at the last verse; *As the body without the spirit is dead, faith without works is dead also.* A living faith doth truly contain obedience in it, as a living body contains a spirit.

And those distinctions which are commonly applied to this discourse of St James, do not clear it, but contradict the express design of it. Some say that *fides quæ vivæ justificat; sed non quæ viva*: "Faith which is living justifies; but not as a living faith." Others say, which is much to the same purpose, *fides justificat per operibus; sed fides sine operibus non justificat*: "Faith justifies without works; but faith without works does not justify." But St James says expressly, that *we are justified by works*. How then is that true, that *faith justifies without works*? And he says that works are the life of our faith. How then can any man say, that *ough faith justifies, yet not as it is a living faith*; when we are justified by that which is the very life of our faith, and that is obedience?

There are two other distinctions whereby men endeavour to elude this plain text, which I did not mention before; that *faith justifies the person, and works justify the faith*, and that this is St James's meaning. But what ground for this, when the text speaks expressly of the person being justified by works, as well as *faith*? *Was not Abraham our father justified by works?*

ver. 21. *You see then that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.* Ver. 24. *Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works?* What colour is here for a man to say, that St James does not speak of the justification of the person by works, but of the faith? (What necessity of framing this distinction, but only serve an opinion? But at this rate a man may maintain any thing, though it be never so contrary to scripture and elude the clearest text in the Bible.

The other distinction, which is much to the same sense, is, that the Apostle doth not here speak of a real justification before God, but a declarative justification before men. But, according to this, what sense can be made of verse 14. *What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say, I have faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?* That is, according to this explication, can faith without works save him before men?

And this doth not contradict St Paul, who saith Gal. ii. 16. *that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.* For how doth this, that we are justified, not by the legal dispensation but by the faith of the gospel, which includes obedience and good works, contradict what St James says, that we are not justified by a bare assent to the truth of the gospel, but by obedience to the commands of it? And I do not see that upon the contrary supposition, viz. that the faith of the gospel doth not include obedience in it, it is possible to reconcile these two apostles. Suppose this was St Paul's meaning, that *we are justified by faith*, as the only condition and instrument, and let it be what they will, of our justification; but not by obedience or good works, as a condition of our justification; by what kind of comment can St James's words be brought to this sense? What man would allow that those words at the 21st verse, *Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar*, should be explained by this sense? Was not Abraham, when, in obedience to God's command, he had offered his son upon the altar, and upon this act of obedience was justified, was not he justified by faith only, and not by any work or act of obedience?

That those words at the 24th verse, *Ye see then that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*, should be interpreted, *Ye see then that by faith only a man is justified, and not by works?* and unless they be thus interpreted, they are not to be reconciled with the sense of St Paul's words, which many fasten upon them: but if St Paul's words be taken in the most plain and obvious sense they are capable of, *viz.* that *we are not justified by the works of the law*, that is, by performing the works required by the legal dispensation; *but by the faith of Jesus Christ*, that is, by assenting and submitting to the revelation of the gospel; we do not strain St James's words, to reconcile him with St Paul.

And thus I have shewn; that where the scripture speaks of justification by faith, it speaks of this faith which I have described. I add, and of no other; not of a bare appropriation of the grace and mercy of the gospel; that is, in plain English, this is not justifying faith, to believe that I am pardoned and justified, nor to have a firm assurance of this. For if we be justified by faith, we must believe before we can be justified; but if this be justifying faith, to believe, or be assured we are justified, we must be justified before we believe; or else when we believe that we are justified, we must believe that which is not true. Nor is this justifying faith, to lay hold of the righteousness and merits of Christ for the pardon of our sins; that is, to trust and confide only in that, as the meritorious cause of our pardon. For though this be part of the notion of justifying faith, it is not all; though this be one of the terms or conditions upon which we are justified; yet it is not the whole and entire condition; which, besides this, takes in an assent to the whole gospel, repentance from dead works, and obedience to all the precepts of the gospel. And if any man can produce any one text which saith, that the faith which justifies, consists only in a trust and confidence in the merits of Christ, for the pardon of sin, or any thing to this effect, I will be most ready publicly to acknowledge my error: but if no body can do this, I shall beg their pardon if I do continue still of the same mind.

I was.

I have now done with the fourth thing I propounded: but before I speak to the two heads which remain I must remove an objection or two, that my former discourse may seem liable to.

Object. 1. To make obedience a condition of pardon, seems to take away the freeness of God's grace in pardoning sinners.

1. God's grace in pardoning a sinner is said to be free, not because it is not suspended upon any condition; for the scripture tells us plainly, that it is upon the condition of faith, and repentance, and forgiving others, and the like; but it is free, because God was pleased freely to give his Son to die for our sins, and to accept of his sacrifice for the expiation of them, and to impose easy and reasonable conditions upon us, in order to our enjoying of this benefit; and upon such conditions, though they have nothing of virtue or merit, of any natural or moral efficacy, to deserve, or procure such a benefit as the pardon of our sins, for the sake of his Son, whom he gave to be a ransom for us, to receive us to grace and mercy; and I think this abundantly enough to make our justification very gracious and free, though not absolutely free from all condition.

2. Our salvation is said in scripture to be as free as our justification: we are said to be *saved by grace*, as well as *justified freely by his grace*. But will any man say, that we are saved without any conditions, who reads these texts? *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. If ye walk after the flesh, ye shall die; but if through the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* So that he who can understand how we may be saved by grace, though our salvation be suspended upon the condition of faith, repentance, and holiness, and obedience of life, may, if he please, understand how we may be justified freely by God's grace, though it be upon the same conditions. So that if men were not monstrously perverse, it is impossible they should not see the weakness of this objection.

Objection

Objection the second. This is the doctrine of the Papists, that obedience and good works are a condition of our justification.

Ans. 1. I am for the doctrine which is evidently contained in scripture, whoever hold it. A man ought not to be frighted out of the truth by any name.

2. But there is a wide difference between the doctrine of the Papists about justification, and this doctrine. They say, that obedience and good works are not only condition of our justification, but a meritorious cause of it; which I abhor as much as any one. It is the doctrine of merit that the Protestants chiefly oppose in the matter of justification; and if some also oppose the Papists about good works being a condition, I know nobody that thinks himself obliged to hold every opinion that any Protestant hath maintained against the Papists: and the like I say to the objection of Socinianism and Arminianism, and a hundred names more, if people think fit to fasten them upon it.

And now I might compare this doctrine with the contrary. All that may be said against it is, that it diminisheth the grace of God: but that I have shewn it doth not; but then it hath these advantages. It is, so far as I can judge, (and mine own judgment must govern me), much more plainly contained in scripture, and it is a doctrine more according to godliness; it tends more to quicken men to obedience and a holy life, to believe that they cannot have their sins otherwise pardoned; than to believe that they may have their sins pardoned without obedience and a holy life; and if obedience be not a necessary condition of pardon, it is plain that men may be pardoned without it. For example, if a man promise me a thousand pounds, only upon this condition, that I will believe him, and trust him, but without any condition of doing what he shall command me, and he shall declare thus much to me; if I can trust this man's word; I need not doubt but I shall have the sum promised; though I should disobey him in every thing that he commanded me to do: and this is just the case; and if it be, it is no wonder that men are so loath to disbelieve this pleasant opinion, which gives men comfortable hopes of the pardon of their sins, up-

on such easy terms. Not that I am so uncharitable as not to acknowledge that our worthy and excellent divines, who have been of this judgment, have always pressed the necessity of holiness and obedience: but I am sorry they could not do it with so good advantage according to their principles, the natural consequences of them tending to licentiousness, and a neglect of the precepts of the gospel; to which purpose they have been sadly abused by several libertines in these and former times, ever since Luther's days, and I could never yet see how Antinomianism could solidly be confuted upon those principles.

3. That no metaphorical descriptions of justifying faith are allowable any farther than as they serve to illustrate the plain, and proper, and simple notion of faith. My meaning is, he that would teach men what faith is, he must first acquaint men with the thing, and describe it in as proper and simple words as can be, and not by figurative and metaphorical phrases. Indeed, after a man hath delivered the simple notion of a thing in proper words, he may afterwards illustrate it by metaphors: but then these are not to be insisted upon, and strained to the utmost extent of the metaphor, beyond what the true notion of the thing will bear: for if consequences once come to be drawn from metaphors, and doctrines founded, and theories built upon them, instead of illustrating the thing, they blind and obscure it, and serve to no other purpose, but to seduce and mislead the understandings of men, and to multiply controversies without end; and, as I told you before, I do the rather take notice of this abuse of metaphors upon this subject, because I do not know any other head of divinity which hath suffered so much by them, as the doctrine of justifying faith, whereby the plain truth hath been very much darkened, and occasion ministered to many endless disputes. But this will best appear by some particular instances. Justifying faith hath usually been described by these metaphors, *resting*, and *reying*, and *leaning* upon Christ, *apprehending*, and *laying hold*, and *applying* of Christ, *receiving* of Christ, and *coming to him*. Now, concerning these, I shall briefly speak these or four things.

(1.) That

(1.) That none of these metaphors, except the two last, *receiving of Christ*, and *coming to him*, are any where used in scripture, to describe justifying faith by; and therefore there is no reason why they should be so much used and insisted on. Let any man shew me where justifying faith is any where in scripture described by *resting*, and *relying*, and *leaning upon Christ*, by *apprehending*, and *laying hold*, and *applying* of him.

(2.) If these metaphors were explained and turned into proper and plain words, they can signify nothing else, but that faith which I have been all this while describing. For what can any man understand by *resting*, and *relying*, and *leaning upon Christ*, but to trust in him as the author of our eternal salvation? under which word all the benefits which Christ hath purchased for us are comprehended. Now, can any man be said to trust in Christ, as the author of his salvation, otherwise than by assenting to the truth of the gospel, and complying with the terms and conditions of it? And what can any man understand by *apprehending*, and *laying hold on*, and *applying Christ*, other than this, to make use of him for all those ends and purposes for which God hath appointed him? And what those are the scripture tells us, that *he is made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*

(3.) As for those scripture-metaphors of receiving Christ, and coming to him, the scripture useth them but sparingly, and I dare say, for once that it useth these metaphors, it doth twenty times describe faith by plain and proper words; and where it does make use of these metaphors, it doth sufficiently explain them. So you find coming to Christ is explained by learning of him: Matth. xi. 28. 29. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* That is, come to me as scholars and disciples to be taught by me; in order to which, it is requisite that we should believe him. *Oportet discipulum credere:* "He that will learn, must believe him that teacheth him," and trust his skill. And so for receiving him, lest the metaphor should seduce men, St John had no sooner used it, but he

he tells what he means by it. John i. 12. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; that is, believed him to be the person promised to be the Messiah, and Saviour of the world; as appears by the opposition in the verse before, He came to his own, and his own received him not; that is, rejected him, did not own him to be the true Messiah.* But now, if we will strain such a metaphor as this beyond the intention of it, and because *believing* is called a *receiving* of Christ, and we receive things with the hand, and the hand is an instrument, will from hence infer, that faith is an instrument of our justification; what may not men make of the scripture at this rate?

(4.) I will add this concerning scripture-metaphors in general, that where the scripture useth metaphors which were very familiar in those languages in which the scripture was writ, and well understood by those who spoke that language, but are very obscure and uncouth to us, and not at all used in our language, as most of the scripture-metaphors are, the proper work of a minister is not to insist in such cases upon scripture-metaphors, to darken his discourse by them, but to explain them, and make them intelligible, to translate them into English, and instead of them to use such phrases as people are more familiarly acquainted with, and are used in our own language. For a man may be a barbarian that speaks to people in unknown phrases and metaphors as well as *he that speaks in an unknown tongue*; and the very same reason that obligeth us to put the scripture into a known language, doth oblige men to explain the doctrines contained in it by such phrases and metaphors as are known and used in that language.

(5.) That if this plain and simple notion of justifying faith were admitted, it would supersede all those controversies about justification, which have so much troubled the reformed churches. Those who have been curious to inquire into these matters, have reckoned up at least twenty several opinions among the Protestants concerning justifying faith. I do not desire to acquaint myself with those differences; he that would know what justification and justifying faith are, shall sooner

oner come to understand the nature of them by diligent reading of the scriptures, than by reading over all the controversial writings of divines about them; and men would but content themselves with those plain and simple descriptions which the scripture gives us of it, there could not be any great difference about it; this would cut off most of those disputes which have been commenced upon metaphors, and figurative speech. And here I had thought to have descended to a particular consideration of the controversies about justifying faith, but I am weary of the work, and therefore shall only make some brief reflections upon this whole discourse, and then apply it to our own use, at this, God willing, the next opportunity.

S E R M O N C C X X V I I I .

The condition of the gospel-covenant, and the merit of Christ, consistent.

JOHN XX. 31.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The fourth sermon on this text.

[Have, in my former discourses on these words, treated largely of the nature of Christian faith, particularly as it sanctifies, justifies, and saves men. All that I farther propose is, to make some reflections upon this whole discourse, particularly that which relates to justifying faith, and then apply all to our own use.

I have already taken notice of two objections, to which my discourse may seem liable; and if yet there remain any prejudice upon any man's spirit against this doctrine, I would desire such calmly to consider it, and the agreeableness of it, not to the opinions of men, but

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to the word of God, and the suitableness of it to the great design of Christian religion, every where expressed in the gospel, which is to bring men to holiness and obedience. And what argument and consideration can be more powerful to take men off from sin, and to excite them to the practice of holiness, than this, that repentance and obedience are an indispensable condition of our justification and pardon? And this is the very point in difference, whether the gospel do not make repentance and obedience conditions of our pardon and justification, as well as an assent to the truth of the gospel, and a trust in Christ as the meritorious cause of our salvation. That they are, I have endeavoured to prove from scripture; and for the farther clearing of it, I desire that the nature of the gospel-covenant may be well considered, which I take to be this. On God's part there are certain benefits promised, justification and pardon of sin, and eternal life and salvation. On our part there are certain conditions required before we can be made partakers of those benefits; these are, assent to the truth of the gospel, trusting in Christ as our only Saviour, repentance from dead works, and a sincere purpose and resolution of obedience, and a holy life; these make up the whole and entire condition of the gospel, and are often expressed by this one word, *faith*, which signifies the whole duty of a Christian; so that he that truly believes the gospel, will do whatever the gospel requires. And hence it is, that to be a Christian, and to be a believer, are, in the phrase of the New Testament, all one. Now, the matter in controversy is plainly this; whether this whole condition required of us in order to our pardon and justification, as well as in order to our salvation. That repentance and obedience, and holiness of life, are conditions of our salvation, I think is universally agreed. I am sure it is clearly expressed in these two texts, *Christ is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him*, Heb. v. 9. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. And that the conditions of our justification and salvation are the same, I think it every whit as clear both from scripture, and from the general acknowledgment of divines by necessary consequence. From scrip-
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ure, St James says, that the same thing that justifies us, saves us: for when he disputes, whether we are justified by faith only, or by faith and works, he hath this expression, *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?* From whence the inference is plain, that upon the very same condition that we are justified, we are saved. And it is evident by necessary consequence from the general acknowledgment of divines; or I think this is universally agreed by divines, that whatever puts a man into a state of justification and pardon, puts a man into a state of salvation; and if this be true, it necessarily follows, that the conditions of our justification and salvation are the same: and if assent to the truth of the gospel, and trust in Christ as our only Saviour, be the only conditions of our justification, then they are the only conditions of our salvation; and repentance and obedience are not conditions of our salvation: but if they be conditions of our salvation, then they are of our justification. And I will be bold to say, that this hath as much of demonstration in it, as any thing in divinity is capable of; and I wonder extremely how any man, that considers the nature of the gospel-covenant, can imagine that we should be made partakers of any blessing or benefit promised in the covenant, without performing the whole condition of the covenant.

And now, if any man ask, *Cui bono?* To what end is all this? Suppose it be true, to what purpose is it to awaken differences, and stir up controversies about these matters? In order to these two ends, which I take to be very considerable.

1. That we may be able to answer the Papists, who charge us with Solifidianism; as if we were of this opinion, that if a man do but trust in Christ, that is, be but confidently persuaded that he will save him, and pardon him, that is sufficient; and consequently, he that is thus persuaded, need not take any further care of his salvation, but may live as he list: and I do not see how this can be avoided; especially if this be true, which our divines universally assert, that whatever puts a man into a justified state, puts him into a state of sal-
vation;

vation; I say, I do not see how this charge can be voided, unless we own holiness and obedience to conditions of our justification, as well as trust in Christ. I know no other middle way between Popery and Antinomianism. But,

2. Which is more considerable, without this we can give no satisfactory and reasonable account of our religion to a Heathen. Suppose a Heathen should say thus: Your religion gives a very good account of the corruption and sinfulness of mankind, and hath provided very probable remedy for the expiation of it, by the death of the Son of God: but this seems to me very unreasonable, and to contradict the most natural notion that we have of God's justice and holiness, that he should pardon men, as you say he does, though they do not repent of their sins, nor are resolved to leave them, nay, though they be resolved to go on in a wicked course. Did ever any wise prince pardon a traitor upon these terms? But whoever says that repentance and a sincere purpose and resolution of obedience, are not the condition of our pardon, says, that God will pardon men without repentance, though they are not at all sorry for what they have done, nor resolved to change their course: for that is a condition without which a thing cannot be; and if repentance be not a condition of pardon, a man may be pardoned without it. And if this be true, Christianity is the most lewd and senseless doctrine in the world. For what can be a greater encouragement to sin than this, to tell men that they may be pardoned without repentance? that is, though they live in sin, and continue so to do. Paganism never taught any such thing. Nay, they may add farther, that this which you teach as the doctrine of your religion, seems expressly contrary to your own books, which you say contain your religion. Does not the Bible say, that *he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy?* And doth not this plainly imply, that repentance is a condition of pardon? *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Doth it not say, that *if you forgive not men their trespasses,*

passes,

ness, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you? In any words more plainly express a condition than these do? How should we be able to defend our religion against such an assault, unless we disclaim this charge, and tell them plainly, and without a distinction, that our religion teacheth that repentance, and resolution of holiness, and obedience, are conditions of our pardon and justification? I would to God men would consult the honour of Christianity, and when they hold any opinion, they would not consider the interest of a party, but the universal concernment of the Christian religion. If we had to deal with subtle Heathens, as the primitive teachers of the church had, we should see a necessity of laying aside such unreasonable opinions. I would fain see any man shew any one clear passage out of any of the ancient fathers and writers concerning Christian religion, which says, that trust in Christ for salvation is the only condition of our justification, and that repentance and obedience are not; or that explains justification by faith alone, in this sense. I know it is usually said, the ancient fathers and Christians were ignorant of the doctrine of justification in a great measure, and knew very little of the mystery of the gospel. I know not what they mean by mystery: but I am sure they defined Christian religion better, and gave a more reasonable and satisfactory account of it, than any of those who are so apt to slight them.

The use of this doctrine is as follows.

First, To persuade men to place all their hope and confidence of salvation in Jesus Christ the Son of God; that is, to believe that through the alone merit of his death and sufferings, God is reconciled to us, and that only upon the account of the satisfaction which he hath made to divine justice, we are restored to the favour of God, and our sins are pardoned to us, and we have a title to eternal life. Not but that there are conditions required on our part, to make us capable of these benefits, faith and repentance, and sincere obedience and holiness of life, without which we shall never be made partakers of them: but that the satisfaction of Christ is the only meritorious cause of these blessings. And to per-

suade men to the belief of this, I shall endeavour to satisfy them of these two things.

I. That Christ hath properly merited these blessings for us.

II. That he only hath done it. The first of the propositions is directly levelled against the Socinians: the second against the Papists. I shall speak but briefly of them.

I. That Christ hath properly merited these blessings for us: and this being purely matter of revelation, we are apt to rely upon scripture only for the proof of it. Matth. xx. 28. *The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many,* *λύτρον ἀντι πολλῶν, a price of redemption,* in steed of that which should have been paid by us. John vi. 51. *And the bread which I shall give, is my flesh, which will give for the life of the world.* John x. 11. Christ called the good shepherd that lays down his life for his sheep. John xv. 12. 13. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.* Matth. xxvi. 28. *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.* Rom. v. 6. *For when we were yet without strength, due time Christ died for the ungodly.* 1 Cor. xv. 3. *I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures.* 2 Cor. v. 14. 15. *For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then we are all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.* Eph. i. 7. *In which we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* Col. i. 20. 22. *And (having made peace through the blood of the cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by his blood, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.* And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled you in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and unreprieveable in his sight. 1 Thess. 9. 10. *For God hath not appointed us to wrath; but to obtain*

nation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us. Heb. 10. That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Heb. ix. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. But Christ being our high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself with spot unto God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called, might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. And ver. 25. 26. 27. 28. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entered into the holy place every year with blood of others; (for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world): but now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation. Heb. x. 11. 12. And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God. 1 Pet. i. 18. 19. Inasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 1 Pet. ii. 21. 24. Because Christ himself suffered for us; who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. 1 Pet. iii. 18. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, 1 John ii. 1. 2. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Je-

Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of whole world. 1 John iii. 16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* 1 John iv. 1. *Herein is love, not that we loved God; but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* Rom. i. 5. *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* Rev. v. 9. *Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.* From these and many other texts, it seems to be very plain and evident, that Christ died for our sins, and suffered in our stead, and by the sacrifice of himself hath made an atonement for us, and reconciled us to God, and hath paid a price and ransom for us, and by the merit of his death hath purchased for us forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among the saints that are sanctified. And I do not know any doctrine of our religion, that is founded and established upon more and plainer texts, which cannot be understood in any other sense, without offering great violence to the first and most obvious meaning of them.

I know the Socinians have framed evasions to these texts, which I have not time now to produce and examine; nor would it be worth the while. I shall only say this to them in general; that there is no principle of religion so plainly laid down in the whole scripture, but may be overthrown by the same or the like evasions. Suppose Christ had died in our stead, and made satisfaction for sin, and God had intended to declare so much to us; in what plainer, and more express and proper words could he have done it, than the scripture hath already done? If God had said in the scripture expressly that Christ had *died in our room and stead, and had satisfied for our sins*; these very expressions, by the same arts of interpretation, might have been strained and wrested to some other sense. So that if God did not intend to express to us by these texts, that *Christ satisfied for the sins of men*; yet they are so obvious to be interpreted to that sense, and so hardly, if at all capable of any other, that we cannot imagine, without a great reflection upon the wisdom of God, that he should

ould deliver his mind to men in words and expressions exceedingly liable to a quite different sense from what he intended. Besides that there is nothing more unreasonable than to deny that to be the meaning of scripture, which if it had been the meaning could not have been expressed in plainer and more advantageous words; especially when this is done, not in one or two texts, but very many; and not by one form of expression, but several, and all inclining to the same sense; and which is worst of all, this violence is offered to scripture in a matter which does neither contradict other texts of scripture, nor the reason of mankind, viz. that one man should suffer in another's stead, and make satisfaction for the crimes and faults which another hath committed; supposing the party offended be willing to accept of the commutation, and the party that suffers in another's stead do voluntarily do it.

II. That Christ only hath merited these blessings for us, and that he had no partner with him in this; or there is no other hath merited these blessings for us, nor can we ourselves merit them.

I. No other hath merited these blessings for us. Not to take notice of what the Papists say of the meritoriousness of our works of supererogation, which go into the treasury of the church, and make up a public stock of merit, to be disposed and dealt out by the Pope at his discretion; they have, by a most unparalleled blasphemy, joined the Virgin Mary with Christ in the work of our redemption; and some of them have been so impiously bold, as to parallel the virtue of her milk with the efficacy of Christ's blood. And though Christ say, *that he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath alone, and of the people there was none with him*; yet Bonaventure in his meditations ventures to corrupt the text, by this foolish gloss, *Nullus erat tecum. Recte, Domine, sed erat tecum femina*; "Right, Lord, there was no man with thee, but there was a woman, viz. thy mother."

2. Nor can we ourselves do any thing whereby we can merit these blessings at God's hands. Considering that we received our being, and all that we are and have, from God, and upon account of these benefits are obliged to love him and serve him to the utmost; what

a senseless piece of arrogance is it to say, that a creature can merit any thing at God's hand? Whatever we give God is of his own, and when we have done all we can we have done no more than our duty. And can any man challenge any reward for doing what he ought to do? Can any man make satisfaction for a fault that he hath committed, by doing his duty, that is, by not committing another? It is a sure rule, *Debitum debito non solvitur*. We are indebted to God by the breach of his law: but we cannot quit this debt, and satisfy for the breach, by not breaking it again, because we owe to God all possible obedience.

Besides that all our obedience is imperfect, and is so far from meriting, that it stands in need of pardon, and can a man demerit and merit by the same action? Can he who deserves to be punished for an action, because he did it no better, deserve to be rewarded for the same action, because he did it so well? And to say that Christ hath merited that our imperfect obedience should merit, either signifies only this, that Christ hath merited that our imperfect obedience should be accepted by God, notwithstanding its imperfection; (and this is true, but nothing to the purpose of merit); or else it signifies, that Christ hath merited that that which is not wise meritorious, should be so; that is, that the nature of things should be altered; which is not only false, but senseless.

Secondly, To persuade ^{us} to live as we believe. If we profess to believe the gospel to be true, then let our hearts and lives be suitable to those truths which we believe. If we believe Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, we believe the doctrine which he delivered to the world to be from God, and consequently to be true; we believe the precepts of it are holy, and just, and good, and that they are necessary to be observed by us, as being in order to our peace and happiness; we believe that the promises of the gospel are all yea, and amen, and shall every tittle of them be made good; we believe that the threatenings of the gospel shall all punctually be fulfilled. Now, how ought men to live, that believe all this? Having a law given us, which hath the sanction of such promises and threatenings,

threatenings, ought we not to conform our lives to it, and charge ourselves with obedience to all those precepts of piety towards God, and purity and temperance in the government of ourselves, and justice and righteousness in our dealings with others, which are contained in this new law of the gospel? If the gospel hath promised eternal life and happiness to those who do conscientiously abstain from sin, and follow holiness; *having these promises, ought we not to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God?* If the gospel hath threatened, that, at the end of the world, Christ will *come in flaming fire, &c.* if we believe these things shall be, *what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?*

I have formerly shewed at large, how unbecoming it is for any man that professeth himself a Christian, to live unsuitably to his profession; that it is the greatest disparagement to the gospel, and the highest reflection upon it that can be; and that it is infinitely dangerous to us; and though these be very proper considerations, yet because I have formerly urged them, I shall not now enforce my exhortation with these arguments; but shall mention two other considerations, and so conclude.

First, If our lives be not answerable to our belief, our faith will be ineffectual to all intents and purposes.

Secondly, A life unsuitable to our belief is the highway to infidelity and atheism.

First, If our lives be not answerable to our belief, our faith will be ineffectual to all real intents and purposes.

1. It will be ineffectual to give us the reputation of Christians among wise and discerning persons. We profess to believe the gospel; but if we live contrary to it, our profession is *protestatio contra factum*, and therefore not credible; because our actions contradict it. The constant tenor of a man's actions is a more credible and emphatical declaration of the inward sense of his heart, and shews better what the man believes, than the most solemn profession in words. When our words are not confirmed by our actions, they are but an empty sound, and signify nothing. I may allude to that of St Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. *Though a man have all*

all faith, yet if he be destitute of the true effect of faith and charity, he is but as a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal. St James doth very well set forth the inefficacy of such a faith, by this similitude, James ii. 15. 16. 17. *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, but you warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead.* Men are not so easily cozened as we think they are. Discerning men will not be imposed upon, and put off with a formal and empty profession of faith, when there is nothing in our lives to answer it. It is not standing up in the church, and professing that we believe in God, and in Jesus Christ, that he was born, and died, and rose again, and at the end of the world will come to judge the quick and the dead, that will persuade men that we are Christians. Men will look into our lives, and examine our actions, and inquire into our conversations: by these they will judge of the truth and reality of our profession. Let us not delude ourselves, and think to pass for Christians upon these terms, among any that know how to make a right judgment of things. We may cozen ourselves; but we cannot cheat others, who are not so partial to us, as we are apt to be to ourselves. It is not our winking, that hinders others from seeing us.

Nay, I go farther, it is not an earnest contending for fundamental articles of our Christian faith, if we live contrary to them, that will satisfy any wise man that we believe them; much less an intemperate zeal for indifferent opinions in religion. Such were the doctrines concerning the necessity on the one hand, and the unlawfulness of circumcision on the other; but the assent to the one opinion or the other in these matters, *neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love, the new creature, the keeping of the commandments of God,* as the Apostle in several places expresseth it. Men stand much upon the title of orthodox, by which is usually understood, not believing the doctrine of Christ or his apostles, but such opinions as are in vogue among such a party, such systems

systems of divinity as have been compiled in haste by those whom we have in admiration; and whatever is not consonant to these little bodies of divinity, though possibly it agree well enough with the word of God, is error and heresy; and whoever maintains it, can hardly pass for a Christian among some angry and perverse people. I do not intend to plead for any error; but I would not have Christianity chiefly measured by matters of opinion. I know no such error and heresy as a wicked life. That man believes the gospel best who lives most according to it. Though no man can have a worse opinion of the Socinian doctrine than I have, yet I had rather a man should deny the satisfaction of Christ, than believe it, and abuse it to the encouragement of sin. Of the two I have more hopes of him that denies the divinity of Christ, and lives otherwise soberly, and righteously, and godly in the world, than of the man who owns Christ to be the Son of God, and lives like a child of the devil.

2. Such a faith as hath not an answerable life will be ineffectual to the purpose of justification and salvation. So St James tells us, *it is a dead faith, and profits nothing*, that no man is justified by it, nor will it save any man. *Christ is the author of eternal salvation to them who so believe his doctrine as to obey it; he will come in flaming fire, to render vengeance, not only to them that do not believe, but to them that do not obey the gospel.* It will not be sufficient, at the day of judgment, to plead our profession of faith in Christ, and to say, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wondrous works?* Doing all this in Christ's name, implies that they profess to believe in him; but notwithstanding all this, if they be *workers of iniquity*, Christ will say to such, *Depart from me, I know you not.* If our Saviour makes a true and proper representation of the day of judgment, and the proceedings of it, Matth. xxv. mens faith shall then be tried by the real fruits and effects of it; then the inquiry shall be, how men have lived? what good they have done, or omitted and neglected? and accordingly sentence will be passed upon them. Nay, such a faith is so far from saving, that it will be an aggravation
of

of our condemnation, and sink us the deeper into hell. *There is one that condemneth you, even Jesus in whom you trust.*

Secondly, A life unsuitable to our belief is the highway to infidelity and atheism, to bring others and ourselves to it.

1. To bring others to infidelity and atheism, and to confirm them in it. What can be a more effectual bar to keep Heathens, and Jews, and Turks from entertaining the gospel? what can be a greater confirmation of them in their infidelity, than so to misrepresent Christian religion to them, as we do by our unsuitable lives? What can be a stronger prejudice against it, to men who do not look narrowly into it, but only see it at a distance, than to see what fruit it produces in the lives of Christians? May they not invert that proverbial speech of our Saviour's, *Does a vine send forth thorns?* If Christianity were such a holy institution, how comes it to pass that Christians are so wicked? If Jesus Christ were so excellent a master, we should see it in his scholars; *si Christus sancta docuisset, Christiani sancte vixissent*, as Salvian speaks. And it is the way to bring men to atheism. What more like to take men off from all religion, than to see the religion which pretends to be the best in the world, represented by the lives of Christians at such a disadvantage, as if it were a barren, and fruitless, and ineffectual thing, and as if they who profess it, did believe it to be a lie, and gave no credit at all to the doctrines of it?

2. It is the way to bring ourselves to infidelity and atheism. As an erroneous judgment and understanding hath usually an evil influence upon mens lives, so much more a vitious and corrupt life hath a bad influence upon mens understandings. It is so uneasy a thing for men to act contrary to their reason, and against the dictates of their understandings, that men, for their own quiet, and in their own defence, will bend their judgments, and make them comply with the interest of their lusts. Mens affections, which way soever they incline, set a bias upon their understandings; and this doth not only proceed from the nature of the thing, but from the just judgment of God. 2 Thess. ii. 10. 11. 12. the Apostle

apostle tells us, that those who receive not the truth in the love of it, that they may be saved; God will send them strong delusions, to believe lies; that they all may be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. If men once have pleasure in unrighteousness, it will not be long before they give over believing the truth, because God, by his just judgment, will give them over to themselves, to follow the bias of their own corrupt hearts, which inclines them to believe lies. Of all persons in the world, a wicked and unholy Christian is most likely to turn a speculative infidel and atheist; and none so like to fall into this gross darkness, as those who resist and quench so great a light as that of the gospel is, which they profess to believe.

S E R M O N CCXXIX.

Of the miracles wrought in confirmation of Christianity.

H E B. ii. 4.

God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.

The first sermon on this text.

WHoever impartially considers the Christian religion, cannot but acknowledge the laws and precepts of it to be so reasonable; and the practice of them so evidently to tend not only to the happiness of particular persons, but to the peace and welfare of the world; and the promises and threatenings of the gospel, which are the great motives to persuade men to the obedience of those laws, to be so agreeable to the natural hopes and fears which mankind were always

ways possessed withal; that, upon this consideration, it might justly be expected, that the doctrine of Christianity, upon the first publication of it, should have been entertained with a readiness of mind proportionable to the reasonableness of it.

Or if the bare reasonableness of it be not thought inducement enough, we may easily imagine, how God, if he had pleased, could, upon the first appearance of this religion in the world, have given it such advantages; as would mightily have contributed to the more easy reception and entertainment of it. He could have ordered things so, that our blessed Saviour, the author of this doctrine, should have been, as the Jews expected, a great temporal monarch; he could have raised him to that dignity, and have armed him with that authority, as must have given him a mighty power and influence over mankind, and would have gained the great, and the wise, and the learned, to have been active instruments in the propagating of this religion, and in persuading men to the embracing of it.

But he, *whose ways are above our ways, and whose thoughts are above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth*, did not think fit to have it promoted and carried on this way; nay, he seems on purpose to have stripped it of all secular advantages, that it might be perfectly free from all suspicion of a worldly interest and design, and that it might be evident to all the world, that it was a *plant which his own right hand had planted*; and that it did not owe its establishment to the authority, and wisdom, and contrivance of men, but to the power of God, and to the immediate favour and contrivance of heaven.

And now being thus destitute of all worldly assistance, though never so reasonable in itself, it was not likely that it should be able with success to grapple with the lusts and corruptions of men, to which it was so directly opposite; nor with the strong prejudices of their education in a contrary religion, which are always hard to be overcome; nor with the temporal interests of men, which were all at that time to be renounced and quitted for its sake; unless it had some other advantages to make way for it, and to recommend it to the minds of men.

en. For having no secular baits and allurements to tempt men to the profession of it; no earthly contrivance and assistance to support it and bear it out, but, on the contrary, the most violent and powerful opposition raised against it; it was necessary that those who offered it to the world, should be able to give credit to it some other way, and to produce very sensible and convincing arguments of another kind: otherwise they might have spaired of ever conquering the prejudices of men against it, and of persuading them to embrace that religion, which was so apparently contrary both to their inclinations and interests.

So that in these circumstances, in order to the full conviction of men, that those who published this doctrine to them came from God, and were commissioned and sent by him to teach the world, it was very fitting, that God himself should give some remarkable testimony to the first preachers of it; and this the text tells us he did, by *bearing witness to them, with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.*

For the better understanding of these words, we shall do well to reflect upon the design of this epistle, which was to establish the Jews, who had but newly embraced christianity, in the stedfast belief and profession of it, notwithstanding the troubles and persecutions which attended it: and to this end the Apostle represents to them, that the gospel was delivered with more authority, and had a greater confirmation given to it, than the law. The law was delivered by angels; but the gospel by the Son of God: and if the contempt of the law was so severely punished, what might they expect would be the fate of those who should slight and reject the gospel? *If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? God also bearing them witness, with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will; ουκ επιμαρτυροντες τω Θεω, God adjoining this farther testimony of signs and wonders.* The apostles testified what they had heard from our Lord; and to

give credit and confirmation to their testimony, God was pleased to endow them with miraculous gifts; *bare them witness with signs, and wonders, and miracles.* So likewise, Acts xiv. 3. it is said, that *God gave testimony to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by the apostles.* Sometimes there are more words put together, to express the giving of the miraculous power. Acts ii. 22. *Jesus of Nazareth, approved of God by miracles, and wonders, and signs.* 2 Cor. xii. 12. St Paul, speaking of himself, says, *The signs of an apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, signs, and wonders, and miracles.* These were the marks of an extraordinary and immediate commission, such as was that of the apostles.

It is to no purpose nicely to inquire into the difference of these words, σημεῖα, τερατα, δυνάμεις, *signs, wonders, and miracles,* because in all probability there is no difference intended, it being the manner of the Hebrews, when they would express a great thing, or a great degree of any thing, to heap several words together, signifying the same thing. So we find, Deut. vi. 5. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might;* that is, greatly, with a very ardent and intense degree of affection. So likewise in the text, God is said to *bear witness to the apostles, with signs, and wonders, and miracles;* that is, in a very eminent and extraordinary manner, by great and wonderful miracles.

From these words, three things offer themselves to our consideration.

First, That miracles are a divine testimony given to a person or doctrine: *God bearing them testimony, with signs, and wonders, and miracles.*

Secondly, That God gave this testimony to the apostles, and first preachers of Christianity, in a very eminent manner; for so the phrase signifies, so many words being multiplied to express the greatness of the thing.

Thirdly, We will consider the reason why miracles are now ceased in the church, and have been for several ages, so that there have been no footsteps of them for a long time.

First, That miracles are a divine testimony given to a person or doctrine. God is here said to *bear witness to the apostles, with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles*; that is, the miracles which God enabled them to work, were an evidence that their doctrine was from God.

And because there is some difficulty in this argument, therefore, that we may the more distinctly understand of what force this argument or testimony of miracles is, to prove the divinity of any person or doctrine, it will be requisite clearly to state these two things.

I. What a miracle is.

II. In what circumstances, and with what limitations, miracles are a sufficient testimony to the truth and divinity of any doctrine. The clearing of these two things shall be my work at this time.

I. What a miracle is. The shortest and plainest description I can give of it, is this, that it is a supernatural effect, evident and wonderful to sense. So that there are two things necessary to a miracle.

1. That it be a supernatural effect.

2. That it be evident and wonderful to sense.

1. That it be a supernatural effect. By a supernatural effect, I mean such an effect, as either in itself, and in its own nature, or in the manner and circumstances of it, exceeds any natural power that we know of to produce it. For there are some things that are miraculous in themselves; others that are only miraculous in the manner and circumstances of their operation. For instance, the resurrection of one from the dead, is a thing which in itself is supernatural, and an effect above any power that we know of in nature to produce; but the healing of several diseases, and the speaking of languages, are not things which are in themselves, and in their nature supernatural: for we see that they may be acquired by natural skill and industry: but to heal all sorts of diseases in an instant, and by a word, and without the application of natural means; and on a sudden to speak languages which a man never learned; these are things, which though they be not in

their nature, yet in such circumstances as these, they are supernatural.

I say, that a supernatural effect is that which is above any natural power that we know of to produce; by which I do not mean, that miracles are always an immediate effect of the divine power, and consequently that God alone can work them. For angels, good or bad, may do such things as exceed any natural power known to us, and such as we cannot distinguish by any certain marks and characters from those effects which are wrought by the immediate power of God; and if we cannot distinguish them, they are equally miracles to us. When the angel slew 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians in one night, this ought in all reason to be reckoned a miracle; and yet this, though done by the command of God, an angel might do by his own power and strength; for *they excel in strength*: but what limitations to set to their power, we cannot tell, only it is finite; so that excepting those things which the scripture hath peculiarly appropriated to God, we cannot say what it is that an angel cannot do.

The same may be said concerning evil angels. The devil may work wonders, or assist his instruments to work them. So Pharaoh's magicians wrought several miracles by the power of the devil, and did some of the very same things that Moses and Aaron did, either really or in appearance, and it is all one whether. For he who to mens senses turns a rod into a serpent, works as great a miracle to me, as he who really does it; and if I am not to believe a thing to be a miracle, when to my senses it appears to be wrought, I am never to believe any, unless I could make some difference between those miracles which are real, and those that only appear to be wrought; for if we know not how to distinguish them, they are to us all one as if they were real; but if they may be distinguished, then there will be need of another miracle, to shew which are real, and which not; and the same question and doubt will arise about that miracle, and so without end.

So that I do not see what is gained by saying, that Pharaoh's magicians did only delude mens senses, but did not turn their rods really into serpents, as Aaron did.

did his; because this may be said on one side, as well as on the other: for to the standers-by there was no difference, but the one seemed to the senses of the beholders to be as real as the other; and the text makes no difference, but says, *The magicians did in like manner; for they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents, only Aaron's had this advantage, that his rod swallowed up their rods:* but the main difference was here, Moses and Aaron wrought such miracles, as the magicians could not work, neither really, nor in appearance: for when Aaron, by smiting the dust with his rod, had turned it into lice, it is said that the magicians attempted to do so with their enchantments, but could not, and then they yielded, and acknowledged that it was *the finger of God.* And if they had not been thus plainly overcome, but could, to all appearance of sense, have done all those things which Moses and Aaron did, it might justly have been disputed which had been the true prophets.

So that the devil and his instruments may work miracles. Moses plainly supposeth that a false prophet, who comes to seduce the people to idolatry, may work a true sign or wonder. Deut. xiii. 1. 2. *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder; and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods.* And our blessed Saviour expressly foretels, Matth. xxiv. 24. *that false Christs and false prophets shall arise after his death, and shew great signs and wonders.*

From all which it is evident, that it is not of the essence of a miracle, as many have thought, that it be an immediate effect of the divine power. It is sufficient, that it exceed any natural power that we know of to produce it. And if such effects be not to be esteemed miracles, a miracle would signify nothing; because no man could know when it is wrought, nor distinguish it from those effects which appear to be miraculous, but are not. This is the first property or condition of a miracle, that it be supernatural, that is, such an effect as exceeds any natural power that we know of to produce it. But then,

2. There is another condition also required to a miracle, that it be an effect evident and wonderful to sense; for, if we do not see it, it is to us as if it were not, and can be no testimony or proof of any thing, because it self stands in need of another miracle to give testimony to it, and to prove that it was wrought; and neither in scripture, nor in profane authors, nor in common use of speech, is any thing called a miracle, but what falls under the notice of our senses; a miracle being nothing else but a thing wonderful to sense; and the very end and design of it is to be a sensible proof and conviction to us of some thing which we do not see.

And for want of this condition, transubstantiation, if it were true, would be no miracle: it would indeed be very supernatural, but for all that, it would not be a sign or wonder; for a sign or wonder is always a sensible thing, something that is wonderful and astonishing to sense, otherwise it is no sign or wonder. That such a change as is pretended in transubstantiation should really be wrought, and yet there should be no sign and appearance of it, is a thing very wonderful, but not to sense; for our senses perceive no change, the bread and wine to all our senses remaining just as they were before. Now, that a thing should remain to all appearance just as it was, hath nothing at all of wonder in it. We wonder indeed when we see a strange thing done: but no man wonders when he sees nothing done.

So that to speak the truth, transubstantiation, if they will have it a miracle, is such a miracle, as any man may work, that hath but confidence to face men down that he works it, and the fortune to be believed. And however they of the church of Rome are wont to magnify their priests, chiefly upon the account of this miracle, which they say they can work every day, and every hour if they please; yet I cannot understand, how it magnifies them so much; for when this great work, as they call it, is done, there is nothing more appears to be done, than if there were no miracle. Now, such a miracle, as to all appearance is no miracle, I see no reason why a Protestant minister may not work as often as he pleaseth, as well as they: or if he can but have the patience to let it alone, it will work itself:

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for certainly nothing in the world is easier than to let a thing be as it is, and by speaking a few words over it to make it just what it was before. In short, a miracle is a wonder to sense, and where a man sees nothing that is strange done, there is no miracle; for if he will call it a miracle, when things remain just as they were, and no sensible change is made in them, every man may every day work a thousand such miracles. I come now, in the

II. Place, to consider in what circumstances and with what cautions and limitations, miracles do give testimony to the truth and divinity of any doctrine; for instance, of the Christian doctrine: and for the clearing of this matter, I shall lay down these propositions.

1. That the entire proof of the Christian doctrine or religion, consists of many considerations, which, taken together, make up a full demonstration of the truth of it, when perhaps no one of them, taken singly and by itself, is a convincing and undeniable proof.

The Christian religion hath all the characters of divinity upon it, which any religion can be expected to have: whether we consider the doctrine of it, in which there is nothing unworthy of God; for it makes such a representation of God, and gives such directions concerning his worship, as is most agreeable to those apprehensions which the wisest men have always had of God, and of that service which is most proper to be given to him. Indeed, it declares something concerning God, which is very mysterious and past our comprehensions; but this ought not to offend us, since natural light always did acknowledge the divine nature to be incomprehensible.

The precepts likewise of this religion are highly reasonable, and such as plainly tend to the perfection and happiness of human nature; and the arguments to enforce these precepts are not only very powerful in themselves, but very suitable to the natural hopes and fears of men.

Or if we consider the author of this doctrine, our blessed Saviour, he will appear to be a divine person, *and a teacher sent from God*, by the clear predictions concerning him long before he came; which when he came were
exactly

exactly fulfilled in him; by the miracles he wrought to give testimony of him; by the eminent holiness and virtue of his life; and by innumerable things which he foretold concerning himself, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, and the success of his doctrine in the world, which were all afterwards punctually accomplished. All these proved him to be an extraordinary person. But he was likewise declared to be *the Son of God*, by a voice from heaven, and by his resurrection from the dead.

Or if we consider the first publishers of this doctrine, to whom *God bare witness, with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*, and the wonderful success they met withal, notwithstanding the outward meanness of their persons, insomuch that their doctrine very suddenly prevailed, and passed like lightning through the world; and in the space of a few years spread itself beyond the utmost bounds of the vast Roman empire, and this in despite of the most powerful oppositions and fiercest persecutions that ever were raised against any religion; so that, like the children of Israel in Egypt, it did thrive under affliction, and the more it was oppressed, the more it grew and multiplied; because there was a divine power that did visibly accompany the first publishers of it, and men were not able to resist the spirit whereby they spake.

All these together make up a full and convincing demonstration of the truth and divinity of the Christian doctrine: and yet perhaps no one of these alone is a sufficient proof of it. For though a doctrine be never so reasonable in itself, this is no certain argument that it is from God, if no testimony from heaven be given to it; because it may be the result and issue of human reason and discourse: and though a doctrine be attested by miracles, yet the matter of it may be so unreasonable and absurd, so unworthy of God, and so contrary to the natural notions which men have of him, that no miracles can be sufficient to give confirmation to it; and therefore in some cases the scripture forbids men to hearken to a prophet, though he work a miracle: Deut. xiii. 1. 2. 3. *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,*
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and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them: thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet. And the reason is given, ver. 5. *Because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God.* From whence it is plain, that a miracle is not sufficient to establish the worship of a false god.

The sum of what I have said is this, that we do not found our belief of Christianity upon any one argument taken by itself; but upon the whole evidence which we are able to produce for it, in which there is nothing wanting that is proper and reasonable to prove any religion to be from God.

2. But yet miracles are the principal external proof and confirmation of the divinity of a doctrine. I told you before, that some doctrines are so absurd, that a miracle is not a sufficient proof of them: but if a doctrine be such as is nowise unworthy of God, nor contrary to those notions which we have of him, miracles are the highest testimony that can be given to it, and have always been owned by mankind for an evidence of inspiration. And therefore Nicodemus takes it for an acknowledged principle, that miracles are a sign of a teacher sent from God. John iii. 2. *We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for none can do these miracles which thou dost, except God be with him.* And the scripture constantly resolves the divinity of any person or doctrine into miracles, as the chief external evidence that they are from God. This was the testimony which God gave to Moses, to satisfy the people of Israel that he had sent him. Exod. iv. 1. *And Moses answered, and said, But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.* Upon this God tells Moses, that he would give him a power of miracles, to be an evidence to them that they may believe, that the God of their fathers, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, hath appeared unto thee. And all along in the Old Testament, when God sent his prophets to make any new revelation, or upon any extraordinary message, he always gave credit to them, by some sign or wonder. And when

he sent his Son into the world, he bare witness to him, by more and greater miracles than Moses or any of the prophets had wrought. And to this testimony both our Saviour himself and the apostles appeal, as the great evidence of the divinity of their doctrine. When John the Baptist sent his disciples to our Saviour, to be satisfied whether he was the Messias, he refers them to his miracles: Matth. xi. 4. 5. *Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up.* And John v. 36. *But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* And Acts ii. 22. *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀποδείχθαις ὑμῶν, a man demonstrated by God to you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which he did in the midst of you.* And Acts xiv. 3. it is said, that when the apostles preached the gospel, *God gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.* From all which it is plain that our religion appeals to miracles, as the great external confirmation of it.

3. Especially if miracles have all the circumstances of advantage given to them which they are capable of; if they be many and great, public and unquestionable, and universal, and of long continuance. And such were the miracles wrought by Moses, and by our Saviour and his apostles, which for their nature and quality, for the number and continuance of them, and for all other circumstances that may give credit to them, and argue them to be from God, are in no degree to be equalled by those which any other religion hath pretended to.

And in these circumstances, miracles alone are in most cases a sufficient proof of the divinity of a doctrine: for there is a great deal of difference in reason to be made between one or two strange and miraculous effects, and those not of the highest and most unquestionable rank of miracles neither, privately wrought, and before few witnesses; and a long continued series of miracles of all kinds, and such as are universally acknowledged to be above the power of nature, and those publicly wrought

in the face and view of the world, in every city and country, by a great many persons for many years, yea, for many ages together. The former may be doubted of, but the latter carry so sensible a conviction with them, that it is not credible, that the divine goodness should permit so great and overpowering a testimony to be given to a falsehood.

4. It cannot be denied, but that God doth sometimes permit miracles to be wrought for the countenancing of a false doctrine. This the Heathens pretended to at their temples and oracles; and it is not incredible, that God should permit the devil to do several strange and extraordinary things; though it be certain that there was a great deal of cheat and imposture mingled with them. To be sure the scripture owns the working of miracles by false prophets. Moses takes notice of it in his law, and provides against it as a case that might happen; and our Saviour expressly foretels it, Matth. xxiv.; and so does St Paul, 2 Theff. ii. that *the man of sin should come after the working of Satan, with power, and signs, and wonders of lies*; that is, should work miracles to countenance his false and impious doctrines. And the scripture likewise tells us, for what reason God does sometimes permit this to be done. For the trial of the good: Deut. xiii. 3. *For the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your hearts.* And for hardening of the wicked, by the just judgment of God: 2 Theff. ii. 10. 11. 12. *Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them ἐπιψέαν παράνομν, the efficacy of imposture, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

5. and lastly, God never permits miracles to be wrought for the confirmation of a false doctrine, but he affords sufficient marks, whereby those who are free and impartial inquirers after truth, and sincere lovers of it, may distinguish truth from imposture. So our Saviour tells us, that the elect, that is, the true and sincere Christians, should not be deceived by the *signs and wonders of the false Christs and false prophets.* And therefore he was not afraid of ha-
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ing the credit of this doctrine weakened, by foretelling that false prophets should work miracles; because he knew when the devil had done his utmost, the difference would be apparent enough between the confirmation which he had given to the Christian doctrine, and what the devil should be able to give to his instruments. As,

1. Either the doctrine would be absurd in itself, and such as no miracles can confirm; as in the case which Moses instanceth in, of a miracle wrought to seduce them from the worship of the one true God, who is naturally known, to the worship of idols. Or else,

2. It would be contrary to that doctrine which had already had a far greater and more divine confirmation. And this likewise is another reason intimated by Moses, why the people should not hearken to a prophet that would seduce them to idolatry, though he should work a miracle; *because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt; that is, from that God who hath demonstrated himself to them by such a series of great and unquestionable miracles as ought in all reason to bear down any single sign and wonder.*

And the case is the same, if miracles should now be pretended for the confirmation of any thing plainly contrary to the Christian doctrine, which being established by such miracles as never were wrought in the world upon any other occasion, it cannot be thought reasonable, that any evidence inferior to this should be able to control it, or to give credit to any thing that contradicted it. And in this case the apostle has expressly forbidden Christians to hearken to a contrary doctrine, *though they themselves, or an angel from heaven, should preach it, Gal. i. 8.* Therefore St Paul expressly lays down this rule, whereby we may judge what miraculous powers are from the Spirit of God, and what not, *I Cor. xii. 1. Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant, that is, what miraculous gifts are from the Spirit of God, and what not; and then, ver. 3. he gives this rule, Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost: that is, if any man pretend*

tend to be inspired, and to be endowed with a miraculous power, and yet blasphemeth Christ, this spirit is not from God: but if any man be endowed with this power, and acknowledge Christ, we may safely conclude this power to be from the Holy Ghost. The very same rule St John lays down yet more plainly, 1 John iv. 1. 2. 3. *Believe not every spirit, that is, not every one that pretends to the gifts and inspirations of the Spirit; but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.* And ver. 6. *We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* This seems at first sight to be a very odd rule, and what every false teacher, and every sect may lay down in favour of themselves; *He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that knoweth not God, heareth not us;* and nothing can make it reasonable, but the consideration that the Christian religion being already so abundantly confirmed beyond contradiction, is itself become a rule to try spirits or miracles by. Or,

3. The miracles which false prophets work, are presently confuted, and upon the spot. Thus Moses confuted and conquered Pharaoh's magicians, by working miracles which they could not work; which forced them to yield the cause, and acknowledge that it was *the finger of God.* And so likewise Simon Magus, who had gained so great a reputation among the people by his sorceries, as to be called *the mighty power of God,* was confuted by the apostles, who, by the laying on of hands, conferred a miraculous power on men; which he not being able to do, would have purchased it with money. And so Elymas the sorcerer was struck blind by St Paul. And the miracles of the Heathen temples and oracles, upon the preaching of the gospel, ceased, as being ashamed of themselves; as Prophecy, one of the bitterest enemies of Christianity, doth expressly acknowledge. Or else,

Lastly, The miracles wrought, or pretended to be

wrought, to confirm false doctrines, are such as do some way or other confute themselves; or if they be real are sufficiently detested to be the pranks of the devil and not the great and glorious works of God. Such were the miracles of the Heathen deities, wrought so privately and obscurely, and confessedly mixed with so much of imposture, as to bring a just suspicion upon them that when they were real, the devil was the author of them. And such were the miracles which are attributed to Mahomet; either grossly absurd and ridiculous, as that of part of the moon coming down into his sleeve and his remanding it into its place again; or else destitute of all proof and witness, as that of a camel's speaking to him by night; and his pigeon whispering to him in his ear: which if it had been intended for a miracle the pigeon should not have whispered, but have spoken out, that others might have heard it. But Mahomet was so conscious to himself of his own defect in point of miracles, that he laid no weight upon them; *being, as he said, not sent to convert the world by miracles, but to conquer them by force of arms.*

And now I am sorry I have occasion to say, but it is too true, that the miracles pretended to by the church of Rome, for the confirmation of their erroneous doctrines are of the same stamp with these, taxed by several of their best writers of imposture and forgery, of fable and romance, so extravagant, and freakish, and fantastical wrought without any necessity, and serving to no wild end, that they are so far from giving credit to their doctrines, that they are a mighty scandal to to them, and to our common Christianity: whereas the truly divine miracles, reported to us in scripture, how unlike are they to these? How venerable in themselves, and in all the circumstances with which they are related never wrought but upon great necessity, and for excellent ends, full of benefit and advantage, of mercy and compassion to mankind; and in a word, such as are every way worthy of their author, having plain characters of the divine wisdom and goodness stamped upon them.

And thus I have done with the first thing I propounded to speak to, namely, that miracles are a divine testimony

mony; and in what circumstances, and with what cautions and limitations they are so. I shall at present only draw some inferences from what hath been discoursed upon this argument.

1. What has been said may satisfy us of the truth and divinity of the Christian doctrine, which had so eminent a testimony given to it from heaven, and did at first so strangely prevail in the world, contrary to all human probability, *not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.* No man can suppose a religion in circumstances of greater disadvantage, and upon all human accounts more unlikely to sustain and bear up itself, than Christianity was. The first appearance of it was so weak, its beginnings so small, and the instruments employed in the propagation of it so mean and despicable, that no man but would have concluded it must presently have sunk and come to nought; and no other reason can be given of the strange success and prevalency of it, but that *it was of God,* and therefore *it could not be overthrown.*

2. From hence we may judge how groundless the pretences are, which men now-a-days make to inspiration and infallibility; because this is not to be proved and made out any other way but by miracles. For either we must believe every pretence of this kind; and then we are at the mercy of every crafty and confident man, to be led by him into what delusions he pleases: or we must only believe those who give some testimony of their inspiration: but the evidence of inspiration was always miracles. This is the testimony which God hath always given to those whom he hath sent upon an extraordinary message to mankind. And this is that which we reasonably demand of our modern enthusiasts, and of the great pretender to infallibility, the Bishop of Rome; because nothing can be more vain, than for men to pretend to inspiration, and an infallible spirit, without miracles. And yet I cannot learn that the Popes themselves, among all their boundless privileges and powers, do so much as pretend to a power of miracles, which yet is the only thing that can in reason support their pretences to infallibility.

3. You see what an immediate testimony from hea-

ven God was pleased to give to the first preachers of the Christian doctrine, to qualify them with any probability of success, to contest with violent and almost invincible prejudices of men educated in a contrary religion, and which had the secular authority and laws on its side. For having this divine seal given to their commission, they did, as it were, carry the letters patents of heaven in their hands, and an authority paramount to that of human laws. And therefore the wisdom of God, which does nothing which is superfluous and unnecessary, did not think the apostles sufficiently armed and appointed for this design, by a commission from the mouth of the Son of God, without this divine seal and testimony of miracles, as a visible evidence of their divine commission. And therefore our Saviour, after he had commissioned them *to preach the gospel to all nations*, commanded them not to enter upon this work, nor to depart from Jerusalem, *till they had received the promise of the Father*, that is, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, Acts i. 4. And so our Saviour explains it, Luke xxiv. 47. where, after he had commanded, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem, he adds, ver. 49. *And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.* And to the same purpose, Acts i. 8. *But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; by which he tells us, they were qualified to be witnesses unto him, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.*

4. and lastly, The consideration of what hath been said, doth justly upbraid us, that our religion, which hath such evident marks of divinity upon it, and comes down to us confirmed by so many miracles, should yet have so little efficacy upon the lives of the greatest part of those who call themselves Christians. It is true, miracles are now ceased among Christians, our religion being sufficiently established by those that were wrought at first; and now the greatest miracle, in these latter ages, is a good man, a true and sincere Christian: but the laws of Christianity are still the same; and the motives

tives and arguments to a good life are the same; and though the miraculous gifts of the Spirit have left the world, yet the sealing and sanctifying gifts of the Holy Ghost do still remain. We cannot now speak all languages, as the apostles did: but we may do that which is much better, and more pleasing to God, we may live holy and virtuous lives. We have not that faith which works by miracles: but we may have that which is far more excellent, *the faith which works by charity; which, if we believe St Paul, is more than to speak with the tongues of men and angels, more than to prophesy, and to understand all mysteries and all knowledge.*

The admirable piety and virtue of the first Christians are still upon record for our imitation: but I know not how it comes to pass, we chuse rather lazily to admire those patterns, than vigorously to imitate them; as if the holiness of those times were also miraculous, and not intended for the imitation of succeeding ages; as if it were impossible for us now to lead such lives as they did; as if heaven and earth, God and men, and all things, were altered since that time; as if the Christian religion were now quite dispirited, and had lost all its vigour and force; and as if the Holy Spirit of God had, to all intents and purposes, forsaken the world, and were retired to the Father.

But our religion is still the same it was; the precepts of it as reasonable, and the promises of it as powerful as ever; God is still the same he was; and Christ still *at the right hand of God, making intercession for us;* and the Holy Spirit of God still ready to assist us, *to every good word and work.*

To conclude: We have, beyond comparison, the best and most reasonable religion in the world; a religion which carries along with it the greatest evidence of its truth, which contains the best rules and directions for a good life, which offers the most powerful assistance to the obedience of its laws, and gives the greatest encouragements thereto, by the assurance of a blessed immortality in another world. Now, the better our religion is, our case is so much the worse, if we be not made good by it. Philosophy had some effect upon the world to make some men temperate, and chaste, and just,

and honest in their lives. And the Jewish religion (as weak and imperfect as it was, and though it was but *the shadow of good things to come*) hath yet left us many eminent examples of good and holy men. What then shall become of us, if the best institution in the world, the blessed gospel of the Son of God, have less effect upon us, than the doctrine of Pythagoras, and the law of Moses had upon them? *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? God also bearing them witness, with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.* To which blessed and glorious Trinity, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

S E R M O N CCXXX.

Of the miracles wrought in confirmation
of Christianity.

HEB ii. 4.

God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according his own will.

The second sermon on this text.

I Have begun to discourse upon these words, from which I told you three things offer themselves to our consideration.

First, That miracles are a divine testimony to a person or doctrine. God is here said to *bear witness to the apostles, by signs, and wonders, and miracles.*

Secondly, That God gave this testimony to the apostles, and first publishers of the gospel, in a very eminent

ment manner; for so the phrase signifies, *God bearing them witness, with signs, and wonders, and miracles*; so many words to the same sense, being purposely used to signify the greatness of the thing.

Thirdly, The reasons why miracles are now ceased in the church, and have been for several ages; so that there have been no footsteps of this miraculous power for several ages past. The first I have spoken to, and proceed now to the

Second thing which I proposed to consider, *viz.* That God gave testimony to the apostles and first publishers of Christianity, in a very eminent manner; for so the expression in the text signifies, where so many several words are used for the same thing, to express, according to the manner of the Hebrew phrase, the greatness of the thing; *God bearing them witness, both with signs, and wonders, and doers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*, that is, with many and great miracles, καὶ μισθμοῖς, *and distributions of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will*; that is, God distributed these several miraculous powers and gifts among the apostles and first preachers of the gospel; not all to every one of them, but some to one, and some to another, as to him seemed best, and was most for the benefit and edification of the church.

The history of it in short is this. When our blessed Saviour ascended into heaven, he promised to send down his Spirit in miraculous gifts upon his apostles, to give credit to his doctrine, and to qualify them for the more speedy planting and propagating of it in the world; and accordingly, not many days after he was ascended into heaven, as an evidence of the power and glory he was invested withal, he, according to his promise immediately before his ascension, sent down the Holy Ghost upon the apostles in a visible manner, that is, in the form of fiery cloven tongues, as an emblem of one of the principal gifts they were endowed withal, *viz.* the knowledge and ability of speaking several languages, which they had never learned. And this happened upon the day of Pentecost, that so the gospel might exactly correspond to the dispensation of the law, which was the type and figure of it. And therefore, as
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our Saviour died at the time of the Jewish passover; which was the type of his sufferings; so the gospel, which was the perfection and fulfilling of the law, began to be published at the very same time that the law was given from mount Sinai, *viz.* at the end of the seven weeks after the passover. For at this time the Holy Ghost descended upon the apostles in miraculous powers and gifts; when this new law was to come forth out of Zion, and the law of the Lord from Jerusalem.

And among these gifts, the first we find mentioned was the gift of tongues; without which, the gospel must of necessity have been very slowly propagated in the world: for had the apostles been first to learn the several languages of the nations they were to preach to, how tedious a work would that have been? it requiring the industry of some years, to gain so perfect a mastery of a strange language, as to be able to use it with that freedom and readiness which is necessary for such a work.

And this gift all the apostles had, because they had all occasion for it, being designed by our Saviour to be the chief publishers of his gospel to the world. And this gift did also continually reside upon them, and not only at some times, as some other gifts did, because they had constant use of this gift of tongues.

The interpreting of things spoken in a strange tongue was also a gift distinct from the gift of tongues, though attending it; insomuch that some persons had one, and some the other. So the Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xii. 10. *To one is given divers kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues.* The occasion of which was plainly this: It might happen, and often did, that the auditory might consist of people of several nations; now, because no man could speak more than one language at once, it was convenient others should have the gift of interpreting what was spoken, to those who understood not the language in which it was spoken, that so all might receive the benefit of what was delivered, and be edified thereby. So that here were two several gifts serving the same end, *viz.* the conveying of the knowledge of the gospel to mankind, in a more speedy way than it could have done
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by ordinary means ; and these were very plain and sensible miracles, unquestionably supernatural, and evident to the senses of all men. - So that the gospel, where-ever it was preached, carried its own testimony along with it, and was confirmed by the very manner of its conveyance and delivery : and well might men entertain it as a divine doctrine, when the very manner and the means whereby it was published was a miracle.

And here I cannot but take notice, how contrary the arts and the ways of the church of Rome are to the methods of God, and that when he was at the expence of so many miracles to publish this doctrine to the world, they should use so much industry and violence to conceal it. God was pleased to endow the first preachers of it with the gift of tongues, that *their sound might go into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world* ; that there might be no nation nor language where this saving knowledge might not come ; that the sermons which they preached, and the prayers which they put up to God in public, for themselves and the people, and all the offices of religion which they performed, might be fully understood by all, and that all might join in them, and have the benefit and comfort of them ; that their understandings might be informed and enlightened by what was spoken, and their affections raised and warmed by their understandings, and their wills excited by their affections ; and that the effect of all this might appear in their lives and practice. Thus it was in the primitive Christian church : but in the church of Rome, things are managed in a quite contrary way, and have been for several ages. The doctrine of salvation, as it is contained and delivered in the holy scripture, is a sealed book, which the people are not thought worthy to open or look into. This *bread of life which came down from heaven*, is like the *shew-bread* among the Jews, which none may eat but the priest only, unless it be by extraordinary favour, and particular licence from the bishop. The people indeed come together, and are present at the prayers and devotion of the priest ; but the priest *that prays is a barbarian to them*, and all the while the understanding

understanding of the people is unfruitful, and *they cannot say amen, because they understand not what he says.*

But let any man shew me the least intimation in scripture or antiquity, that our Saviour, or his apostles, or the primitive church, ever used this way; and yet the danger of error and heresy was as great then, as it is now. So that the church of Rome must pretend themselves wiser than our Saviour and his apostles; and to be more careful to prevent heresy in the church, than they were. This they are loath to say; and yet they must say it, if they will justify their own doings. But the plain truth is, there is another and truer reason for it, though they are not willing to own it, and that is this; if the scriptures were permitted to the people in a language which they understand, the errors of their church would be discovered and laid open, and men would plainly discern how contrary many of their doctrines and practices are, to those of our Saviour and his apostles: for *every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be discovered.*

Secondly, The next miraculous gift I shall mention after the gift of tongues, is the gift of prophecy, or foretelling things future, which was always looked upon as an evidence of inspiration. And this we find mentioned, I Cor. xii. 10. *To another prophecy,* and in several other places; and to this gift the Apostle gives a great pre-eminence, I Cor. xiv. 1. *Covet spiritual gifts: but rather that ye may prophesy;* because foretelling of things to come was always esteemed by mankind an evidence of a person divinely inspired, and consequently was one of the greatest testimonies of the truth of Christianity; and this the angel that appeared to St John particularly takes notice of, Rev. xix. 10. *The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.* The prophecies of that book were to be a standing testimony of the truth of Christianity in all ages of the church.

Thirdly, The next gift is that of healing all manner of diseases. And this the apostles seem generally to have had, and the elders of the church also, whose peculiar office it was to pray over the sick, and to anoint them with oil; and upon their prayers, God was pleased

led to grant miraculous recoveries, as we find expressly promised, James v. 14. 15. *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.*

This miraculous power we find likewise mentioned to be conferred on the apostles in our Saviour's life-time, when he first gave them commission to preach the gospel to the Jews, Mark vi. 12. 13. where it is said, that *they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.*

And now that this miraculous gift is ceased, there is no reason why the mere ceremony of anointing with oil should continue; which yet is still used in the church of Rome, and made a sacrament, though it signify nothing: for they do not pretend to heal men by it; nay, they pretend the contrary, because they never use it, but in extremity, and where they look upon the person as past recovery; and if they did not think so, they would not use it.

But besides the healing, with this solemnity of anointing with oil, and with prayer, which seems to have been used by the elders of the church only upon those who were members of the church, there was likewise a general gift of healing, which the apostles exercised upon all occasions where-ever they came; and this was performed only by laying their hands on the sick. And this we find promised by our Saviour to his apostles, when he gave them commission to preach the gospel to all the world, immediately before his ascension; and not only to the apostles, but to those who should believe upon their preaching: Mark xvi. 17. 18. *These signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils, &c. and then it follows, they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

Fourthly, The power of raising the dead, which hath always been esteemed one of the greatest and most unquestionable miracles of all other. A principal part of the apostles office was to *be witnesses of our Saviour's resurrection from the dead*, whereby he was so powerfully demonstrated

demonstrated to be the Son of God. But because this was a strange relation, and not easy to be credited, by those who were strangers to the apostles, and had never known them before; therefore that they might witness this with more authority, God was pleased to endow them with a miraculous power of all kinds; and particularly with a power of raising the dead, and then there was no difficulty in receiving their testimony concerning our Saviour's resurrection, when men saw them in his name raise others from the dead. And of this we have two instances in the Acts of the Apostles; of St Peter's raising Dorcas, Acts ix. and St Paul's raising Eutychus, Acts xx. And Irenæus, who lived in the age after the apostles, tells us, that in his time this power continued among Christians.

Fifthly, Another miraculous gift was that of discerning spirits; the principal use of which was, to try and judge who were true prophets. And of this the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xiv. 29. *Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.* And ver. 32. *The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.* And this is likewise called by the same apostle, *the gift of discerning spirits.* 1 Cor. xii. 10. *To another is given the discerning of spirits.* Those who pretended to this gift were tried by the bishops and elders of the church, as the prophets were tried among the Jews by the Sanhedrim. And of these kind of assemblies among the Christians, for the trial of prophets, Eusebius speaks particularly in his fifth book.

And it should seem likewise that this gift of discerning spirits extended also to the discovery of the secrets of mens hearts; by the revealing whereof, unbelievers were many times suddenly struck and convinced; as may very probably be collected from 1 Cor. xiv. 24. 25. *But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned; he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.*

And upon this miraculous gift of knowing the secrets of mens hearts, it seems to be very probable, that that which is commonly called *the power of the keys* did depend:

depend: I mean *the power of remitting or retaining sins*: for they who had the privilege of knowing mens hearts, might do this upon certain grounds, and were secured from mistake in the exercise of their power upon particular persons; which the priests and ministers of the church now are not, nor can be; because they cannot see into mens hearts, whether they be truly penitent and qualified for forgiveness or not. For I cannot easily believe but that those words of our Saviour, *Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose sins ye retain, they are retained*, were intended to signify something more than a mere declaration of the promises and threatenings of the gospel, which any man might make as well as the apostles and ministers of the church. For that God will forgive the penitent, and that he will not pardon the sinner, except he repent, is as true from any man's mouth, as from an apostle's: and as to the absolution of this or that particular person, though a minister, by the skill and knowledge of his profession, is ordinarily and reasonably presumed, by virtue of his office, to be a better judge of a man's repentance, than other persons are, and therefore may, with more authority and satisfaction to the penitent, declare his judgment and opinion concerning him; yet not being able to see into his heart, he may be mistaken concerning him; and if he be, his declaring his sins to be forgiven, that is, his absolution of him, will do him no good: and on the other hand, his refusal to absolve him, if he be truly penitent, will do him no harm. As the judgment of a skilful lawyer is of greater authority, and more satisfactory to us concerning our title to an estate, than the opinion of another man, who is not of the profession, nor presumed to have the like skill; but yet for all this, his judgment does not alter the case; and if in truth the law be otherwise, our title is bad, for all this skilful man's opinion of the goodness of it.

And thus much is granted by the church of Rome, that if the priest be mistaken in the use of the keys, and gives absolution to one that is not truly penitent, his sins are not remitted; or if a person be excommunicated that is not truly guilty, his sins are not retained: what *he binds on earth, is not bound in heaven; and he whom*

he loofeth and absolves on earth, is not absolved in heaven. But the Protestants go farther, and do not only make a mistaken absolution or excommunication void in itself; but they do not make the absolution of the priest at all necessary to the forgiveness of sins, but only convenient for the satisfaction and comfort of the penitent. For which reason, our church does not require a formal absolution to be given to the dying penitent, unless he himself desire it; which is a certain argument, that, in the judgment of our church, the absolution of the priest is not necessary to the forgiveness and salvation of the penitent. For had they thought it necessary, they would have enjoined the priest to give it to every one whom he judged penitent, whether he desired it or not.

So that the absolution of the priest, having only the authority of a man, presumed to be skilful in his office, but no certain effect, in case he be mistaken, (as he very easily may be, and if he be, as he ought to be, a charitable man, no doubt often is), I cannot think but that this power of *remitting and retaining sins*, so solemnly conferred on the apostles by our Saviour, had something in it that was miraculous and extraordinary, and did suppose the knowledge of mens hearts, and that they were not mistaken in the application of this power to particular persons; and consequently, that, in that miraculous and extraordinary degree, it was peculiar to the apostles and their times. For I cannot easily be brought to believe, that the meaning of this great promise to the apostles should be only this, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, if ye be not mistaken, as in many cases ye will be, and in any case ye may be, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.* And if more be meant than this, it must suppose a miraculous power of discerning the sincerity of mens hearts.

And therefore when the power of the keys is conferred on the ministers of the gospel, in our form of ordination, I suppose that only one or both of these two things is intended by it, *viz.* a power to admit persons into the Christian church by baptism, in which is sealed

to them the remission of sins; and to cast persons out of the communion of the Christian church, by excommunication and the censures of it: and an authority, by virtue of their office, to declare to men the terms of pardon and forgiveness, which cannot be that infallible power of absolving which the apostles had.

And I am the rather induced to think so, because I find it promised to the apostles, together with the miraculous power and efficacy of prayer, which St Chrysostom reckons among the miraculous gifts, which he says were ceased in his time. That it was thus promised, you may see, Matth. xviii. 18. 19. *Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* But surely no man will pretend that any two Christians or ministers have now this power, that whatever they shall agree together to ask of God, which is fit and lawful, in behalf of any person, God will certainly grant it upon their request. In the same sense I understand several other texts concerning the efficacy of the prayers of the apostles and first Christians, as in a great measure miraculous, and peculiar to the first times of Christianity. And I think any man that attentively considers them, will think that they cannot well be understood otherwise. Such as these, Matth. xxi. 22. *And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* Mark xi. 24. *I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* John xiv. 14. *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it;* and chap. xv. 17. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* 1 John iii. 22. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him;* and chap. v. 14. 15. *And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* These promises I take to contain something extraordinary, and peculiar to the first

times of Christianity. And this will appear exceeding probable, if we consider the occasion and circumstances of these promises, which are so often joined with the promise of a miraculous power, as in the place I mentioned before, Matth. xviii. 18. 19. where, after the power of *binding and loosing*, it immediately follows, *that if two of you shall agree on earth touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* Matth. xxi. 22. and Mark xi. 23. says our Saviour there to his disciples, *Have faith in God: for verily I say unto you, whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith.* And then immediately it follows, *Therefore I say unto you, Whatsoever things ye desire when you pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them;* that is, whatever ye desire of God to do, he shall miraculously do it upon your prayers. So likewise John xiv. 12. 13. 14. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* Still you see this extraordinary efficacy of prayer is joined with the power of miracles, as one part and branch of it. More particularly, we find the forgiveness of the sins of those whom they pray for, expressly promised, 1 John v. 15. *And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* And then it follows, *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for the sin that is not unto death.* Where forgiveness of sins, upon the prayers of Christians for one another, is promised, except in the case of *a sin unto death*, by which is meant apostasy from Christianity to the Heathen idolatry, which is the reason of the caution which follows; *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.* And this extraordinary efficacy of prayer, we find promised in a more especial manner to the elders of the church, James

v. 14. 15. *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

In comparing of all these texts, it seems plain, that both the power of remitting and retaining sins, and the strange efficacy of prayer, which were promised to the apostles and first Christians, had something miraculous and extraordinary in them, and were peculiar to the first ages of the church. I will not be peremptory in these things; but this seems to be the most genuine and reasonable interpretation of these texts.

Sixthly, And besides these which I have mentioned, there was likewise a power of inflicting corporal punishments and diseases upon scandalous and obstinate Christians; which in scripture is called, *a delivering men up to Satan, for the destroying or tormenting of their bodies, that their souls might be saved at last*. And of this kind were those diseases which beset the Corinthians, for their disorderly and irregular carriage at the sacrament, of which the Apostle speaks, *1 Cor. xii. 20. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*; that is, to some of them these distempers proved mortal. And we find that this power did in some cases extend to the inflicting of sudden and present death, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. And, indeed, considering that Christianity was at first destitute of any countenance from the civil power, some such power as this was necessary to maintain the authority of the apostles against the contumacious and disobedient.

And then, *lastly*, there was the power of casting out devils in the name of Christ, which was common to the meanest Christian, and continued in the church a long time after most of the other gifts were ceased, as Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Arnobius, do most expressly testify concerning their times.

Thus you see that there were almost all imaginable kinds of miraculous powers conferred upon the apostles and first Christians, to give the greater establishment and confirmation to the Christian doctrine.

All the reflection I shall make upon what has been said, shall be this: Since our religion comes down to us confirmed by such miraculous powers, *we ought to take the more earnest heed to it, to believe it more stedfastly, and to practise it carefully in our lives. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*

S E R M O N CCXXXI.

Of the miracles wrought in confirmation of Christianity.

H E B. ii. 4.

God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.

The third sermon on this text.

IN these words three things offer themselves to our consideration.

First, That miracles are a divine testimony given to a person or doctrine.

Secondly, That God gave this testimony to the apostles and first publishers of the gospel in a very eminent manner. Of these two I have discoursed at large, and now proceed to the

Third and last thing which I proposed, *viz.* the reason why these miracles are now ceased in the Christian church, and have been for a long time, so that there have been no footsteps of this miraculous power for many ages. And in the handling of this argument, I shall do these three things.

I. Shew that these miraculous gifts and powers have ceased in the Christian church for several ages.

II. I shall assign a plain reason of the ceasing of miracles after such a time.

III. Answer the objection from the innumerable miracles which have been, and are still pretended to be wrought in the church of Rome.

I. I shall shew, that these miraculous powers and gifts have ceased in the church for several ages. That they are now ceased, we find by certain experience; nor are they pretended to at this day, by any part of the Christian church, except the church of Rome, where yet they are nothing so plentiful now-a-days, as they were in those ignorant ages, from the time of the degeneracy and corruption of the western church down to the reformation; and now chiefly pretended to in those parts of the Roman communion, where their religion reigns without any contradiction, and the people are under the awe and lash of the inquisition, so that they dare neither gainsay, nor offer to detect the forgery and imposture of them; and yet here is less need of them, because the people are all of a mind, and believe as the church would have them, and dare not for their lives do otherwise. For where the inquisition rules, and ignorance, the mother, not of true devotion, but of credulity and superstition, is carefully preserved, there is no need of miracles to make people believe what they have a mind to: but in other places, where their religion is opposed, and there is great occasion for them, both to confirm those of their own religion, and to reduce heretics and unbelievers, there is little or no pretence to them, as I shall shew by and by.

So that all over the Christian church, except in the church of Rome, all pretence to these miraculous powers and gifts is now ceased, and hath been for many ages. St Chrysostom speaking of his time, which was about four hundred years after Christ, says that these miraculous powers were then ceased, and speaks as if no footsteps of them were left in the pastors and governors of the church, much less among private Christians; for which he gives us this substantial reason, which I shall speak to afterwards, that Christianity being now already established by miracles, there was no reason to expect
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the continuance of them. St Augustine indeed, some time after, speaks of many miraculous things done at sepulchres of the martyrs. But this doth not contradict what St Chrysostom had said, because he speaks of the living teachers and members of the church, in whom these miraculous gifts and powers were ceased; but that the same miraculous cures were wrought, upon the prayers of Christians, at the tombs of the martyrs, is a confirmation of the thing, that God designed to honour the primitive Christians and martyrs with these gifts, and not to continue them to the succeeding ages of the church; and therefore God was pleased that so many wonderful things should be done at their sepulchres, to shew that he did intend, that these miraculous powers and gifts should die with them, and continue no longer in the living members of the church.

II. I shall now assign a plain reason of the ceasing of these miraculous gifts after such a time; namely, because there was not the like necessity and occasion for them, that there was before. They were at first in a great degree necessary to introduce the gospel into the world, which was destitute of all other helps and advantages, to recommend it to the esteem and liking of mankind; to give credit to a new doctrine and religion, so contrary to the inveterate prejudices of men, bred up in another religion very different from this, and so opposite to the lusts and interests of men; to make way for the more speedy and effectual planting of this religion in the world; to strengthen the hands of the first publishers of it, and to give credit to their testimony, concerning that strange relation of theirs, of the resurrection of Christ from the dead; to be a sensible evidence and conviction to men, of the divinity of that new doctrine which was preached unto them, and to support and confirm them in the belief and profession of it, against those terrible sufferings and persecutions, which for the sake of it they were exposed to. For these reasons God was pleased to shed abroad so plentifully these miraculous gifts, among the first preachers and professors of Christianity; and as these reasons ceased or abated, so did these miraculous powers and gifts: and therefore as soon as the gospel was planted, which it was in a great part

of the then known world, during the lives of the apostles, the gift of tongues ceased, and we hear no more of it, because there was no farther use and occasion for it. Other gifts did continue longer, but abated by degrees, according as Christianity gained ground and establishment, and they grew less frequent, as there was less need of them. The power of casting out devils, which was most common, for every Christian had it, continued longest; and there was reason it should continue so long as the devil reigned, and the Pagan idolatry was kept up, to shew that the Spirit of Christ was superior to the devil, and would finally overcome him, and overthrow his kingdom, according to that of St John, 1 John iv. 4. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.* And this appeared in that they were able in the name of Christ to cast him out where-ever he had taken possession, which God permitted to be very frequent in those times, for the more glorious manifestation of his power, in *casting out the prince of this world.* But when the powers of the world became Christian, and the Heathen idolatry was every where overthrown, and Satan's kingdom every where destroyed, then this miraculous gift also ceased, there being no farther occasion for it. And now that *the kingdoms of the world were become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ,* and that the gospel was planted, and had taken firm root, and was fully settled and established, these miraculous powers, which were at first necessary to balance the mighty difficulties and oppositions which Christianity met withal, and to supply the want of all manner of countenance from the civil authority, were withdrawn and did cease, because there was no need of their longer continuance.

Besides that it is to be considered, that those miraculous powers which manifested themselves in the first ages of Christianity, were intended by God to give a standing confirmation to it in after ages; as the miracles that were wrought at the giving of the law, and the bringing of the children of Israel into Canaan, were designed for a standing confirmation of the Jewish religion, the memory whereof was so carefully preserved and transmitted.

mitted to after ages, that they needed not to be repeated. I come now, in the

III. And last place, to answer that objection from the innumerable miracles which have been, and are still pretended to be wrought in the church of Rome. And so indeed we find that the Arians and other heretics in former times pretended to miracles, for the confirmation of their errors, a good while after miracles were generally ceased in the Christian church, which shew that this is no new or strange thing.

In answer to this objection, I desire these following particulars may be considered.

First, That the most learned and judicious writers of the Roman church do acknowledge that there is no necessity of miracles now, and that Christianity is sufficiently established by the miracles which were wrought at first to give testimony to it; and therefore not being necessary, without manifest evidence of fact, it is no necessary to believe that they are continued.

Secondly, The miracles pretended to by the church of Rome, are of very doubtful and suspected credit, even among the wisest persons of their own communion; and therefore I hope they do not expect we should give much credit to those miracles, of the truth of which they themselves are in so much doubt, that they are generally looked upon by the more prudent and learned among them, as pious frauds, to raise and entertain the devotion of the weak and ignorant. Several of them have been convicted of fraud and imposture, not only here in England, in times of Popery, and at the beginning of the reformation: but in other countries, where that religion bears sway.

And it is observable, that the greatest part of the history of these miracles, which they call legends, were written in the romance-age, and much in the same style, with the like wantonness and extravagancy of fancy, and fulsome absurdity of invention, and it is to be feared with the like regard of truth. And I know not whether romances had not their name, as well as their original, from these Roman legends, of which they are exact copies and imitations; and as these were sacred so those were a sort of civil legends, in which they represent

presented their heroes doing the like absurd feats and miracles in chivalry, as their saints in their legends are said to do in religion; and they were both written by the lazy and unlearned monks, and by them dressed up and fitted to the gust of those ignorant and superstitious ages.

And yet the legends or lying wonders have not only been put into the hands of the people, but lessons out of them have been taken, as out of the scriptures, and distributed into the public offices of their church, to be read there, as the scriptures are, and instead of them; only with this difference, that the people are permitted to have the scriptures only in an unknown tongue, but the legends, out of which these lessons are taken, they are permitted to have at home in their own tongue; as if there were no danger of error and heresy from false stories, but only from the word of truth. And herein is remarkably fulfilled that prophecy concerning the followers of Antichrist, 2 Thess. ii. 11. That *because they received not the truth in the love of it, God would send them strong delusions, ἐπιψευαν πλάνους, the efficacy of imposture, that they should believe a lie.* And how could they more solemnly declare the belief and love of lies, than by putting these ridiculous fables into the public offices of the church, in place of the holy scriptures; and at the same time that they deny to the people the use of the scriptures in a known tongue, to permit them the use, and to recommend to them the reading of these lying legends, out of which these ridiculous lessons are taken?

Thirdly, The miracles of the church of Rome, supposing several of them to be true, have such marks and characters upon them, as render it very suspicious that they are not operations of God, or good spirits; but the *working of Satan.* If any man have but the patience to rake into these dunghills, and to read over these legends, even as they have by the later collectors and compilers been purged and reformed, he shall find the miracles recited in them, to be generally of one stamp, very foolish and absurd, frivolous and trifling, wrought without any necessity, upon no good occasion, to no wise end, and purpose; so that one may know them by their very countenances, to be the tricks and pranks of the

the devil; and not the great and glorious works of God, such as are the miracles recorded in the holy scriptures.

Fourthly, The miracles of the church of Rome, taking them for true, are very impertinently and unreasonably wrought. When and where there is no need and occasion for them, they are very rife and frequent: but where there is greatest occasion for them, and most reason to expect them, they are either not at all, or very rarely so much as pretended to. In times and places where their religion did most absolutely bear sway, and few or none durst oppose it, and where the doctrines, which they pretend to confirm by these miracles, were most generally believed, as in those long, dark, and ignorant times before the reformation, and now in Italy and Spain, where the inquisition forceth them all to be of one belief, or to profess to be so; in these times and places, where there was least need and occasion for miracles, then and there did they most abound, even more, if we may believe their histories, for several ages before the reformation, than in the times of our Saviour and his apostles. But since the reformation, and that many of their doctrines are called in question, and disbelieved, miracles are grown rare, and almost ceased, even in Popish countries, and they have had but very ill success with those few they have pretended to; witness the miracle, at Angiers in France, of a child appearing over the altar in the time of mass, to convince all people of the doctrine of transubstantiation, with which the Papists made such a noise here in England about fourteen or fifteen years ago, and which at last was discovered to be an artificial juggle and contrivance of some cunning priest, and published to the world for a cheat, by the honest and worthy Bishop of that place.

But where there seems to be most need of them, they are most wanting; as for the conversion of Heathens, and the conviction of heretic infidels. For the conversion of Heathens, in which case, if men did sincerely design the propagation of the true and uncorrupted Christianity, I do not see why miracles might not yet reasonably be expected; but yet for all this, we hear of very few miracles, not so much as the gift of tongues,

tongues, even upon this occasion. In the first planting of the West Indies, we hear of no miracles, except the most prodigious cruelties that ever were in the world, to the infinite scandal of the Christian name. And in the East Indies, and China, Xaverius and the first missionaries speak with no assurance of any miracles wrought by them; and since that time they have so depraved the Christian religion there, by concealing a most essential part of it, the death and sufferings of our Saviour, as if they were *ashamed of the cross of Christ*, that it is not credible, that God should vouchsafe the countenance of miracles to those who *preach another gospel*.

And then for the conviction of heretics, (as they are pleased to call us Protestants), one would think miracles, since they have that power, would be very proper for that purpose to be wrought among them; as now here in England, where they are continually endeavouring (but especially of late with more than usual vigour and hopes) to restore their religion: and yet for all this we cannot prevail with them to favour us with the sight of one miracle, in order to our conviction; but if they have any, they keep them private among themselves, though both reason and scripture tells us, *that miracles were not intended for them that believe; but to convince them that believe not*.

Fifthly, He from whom, of all persons in that church, we might expect the most and greatest miracles, does not, so far as I can learn, pretend at all to that gift; I mean, the head of their church, the Pope, who, both, as he is vicar of Christ, and successor of St Peter in his full power and office, or if he be not his successor, yet as he is his shadow, and pretends to be his successor, might fairly pretend to a power of miracles above any in that church; and I have often wondered why he does not: but it seems he contents himself with infallibility, which is privilege and power enough for one man; and indeed if he had it, and could satisfy others that he hath it, that would serve his turn without miracles: but the mischief of it is, there is no other external evidence, and which can reasonably satisfy others of any man's inspiration or infallibility, but miracles;

and therefore the Pope hath done very unadvisedly, in pretending to one without the other, when he hath the same right and title to both, that is, none at all.

Sixthly, Most of the doctrines in difference between us and the church of Rome, which they chiefly pretend to confirm by these miracles, are not capable of being confirmed by them. There are three sorts of doctrines, two of which are in their own nature incapable of being confirmed by a miracle, and a third, upon supposition of its contrariety to the Christian doctrine, which hath already had an unquestionable divine confirmation.

1. No doctrine which is contrary to sense, is capable of being confirmed by a miracle; as transubstantiation; which because it necessarily requires the renouncing of our senses in order to the belief of it, for that very reason miracles can give no credit to it. For that which depends on the certainty of sense, as miracles certainly do, can be no competent argument to prove that which is contrary to sense, as transubstantiation evidently is.

2. No doctrine that does countenance or injoin idolatry, is capable of being confirmed by a miracle. This is evident from Deut. xiii. where Moses supposeth that a prophet might work a sign or a wonder; but if it was to seduce them from the worship of the true God, who is naturally known, to the worship of idols, in that case they were not to hearken to him, notwithstanding he wrought a miracle; but the church of Rome teacheth idolatry in their worship of images, and of the host, and in the invocation of saints and angels.

3. No doctrine contrary to any part of the Christian doctrine, which hath already received an unquestionable divine confirmation, is capable of being confirmed by the miracles pretended to in the church of Rome, if they were real. For I hope they have not the face to pretend their miracles to be equal to those of our Saviour and his apostles, either for the certainty, or greatness of them; and I have already shewn, that they notoriously want both the credit and certainty of our Saviour's miracles, and the marks of their divinity.

Now,

Now, several of the doctrines of that church are directions contrary to, or inconsistent with the doctrines of Christianity. Their endeavour to conceal from people the doctrine of the gospel, contained in the holy scriptures, is a notorious contradiction to the design of the gospel, and to that particular miracle whereby the knowledge of it was conveyed to the world, the gift of tongues; and then the service of God in an unknown tongue, which is inconsistent with true devotion, contrary to edification, and to the plain scope and design of a whole chapter of St Paul to the Corinthians. And so likewise is the communion in one kind, to our Saviour's express institution; and the repetition of Christ's sacrifice, to as express a declaration of the apostle to the Hebrews to the contrary, as is possible for words to make.

Seventhly and lastly, which falls heaviest upon them of all, the chief prophecies of the New Testament, which are concerning false prophets, and concerning Antichrist, have marked him out by this character, that he should be a great worker of miracles, and magnify himself upon this pretence. Matth. xxiv. 24. *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall uew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.* And 2. Thess. ii. 9. 10. St Paul foretels there, that in the great degeneracy and falling away of the Christian church, *the man of sin shall come after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and wonders of lies*, that is, either false miracles, or miracles wrought to confirm false doctrines, and *with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*, all the legerdemain and juggling tricks of falsehood and imposture. And certainly nothing was ever more visible than these are in the church of Rome; whether we consider their impudent forgeries of writings, which they have not the face now to deny, or the nature and character of their miracles. So that though Bellarmine is pleased to make miracles one of the marks of the true church, yet the miracles of the church of Rome, if we consider all the circumstances of them, are one of the plainest marks of Antichrist, and the very brand of the beast, as we find him described, Rev. xiii. 13. 14. *And he doth great*

wonders, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do.

And now the church of Rome may be allowed to work miracles; and yet divine miracles, such as were wrought for the first confirmation of Christianity, may be ceased in the church; which is a sufficient answer to the objection, and upon the whole matter shews, that the miracles pretended to in the church of Rome, are so far from giving any confirmation to her doctrines, that they are rather an evident proof that she is the apostate and Antichristian church.

I might now draw two or three inferences from this whole discourse. As,

I. We have great reason to admire the wisdom and goodness of God in the dispensation of the gospel, that by the sending down of his Holy Spirit to endow the first publishers of this heavenly doctrine with such miraculous gifts and powers, he hath given such abundant testimony to the truth of our religion, and such firm grounds for our faith to rely upon.

II. The consideration of what hath been said, convinceth men of the great sin of infidelity, and the unreasonableness of it, after so clear conviction and demonstration as God hath given to the world of the truth of Christianity.

III. and lastly, They who believe the gospel, are utterly inexcusable, if they do not obey it, and live according to it. For this is the great end of all the miracles which God hath wrought for the confirmation of Christianity, that, by the belief of the gospel, men might be wrought to *the obedience of faith*, and live conformably to the precepts of that holy religion, which the Son of God by so many miracles hath planted and preserved in the world. But these I have * discoursed of on another occasion, and therefore shall insist upon them no farther at this time.

* See sermon 192.

S E R M O N CCXXXII.

The advantages of truth, in opposition to error.

23 April - First day

I JOHN IV. 4. 5.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

The first sermon on this text.

IN the beginning of this chapter, the Apostle cautions Christians against the false teachers, and false prophets, intending more especially those of the Gnostic sect, as is plain from the scope of the whole epistle, who were so busy to seduce Christians to their impious ways, and to tempt them to apostatize from the Christian religion to the Heathen idolatry, for fear of persecution.

And to encourage them who had hitherto continued in the truth, and resisted the seducing arts of those false prophets, still to persevere in their holy profession and practice, he tells them what advantages they who have embraced the truth and lived according to it, have above those who seduce men to errors, or are seduced by them. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* That which gives truth, and the professors of it, the advantage over error and seducers, is, that truth is from God, and the Spirit of God dwells in those who sincerely embrace and obey it.

Ye are of God; that is, ye are taught by him, and instructed in the doctrine which is from God, and relish divine truth, which our Saviour calls *favouring the things*

things which are of God, in opposition to the things of the world, the lusts and interests of the world, which sway and rule in those false prophets and seducing spirits. For so it follows in the next verse, They are of the world; they are acted by worldly lusts and interests: therefore speak they of the world; they teach things suitable to their worldly affections and interests; and the world heareth them, they who are of the same temper, are seduced and led away by them.

So that the Apostle's design in these words, is plainly to shew the great advantage which truth and the sincere professors of it have above error, and the teachers and disciples of it.

Ye are of God. This phrase is very frequently, and very peculiarly used by St John; it signifies to belong to God in a special and peculiar manner, and is the same with being *born of God*, and being *the children of God*, chap. iii. 10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God.* Where you see, *to be of God*, and *to be the children of God*, are the same thing: and so *to be the children of the devil*, and *to be of the devil*, are by this apostle used in the same sense, chap. iii. 8. *He that committeth sin, is of the devil.* And ver. 12. *Cain who was of that wicked one, that is, a child of the devil*, as he had called such before, ver. 10. And because children do resemble their parents in nature and disposition, therefore those who are of a divine temper and disposition, who relish the things of God, and are apt to embrace the truths of God when they are duly propounded to them, are ready to be taught of God, are said likewise *to be of God*, John viii. 47. *He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.* So here in the text, *ye are of God*; ye are of a temper and disposition apt to relish divine things, ready to embrace the truths of God, and ye have entertained them, and are his children, and are led by his Spirit, and have the Spirit of God dwelling in you; and this makes you victorious. *Ye have overcome them.* He had spoken immediately before of false prophets and Antichrist, by which he doth point out not one particular person, but the whole

whole number and faction of false teachers, as he tells us, chap. ii. 18. that *now there are many Antichrists. Ye are of God, and have overcome them*, this hath enabled you to resist those seducing spirits, and made you too hard for them, that *ye are of God; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The force of the reasoning is this, *Ye are of God*, that is, ye are taught of God, and have received his doctrine, and are born again by the word of God, and are his children, and being his children, ye have his Spirit; and the Spirit of truth and of God is a stronger principle, than that spirit of error and seduction which is in the world, that is, the devil. *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The Spirit of truth is more powerful than the spirit of error and seduction; and consequently they that are of God, who sincerely embrace and obey the truth, are able to overcome all the temptations of the world to apostasy from the truth.

My work, at this time, shall be to shew what advantage good men, and those who sincerely embrace and obey truth, have to secure them in the ways of truth and holiness, against all the temptations of the devil and the world. I say, in the ways of truth and holiness, because there is a strict connection between a hearty embracing of the truth of God, and a sincere obedience to it. And the Apostle speaks of both, in opposition to the Gnostics, who did not only endeavour to seduce men to apostasy from the Christian faith, but likewise from the practice of a holy life. Now, to secure men against temptations to both these, they who *are of God*, who sincerely embrace and obey the truth, have a great advantage, because that spirit and principle which rules and sways in them, is more powerful than that spirit which rules in the world, and in the children of disobedience. *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;* and that in these three respects.

First, Divine truth carries greater evidence along with it.

Secondly, The motives to persuade men to adhere to truth and holiness are more operative and powerful.

Thirdly, There is a greater and more immediate assistance accompanies the truth of God, and they who entertain

entertain it are acted by a more powerful principle than that which is in the world.

First, Divine truth carries greater evidence along with it; as will appear if we consider these three things.

I. The doctrines that are from God have more intrinsic goodness in them, and teach such things as are more worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him.

II. The external confirmation of these doctrines is greater, and hath more conviction in it.

III. The Spirit of God doth illuminate the minds of good men, and is concerned to lead them into the truth, and to secure them from dangerous and damnable errors.

I. The doctrines which are from God have a more intrinsical goodness in them, and teach such things as are most worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him. Whoever supposeth God to make a revelation of himself to men, whereby to conduct them to happiness, must, in all reason, suppose such a divine doctrine to contain plain rules and directions to that end, and powerful helps, motives, and encouragements to enable and excite men to the observation of those rules. For a man would naturally reason, that God who is so infinitely good, would, in revealing his will to men, aim at no other end but the happiness of his creatures: and that he being infinitely wise as well as good, the means would be proportionable, and consequently that the laws and precepts which he gives would apparently tend to the happiness of mankind: and because, if men have immortal souls, and are designed to live for ever, their greatest happiness is that of another world; therefore it is reasonable to conclude, that those rules and directions should principally regard the eternal happiness of men in another life, and in subserviency to that, should respect likewise the temporal happiness of men in this world.

And such laws and rules being supposed, the next thing to be expected is, that God should consider the condition and circumstances of persons to whom these laws are given; and if they be averse to them, that they

they should be awakened and quickened to the observance of them, by such motives and encouragements as are proper and powerful to that end; and if they be weak and impotent to the performance of what God's laws require, that they should be enabled and assisted by a proportionable strength.

Now, the doctrine of the Christian religion, which our blessed Saviour revealed to the world, and, as we Christians say, by divine commission and authority, hath all these marks and characters of divinity upon it. The laws of it are plain and obvious to the common understanding of mankind; all men know what the precepts of piety, and goodness, and mercy, and righteousness, and integrity, and truth, and faithfulness, of meekness, and humility, and patience, and forgiveness, and forbearance, and charity, mean; and so I might instance in temperance and chastity, and all those other virtues and graces which the Christian religion requires of us, and recommends to us. These all tend to the advancement and perfection of our natures, and make us like to God, and capable of the enjoyment of him in the next life; and besides this, they do apparently conduce in all respects to our temporal happiness in this world. And excepting the case of persecution, (to which God hath promised abundant recompense in another world), the practice of these virtues is evidently to the advantage of particular persons in this world, and to the peace and happiness of human society.

And because of the great corruption of human nature, and the strong inclination of it to vice, the gospel offers proportionable arguments and encouragements to men to persuade them to their duty; an act of oblivion and pardon for what is past; perfect reconciliation to God in and through the merits and mediation of our blessed Saviour; and the eternal rewards and punishments of another world; which to men that believe the immortality of their souls, and are not stupidly insensible of their interest, are the most powerful considerations in the world to take men off from sin, and to bring them to goodness.

And because the corruption of human nature hath brought a great weakness and impotency upon mankind;

God

God is pleased in the gospel to offer to men the powerful assistance of his grace and Holy Spirit, to enable them to perform all this which he requires of them. And beyond this, what can we expect God should discover to men, in order to their happiness in this world, or the other? And in all these respects the doctrine of the gospel, revealed from heaven by the Son of God, hath, to any impartial considerer, infinitely the advantage of Paganism or Mahometism, or any other doctrine or institution that ever the world was acquainted withal.

But now, if we bring the doctrines of false prophets and seducing spirits, whom St John calls Antichrists, to this trial, we shall find that they are quite of another stamp, destitute of goodness, and calculated not for the happiness and benefit of men, but for base and unworthy ends; whereby it is evident that the teachers of them are *not of God, but of the world; and therefore they speak from the world, and the world heareth them.* And of this I will give two instances; one in those false teachers the Gnostics, intended by the apostle in this epistle; and the other in a sort of seducers nearer to us in our own times.

As for the Gnostics, besides their contradicting and virtual renouncing the main principles of Christianity, by denying that Christ was really come in the flesh, or that he really died, or rose, affirming all this to be only in appearance; the sum of their doctrine was either a heap of unintelligible words and phrases, under a pretence of high mystery; or a doctrine of liberty, as to all manner of vice and wickedness, under a pretence of perfection, and that whatever they did, they could not sin; both which at the first sight are as plain evidence as any reasonable man can desire, that such a doctrine could not be from God; nothing being more unlikely to be a divine revelation, than such absurd and confused stuff as no man can understand, and which have no tendency to make men better. But above all, nothing can be more unworthy of God, nor more unlikely to proceed from him, than such a doctrine as gives encouragement to vice and wickedness of life, under what pretence soever it be. For what can be more contrary to God, and a greater affront to the reason of mankind, than

than to let men loose to do the vilest and lewdest things, under pretence of perfection in goodness?

The other instance I intend is nearer at hand, and concerns us more, and that is in the church of Rome, and those false teachers which she sends abroad into the world, and which at this day swarm among us; and never did any character more unluckily agree to any sort of men, than this of the Apostle does to that church and the teachers of it, that *they are of the world, and therefore they speak of the world, and the world beareth them.*

In which words there are three remarkable characters given of false prophets and teachers.

1. That they are acted by a worldly spirit, and carry on a secular interest and design; *they are of the world.*

2. That they teach things suitable to their worldly interest and design, and therefore they speak *ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου*, *from the world*, according to that worldly spirit that acts them and rules in them.

3. Those that hearken to them are a sort of people like themselves, of worldly affections and interests; *the world beareth them.*

1. They are acted by a worldly spirit, and carry on a secular interest and design of greatness and ambition, of dominion and tyranny, of riches and wealth. Any man that considers the church of Rome at this day, and by what steps and degrees, by what worldly ways and unworthy means she hath attained to that power, and wealth, and greatness, to that dominion and tyranny, which now for several hundred of years she hath exercised, not only over the consciences of men in the most cruel manner, but even over temporal princes and states, in commanding their treasures and armies, in deposing kings, and disposing of their kingdoms, and in all imaginable instances of secular dominion and tyranny, cannot but be satisfied by what spirit they are acted, and that they as visibly carry on a worldly interest and design, as the most ambitious secular prince ever did.

2. They teach things suitable to their worldly designs and interests. Let but any man impartially survey those which are the proper doctrines of the Romish church,
and

and which we challenge for innovation and corruption of the truly ancient, catholic, and Christian doctrine, and it will, at first sight, be evident to him, whither these doctrines tend, and that they do not serve the ends of religion, but of worldly greatness and dominion. What greater instance of ambition, than the claim of the universal supremacy of the Bishop of Rome over all Christians and churches in the world, without the least ground, or indeed colour of ground, either from scripture or antiquity; and not only of an universal spiritual power over Christians, but of an indirect temporal power over princes, in order to spiritual ends, which may be extended to any thing, and hath been upon occasion, to the donation of kingdoms, and the deposing of princes, and the transferring of temporal dominion from lawful and hereditary princes, to those who had no manner of right or title? What more arrogant and directly tending to the enslaving of mankind, than their pretence to infallibility, which yet they could never agree among themselves where to place? What greater tyranny can be exercised over mankind, than to oblige them to an implicit faith, and blind obedience to believe what the church believes, though they do not know what it is; and to do what the church commands, though they doubt never so much of the lawfulness of it? than to hide the word of God from them, and to lock it up in an unknown tongue, and to deter them from the free use of that which was designed by God to be the great instrument of the salvation of mankind? than not to let men exercise their understandings in the service of God; nor when they join in public prayers, to suffer them to know what it is they ask of God; as if the priests lips were so to preserve knowledge, as to keep it all to themselves, and not to make use of it for the benefit and edification of the people? And lastly, to impose upon men, under pain of damnation, the belief of doctrines, not only contrary to the true sense of scripture, but to all the sense and reason of mankind, as is the doctrine of transubstantiation? How is it possible to bring people into a greater subjection to the priests, and dependence upon them, than by auricular confession, and that unreasonable doctrine

trine of making the efficacy of the sacraments to depend upon the intention of the priest; and consequently to put it into the power of a malicious and bad man to damn all his parish? And to mention but one thing more, what better contrivance could be thought of to enrich the church, and drain the purses of the people, than their doctrines of purgatory, and prayers for the dead, of indulgences and satisfaction, and their form of sins and vices of all kinds, called *the tax of the apostolic chamber*? Can any man think that these and such like doctrines are of God, which do so directly serve the ends of covetousness and ambition? Any one that does not wilfully shut his eyes, may plainly see that such doctrines and such teachers are of the world, and that they speak and teach these things out of a worldly interest and design.

And here I might take notice likewise, that *they speak from the world* also in another sense, by shewing what worldly and indirect means, not to say wicked and sinful arts, they commonly make use of to make disciples and gain profelytes, by flattery and falsehood, by concealing and misrepresenting their own doctrines and practices, by defaming their adversaries with known fictions and calumnies, tempting men from their religion by promises of temporal advantages, which, when they have gained them, they do not always perform and make good. Can any thing be more opposite to the genius of true religion, than to promote it by means so plainly contrary to the very nature and design of it?

3. Those who hearken to them, and are seduced by them, are generally like themselves; *they speak from the world, and the world heareth them.* Not but that men of very honest and sincere minds may be seduced into great errors, through prejudice or weakness, or a melancholy superstition: but generally such a religion as is calculated for the promoting of secular interest, and is carried on by secular arts, does gain upon carnal and worldly minds; and it is usually some worldly consideration or other that prevails with men to embrace and profess it. A religion, that can find out ways to save men without sincere repentance and a good life, is very fit to make profelytes in the world; they that teach such doc-

trines speak from the world, and the world is very apt to hear them.

And thus I have done with the first thing, whereby it appears, that divine truth carries great evidence along with it, namely, that the doctrines which are from God have more intrinsical goodness in them, and teach such things as are more worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him. I will be briefer in the rest.

II. The external confirmation of divine doctrines is greater, and carries more conviction along with it. By external confirmation, I mean chiefly that of miracles. And though the Pagan religion pretended to some, and our Saviour plainly foretold, that *Antichrists and false prophets should arise, and should shew signs and wonders;* and St Paul hath told us, that *the man of sin should come with signs, and wonders, and mighty power;* yet none of these are of any great consideration, in comparison of the many, and great, and unquestionable miracles which were so universally wrought for the establishment of the Christian religion, and continued for some ages; for they bear no manner of proportion to them, neither for the nature, nor number, nor circumstances of them, so as to shake or weaken any man's belief of the Christian religion, which had so much a greater confirmation given to it; especially when our Saviour did foretel that false prophets should do some things of this kind. For after a religion is established by plain and unquestionable miracles, such as for their number, nature, publicness, and continuance, and all imaginable circumstances of advantage, were never upon any occasion wrought in the world; I say, after this, it is not reasonable, that one or two single miracles or wonders pretended to, or really wrought by a false prophet, should bring in question the truth of a religion confirmed by a long series of the greatest and most unquestionable miracles.

Besides that the doctrine of it is such as is worthy of God, and most likely to proceed from him*.

As for the miracles pretended to by the church of Rome, they are generally so fantastical and ridiculous,

* See of this more at large in the three last foregoing sermons.
and

and so unlike the works of God, and wrought so to no end and purpose, not among unbelievers, for their conviction, which was always the great end of miracles, but among themselves, and so destitute of credit, that the wisest among themselves are so far from believing them that they are heartily ashamed of them; so that we need not trouble ourselves about them, for they are not like to give any great confirmation to any doctrine, which stands in so much need of confirmation themselves.

III. Besides the goodness of the doctrines which are from God, and the external confirmation of them by miracles, which is a great advantage to the reception of them, the Spirit of God doth likewise illuminate good men, and those who are desirous to know the truth, and hath promised to lead them into it; and to assist them in discerning between truth and falsehood. So our Saviour hath assured us, John vii. 17. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* Beside that the doctrines which are from God do commonly carry the marks and characters of their own divinity upon them, the providence of God is likewise particularly concerned, that good men, and those who are of honest minds, and sincerely desirous to know the truth, should not be deceived in matters of so great consequence to the happiness and salvation of mankind. To the same purpose is that promise, John xiv. 21. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.* God is always ready to reveal his will to those who are sincerely desirous to do it, and will not suffer men of honest minds to err dangerously in matters wherein their eternal salvation is concerned.

Thus you see what advantage the Spirit of truth hath above the spirit of error and seduction; that divine truth carries greater evidence along with it, both in respect of the goodness of the doctrines which are from God, and the great confirmation that is given to them, and the extraordinary illuminations of God's Spirit, which is wont to accompany the truths of God to the

minds of good men, who are ready and disposed to give entertainment to divine truth.

I should now have proceeded to the second advantage which the spirit of truth hath above the Spirit of seduction, namely, that the motives to persuade men to adhere to truth and holiness, are more powerful and operative upon the minds of men, than the motives to the contrary.

And then, thirdly, that those who embrace and obey the truth of God have a greater assistance, and are acted by a more powerful spirit and principle, than any is in the world. And this seems to be more especially the meaning of that in the text, *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* But these I shall not now enter upon.

S E R M O N CCXXXIII.

The advantages of truth, in opposition to error.

I JOHN iv. 4. 5.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

The second sermon on this text.

I Proceed to the second advantage which the Spirit of truth hath above the spirit of error and seduction, namely, that the motives which good men have to persuade them to adhere to truth and holiness are more powerful, than the motives to the contrary. They who embraced the Christian religion did firmly believe the eternal rewards and punishments of another world;
and

and this principle of faith, being fixed and rooted in them, made them victorious over all the temptations of the world, over all the allurments and terrors of it; because they were fully persuaded of the happiness and misery of another world; the happiness of those who continued stedfast in the faith and obedience of the gospel, and the dreadful misery and punishment of those who disobeyed the gospel of Christ, or apostatized from the profession of it. Hence it was that they were not to be moved by any temporal considerations, either of ease or advantage, or of trouble and persecution in this world. Their eternal interest lay so near their hearts, and they were so fully possessed with the belief of the everlasting rewards and punishments of another life, that they overlooked the goods and evils of this life; and all temporal considerations put into the scales against their everlasting interest, were of no weight and moment with them.

And this our apostle very particularly insists upon in this epistle, chap. v. 4. 5. *Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world*; the children of God are victorious over the temptations of the world; and then he tells us what it is that makes them so; *and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* The believing that *Jesus is the Son of God*, infers the belief of his doctrine, and consequently of that eminent part of it, the eternal recompense of another world, which whosoever firmly believes, will be able to resist and overcome all the temptations of this world. For by the belief of the Christian religion, and faith in the Son of God, we are fully assured of the reality and certainty of the mighty rewards and punishments of another world, though they be future and at a distance; and a firm persuasion of these things makes them in some sort present to us as to their efficacy and operation: for to a wise and considerate man, a great good, or a great evil, which he believes will certainly befall him, according as he manageth his affairs well or ill, though it be at some distance, is of greater force than a far lesser good or evil, which is present and nearer at hand. And of this we

see many instances in the temporal concerns of men. A prudent man will forego his present ease and pleasure, and part with a present advantage, lay down ready money, upon the certain prospect of a far greater benefit that will come to him some years hence; and will undergo present pain and trouble, to prevent a far greater mischief and inconvenience; and upon this principle of the belief of future good and evil, all the great affairs of the world are managed. Upon this principle men plough and sow, and venture their estates in traffic to foreign parts, and trust out their present stock, and purchase reversions, and take physic, and cut off a limb, and run all those hazards of estate and life, which we see men every day do; and all this for the securing of some great advantage, or the preventing of some great mischief, which though it be future and at a distance, yet they probably or certainly foresee will happen to them.

And this principle is so much the stronger, and of greater force and efficacy, in matters of greater moment and importance, where the good hoped for, or the evil feared, is infinitely great, and concerns us for ever. If we firmly believe the reality and certainty of it, no temporal advantage or affliction can come in competition with them, in the calculation and account of a wise man; because there is no proportion between finite and infinite, between the goods and evils which are temporal, and those which are eternal; though the one be seen, and the other not seen; though the one be present and near to us, and the other future, and at a great distance.

Upon this principle the first Christians continued firm and stedfast in the belief and obedience of the gospel, and were bold and open in the profession of it, notwithstanding all the cruel assaults of persecution, though they hazarded the loss of all that was dear to them in this world, and exposed themselves to the suffering of whatever is grievous and terrible to flesh and blood. They *gloried in tribulation*; and did not only patiently submit to the greatest sufferings, but heartily praised God, who *accounted them worthy to suffer for his name: they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and more enduring substance;*

they

they were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection; and when they were harassed with all the evils and calamities of human life, yet they fainted not, knowing that their light affliction, which was but for a moment, would work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; having their minds fixed, not upon the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; the things which are seen being but temporal, but the things which are not seen being eternal.

Thus they overcame the world, not by the force and power of this world, but by the belief of another world, and of the mighty rewards and punishments of it. And this faith purified their hearts, and reformed their lives, and made them stedfast and unmoveable in their holy profession, and raised their minds above all the temptations and terrors of present and sensible things.

Let us now see on the contrary what kind of motives and arguments false teachers use to seduce men to their pernicious ways. They speak from the world, and commonly make use of base, and low, and temporal considerations, of little tricks and devices, and all deceivableness of unrighteousness, as the scripture calls it, to make disciples and gain profelytes. They terrify them with temporal dangers and inconveniencies, and present to them suffering, and persecution, and death, in all their frightful shapes, to deter them from profession of the true religion: they set before them all manner of worldly baits and allurements, ease, and wealth, and preferment; they promise them liberty from the strictness of those laws and rules which religion ties them up to. By these arts and arguments the Gnostics of old used to tempt men from Christianity, and to shake their constancy in the profession of it; and the same ways are still put in practice by seducers at this day: they tell men of a glorious church, that hath great power and interest in the world; they amuse them with a great deal of outward pomp and ceremony; they promise them preferment and great worldly advantages, by coming over to them; they threaten them with fire and faggot, with persecutions and massacres, and where they have power, they hold them fast when they have gained them,

them, by the terror of an inquisition; they promise them liberty, and what by the looseness of their casuistical divinity, and by the easiness of their penances and absolutions, and the cheats of their indulgences, they have devised ways to reconcile almost the worst life that any man can lead, with fair hopes of getting to heaven at last. They tell them indeed, they must make some stop in purgatory: but they have so many ways to release men from those sufferings, as do very much abate the terror of them; to any man that hath but credulity enough to believe them: for besides the vast treasure of merits in the common bank of the church, which the Pope hath in his disposal, and which no body ought to doubt but that they are faithfully employed by him for the ease and deliverance of souls in purgatory; I say, besides these, there are so many particular ways of effecting this business, that a man of ordinary discretion, with an indifferent purse, may so order the matter, that he shall only pass through purgatory, but need not make any stay in that place of torments.

But though these be their common motives and inducements to draw men to their communion, yet they do not wholly omit the arguments taken from the eternal happiness and misery of men in another world: for to give them their due, there are no people in the world more prodigal of eternal salvation and damnation: they promise the one upon the easiest terms, and threaten the other upon the least displeasure: if a man be in their communion, he can hardly fail of salvation; and if he be out of it, and differ from them in the least point of faith, though but of their own making, he is sure to be damned, though he had the graces and virtues, the sanctity and charity of an angel: and this is the true reason why these arguments which are so powerful in themselves, signify so little from their mouths; because every man that hath read the Bible, and understands the Christian religion, plainly sees that they have made terms of salvation and damnation quite different from those which God hath constituted: so that these motives, which are so strong and mighty in themselves, quite lose their edge and force, when they are managed by
seducers

seducers in so undue a manner, and to ends and purposes so cross to the main design of Christianity. This is the second advantage which the Spirit of truth hath above the spirit of error and seduction, that the motives to persuade men to adhere to truth and holiness, are really in themselves more powerful than the motives to error and seduction.

Thirdly, Those who sincerely embrace and obey the truth of God, have a greater assistance, and are acted by a more powerful spirit and principle, than that which is in the world; and this seems more especially to be the meaning of the reason here given in the text, why the Spirit of truth is victorious over the spirit of error and seduction: *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world*; that is, the spirit which is in good men is more powerful than the devil, that evil spirit which inspires and acts *the children of disobedience*.

For the farther explication of this, I shall do these three things.

I. Shew that there are these two principles in the world, the Spirit of God, and the devil, very active and powerful in good and bad men.

II. That the Spirit of God, which is in good men, is greater than he that is in the world.

III. In what ways the Spirit of God doth move and assist good men.

I. That there are these two principles in the world, the Spirit of God, and the devil, very active and powerful, the one in good, the other in bad men. This is very credible in the general, from the universal tradition and consent of mankind, in the belief of good and evil spirits attending men, and prompting them to good and evil: but we who embrace the revelation of the gospel have a much firmer and surer ground for it, nothing being more plain and frequent in scripture, than that the Holy Spirit of God guides and assists good men in doing the will of God; and that the devil *works in the children of disobedience*, and is always ready to tempt men to, and promote any evil action or design. From hence it is that the scripture does almost every where ascribe

ascribe all good motions and actions to the operation and influence of God's grace and Holy Spirit upon the minds of men; and the sins of men to the temptation and suggestion of the devil; and this is so well known to any one conversant in the holy scripture, that I need not cite particular texts for the proof of it.

It is true indeed, that the motions of God's Holy Spirit, and the suggestions of the devil, are very secret to us, and imperceptible by us, so that no man can say certainly, that this good inclination or action is an immediate motion of God's Holy Spirit in me, or that evil thought and design is an immediate suggestion of the devil; it is sufficient for us, that we are assured from divine revelation in general, that the Spirit of God very frequently does, and is always ready to assist good men in the doing or suffering of God's will; as the evil spirit, where God permits him, is always busy to tempt and seduce men to evil. And this ought not to be strange to us, because our Saviour hath expressly told us, that the Spirit of God works in men after an imperceptible manner: *John iii. 8. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Though we do not know the manner of the Spirit's working, nor perceive the operations of it upon our minds, yet we find the effects of it in the renovation and sanctification of our hearts. Thus by undeniable arguments men are assured of a divine providence governing the world, though men do not always see, nor can make out to others, the particular interpositions of it, so as to say that this or that was an immediate effect of divine providence. To know certainly that a thing is, it is not necessary that we should be able to give a particular account of all its operations, and the manner of them; these may be hidden from us, and yet we may be sufficiently assured by other arguments that there is such a thing. Men are sure they have souls, though they can give no account how the actions of understanding, and remembrance, and sensation are produced by them: so it is in the present case, we are sufficiently assured from the word of God, that good and bad spirits have a great influence

fluence upon the minds of men, though we be not conscious to their operations, and the manner of them.

II. The Spirit of God which is in good men is greater than he that is in the world; he is more able and ready to assist men to good purposes, than the devil is to tempt and help forward that which is evil. And this will appear, if we consider these three things.

1. The Spirit of God is more powerful than the devil; and this is so evident in itself, that it needs no proof.

2. The Spirit of God is as forward and willing to assist men to good purposes, as the devil is to the contrary. That extremity of malice and envy, which is in evil spirits, does no doubt make them very forward and active to do all the mischief they can to mankind, by tempting and seducing them to sin: but on the other hand, the utmost perfection of goodness, which in God is more and greater than the malice of the devil, will incline more strongly the Holy Spirit of God to pity, and aid, and help good men, than the malice of the devil can urge him to procure the harm and mischief of mankind; and if we could suppose their will and inclinations equal; yet our comfort is, their power is not.

3. The Spirit of God hath a more free and immediate access to the minds of good men, and a more intimate conjunction with, and operation upon them, than the devil. The Spirit of God is always present to us, and willing to dwell and abide in us, and ready to help and assist us, if we be ready to obey his dictates, and comply with his holy and blessed motions; if we did not resist, and quench, and grieve him, he would always take up his abode and habitation in us, and would be continually exciting, and guiding, and assisting us to that which is good; he knows our hearts, and sees all the secrets of our souls; knows all our inclinations, knows our weakness and our danger, what assistance we want, and when it will be most seasonable; and is as intimate to us, and as conscious to all the motions of our spirits, as we ourselves are.

But now the devil is under great restraint, and cannot make nearer approaches to any man than God permits him; he does not know our hearts, nor can pry into the secret of our thoughts. God knows, but the devil does

does but guess at the thoughts, and designs, and inclinations of men; he hath no power over us, nor any access to us, but what we give him, or God permits. By obedience to God's will, and resisting the temptations of the devil to sin and disobedience, we may not only keep out the devil, but keep him at a great distance, and make him flee from us, so that we shall have little trouble or molestation from him: for though he be unwearyed in his malicious attempts to ruin our souls, yet because he cannot be every where, he haunts those most where he hath greatest hopes of success; and is too eager and intent upon mischief to employ his time and temptations where he hath been often foiled, and hath reason to despair of victory. So that if all things be considered, it is our own fault if we want the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, or if the devil have any great power over us; for God does not usually, but upon great provocation, take away his Holy Spirit from men, and lay them open to the assaults and temptations of the devil. *If any be led captive by the devil at his pleasure, it is those who have wilfully forsaken God, and sold themselves to do wickedly.*

III. We will consider in what ways the Spirit of God doth move and assist good men. These two ways.

1. By exciting good motions in us, and enabling us to bring them to effect.

2. By supporting us under persecution for religion.

1. By exciting good motions in us, and enabling us to bring them to effect. These the Apostle puts together, Phil. ii. 13. *For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.* It is he that stirs up good inclinations in us, and carries them into effect. And this he makes an argument why we should be diligent and industrious in the work of our salvation, because God is so ready to assist us: *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.*

2. By supporting us under persecution for religion. In case of extraordinary temptations, and violent assaults upon our constancy in religion, by force and cruel persecutions, God affords immediate and extraordinary supports to good men, whereby they are many times

borne up under the greatest sufferings, not only with patience, but with comfort, and joy *unspeakable and full of glory*. Where-ever God suffers good men to be tempted above humanity, he affords them an immediate divine assistance to bear them up, and make them victorious. So St Peter tells us, 1 Pet. iv. 4. that those who *suffer and are reproached for the name of Christ, the Spirit of glory, and of God resteth upon them*. So likewise St Paul, 1 Cor. x. 13. speaking of those who had not yet been set upon by any sharp persecution, *No temptation hath taken you, but such as is common to man, εἰ μὴ ἀνθρώπινος*, nothing but what is human, what the spirit of a man may bear: but if such a case happen, of temptation above nature, and the spirit of a man be too weak to support itself under it, God will in that case afford men immediate and extraordinary supports and comforts: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it*; and then it immediately follows, *Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry*; because God hath promised such an extraordinary assistance in case of persecution for religion, therefore he encourageth them to continue stedfast in the profession of Christianity, and cautions them against apostasy to the Heathen idolatry.

The inference from all this discourse, is to encourage us to continue stedfast in the truth, and in the practice of our holy religion, *to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*, and not to suffer ourselves to be shaken with every wind of doctrine, by the arts and cunning of those who lie in wait to deceive; who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, and led away by divers lusts. You see what kind of persons these false teachers used to profelyte; women of no virtue, of a prostitute reputation, *laden with sins, and led away with divers lusts*; a character that notoriously agrees to some seducers of our times.

Therefore let us *continue in the things which we have heard*, and not suffer ourselves to be moved from our *steadfastness*. The more we consider our religion, and compare it with the unquestionable revelation of God in the holy scriptures, the greater reason we shall see to

adhere to it. The doctrines of our religion are of God, plainly contained in his word, and such as are worthy of him, and likely to proceed from him, and tend to the good and happiness of mankind, to make men really better, and to qualify them for that happiness which God hath promised to holy souls. The doctrines of our religion are free from the suspicions of a worldly interest and design. But if we consider the doctrines and innovations of that church which pretends to be the only Christian catholic society in the world, we shall find that they are of another stamp, and of a quite contrary tendency, that they favour so rankly of a worldly interest, that any impartial man would at first sight judge them to be the contrivances of worldly, covetous, and ambitious men, and that they did not look like divine truths, and doctrines that are of God, but that they are of the world, and therefore they that propagate them, and would seduce men to them, *speak from the world, and the world heareth them.*

S E R M O N CCXXXIV.

The evidences of the truth of the Christian religion; with the cause and danger of infidelity.

2 COR. iv. 3. 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The first sermon on this text.

I Shall explain these words, and then proceed to handle many things contained in them.

If our gospel be hid, or veiled; for by this metaphor the Apostle alludes to what he had said in the latter part

part of the foregoing chapter, concerning the veil which was upon Moses's face, and upon the hearts of the Jews, so that they could not see to the end of that dispensation. There was a great deal of obscurity in that administration: *But the veil is done away in Christ.* The gospel is a clear revelation, and sufficiently conspicuous in itself: and now, if it be hid from any, the fault is not in the obscurity of the object, but in the blindness of mens minds.

If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; to them that deserve to perish, because they will not see.

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. Some of the fathers, as St. Augustine, and St. Chrylostom, and several of the Greek scholiasts, read these words otherwise: *In whom God hath blinded the eyes of the men of this world who believe not;* and so refer this blindness to God's permission; in which sense he is said elsewhere in scripture, *to harden mens hearts.* The reason why they chuse this reading of the words rather than the other, was in opposition to the Marcionites and Manichees; the former of which sects made use of this text to countenance their opinion of two Gods; the one of the Old Testament, whom they called *the just God;* the other of the New, whom they styled *the good God;* the former of these, say they, made the world, and is therefore here called *the God of this world.* The Manichees made use of this text to prove that the devil, whom they made the principle of all evil and imperfection, was the maker of this world, and is therefore called *the god of it.*

But there is no need why for this reason we should depart from the usual reading of the words; for there is nothing in the true importance of them, that can give countenance to these errors. For the devil, though he did not make this world; may be said to be *the god of it,* upon a very good account, because the greatest part of the world being sunk into idolatry and wickedness, were become his lot and portion, who worshipped him as God, and did his works, and therefore were part of his dominion. So St John tells us, 1 John iii. 8. *He that committeth sin, is of the devil;* and chap. v. 19.

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ καίται, which may be rendered more agreeably to the opposition which the Apostle intended, is subject to the evil one, is in his power, and under his dominion. According to which Plutarch tells us, that "every unreasonable and brutish nature" belongs to the lot of bad spirits." So that in this sense the devil may very well be said to be the god of this world, as he is elsewhere called by our Saviour, the prince of this world, John xii. 31. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and John xiv. 30. The prince of this world cometh. And so the Apostle, Eph. vi. 12. The ruler of the darkness of this world.

Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them, ἵνα τὸ μὴ ἀυγάζουσι, lest they should see, or behold the light of the glorious gospel; for so Hefych tells us, that ἀυγάζω ἀυγάζομαι, is ὁρᾶν καὶ βλέπειν. It is called the glorious gospel of Christ, because of the glorious confirmation that was given to it by his miraculous resurrection and ascension, and his sending the Holy Ghost into the world; and Christ is said to be the image of God, because the power of the Deity did shew forth itself in the miracles which he wrought.

The words being thus explained, the most material things that offer themselves to our consideration in them, are these three.

First, The full and clear evidence which we have of the truth of the gospel, or of the Christian religion, which the Apostle expresseth to us in these words, the light of the glorious gospel of Christ.

Secondly, The cause of infidelity, notwithstanding all the evidence which the gospel carries along with it, which the Apostle expresseth in these words, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not.

Thirdly, The dangerous state of those, who having the gospel propounded to them, do not believe it. The Apostle tells them, they are lost and undone: If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that perish.

I begin with the first of these, namely, the full and clear evidence which we have of the truth of the gospel

spel or Christian religion. The only thing that can give us full assurance that any religion is true, is, if we can be satisfied, that it is from God; for being once satisfied of that, there can remain no doubt of the truth of any thing that comes from him, it being an essential part of the notion which every man hath of God, that he is *a God of truth*.

Now, there are two things must concur to give the mind of man full satisfaction that any religion is from God.

First, If the person that declares this religion give testimony of his divine authority, that is, that he is sent and commissioned by God to that purpose. And, *Secondly*, If the religion which he declares contain nothing in it, that is plainly repugnant to the nature of God. I say, these two must concur; for though I could suppose a person to bring the highest testimony imaginable of his divine mission and authority, suppose he should work a miracle for the confirmation of his doctrine; yet if there were any thing in the doctrine plainly repugnant to the natural notions which I have of God, I could not receive it as from God; the reason of which is plainly this, I can have no assurance that that is from God, which if it were true, I should be uncertain whether there were a God or not. I cannot possibly have any greater assurance that any thing is from God, than I have that there is a God; and I have no greater assurance that there is a God, than I have of his essential perfections, as that he is good, and powerful, and wise, and just, &c. For by the very same arguments that I come to know that there is a God, I know likewise that he must necessarily have these perfections. So that if any thing should be offered to me as a revelation from God, which plainly contradicts those natural notions which I have of him, I must necessarily reject it, yea though it were backed with a miracle; because no man can at the same time believe that there is a God, of such and such perfections, and entertain any thing as from him, which evidently contradicts those perfections. And as this is reasonable in itself, so it is clear from scripture, Deut. xiii. 1. 2. 3. *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and*

giveth thee a sign, or a wonder: and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them: thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet. Here is the very case put, which I am speaking of; a prophet comes and preacheth the worship of idols, as the sun, moon, stars, &c. and for the confirmation of this he is supposed to work a miracle; and yet, notwithstanding this, we are forbid to hearken to him, because the doctrine that he brings does evidently contradict the natural notions which I have of God.

From all which it appears, that these two things must concur, to give us full satisfaction that any religion is from God, namely, first, that the person that declares this religion, gives testimony of his divine authority, that he is sent and commissioned from God to that purpose. And,

Secondly, That the religion which he declares contains nothing in it that is plainly repugnant to the nature of God.

Now, to bring this to my present purpose, I should shew these two things concerning the Christian religion.

First, As to the divine authority of the person that declares this religion to the world, that he was sent and commissioned by God to that purpose.

Secondly, As to the religion itself, that there is nothing in it that is repugnant to the nature of God.

I intend chiefly to speak of the first of these: for I dare say, any one that will freely and without prejudice, consider the Christian religion, as it is laid down in the scriptures, and not as it hath been abused by the wanton wits of some, and the designs of others, will find nothing in it but what is very suitable to the nature of God, and worthy of him; he shall find nothing in the propositions of faith, but what is suitable to the perfections of the divine nature, and hath a proper influence upon a godly practice; nothing in the precepts of life, but what plainly tends to the perfection of human nature, and the advantage and happiness of mankind; nothing in the arguments and motives to obedience, as, namely, the love of Christ in dying for us, the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, and the rewards and punishments

ments of another world, but what is very accommodate to our nature, and suitable to the wisdom, and goodness, and justice of God; and these three, the propositions of faith, the precepts of life, the arguments and motives to obedience, do constitute the Christian religion, and make up the whole gospel. Concerning most of these, I have elsewhere treated at large; therefore I shall now apply myself chiefly to the first thing, namely, to shew that we have abundant satisfaction of the divine authority of the person that declares this religion to the world.

Now, because we live at a great distance from the age wherein this revelation of the gospel by Jesus Christ was made to the world, it will be requisite, for our clearer proceeding in this matter, to consider distinctly these three things.

First, What evidence those who heard this doctrine of the gospel immediately from our Saviour had for his divine authority. And this inquiry only respects the disciples of our Saviour, and the rest of the Jews to whom he preached.

Secondly, What evidence those had who received this doctrine by the preaching of the apostles. And this concerns those to whom the gospel was published by the apostles after our Saviour's death.

Thirdly, What evidence after-ages, until the present time, have of this. And this properly concerns us, who live at a great distance from the times of the first publication of the gospel.

And according to these three differences of time there are likewise but three ways whereby we can come to the knowledge of matter of fact; and they are all such as are capable of giving us sufficient assurance.

The first is by the testimony of our own senses; and this was the advantage of those who heard our Saviour's doctrine, and saw his miracles.

The second by the report and relation of credible eye and ear witnesses; and this advantage those had who heard the apostles.

The third by a constant and uncontrolled relation derived down successively from one age to another,
either

either by word, or writing; or both; which is the way whereby the ages, since the apostles to this day, have had the Christian religion derived down to them.

First, To consider what evidence those who heard this doctrine of the gospel, immediately from our Saviour himself might have of his divine authority. Now, there are but four ways that I can at present imagine, setting aside an internal revelation in every man's mind, whereby men may be sufficiently satisfied of the divine authority of any person.

I. If it be prophesied of him, and foretold by persons divinely inspired, that God would send such an one as his messenger and prophet into the world, and afterward such a person comes, to whom all the circumstances of those prophecies do agree.

II. By the testimony of an immediate voice from heaven.

III. By a power of working miracles.

IV. By the gift of prophecy, proved and made good by the accomplishment of his own predictions.

Now, I shall shew that those who lived in our Saviour's time; and conversed with him, were capable of satisfaction concerning his divine authority all these four ways. I shall begin with the

I. They were capable of being eye-witnesses that Christ was the great Prophet and Messenger of God, the Messias prophesied of and foretold in the Old Testament. And here I do reasonably take for granted the divine authority of the Old Testament, and that the prophecies therein contained are of divine inspiration, because those to whom our Saviour ordinarily preached, were only the Jews, who acknowledged the divine authority of those books; and therefore the accomplishment of those prophecies in the person of our Saviour, must needs be a satisfactory argument to them, that he was the Messias foretold.

Now, to shew that the disciples of our Saviour, and the rest of the Jews, were capable of receiving full satisfaction in this, that Jesus Christ was the Messias prophesied of in the Old Testament, I shall proceed by these steps.

I. That

1. That the prophecies of the Old Testament fix a time for the coming of the Messias; they give certain marks and signs whereby it may be known when the Messias would come; as that he should come when the government should utterly be lost from Judah. Gen. xlix. 10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh come;* by whom the ancient Jews did understand the Messias; and nothing but plain malice against Christ, and the Christian religion, makes the modern Jews to depart herein from the sense of their ancient masters. That he should come before the destruction of the second temple, Hag. ii. 6. 7. 8. 9. *For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.* From whence it is plain, that this house shall remain when the desire of all nations, that is, the Messias, according to the interpretation of the ancient Jews, should come, and his presence should be the glory of this second temple, and make it excel the first. And much to the same purpose, Mal. iii. 1. *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, that is, the Messias, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.* That he should come at the end of so many weeks of years, from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, and after so many weeks of years should be cut off, and after that the city of Jerusalem and sanctuary should be destroyed and made desolate, Dan. ix. 24. 25. 26. 27. So that you see the prophecies of the Old Testament do fix and ascertain the time of the Messias's coming, both by infallible marks and signs, concomitant and consequent, and by an exact computation of years.

2. That the time fixed by those prophecies for the coming of the Messias is already past. And this appears,

appears, in that all those marks and signs, which it was foretold should accompany and follow the coming of the Messias, are come to pass, and the time limited for the coming of the Messias is long since expired.

For (1.) the sceptre is long since departed from Judah. The Jews are now dispersed among all nations, their government lost, their families confounded, in so much that they do not at this day know those of the tribe of Judah from others. At the captivity, the government was not utterly lost, for they had a prince of the captivity; or at least it was interrupted but for seventy years, and then it was restored to them again: but now the sceptre hath been departed, and the government lost for sixteen hundred years.

(2.) The second temple is destroyed, to which it was foretold, that *the desire of all nations should come*.

(3.) The city is destroyed and made desolate, which was foretold should be *after the cutting off of the Messias*.

(4.) The seventy weeks of years are accomplished and expired long since, which were to begin from *the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem*, and to end at the coming of *the Messias the Prince*. And whether we fix the beginning of these weeks in the first or second year of Cyrus, or in the reign of one of the Darius's and Artaxerxes's, (for by universal consent it must begin in some of them), it matters not to my present purpose; for where-ever it be fixed, these weeks are long since expired.

3. And consequently the Messias is already come. For if the predictions of the Old Testament be true, which limit his coming to a certain time, which is fixed both by infallible marks, and by an account of years, I say, if these predictions be true, that he should come at such a time, and that time is past, then he is already come.

The Jews seek to evade the force of this argument by this pitiful shift, that the promises and predictions of the Messias were not absolute, but conditional: that is, he should come at such a time, if the sins and impenitency of men did not hinder. To this I answer,

(1.) This grants that the time for the coming of the Messias is past.

(2.) The

(2.) The reason that they give why God hath deferred the accomplishment of those prophecies and promises, is, because of the impenitency and wickedness of the people of the Jews at that time; which will agree very well with the history of the gospel, and give us a very good account how they came to reject the Messias; because they were so wicked, and their unbelief and impenitency were so great at that time.

(3.) There is no such condition any where expressed in any of those prophecies.

(4.) It is unreasonable that there should be such a condition; that the impenitency of men should hinder the coming of him, who was to bring the world to repentance, that is, to do that on his part which was sufficient to that end.

(5.) Nothing could bring the veracity of God into question more, than to make such predictions conditional, as by the concurrent testimony of so many prophets have the time of their accomplishment so punctually defined, and have not either a condition expressly fixed to them, or in the nature of the thing necessarily implied; and if this were not so, any one might pretend to be a true prophet, though the event proved never so contrary to his prediction.

(6.) It appears out of the books of the Jews to have been a constant tradition among them, that the Messias should come when the state of the people was most degenerate, and there was the greatest corruption and dissolution of manners among them. And if this be so, then their wickedness and impenitency could be no obstacle and impediment to the fulfilling of the promises and predictions concerning the Messias.

I should have added, in the next place, that the prophecies and promises in the Old Testament concerning the Messias, do all exactly, both as to the time, and all other circumstances, agree to Jesus Christ, who was born at Bethlehem, who gave himself out to be the Messias, and whom we Christians own to be so. But this I reserve for the next opportunity.

S E R M O N CCXXXV.

The evidences of the truth of the Christian religion.

2 COR. iv. 3. 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them.

The second Sermon on this text.

IN discoursing on these words, I have begun to shew, how those who heard the doctrine of the gospel immediately from our Saviour, might be satisfied concerning his divine authority; and I mentioned four ways by which such persons might receive full satisfaction.

I. By the agreement of the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament to our Saviour.

II. By the testimony of an immediate voice from heaven.

III. By the power of working miracles.

IV. By the gift of prophecy, proved and made good by the accomplishment of his own predictions.

In discoursing of the first of these, I proceeded by these steps.

1. That the prophecies of the Old Testament did fix a time for the coming of the Messias, and gave certain marks and signs whereby it might be known when the Messias would come.

2. That the time fixed by those prophecies for the coming of the Messias is already past.

3. And

3. And consequently, that the Messias is already come. Thus far I have gone; and now add,

4. The prophecies and promises of the Old Testament concerning the Messias do all exactly, both as to the time and all other circumstances, agree to Jesus Christ, that was born at Bethlehem, who gave himself out to be the Messias, and whom we Christians own to be so.

1. The time specified in those predictions agree to him. When he came into the world, the government was departed from Judah; for they were then in subjection to the Romans; and Herod their King, who was put into the government by the Romans, was an Idumæan. He came into the second temple, which, notwithstanding its being re-edified by Herod, might justly be accounted the same, it not having been again destroyed by any enemy, but only pulled down in order to the beautifying and enlarging of it; notwithstanding which Josephus every where calls it the same temple; for he reckons but two temples, the one, that which Solomon built, which continued till the captivity of Babylon; the other, that which Zerubbabel built, and that, he says, continued till the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. And not long after our Saviour's death, the city of Jerusalem and the sanctuary were utterly demolished, and *the end thereof was with a flood*; there was a total devastation of them; which plainly shews the seventy weeks did also expire about that time, where-ever we fix the beginning of them; because the prophecy of Daniel tells us plainly, that towards the expiration of them, *the city and the sanctuary were to be destroyed*; which was fulfilled with a great deal of severity, as if there were some extraordinary cause of those fearful judgments which came upon them. And indeed we find, that after they had committed the great sin of *crucifying the Lord of life*, they gave up themselves to all manner of wickedness, *filling up the measure of their sins, that wrath might come upon them to the uttermost*; inso-much that Josephus tells us, "That he did verily believe, that if the Romans had not come at that time to destroy them, either the earth would have swallowed up their city, or a flood have overwhelm-

“ ed, or thunder and lightning, or fire from heaven, would have consumed them, like Sodom and Gomorrah; for, says he, this generation was much more wicked than they were.”

And, which is a very considerable argument to the Jews, he came at the time when their whole nation were in expectation of the Messias; and indeed the whole world were about this time in expectation of a Prince out of Judea. That the Jews did expect the Messias about this time, appears by the famous saying of one of their greatest rabbies, Elias, that there should be 2000 years before the law, 2000 years the law should last, and 2000 years should be the time of the Messias: and according to the most exact chronology, it was much about the 4000th year of the world that Christ was born. That a great part of the world besides were at this time in expectation of a Prince to spring out of Judea, appears from those known testimonies of Suetonius and Tacitus. *Percrebuerat toto oriente vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut Judaea profecti rerum potirentur*, saith Suetonius; and Tacitus to the same purpose. Both agree in the words of this prophecy, which seem to be taken out of the prophecy of Micah, speaking of Bethlehem, in the land of Judea; *Out of thee shall come a Governor*. And Suetonius tells us farther, that the belief and expectation of this among the Jews was so great at that time, that this was the cause of their rebelling against the Romans. A just judgment of God upon them, that those who had rejected the true Messias should be deluded to their own ruin by the hopes of a false one.

2. All other circumstances of those promises and prophecies are exactly answered in the history and relation which the gospel gives of him. He was emphatically *the seed of the woman*, according to the first and very obscure promise made to our first parents, Gen. iii. 15. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*: I say, he was emphatically *the seed of the woman*, being, as our books of the gospel tell us, born of a pure virgin, which never knew man. He was the seed of Abraham, according to the second promise of him made to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. *In thee shall all the families of the earth*

earth be blessed. He was a prophet like unto Moses, being a great worker of miracles above any of the prophets, as Moses also was; and by whom God gave a new law, as he did by Moses, according to the other famous promise of him, Deut. xviii. 15. *A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me.*

He was of the tribe of Judah, and of the seed of David, as it was foretold the Messias should be; therefore he is called in the gospel, *the son of David*; and the apostle to the Hebrews, chap. vii. 14. appeals to the Jews concerning this, as a thing clear and acknowledged among them, *It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah*; which he would not have affirmed to the Jews without proof, if it had not been granted by them.

For the other, that he was the seed of David, the Jews will by no means admit as a thing at all evident from the history of the gospel concerning him: for, say they, if that appear any where, we should find it in his genealogy; but there we find no such matter: there indeed we have the genealogy of Joseph very differently related by the two evangelists, Matthew and Luke; but what is this to the genealogy of Christ, when the Christians themselves avowedly declare, that Joseph was not his father? It is granted that Joseph was of David's line; but to prove that Christ was really descended from David, instead of the genealogy of Joseph, they should have shewn Mary's.

This is a very malicious and spiteful objection, and the Jews insist very much upon it: but yet I think it is capable of a very satisfactory answer, in which I shall proceed by these steps.

1. We will grant that both the genealogies of our Saviour, that in Matthew and that in Luke, are intended to shew that Joseph was of Abraham's and David's line, and that neither of them are the genealogy of Mary. Some indeed have thought so, but it seems to me with very little probability: I incline much rather to Grotius's excellent conjecture about it, that Matthew's genealogy gives us an account of the succession of the royal family down as low as Joseph, and that in St. Luke the direct series of Joseph's ancestors.

2. The Jews grant that it hath been an ancient tradition among Christians, that Joseph and Mary were of the same family, and that Mary was *virgo intacta*, one that had no brethren, an heiress, or co-heiress, and so according to the Jewish custom she was bound to marry in her family; which the Jews were especially careful of in the family of David, to preserve the succession of the royal line, of which the Messias was to come.

3. The Jews have nothing to object against this which shews it improbable.

4. If so, that they were of the same family, then the genealogy of Joseph, though not directly and expressly, yet by consequence was the genealogy of Mary; and consequently those genealogies in the gospel do sufficiently shew that Christ was the Son of David.

5. It cannot be imagined that the evangelists should have omitted the genealogy of Mary, if it had not been included in that of Joseph, especially St Matthew, who in his genealogy expressly tells us, that he intended to shew that he was *the Son of David*, and also denies Joseph to have been his real father.

6. If there had been any question, whether Mary was of the line of David, the Jews would certainly in that time have rejected him from being the Messias; upon that very account, nothing being more plausible for them to have said than this, that he pretended to have no father, and to be born of a virgin, who was not of the line of David, how could he then be the Messias, who was to be *of the seed of David*? But that he was always owned by the Jews to be of that seed, appears by the title so frequently given to him, of *the Son of David*.

It was prophesied that the *Messias should be born in Bethlehem of Judah*, Micah v. 2. which you find accordingly fulfilled, Matth. ii. 6. the providence of God so ordering it, that Augustus should then lay a general tax, which occasion brought up Joseph and Mary to Bethleliem; not only that she might be delivered there, but that their names being there entered, their family might be ascertained, and there might no doubt afterward arise, but that they were *of the line of David*.

It was foretold he should be *born of a virgin*, Is. vii. 14. which you see accordingly fulfilled, Matth. i. That this is not the primary, but the mystical sense of that place in Isaiah, I think may without prejudice be granted to the Jews, who, in innumerable places of the Old Testament, do, besides the first and literal sense, allow of a mystical one; and if it be objected that this is only the saying of us Christians, that Christ was born of a pure virgin; to them it is easily answered, that if this be foretold of the Messias, whoever he be, that he shall be born of a virgin, as the Jews generally grant, we have as much assurance of this, as they can have, or imagine to have of theirs, whenever he should come. For it is not any report or tradition that can give credit to so strange a thing, but the unquestionable miracles which he wrought, which prove him to come from God, and consequently to be no impostor, but to be all that he pretended he was.

It was foretold of him, that he should be a *great prophet and teacher*, Deut. xviii. 15. *A prophet as if the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me.* Is. lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, &c.* Ezek. xxxiv. 23. *And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.* And chap. xxxvii. ver. 24. *And David my servant shall be King over them, and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.* And this was eminently fulfilled in that he foretold several future contingents; as his own crucifixion, Peter's denial of him, the destruction of Jerusalem, the rising of false Christs, and false prophets, (which I shall particularly consider hereafter), the descending of the Holy Ghost, and the admirable success of the gospel in the world; in that he preached so pure and perfect a doctrine to the world, and with so much authority; a doctrine so excellent and reasonable, so suitable to the necessities, and agreeable to the reason of mankind; a doctrine which tendeth so much to the perfecting of human nature, and to the peace and happiness of human society, above any other institution in the world.

It was foretold that he should do many and great miracles, and such as should be beneficial to men, *If. xxxv. 5. 6. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.* And was not all this eminently accomplished in Jesus Christ? What greater, or more public, or more frequent and numerous, or more beneficial miracles, can almost be imagined, than Christ did? So that we may say to the Jews, as some of them did to the Pharisees in our Saviour's time, *You talk of a Messias to come; yet when he is come, will he do greater works than this man hath done?*

It was foretold of him, that the people should receive him with joy and triumph when he came riding upon an ass to Jerusalem, *Zech. ix. 9.* which we find fulfilled, *Matth. xxi.*

It was prophesied that he should suffer many things, and be rejected, and despised of men. *Psal. xxii. 6. But I am a worm, and no man; a reprobach of men, and despised of the people. If. liii. 3. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* Which we find fulfilled all along in the history of the gospel.

It was prophesied that he should be sold for thirty pieces of silver, *Zech. xi. 12.* which we find fulfilled, *Matth. xxvii. 9.* That when he who was the shepherd was smitten, the sheep should be scattered, *Zech. xiii. 7.* which was accomplished, *Matth. xxvii. 56.* All the disciples forsook him and fled. That he should be scourged, and buffeted, and spit upon. *If. l. 6. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting;* which you find punctually accomplished, *Matth. xxvii.*

It was foretold that he should die a violent death, *If. liii. 8. He was cut off out of the land of the living. Dan. ix. 26. Messias the Prince shall be cut off.* That he should undergo all these sufferings with the greatest patience, *If. liii. 7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers*

is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. That he should suffer all these things, not for himself, but for sinners, *Is. liii. 5.* He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. And *ver. 6.* The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. And *ver. 8.* For the transgression of my people was he stricken. And *ver. 10.* His soul was made an offering for sin. And *ver. 12.* He bare the sins of many. And *Dan. ix. 26.* it is said, the *Messias* should be cut off, but not for himself.

It was foretold, that his hands and feet should be pierced, *Psal. xxii. 16.* he should be numbered with the transgressors, *Is. liii. 12.* And accordingly he was condemned as a malefactor, to suffer with malefactors, being crucified between two thieves.

It was foretold that he should have gall and vinegar given him to drink, *Psal. lxix. 22.*; that he should be derided in the midst of his sufferings, *Psal. xxii. 7. 8.* All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. And this was most punctually accomplished, *Matth. xxvii. 39. 43.* And they that passed by, reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him.

It was foretold that he should cry out under his sufferings, *Psal. xxii. 1.* My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? That he should pray for his wicked persecutors, *Is. liii. 12.* that he made intercession for the transgressors: and so he did most affectionately, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. That they should cast lots for his garments, *Psal. xxii. 18.* All, or most of which predictions were by the ancient Jews understood of the *Messias*, and were exactly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, as appears fully out of the history of the gospel.

And then for the circumstances of his burial; it was foretold, that he should make his grave with the rich,

II. liii. 9. which was accomplished in that he was put into Joseph of Arimathea's own tomb.

His resurrection was foretold, to be *after three days*, Hof. vi. 24. as several of the rabbins understood that place; however, that he should rise again, may be plainly argued from those texts, where it is said, that *his kingdom shall have no end*; and II. liii. 10. where it is said, that, after his death, *he shall see his seed, and prolong his days; and that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand*. But most expressly, Psal. xvi. 10. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption*.

And his sitting at the right hand of God, which supposeth his ascension into heaven, Psal. cx. 1. *Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*.

The wonderful success of the gospel, and the universal spreading of it through the world, was foretold, Gen. xii. 2. *In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*; which implies, that the blessing of the gospel, which the Messias brought to the world, should be universally diffused, Gen. xlix. 10. *To him shall the gathering of the people be*. Psal. ii. 8. God promiseth there, *to give Christ the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession*. Besides several other places of the psalms and prophets, too many to be reckoned up.

Now, the accomplishment of all these prophecies happened in their days who saw our Saviour, and conversed with him; so that they were capable of receiving full satisfaction concerning his divine authority, and that he was a person sent of God to teach the world, and assure them that he was the Messias, foretold and prophesied of in the books of the Old Testament, which being by them received as of divine inspiration, did consequently assure them that he was from God.

II. The second way whereby we may be satisfied concerning the divine authority of a person, is by the testimony of an immediate voice from heaven: and this testimony Christ had twice given to him: the first publicly before a great assembly of people at John's baptism, which was just before he began his public ministry. Matth. iii. 16. 17. *The Holy Ghost descended upon*

upon him like a dove, as he came out of the water; and there was a voice from heaven, which said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* The same voice was heard by Peter, James, and John, at his transfiguration on the mount, as you may see, Luke ix. 35. And this St Peter mentions, as a considerable argument of Christ's divine authority, 2 Pet. i. 16. 17. 18. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from the God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*

Indeed he makes this testimony to be such an argument, as, concurring with that which I mentioned before, is sufficient to persuade one that Christ was sent from God; but he does not make it to be equal to that, which he adds at the 19th verse, *We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, &c.* intimating the prophecies of the Old Testament were greater confirmation than this single testimony of a voice from heaven does amount to.

III. I proceed to the next evidence, which those who lived in our Saviour's time had of his divine authority, *viz.* the power of working miracles, which he was endowed withal; and this is the highest testimony that can be given to any person that he is sent from God. And in this respect chiefly is the gospel called *the light of the glorious gospel of Christ*, because of those glorious miracles whereby the gospel was confirmed. This is, as it were, the broad seal of heaven which is sufficient to give confirmation to any doctrine which does not evidently contradict the perfections of the divine nature: and it is not credible, that the providence of God is so little tender of the concernments of mankind, as to communicate this power to any person that will abuse it to the confirmation of a lie. I deny not but the devil may do many strange things, and such as we cannot

cannot distinguish from some sort of miracles *; and where men, by some great precedent provocation, have made it just for God to give them up to strong delusions to believe lies, because they would not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness; there God may permit the devil to work strange wonders, as it is foretold, 2 Theff. ii. 9. that the coming of Antichrist shall be after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and all deceivableness of unrighteousness. But in this case there will remain two ways, whereby impartial and considerate men, and such as are not blinded by prejudice or their lusts, may sufficiently discover, that this is not from God.

1. By the absurdity of the doctrine which those wonders are brought to confirm: and such were the lewd, and filthy, and senseless doctrines of the Gnostics, to which Simon Magus pretended to give a confirmation by the wonders that he wrought, and this very probably may be that which the Apostle refers to in this chapter. And such likewise are several of the doctrines of Popery: such as the adoration of the virgin Mary, of saints and images, and the doctrine of transubstantiation; for the confirmation of which, they pretend a great many wonders have been wrought.

2. By the contrariety of the doctrine to that which hath had the confirmation of far greater miracles. Therefore if we should grant to the Papists, that several of those miracles which they brag of, were really wrought, (which considering the infinite cheats and impostures which have been practised by them in that kind, and have been discovered, we have no reason to grant); yet because the doctrine, which they pretend to confirm, is absurd, and unreasonable, and contrary to the doctrine which they themselves own to have had a far greater confirmation, by miracles far greater, and more unquestionable, more publicly done, and in such a manner, and with such circumstances, as do free them from all suspicion of imposture; I say, for this reason we cannot admit those doctrines to be of divine authority; because the confirmation which is given to them by those wonders, is overpowered by a great-

* Of this see more, ser. 229. 230. 231. in this volume.

er and more divine testimony ; as the magicians of Pharaoh, though they did many odd feats, yet were plainly mastered and conquered by the greater miracles which Moses wrought.

The sum is this, that where-ever any person is endowed with an eminent power of working miracles, such as are of the first rank, great and unquestionable, and many, and publicly wrought, that is one of the highest evidences we can have of the divine authority of any person or doctrine. Therefore Nicodemus does upon this ground very reasonably conclude, that our Saviour was sent from God, John iii. 2. *We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do those miracles which thou dost, except God be with him.* And our Saviour himself insists upon this frequently as the great proof of his divine authority, Matth. xi. 3-4. When John Baptist sent two of his disciples to him, to be satisfied, whether he was the Messias, he bids them report to John what the doctrine was which they heard him preach, and what miracles they saw him work for the confirmation of it: *Go and shew John those things which ye do see and hear; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them.* John v. 33. 36. our Saviour there tells the Jews, that *John bare witness of him; and that might satisfy them, because they looked upon John as a prophet: but, saith he, I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* John xv. 24. *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.* This was the great aggravation of their unbelief, that they resisted the evidence of so great miracles, such as no man in the world ever wrought*.

I should now briefly run over the chief of those miracles of our Saviour, which we find recorded in the history of the gospel ; and shew that they have all the advantages that miracles can have, to give satisfaction to men concerning their reality. But this I reserve for my next discourse.

* See more of this, ser. 222. in this volume.

S E R M O N CCXXXVI.

The evidences of the truth of the Christian religion.

21 April 72

2 COR. iv. 2. 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The third sermon on this text.

IN my last discourse, I was considering the third evidence which those who lived in our Saviour's time had of his divine authority, viz. the power of working miracles, with which he was endowed. And in treating on this, I proposed briefly to run over the chief of those miracles of our Saviour, which we find recorded in the gospel, and to shew that they have all the advantages that miracles can have, to give satisfaction to men concerning their reality. And that I may proceed in some kind of order and method, I shall reduce the miracles that concern our Saviour to these three heads.

First, The miracles of his life.

Secondly, Those that were wrought at his death.

Thirdly, The great miracles of his resurrection from the dead, and those two that were consequent upon it, his ascension into heaven, and his sending the Holy Ghost upon the apostles and Christians in miraculous gifts and powers.

I begin with the first, the miracles of his life. And in speaking of these, I shall shew that they had all the advantageous circumstances to convince men of the reality of them, and to free them from all suspicion of imposture.

posture. They were many; they were great, and unquestionable miracles; they were frequently wrought, and for a long time together; publicly, and in the presence of multitudes; and they were beneficial, and for the good of men.

1. They were many. There might be something of imposture suspected in a few instances, that might be chosen out for the purpose. But our Saviour gave instances of his divine power in several kinds, so that there is scarce any thing that is miraculous can be instanced in, wherein he did not shew his power. He healed all manner of diseases, and that in multitudes of people, as they came accidentally without any discrimination, Matth. iv. 23. 24. And though most of his miracles were healing, yet he gave instances in other kinds; as in turning of water into wine; commanding down the storm; and walking upon the waters, &c. And though the history of the gospel mentions very many miracles that he wrought, yet St John tells us, that those that are recorded, are but very few in comparison of what he did, John xx. 30. *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.* And chap. xxi. 35. *And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.* An hyperbolical expression, to signify the great number of his miracles and actions, besides what are recorded by the evangelists.

2. As they were many, so they were great and unquestionable, both as to the manner of doing them, and as to the things that he did.

(1.) Many things which were not miraculous in themselves, yet were so as to the manner of doing them, which was not by any magical words, and figures, and charms, and superstitious rites, according to the manner of those who pretended to work miracles among the Heathens. It is true, he healed many diseases which were curable by physic and art; yet then the manner was such as was above the ordinary course of nature; many he cured by a word only, or by a touch, and the cure was wrought immediately, and

in the same instant when he spake the word, though they were at a great distance. Many were cured without his taking any notice of them, by touching the very hem of his garment; of all which I might give several instances, but that they are so well known to those who are acquainted with the history of the gospel. Sometimes indeed he performed the cure by degrees; as in the man that was restored to sight, and saw men at first confusedly, and without any distinction, as if they had been trees, Mark viii. 24. Sometimes he used some kind of means, but such as were very disproportionable in their nature to the effect that was produced; as in the case of the deaf man, which he cured by putting his finger into his ear, and by his spittle, Mark vii. 33.; and the blind man whose eyes he anointed with clay mixed with spittle, and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam, John ix. 6. 7. But most of his miracles he wrought in an instant, and merely by his word.

(2.) As to the things he did, many of them were miraculous in themselves. He cured many inveterate diseases, as Matth. ix. 20. A woman that had an issue of blood twelve years. He made the woman straight by touching her, that had been crooked, and bowed together eighteen years, Luke xiii. 13. and the man that had an infirmity thirty-eight years, only by bidding him take up his bed and walk, John v. 8. He cured the man that was born blind, John ix. and, which all men will grant to be miraculous, and to have exceeded all the power of nature that we know of, he raised several from the dead; and because it might be said that several of those were not really dead, but in a delirium or swoon, there is one instance beyond all exception, John xi. he raised up Lazarus to life, after he had been four days in the grave.

(3.) He wrought his miracles frequently, upon all occasions that were offered, and for a long time together, during the whole time of his public ministry, which is generally computed to have been three years and a half; a time sufficient to have detected any imposture in; especially one that shewed himself so openly, and conversed indifferently with all sorts of persons with so little guard and caution.

(4.) He

(4.) He did all his miracles publicly, not in corners and among some select company of people, but before multitudes, and in the greatest places of concourse; so that if there had been any thing of imposture in them, he gave the fairest opportunity that could be to his enemies to have detected him. Mahomet's miracles were wrought by himself alone, without witness; which was the best way in the world certainly for one that could work no miracles, but yet could persuade the people what he pleased: but our Saviour did nothing in private. His transfiguration only was before three of his disciples; and therefore he made no use of that as an argument to the Jews, but charged his disciples to tell it to none, till after his resurrection, because that would give credit to it; after they were assured of that, they would easily believe his transfiguration: but all his other miracles were in the sight of the people. He healed publicly, and admitted all to see what he did. When he turned the water into wine, it was at a public feast; when he multiplied the loaves, and the fishes, it was in the sight of four or five thousand people; when he raised Lazarus from the dead, it was before a great multitude of the people. The works that he did durst abide the light, and the more they were manifested, the more miraculous they did appear.

(5.) His miracles were generally beneficial, and for the good of men; so that they had these two characters of divinity stamped upon them, that they were effects both of power and goodness. Most of his miracles were such as tended to the benefit of mankind; most of them were either healing, or feeding miracles; or refreshing, as turning the water into wine; or tending to the peace of human society, as the miracle that he wrought, rather than he would give offence by not paying tribute. It is true indeed he might have shewn his power every way; he gave some instances of it in other kinds, which might seem more for his purpose, and for the manifestation of his power, as in his allaying the storm, and walking upon the water: but he wrought no miracles that were destructive, except only two, namely, his permitting the devil to enter into the

swine, Matth. viii. 28. whereby the inhabitants of the place sustained a great loss. But our Saviour did this upon very good reason, as a reproof of that sordid temper which he saw to be in them; they were so immersed in the world, and wedded to their interests, that they would, rather than lose any thing in that kind, forfeit all the blessings that the Messias brought with him; and this temper appeared afterward in them; for though they were convinced that he had wrought a miracle, yet because they had sustained some prejudice, *they desired him to depart out of their coasts.*

The other exception is his cursing the fig-tree, Matth. xxi. 19. which had a moral signification to his disciples, and was a sharp warning to them, what they must look for if they were unfruitful. Our Saviour rebukes our sloth and barrenness in the fig-tree.

Secondly, Next to the miracles of our Saviour's life, I mentioned those that were wrought at his death, which though they were not wrought by him, yet they were wrought to give testimony to him, that he was some extraordinary person; for as much as when he died, the frame of nature was put into such a trembling and melancholy posture. So the history of the gospel tells us, Matth. xxvii. 45. *that from the sixth hour till the ninth, there was darkness over all the land;* which, as learned men have calculated, could not be an eclipse, according to the natural course of things. And ver. 51. 52. *&c. The veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened.*

Thirdly, The great miracle which was wrought after his death, in raising him up from the dead, together with those two that were consequent upon it; his visible ascending into heaven, and his sending the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, and primitive Christians, in such miraculous gifts and powers.

First, The great miracle of his resurrection, after he had lain three days in the grave. This was the miracle which was to be the chief attestation of his divine authority, and to give confirmation to the doctrine which he declared to the world. And accordingly we find that
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the chief office of the apostles was to be witnesses of his resurrection; and the great evidence they were to give to the world of his divine authority was, *that God raised him from the dead*. And we find the scripture every where laying the great stress of his divine authority upon this miracle. Acts xvii. 31. *By that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead*. Rom. i. 4. *Declared mightily to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead*. 1 Pet. i. 21. *Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory*.

Now, that this miracle was really wrought, I shall endeavour to shew, by producing such evidence for it, as the nature of the thing to be proved, which is matter of fact, will bear. I shall therefore,

First, Produce such testimony as we have for it.

Secondly, Add some considerations that may serve to give strength and advantage to the testimony,

First, For the testimony we have of this. In short, we have it attested by an abundantly sufficient number of eye-witnesses; and greater evidence than this, matter of fact is not capable of. For the eye-witnesses and the number of them, you have them produced by St Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 5. 6. 7. 8. The sum of what he saith is this: That Christ, after his resurrection, was seen once by Peter alone, once by James alone, and twice by all the apostles together; and by above five hundred brethren at once. So that the number of the eye-witnesses is abundantly sufficient. And that they did attest this, appears by the history of the gospel, which hath descended down to us by uncontrolled tradition. And in this case we require no more credit to be given to the gospel, than to any other history, or narrative of matter of fact; which whosoever doth deny, takes away the faith of history, and makes it impossible to prove the truth of any thing that is past*.

Secondly, I shall add some considerations that may serve to give strength and advantage to this testimony; partly relating to the persons that give this testimony, and partly to the matter or thing which they attest.

* Of this see more, ser. 193.

1st, In reference to the persons that give this testimony, we may consider them with these three advantages.

1. That they are credible persons.
2. That they agree in their testimony.
3. That the greatest sufferings could not make them to conceal it or deny it.

1. For the credibility of the persons. Two things render a witness suspected, want of knowledge, or of integrity; if either he do not sufficiently know the thing which he attests; or there be a reason to suspect his fidelity in relating the thing. Now, the witnesses in this case of the resurrection cannot be questioned for either of these; not for want of knowledge, because they were eye-witnesses, as I said before; nor for want of faithfulness. There are two things which ordinarily make us suspect the fidelity of a witness; if there be either an appearance of deceit in the manner of the relation, or of design in the end of it: but the witnesses of Christ's resurrection are free from both these grounds of jealousy.

(1.) There is no appearance of deceit in the manner of their relating it. We suspect a relation that is either too general, or too artificial; but the report of these witnesses cannot be charged with either of these. For,

1st. They report the thing with all its circumstances of time and place; when he rose, what were the circumstances of it, where he was seen, and by whom, how often he appeared, what he did and said.

2dly, They use no art or insinuation in the manner of delivering, but report it with the greatest plainness, and nakedness, and simplicity that can be imagined; without any ambiguity, or obscurity, or flourish of language, as becomes an honest relator, who useth no arts, because he is not guilty to himself of any design to deceive.

(2.) Nor is there any appearance of design as to the end of their testimony. What design could they have, who did knowingly renounce all secular advantages of honour, and riches, and reputation, and forego all worldly contentment, and expose themselves to continual

nual hazards and sufferings? They got nothing by bearing this testimony, but what every man that hath worldly designs doth most solicitously avoid.

2. They concur and agree in their testimony. They constantly delivered the same testimony, with all its circumstances, both in word and writing, several persons in several places, without varying or disagreeing in the least material circumstance.

3. The greatest sufferings could not make them either deny it, or conceal it; which is a great argument of their integrity. If the thing they attested had been false, it had been an unparalleled madness for any one to persist in it to the loss of life; and incredible that so many should conspire in the same unreasonable and unaccountable folly; especially when the religion which they professed did exclude all liars from all the happiness and rewards of the next life, which they pretended to be persuaded of; so that whatsoever those persons might be otherwise, and however they might falsify in other things, there is no reason to doubt of their truth and fidelity in this report, because they died for the testimony of it. Therefore the highest attestation of a thing is called martyrdom, and the most credible witnesses, martyrs. And though bare martyrdom be not an argument of the infallible truth of a testimony, or of the infallibility of the person that gives it; yet it is one of the highest arguments that can be of his honesty and integrity in that thing, and that he believes himself; otherwise he would not die for it: and it is a good evidence of the general integrity of these persons, as to all other things, that they were so conscientious, as not, for fear of death, to deny that which they believed to be a truth; nor to conceal that which they believed to be of importance.

2dly, As to the matter or thing which they attested, we may consider it with these advantages.

1. The resurrection of Christ was such a thing, as in its own nature they were capable of giving evidence to.

2. We will consider a little the circumstances of it, which add much to the credit of it.

3. We

3. We will consider the effects that this relation and report had in the world.

4. The circumstances of the persons who entertained the belief of it.

1. Let us consider that the resurrection of Christ is such a thing, as in the nature of it they were capable of giving testimony to. Indeed, if it were such a thing as either in the nature of it were absolutely impossible, as if a man should say he had seen or handled a pure spirit; or else such, as these persons could not reasonably be presumed to be competent witnesses of it, as if a man that is altogether ignorant in geometry should say, that he had seen such a man demonstrate a proposition in Euclid; in these cases, though a man be never so credible, yet he is not to be credited. But the resurrection of Christ is no such thing; no man that believes that God can make a living body out of nothing, can think it absolutely impossible to raise a dead body to life; nor was it a thing they could not be presumed to be competent witnesses of: for that which they attest concerning the resurrection of Christ, is that which every man may give evidence in, for it requires nothing but common sense and understanding; as to touch and handle a body, and know that it is a body; to see a man perform the operations of life, to see him walk, and eat, and hear him speak: and this they attest of Christ, after he was crucified, dead, and buried; that they saw him several times, and conversed with him; and they could not be mistaken in the person, being so intimately and familiarly acquainted with him in his life-time.

2. We will consider a little the circumstances of his resurrection. He had foretold in his life-time, that he would rise again the third day. The chief priests and the Pharisees remembered this saying, and therefore lest his disciples should come by night and steal him away, they make the sepulchre sure, seal the stone, and set a guard of soldiers. The disciples whom they were afraid of, they were scattered with fear; and that it might appear that it was the work of God, there was a great earthquake which made the guard to tremble; and in
their

their sight an angel appearing in a most glorious manner rolled away the stone; and when he was risen and appeared to his disciples, they were terrified, and thought it had been a spirit, till our Saviour bids them *see him, and handle him, that he had flesh and bones, which a spirit could not have.* He conversed familiarly with them; and, for their greater satisfaction, did eat with them; and, to satisfy the scrupulous unbelief of Thomas, he bids him put his hand into the hole of his side, and see in his hands the print of the nails, to shew that it was the same body that was crucified. Now, the greater their jealousy and unbelief was, the greater is the evidence of the thing; and it shews that it was upon great conviction; and when they could no longer resist the evidence of the thing, that they did believe it: and after all this, they saw him ascend up into heaven, and found the promise of the Spirit made good to them, to furnish them with power and gifts, for carrying on the work of the gospel.

3. We will consider the strange and wonderful effects that this report and relation had in the world. The preaching of Christ crucified, and rising from the dead, had a strange operation upon the world. With such admirable success did this prevail, that in a few years the gospel was entertained in a great part of the world. The plain and naked relation of this, by men that were destitute of secular learning and arts, without the help of power, or policy, or any other worldly advantage, did prevail with men to entertain and embrace that profession, against the prejudice of education, the bias of corrupt nature, and the advantages of worldly interests: nor could all the opposition of the great and the wise, the princes and the philosophers of the world, give a check to the prevalency of it. Surely nothing but truth could have wrought those great wonders and effects, naked and unarmed. Those strange and miraculous effects which are matter of fact, and undeniable, one would think, should render it very easy to any man to believe the miracle of Christ's resurrection.

4. We will consider the circumstances of the persons who entertained the belief of it. Many of them were

were very rational, and serious, and inquisitive persons, who had opportunity to satisfy themselves about the truth of it; and if there had been any reason to disbelieve the testimony that was given, had such great and generous spirits, that if it had been for their advantage and interest to have believed it, yet out of the greatness of their minds they would not have entertained any ungrounded relation, much less a religion built upon it. Such were some eminent among the Jews and Heathens for their great learning, and knowledge of philosophy, and all excellent endowments, who were early converted to Christianity. And as for the multitude who embraced the gospel, the doctrine of it was so contrary to their lusts, and the profession of it to their interests, that nothing can be imagined to have persuaded them to the belief of it, but a high satisfaction of the truth of it; and particularly of this great miracle of Christ's resurrection, upon which principally the gospel doth rely. And thus I have endeavoured to give you the best evidence I could of the truth of this miracle.

I should now proceed to take notice of the objections that may be made against it: but this I shall reserve to the following discourse.

The end of the Ninth Volume.

