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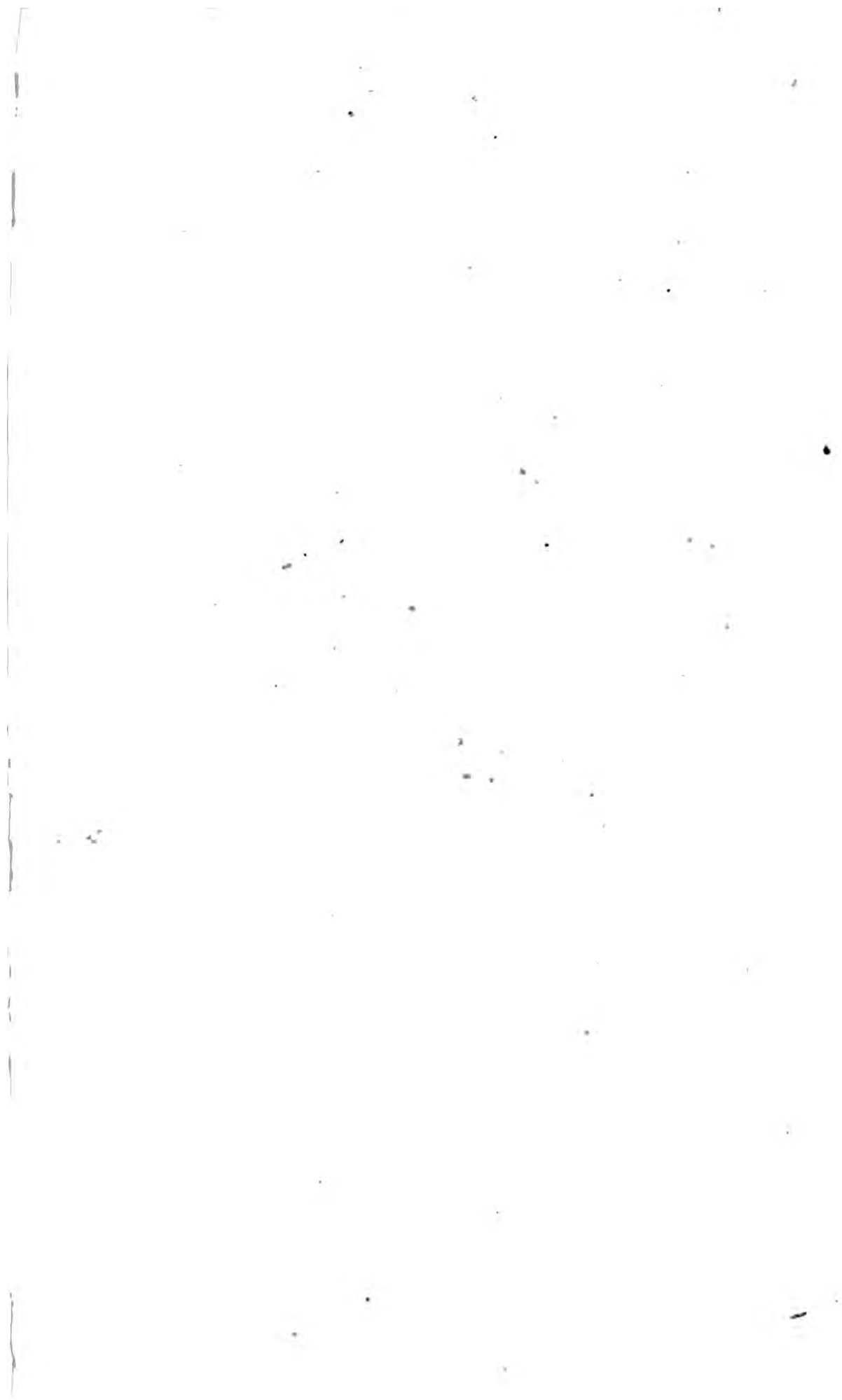


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PRACTICAL  
**S E R M O N S,**

SELECTED FROM

**The Manuscripts**

OF THE

**REV. JOHN SKINNER, D.D.**

Late Rector of Poulshot, Vicar of Shrewton, and of the Cathedral, Salisbury ;  
formerly of Trinity College, Oxford.

—  
IN TWO VOLUMES.  
—



*DEDICATED (BY PERMISSION)*

TO THE

**RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF SALISBURY.**

—  
**VOL I.**  
—

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## DEDICATION.

TO THE

RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF SALISBURY.

MY LORD,

THE following Sermons would not have met the public eye, but from the suggestion of some friends, who had derived consolation and comfort from the soundness of the doctrine and simplicity of the style; the Author, having been honored while living, with the approbation of a man of your Lordship's exalted rank and benevolence of character, and your permission for his labors being dedicated to you, are the strongest proofs he was one in whom precept and example were most rigidly combined.

I have the honor

to subscribe myself,

Your Lordship's most grateful Servant,

C. E. CLARKE.

*10, Lower Grosvenor-Place, London.*





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## CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE.
<b>SERMON I.</b>	<b>1</b>
Psalm 42.—Verses 6 and 7.	
<i>Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul: and why art thou so disquieted within me? Put thy trust in God, for I will yet give him thanks for the help of his countenance.</i>	
<b>SERMON II.</b>	<b>11</b>
St. John's Gospel.—Chap. 11.—Verse 35.	
<i>Jesus wept.</i>	
<b>SERMON III.</b>	<b>19</b>
St. Matthew 11.—Three last Verses.	
<i>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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.</i>	
<b>SERMON IV.</b>	<b>33</b>
St. Matthew's Gospel.—Chap. 11.—Verses 21 and 22.	
<i>Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe 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.</i>	
<b>SERMON V.</b>	<b>46</b>
St. Luke.—Chap. 16.—Verse 25.	
<i>But now, he is comforted, and thou art tormented.</i>	
<b>SERMON VI.</b>	<b>56</b>
St. John's Gospel.—Chap. 6.—Verse 44.	
<i>No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.</i>	



	PAGE.
<b>SERMON VII.</b>	<b>68</b>
15th Chap. of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. 53d Verse.	
<i>This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.</i>	
<b>SERMON VIII.</b>	<b>81</b>
St. Matthew.—Chap. 5.—Verse 11.	
<i>Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</i>	
<b>SERMON IX.</b>	<b>94</b>
St. Luke.—Chap. 15.—Verse 29.	
<i>Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.</i>	
<b>SERMON X.</b>	<b>105</b>
1 Kings.—Chap. 12.—Latter part of the 11th Verse.	
<i>My Father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.</i>	
<b>SERMON XI.</b>	<b>117</b>
Judges.—Chap. 10.—Verse 14.	
<i>Go, and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen: let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.</i>	
<b>SERMON XII.</b>	<b>128</b>
Matthew.—Chap. 10.—Verse 28.	
<i>Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.</i>	
<b>SERMON XIII.</b>	<b>140</b>
St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.—Chap. 1.—Verse 18.	
<i>The eyes of your understanding being enlightened ; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance, in the saints.</i>	
<b>SERMON XIV.</b>	<b>153</b>
St. Matthew.—Chap. 18.—Verse 3.	
<i>Verily I say unto you, except you be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.</i>	

	PAGE.
<b>SERMON XV.*</b>	164
Genesis.—Chap. 45.—Verse 24.	
<i>See that ye fall not out by the way.</i>	
<b>SERMON XVI.</b>	177
Psalm 1.—Verses 1 and 2.	
<i>Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.</i>	
<b>SERMON XVII.</b>	188
St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.—Chap. 4.—Verse 14.	
<i>Ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.</i>	
<b>SERMON XVIII.</b>	198
St. Matthew.—Chap. 6.—Verse 34.	
<i>Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.</i>	
<b>SERMON XIX.</b>	211
Psalm 34.—Verse 7.	
<i>The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.</i>	
<b>SERMON XX.</b>	221
Psalm 68.—Verse 3.	
<i>Let the righteous be glad, and rejoice before God; let them also be merry and joyful.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXI.</b>	231
2d General Epistle of St. Peter.—Chap. 3.—Verse 9.	
<i>The Lord is not slack concerning his promise (as some men count slackness) but is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXII.</b>	244
7th Chap. of St. John.—Part of 31st Verse.	
<i>And many of the people believed on him.</i>	

	PAGE.
<b>SERMON XXIII.</b>	<b>255</b>
First Epistle to Timothy.—Chap. 1.—Verse 15.	
<i>This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world, to save sinners.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXIV.</b>	<b>267</b>
Epistle to the Romans.—Chap. 13th.—And part of the 12th Verse.	
<i>Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXV.</b>	<b>278</b>
Epistle to the Romans.—Chap. 13.—Verse 5.	
<i>Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXVI.</b>	<b>289</b>
St. Luke.—Chap. 9.—Verses 55 and 56.	
<i>But he turned and rebuked them, and said, ye know not of what manner of spirit ye are of.</i>	
<i>For the son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And he went to another village.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXVII.</b>	<b>302</b>
St. Luke.—Chap. 16.—Verse 8.	
<i>And the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXVIII.</b>	<b>315</b>
Acts of the Apostles.—Chap. 8.—Verses 14 and 15.	
<i>When the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John.</i>	
<i>Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the holy ghost.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXIX.</b>	<b>328</b>
First Epistle General of St. John.—Chap. 5.—Verse 7.	
<i>There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.</i>	

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## SERMON I.

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PSALM 42.—Verses 6 and 7.

*Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul :  
and why art thou so disquieted within me ?*

*Put thy trust in God, for I will yet give him  
thanks, for the help of his countenance.*

---

**T**O suppose that our journey through this sad and troublesome life can be taken without any serious interruption, is to suppose what will never happen to the most prosperous. The common accidents of life, which no foresight can entirely prevent, and the dark schemes and subtle treachery of pretended friends, or avowed enemies, will often disturb the peace and undermine the happiness of the virtuous and the good. And as it would be a mark of the greatest folly and imprudence to expect peace and safety in the midst of war, it would be equally so to look for calmness and tranquillity in this world, whilst

the envious and the malicious are always on the watch to make the successful and the innocent their devoted prey. The pain we receive from severe injuries, will ever be keenly felt; but the wound will always be the deeper if given by one whom we loved and respected. This must be allowed to be invariably the case. It cannot be imagined that the idle and wanton shafts of ridicule and abuse, which are flying around us in all directions, whenever they *strike*, will make an impression like that which is inflicted by the heavy and barbarous hand of rooted prejudice and deliberate unkindness. We must, and do feel, according to circumstances, persons, and things; and happy, very happy is it for us, that in all our bitter sufferings on earth, whether of body or mind, a remedy of heavenly extraction is always at hand to compose and allay it.

When David fondly thought his kingdom was founded on a rock which nothing could shake, his son Absalom, at the head of the most unnatural rebellion, drove him from Jerusalem to the country beyond Jordan. Such a change, and effected by such ungracious means, drew from the persecuted and afflicted Monarch these moving expressions: “ My tears have been my meat  
“ day and night; while they say unto me, where  
“ is now thy God? Now, when I think there-

“ upon, I pour out my heart by myself.” His present situation in a state of exile, and that exile originating in his own son ; and the comparison of his destitute and forlorn state with his former glory and happiness, awakened the most tender feelings in his troubled and wounded heart. Indeed, what circumstances can we picture to ourselves more distressing than these ? Contrast is the strongest feature in every representation, and gives us the most lively as well as the most just view of whatever happens. And no contrast can be greater than to see a father dethroned by his son, and a great and illustrious king doomed to wander in the vale of misery and wretchedness. This scene, melancholy and gloomy as it appears, is no uncommon event ; and we of the present day have seen revolutions, though not exactly alike, yet very similar. But however extraordinary the troubles of David were, he did not yield with a weak flexibility to their wildest fury. In the bright and splendid days of his prosperity, encircled by his numerous subjects, he had often attended the service of the tabernacle, in the City of God ; and the dark clouds of adversity, which at this time hung over him, did not tempt him to *forget* the God of his health and of his salvation. Reflecting on the uncertainty of all things here



below, and on the impenetrable wisdom and goodness of Providence, who visits with various afflictions the sons of men, he thus expostulates with his distressed and miserable soul : “ Why  
“ art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul : and  
“ why art thou so disquieted within me. Put thy  
“ trust in God, for I will yet give him thanks,  
“ for the help of his countenance.”

“ The holy mourner, in these words, reasons  
“ with his soul on the impropriety of suffering  
“ herself to sink into a kind of despondency  
“ on account of her afflictions, and the in-  
“ solent triumph of the adversary ; and, as a  
“ sovereign cordial for melancholy, prescribes  
“ faith in God, which will shew the morning of  
“ salvation dawning after the night of calamity  
“ shall have run its course ; a night which can-  
“ not be long, and may be very short. When  
“ the sun arises, we cannot be without light ;  
“ when God turns his countenance towards us,  
“ we cannot be without salvation.” \*

David experienced the reviving favor of Heaven, after the most acute and bitter calamities, and returned again triumphant to his kingdom, having wept sorely over the dead body of his ungrateful son.

\* Horne on the Psalms.

From such an example what important and useful advantages may we not draw? In our Christian pilgrimage here on earth, we must all encounter the vicissitudes of joy and sorrow, of hope and despondency; there is no exemption for any. For the affairs of this world seldom keep an even and uniform course. The stream of life does not flow always gently and smoothly; but a thousand interruptions check and disturb the current. The causes of them cannot always be traced, as they lie too deeply for the nicest investigation of the human eye to discover. The incessant and laborious industry of some who are disposed to discharge the several duties of their station with the utmost propriety, is frequently put a sudden stop to by severe and continued disease. And in the words of the Holy Psalmist they may perchance thus utter their sorrows and their complaints: "My God, my God, look upon me; why hast thou forsaken me; and art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint? O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not: and in the night season also I take no rest." This strong and feeling language may well be supposed the language of all under the bitter agonies of pain and affliction. But as to suffer is our lot, and the degree of our sufferings

must be left to the will of our heavenly and most merciful Father, we are none of us to murmur or repine. And whilst we think, and I trust not improperly, that we may use the Psalmist's expressions when under the pressure of any disease, we should also use his humble and pious resignation to the Almighty Hand that wounds us, and say with him, "but thou continuest holy, O thou worship of Israel." It is impossible for any of us in our present imperfect state to draw conclusions from the several events that take place around us. We know not for what beneficial purposes and intentions, trouble, and sorrow, and grief, and misery, may be permitted to visit us in forms the most alarming, and in afflictions the most dreadful. Violent remedies are sometimes necessary to restore health to the body; and remedies not less violent may be equally necessary to awake serious reflection, and rouse the torpid energies of our minds; and *force us* to see our several and respective duties in a proper light. David, in distress and sorrow, felt the great advantage of both, and thus expressed his devout and serious sentiments: "It is *good* for me that I have been in *trouble*;" and to shew the effect produced by what he had undergone, he illustrates the doctrine advanced above, by adding, "that I might learn thy law."

So that the knowledge of God's holy law, and the practice of the duties which it inculcates, were imputed by the royal Penitent to the gracious influence of severe affliction, and the awful visitation of sorrow and distress. And can you not suppose that there are many in the world who have been brought to a sense of virtue and religion in the same manner? When a calmness and serenity possesses the atmosphere, the smiling face of nature gilds with a general charm every object around us, and we are strangers to danger or to fear; but if on a sudden, the storm should begin to rise, the clouds to threaten, and the thunder to roll, in an instant what poor, timid creatures do we appear! Serious thoughts and apprehensions then take possession of our breasts, and external horror kindles the languid flame of expiring piety, and we seem more disposed to be devout when in danger than when in safety. This idea made the sacred writer thus express himself: "When thy judgments are in the world the inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness." Distress, therefore, and sorrow, may be, and very often are, the parents of lasting joy and happiness. Whatever makes us look into ourselves, and think properly, will in the end conduce to our permanent advantage. And as sorrow and distress, by

shewing us the little dependance that is to be placed in sublunary things, point out to us in the most feeling manner, a future world as our only true place of comfort and of rest, we should look on them as friends in disguise. Prepared by these rational sentiments to view the world and all its vanities in the clear mirror of undisguised truth, and prepared on all important occasions, not to judge rashly or hastily of the melancholy and gloomy scenes around us, let us with holy faith and christian patience, meet the events of life piously and firmly. It is not to be expected that we can *stifle* our sense of feeling, or *blunt* in a moment, or just when we wish it, the keen edge of pain, and the more keen edge of ingratitude; but we may by reflection, in a certain degree, mitigate the extreme violence of both. To complain is natural, and the voice of murmuring and discontent *will* break forth from the bed of sickness and of anguish. To do violence to nature we are not required; but to despair we are forbidden. And as nothing can ever happen to us but by the will, and permission of heaven, whenever we seem to suffer more than we think ourselves able to bear, we must check the loud pangs of distress by that strong address to our better part which the text enjoins: "Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul:

“and why art thou so disquieted within me.  
“Put thy trust in God, for I will yet give him  
“thanks for the help of his countenance.” Here  
the whole of our devotion and resignation must  
rest. This is the only stay of our hope, our  
trust, and our confidence. If God be for us, it  
will very soon be of little, or no consequence,  
who has been against us. And God will most  
assuredly be for us, if we endeavour to serve him  
truly and faithfully all the days of our life. If  
in our health we are not unmindful of his bless-  
ings, and in the sad and serious hours of sickness  
rely on his mercy and goodness, that the event  
will be such as he shall deem most conducive to  
our real interest. And can we better or more  
sincerely discover and manifest our trust in God  
than by cultivating a holy and religious life?  
Can we more effectually prove to the world our  
hopes and our expectations, than by regulating  
all our actions according to the Revelation made  
by his Son Jesus Christ? To talk of putting  
our trust in God when we reject the doctrines of  
our blessed Saviour, is talking wildly and wick-  
edly. They who believe in God and *trust* in  
him, must also believe in Christ and trust in *him*.  
Let us not then lose any opportunity that offers  
of shewing our entire dependence on the mercy  
of God and the merits of our Redeemer for that



eternal salvation which the Christian Faith secures to all true believers.

To conclude.—To prevent our religious duties from degenerating into a cool and lifeless devotion, let the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ be received as often as occasion may enable us to receive it. Let no fears nor doubts alarm us in this our bounden service. Remember you are not fit to pray if you are not fit to come to the altar. Your sins will as certainly render the one useless, as the other; and a pious disposition and hearty repentance, with a subsequent amendment of life, will give to both their true energy and spirit. To deceive ourselves in so momentous a concern, would be attended with extreme danger; and knowing our duty and not practising it, would expose us to the severest punishment. Let us, then, *shew* our love of *God*, by *trusting* in him; and our love of *our Saviour*, by implicitly obeying all his commands. If we do this our salvation will be accomplished, and our everlasting happiness secured.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honor, and power, and glory, for evermore.

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## SERMON II.

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ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.—Chap. 11.—Verse 35.

*Jesus wept.*

---

**T**HE tender and pathetic were never delineated in finer or stronger colours than in the chapter of which my text is a part. The soft emotions of pity and affection on the one side, and the regular and uniform dependence of a well-grounded faith on the other, exhibit a scene truly wonderful and astonishing. In whatever light we view the pleasing, the awful subject before us, we cannot fail being affected with a religious sympathy and veneration.

Lazarus, of Bethany, (whose integrity and virtue rendered him the object of his Saviour's friendship,) was taken dangerously ill : his sisters immediately sent unto Christ, "saying, " Lord, behold he whom thou lovest, is sick."

They had often been eye witnesses of the many miracles which our blessed Saviour wrought for

the benefit of strangers ; and concluded he would not be less anxious for the welfare and comfort of one whom he esteemed a particular friend.

And here let us reflect awhile on the exalted character of that man who is honoured with the friendship of his Redeemer ! a character, which we may all acquire in the same degree of perfection with Lazarus, if we as zealously pursue the same upright and virtuous conduct.

However great the concern of the two loving sisters might have been for their sick brother, our Saviour purposely delayed visiting them till after his death. Thoughts of the highest moment and concern fill the breast of the immaculate Son of God. Designs of a most beneficial tendency to his followers occasion that delay, which at first sight may perhaps appear cruel and unkind.

We may take a short view of the afflicted and disconsolate family for the loss of one whose merit endeared him to all his acquaintance. We may observe the melancholy and desponding looks of Martha and Mary, weeping for a kind and affectionate brother, and regretting the absence of that only Friend who could have raised him from the bed of sickness, and stopped the chilling grasp of Death. This scene must strike home to our hearts, as we must all, one

time or other, take a part in it; and when the trying period arrives, may the grace of God comfort and support us under it.

After Lazarus had laid in his grave four days, our blessed Saviour came to Bethany, "and many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother." Kind and friendly office this to visit the children of sorrow and affliction, in the sad and solemn season of distress! Then is the time to administer consolation; then is the hour for real benevolence and true charity, to exert their healing influence on the broken and sinking heart of wretchedness and woe. And believe me, to a well disposed and feeling mind, there is as much solid comfort and satisfaction in weeping with those that weep as there possibly can be in rejoicing with those that rejoice.

When Martha heard of Jesus's arrival, she ran out in haste to meet him; and with all the expressive eloquence of affection and regard, exclaimed, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But I know, "that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

Blessed faith this, in the power of that Almighty Being, who has promised that he will never leave nor forsake those who trust in him!

Jesus assures her, that her brother shall rise again ; and when despair (amidst the conflict of contending passions, to which our imperfect frame is subject,) seems to get the better of hope, he thus addresses her : “ I am the Resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.”

This divine and solemn declaration, no doubt, gave the most salutary comfort to the mind of Martha, and served to dispel in some degree the melancholy and gloom which darkened her understanding.

This strong and energetic language must have awakened her sensibility, and thrown a large body of light on her mental eye, giving an additional strength to her faith.

And now our Saviour demands of them the place where they had laid the body of Lazarus. “ They say unto him, Lord, come and see.”

“ And Jesus wept.”

Most expressive regard ! most exalted love ! Seeing the general distress that prevailed ; observing the heart-felt anguish of the two sisters ; and having himself a sincere affection for the deceased Lazarus, the Son of Righteousness shed those tears which do the highest honour to

the feelings of humanity and compassion : and here we may justly exclaim, most gracious Lord! thou who (whilst on earth) hast often wept at others woe, melt down the hard, the stubborn hearts of those who know no sorrows but their own ; and who never feel for the misery and wretchedness of thousands that groan around them.

At length they come to the grave. The surrounding multitude, in awful silence, fix their eyes on Christ, who, looking up to heaven, thus addressed himself to his Father : “ I thank thee  
“ that thou hast heard me ; and I knew that thou  
“ hearest me always ; but because of the people  
“ which stand by, I said it, that they may be-  
“ lieve that thou has sent me.”

“ And when he had thus spoken, he cried with  
“ a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he  
“ that *was* dead came forth, bound hand and  
“ foot with grave clothes : and his face was  
“ bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto  
“ them, loose him, and let him go.”

What must have been the feelings of the spectators at this moment ! How must their hearts have been stricken with awe, wonder, and astonishment ! To see the dark and gloomy grave open its wide and ponderous jaws, and give up the dead ! To see the departed and much la-



mented Lazarus again revive! To see a lost and affectionate brother restored to his weeping, his disconsolate sisters! To see a kind and sincere friend given back to his acquaintance!

But chiefly, how must their minds be charmed on viewing the divine complacency (no doubt) visible in the countenance of Christ, who was the author and finisher of all this!

A sight so very uncommon, a sight so truly amazing, could not fail producing the desired, the wished for, success.

“ Many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.”

What indeed, but the most daring infidelity; what, but the most consummate folly, could have resisted the credentials of the Son of God, so amply, so fully displayed in this “labour of love.”

Our blessed Saviour’s delay (when sent to by the distressed sisters) must now appear in the brightest colours, as a public is ever to take place of a private good. Thus was the Son of God glorified, and thus were many believers added to the Church of Christ.

From this truly interesting scene, we may make the following reflections:

If the amiableness of virtue; if the solid,

intrinsic worth of piety have any charms, let us cultivate them with the zeal and ardour that Lazarus did; and, like him, we shall reap the blessed fruits of our toil,—the friendship and love of God: like him, we shall enjoy the most durable, the most lasting pleasure, in having discharged every religious, every moral duty, with satisfaction to ourselves, and with the approbation of Heaven.

If domestic harmony and peace carry with them any real pleasure, and captivating joys; let us, like Martha and Mary, exercise towards each other (as relatives and dependents) the most cordial affection, the most disinterested regard. Their great and unremitted anxiety for a brother's welfare, speaks strongly the love they bore him. Let *our* love speak a language full as strong, full as powerful; let no one violate so sacred a tie, but all discharge the important duty with tenderness, fidelity, and feeling.

When the last and (for a while) gloomy scene opens to our view, when the cold arm of death is raised to part us, I will not say for ever, then, our fortitude and all our resolution will be called into action.

Alas! of all trials whatever, weak and imperfect mortals are too apt to sink under *this*. But why *should* we sink under this short, this transi-



sitory gloom, which will soon be dispersed by that wonderful and amazing flood of light that will break in upon us from the kingdom of a most gracious God, a most merciful Saviour!

Let us (with humble confidence and well grounded hope) resign each other to the dark and dreary mansions of the grave, being well assured, that he who raised Lazarus, he who raised his own precious body from the dead, will also raise us up at the last day, "according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself."

To conclude.—May the substance of our present meditation sink deeply in our hearts. May the several and important duties that have been inculcated, promote in us all the "fruits of good living."—May the interest of the next world always precede the concerns of this, and each action of our lives be regulated by the pure and safe laws of the Gospel.

Under the sacred influence of Christ's holy spirit, may we all so fight the good fight of faith here, as to gain the crown of victory hereafter. Amen.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honor, and power, and glory, for evermore.

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## SERMON III.

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ST. MATTHEW 11.—Three last Verses.

*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.*

*For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

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**AFTER** all the miracles which our blessed Saviour had wrought to prove his divine mission, there were many who shut their eyes against the truth, and continued obstinately impenitent. The inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida, in whose presence he had done many mighty works, instead of being reformed, persisted in their folly and corruption. And Capernaum, for her impiety and prophaness, was told by him, that though she was exalted to heaven, she should be brought down to hell; *i. e.* though she was so

great, so flourishing, and so proud a city, she should be utterly destroyed and brought to nothing. And our Saviour assigns this reason for her fatal overthrow, "If the mighty works which had 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." From this declaration of our blessed Saviour we learn, that unless our conduct in life be equal to the advantages we have enjoyed; unless we improve in virtue and holiness, according to the clear knowledge of our Christian duties, which the gospel has given us, we shall be lost for ever. After his severe denunciation on the prejudiced and infatuated Jews, who had sufficient and repeated opportunities of knowing the truth, and the way, and the life; but who perversely preferred darkness to light, from a daring and bold confidence in their own superior wisdom and abilities; He thus piously address himself to God, "I thank thee O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." So that the wisdom of this world, is foolishness with God; and those

only are qualified to see and practise as they ought, who are *babes*, *i. e.* modest and humble. Let no one then repine at the want of those brilliant talents, which are apt, in the estimation of the world, to dazzle and astonish. An enlightened head does not always produce a good heart; but too frequently leads the possessor of it into the most fatal error and delusion; as evidently appears by the base treatment which Christ received from the pretended wise men among the Jews.

Yet, though conviction did not operate with equal force on the minds of all to whom the words of salvation were spoken, and a blind attachment to ceremonies kept many in a state of slavery and dependence; there were not wanting those who seemed inclined to perform their duty if they were satisfied how and in what manner to discharge it. To all of this description, and to every one who was wandering from the right path, our Saviour delivered the affectionate and pathetic exhortation in my text, "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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

In applying these tender and feeling expressions to our own comfort and advantage, we may with considerable profit investigate their real and true meaning. All those who labour under the grievous and severe burden of their sins, and suffer the keen smart and anguish of various errors and vices, are invited to come to Christ, and he will give rest to their troubled minds. And the pressure of numerous rites, and tedious ceremonies, he will effectually remove, by teaching the penitent and the considerate in what manner they may best serve and please God.

When our Saviour exhorts us to take his yoke upon us, and learn of him, he exhorts us to become his true and sincere disciples. And that we may not be led astray by the doctrines and discipline of other teachers, whose pride and haughtiness served only to seduce the incautious and the unwary, he informs us, that he is "meek, and lowly in heart;" intimating, that a gentle and humble disposition, was the only characteristic of those who would prove themselves worthy his notice and regard. For, whilst ideas of consequence and greatness raise us to a degree of *fancied* importance; a proper sense of our unworthiness will keep us *humble*. And whilst *imaginary* merit fills us with thoughts extravagant and wild, meekness and submission will render

us fit to receive those solid and rational instructions which can alone make us wise unto salvation.

If the kind and merciful Redeemer of Mankind declared himself to be "meek, and lowly in heart," and declared it too, in a manner calculated to make the strongest and most lasting impression on all who profess the name of Christ; what can be said in defence of those who pursue a line of conduct diametrically opposite. Is an anxious desire to reach the highest pinnacle of human power and grandeur consistent with that meekness which Christ universally practised? Is it a proof of our being lowly in heart, when we carry our resentment to such violent extremes as to disturb the peace and comfort of those with whom we are connected, or with whom we associate? These fatal mistakes (for such they are), arise from ignorance of duty; from not *attending* to that sacred voice which speaks to us in every page of the scriptures, and deserves our most serious regard. People are disposed to form a religion for themselves; and to think that difficulties exist where the road before them is very plain and easy to be discovered. To correct this gross deception our Saviour tells us "his yoke is easy and his burden is light." And most assuredly the Christian Religion in all its component parts is free from every thing that is



either troublesome or grievous. It professes to conduct us through the various and difficult scenes of life, with safety, and with success; not by rules, or laws, intricate and puzzling; but such as are comprehensive, easy, and clear. The precepts of our holy institution breathe the most cordial benevolence and philanthropy. Nothing selfish or contracted is to be found in the whole system. We are admonished to do unto others as we would have them do unto us; a law, of such excellent and valuable importance, that if we acted steadily and uniformly upon it, the world would be a paradise of joy and pleasure; and each individual, influenced by the sincerest motives of doing his duty properly, would add to that general harmony which can alone constitute the relative and social happiness of mankind. To do justice, to love mercy, and walk humbly with our God, is another prominent feature in our moral system. And how great the advantages are which flow from the correct administration of justice, whose pure and nice scale weighs in equal balance the affairs and rights of mankind, experience proves every day and every hour. The powers of mercy, when duly exercised, soften the stern frowns and savage resentment of insatiable revenge, and the mild and meek voice of humility prevents the tranquil

and composed breast from feeling those miseries and sorrows which always accompany the proud and imperious. We are encouraged too, on all occasions, to curb the violent sallies of anger, and “to forgive, that we may be forgiven;” and to such a sublime pitch of perfection does our pure and holy religion carry us, that we are taught even to “love our enemies, and to do good to those who *despitefully* use us and persecute us,” after the great example of that Almighty Being who “makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the just and on the unjust.” And the effect produced by such well regulated behaviour lasts to the end of our lives, correcting that harshness and asperity of manner which is apt to lead us into the most fatal misconduct. Why need I mention those repeated lessons which are given to us, to “love as brethren, to be pitiful, to be courteous?” “By this,” (says our blessed Saviour) “shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another;” and “as I have loved you, so ought ye also to love one another.” Can the practice of such a religion as this be otherwise than an easy yoke, and light burden? Can the prosecution of our real interest be attended with *insurmountable* difficulties, when the advantage resulting from the conquest is so lasting and extensive?



But Christianity not only leads us by the hand with pious affection and kind regard through the mazy path of this world, but opens to our view the concerns and glories of another state. Faith, by the wonderful power which she possesses over the human mind, gives to all true believers a foretaste of those joys that are prepared for the righteous in heaven. She shows us the benefits which we enjoy from the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and the only means of securing them. And as Christ himself said, "ye believe in God, believe also in me," we are fully satisfied that natural religion alone is not equal to the great and important task of leading us into the path of eternal life, and of procuring for us the forgiveness of our sins.

The mysterious part of our religion is never to be considered as a burden, either painful or grievous. For our confidence in the merciful goodness of God, will always prompt us to trust in him according to the measure of faith which he may bestow upon us. So that in things which we *do* understand, and in things which we do *not*, our conduct will be governed by such rules as draw a line between the limited powers of the human intellect, and the incomprehensible wisdom of God.

In every point of view we see then, that our

Saviour's yoke is easy and his burden light; since those duties which occur to us in our intercourse with each other, are too explicit to escape us, unless we designedly reject them; and those mysterious truths which we are not able at present to fathom, are reserved for the constant and steady exercise of our faith.

We shall be more sensible of the merit and transcendent excellency of Christianity, if we take a brief and transient view of the religions of other nations. Nothing strikes us with greater force than contrast, which operates like light and shade in a picture, and produces a strong and lasting effect.

In some countries the most impure rites are practised during the celebration of their religious ceremonies; and modesty, which is the distinguishing characteristic of virtue, is totally banished. That the worship of the Deity, who is all purity and perfection, should ever be thus contaminated, is to be accounted for on no principles of reason and reflection. In other countries they fall prostrate and adore the senseless stock, and inanimate stone, carved and adorned by the art of man's device. To these idols of creative folly they look up for safety and protection in the time of danger, and these images, which are not able to move themselves

or shew the least symptom of intelligence, which in the language of the holy Psalmist “ have mouths, and speak not ; eyes have they, and see not ; they have ears, and hear not ; noses have they, and smell not ; they have hands, and handle not ; feet have they, and walk not ; neither speak they through their throat.”— These ridiculous and absurd images are the rude and unaccountable objects of their silly devotion. We may justly add, in the words of the same writer, “ They that make them are like unto them ; and so are all such as put their trust in them.”

But, if our indignation be deservedly kindled against such absurd ideas, and notions of religion, what shall we say of those nations who sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils? Who, from a principle of religion, “ gave the seed of their bodies for the sin of their souls ;” and, without feeling or concern, committed their innocent children to the devouring flame? Our nature starts with horror at the scene of iniquity which such practices and religion give birth to, and we know not in what sentiments sufficiently strong to express our abhorrence and detestation.

Avoiding the cruelty and savage barbarity of those who want the most common tenderness of

humanity, there are not wanting some who place the whole of religion in tedious prayers and long fasts; who think they shall do God service by retiring from the busy and active scenes of life, where they may do good, to the solitary and gloomy cell, where it is not in their power even to attempt it; who spend their days and nights amidst the gloomy horrors of superstition, and as if the road to happiness consisted in mortification and self-denial *only*, refuse themselves the innocent amusements and harmless gratifications of social life.

Are such sentiments as these to be drawn from the pure source of evangelical truth? Can doctrines so ill calculated to promote the welfare of mankind, be comprehended in a scheme of religion that came down to us from heaven? I might proceed to enumerate many other opinions on subjects of devotional exercises, equally erroneous and equally pernicious; but I hope I have said enough to convince you, by the comparison, that Christianity, as she came pure and unadulterated from the hands of our Saviour, is the only true, and by consequence safe, religion; and that if we wish for that peace of mind which passeth all understanding, the religion of Christ *only* can give it; since "there is none  
" other name under heaven given to men, in

“whom and through whom they may receive  
“salvation, but only the name of our Lord  
“Jesus Christ.”

Let us not, however, be led into a fatal mistake when we reflect, that the yoke of Christ is easy and his burden light, by supposing that we may be religious without any labour, and virtuous without any trouble. The life of our Saviour, which is always to be the model by which our own is to be conducted, was employed in doing good to the bodies and souls of men. Private and public devotion received his uniform and regular attention; and vice, in every form and shape, was most severely censured and condemned by him. And whilst he invariably urged the necessity of observing the moral law in all its component parts; he constantly and forcibly commanded them to have *faith*. Still, however, we discover the lightness of his burden and the easiness of his yoke. For what duties can be more agreeable to our nature than those which train us up by regular and sure degrees to virtue, religion, and perfection; and what hopes can be better or more securely founded than those which rest on the sacred promise of God, that he will finally pardon all those who sincerely repent of their sins, and come recommended to him by a firm, solid, and unshaken

faith in his dear and beloved Son Jesus Christ. These are benefits which the grace of God bestows out of his abundant kindness and mercy towards us ; and they are benefits which it will be our own fault if we fail to receive them.

To conclude.—The way to salvation through the merits of our Saviour being clear and open to all who call upon him faithfully, and the happiness of another life depending on our exertions to secure it whilst we continue in this fleshly tabernacle, let us resolutely guard against the evil heart of unbelief. Let not the difficulties of a religious life be magnified to so enormous a size, as to make us believe they cannot be removed. We may all know what we ought to do to be saved, by reading our bibles with proper care and attention ; and when we know the right path to godliness, if we pray to God for the assistance of his holy spirit, he will most assuredly give it us, and enable us to walk worthy of our vocation. All this we may depend on from the voice of Scripture, which is too correct to be mistaken, and too plain to be evaded.

Whilst other nations are lost in the wildest schemes of devotion and superstition, as I have already mentioned, without a just and proper sense of God, and the mode of worship suited to his nature and perfections, we are blessed with



a religion that is freed from the absurdities of Pagan rites and ceremonies, and taught to adore him in spirit and in truth. The situation we are in as Christians should make us thankful for the knowledge we enjoy, and the everlasting advantages we expect to reap from it. And whilst we lament the gross darkness of others, let us piously and humbly walk in the light of divine truth, which it has pleased the Almighty to reveal to us by the mission of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honor, and praise, and power, and dominion, for evermore.

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## SERMON IV.

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ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.—Chap. 11.—  
Verses 21 and 22.

*Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe 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.*

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**WE** are taught in the Scriptures, those sacred oracles of divine truth, that the Almighty will reward every one of us according to our works. That we may not all be so situated as to enjoy the same degree of religious knowledge, is most certain; but it is as certain that our actions must, on all occasions, be suitable to what we know is required of us, as our bounden duty.



Were this not the case, all religion would be matter of indifference ; and we might be induced to suppose, that provided we obeyed the laws of civil society, we might worship the Deity in any manner we thought proper. That these sentiments, wild and erroneous as they are, have sometimes prevailed, is very evident from the actions of too many, and much mischief has ensued from those who have studiously made them the rule of their conduct. To cut up, however, these false notions by the root, we may ask these serious and solemn questions :—Hath God ever revealed his will to mankind? Hath he ever declared in a manner too explicit to admit of the least doubt, how he will be worshipped, and on what conditions he will receive into favor those who *truly* worship him? For unless we establish this fact beyond all controversy, we are doing nothing towards the promotion of uniform and regular acts of Christian piety and devotion. This fact, then, *has* been established in the most extraordinary and miraculous manner, by the mission of our blessed Saviour : “ *He* was the “ true Light, which lighteth every man that “ cometh into the world ; *He* was the Divine “ Word that was made flesh, and dwelt among “ us ;” and *He* it was that went about doing good to the bodies and souls of sinful and mise-

rable men. *He* came from heaven with tidings of eternal salvation to repenting sinners, and taught mankind that God was to be worshipped "in spirit and in truth." All the will of his Heavenly Father, as far as it was necessary for man to know it, *He* most graciously revealed to the world, and assured us that those who believe in *him* as the Mediator and Redeemer of lost man, should be saved; and that no mistake might arise with respect to the nature of that faith which he required of his disciples, he told them repeatedly and earnestly, that obedience to the laws of his holy Gospel could alone render their faith in his merits effectual.

The Son of God, then, taking on himself the nature of man, was commissioned by his Almighty Father to instruct us in our duty, and shew us the way that leadeth to everlasting life. To *his* voice we are to listen with all possible care and attention, and to *his* doctrines we are to submit the direction of our moral and religious conduct. Those doctrines are contained in the Bible, and every one may know them fully and perfectly, if with a pure heart and unprejudiced mind he peruse that sacred page. The consequence of our obedience to the will of Christ will be the forgiveness of our sins, and eternal happiness in the next world after death; and

opposition to the precepts of Christianity, and a neglect of that salvation which our Lord and Saviour hath wrought for us, will expose us to the wrath of God, and to everlasting misery and ruin. But this will appear more clearly as I illustrate the doctrine contained in my text.

Our blessed Saviour, during his ministry, did every thing that tenderness and humanity could suggest to relieve the distresses and alleviate the afflictions of mankind ; and to leave no doubt on the minds of those who saw his actions and heard his doctrines, that he was a Teacher sent from God, he confirmed his authority by numerous and most powerful miracles. Indeed, when John sent two of his disciples to ask him “ who art thou,” instead of returning an immediate answer to the question, declarative of his divine character, he bids them go and tell John the things they had seen and heard, “ that the blind “ received their sight, the lame walked, the “ lepers were cleansed, and the poor had the “ Gospel preached unto them ;” concluding, that all men must allow the person who performed such wonderful miracles to be “ that Prophet “ that should come into the world.” It seems almost impossible that any one should forbear (after seeing the mighty works which Jesus did), exclaiming in the words of Nicodemus, “ No

“ man can do these things which thou doest, “ except God be with him.” To every rational and uncorrupted mind, this appears a most natural expectation. But the voice of truth is not at all times agreeable, and, when mixed with reproof, the hardened sinner starts from it as from a serpent that would sting him ; for vice lays such fast hold on those to whom she is engaged, that it is not a small degree of force that will separate them. Besides, there is a peculiar art and cunning which they make use of who are censured for their faults, and determined to resist all reformation, by which they endeavour to vilify the characters of those who would shew them their errors, and lead them into the right path of duty. This behaviour is most severely condemned by our Saviour, and was particularly directed against himself and the Baptist. When John came as the forerunner of the Messiah, preaching the necessity of repentance, and living in a most temperate and sober manner, *i. e.* “ neither eating nor drinking,” the people to whom he came, instead of admiring the sobriety of his conduct and the purity of his morals, say, “ he hath a devil.” They impute to insanity that regular mode of life, which should have prompted them to have given the more heed to his exhortations and admonitions. When the

Son of Man came eating and drinking, *i. e.* without any rigid austerity or severity of manners, and in a freer way of conversation, they impiously say of *him*, “ behold a man gluttonous “ and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and “ sinners.” So true is it that the best characters are often abused, when an attempt is made to convince the sinner of his wickedness. This perverseness and invincible obstinacy caused our Saviour to “ *upbraid* the cities wherein most of “ his mighty works were done, because they re- “ pented not.” He could not suffer such infatuation to pass unreprieved, or leave men to their own follies and impieties, without pointing out to them the great danger they incurred, and the horrid precipice on which they stood.

“ Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe 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  
“ in sackcloth and ashes.”

Chorazin and Bethsaida were places that had enjoyed, or rather possessed the opportunity of enjoying all the blessings of divine information, and on subjects, too, which can alone fill up the capacity of our intellectual faculties. To them the Son of God had made known the gracious designs of his heavenly Father, and they had seen,



and that frequently, the amazing cures which he effected by a touch, or a single expression. Disorders that had taken the deepest root in the constitution, and baffled the efforts of medical skill, were instantly removed by the command of Christ. Nor could the cold and close grasp of Death confine his captive in the grave, for, at the voice of the Son of God, "he that was dead came forth," to the joy and astonishment of his weeping and grateful relations. These wonders of omnipotence Chorazin and Bethsaida had been assured of, and yet continued impenitent: well, therefore, might our Saviour exclaim, "Woe unto thee Bethsaida! woe unto thee, Chorazin!" And, as a strong proof of his displeasure, he draws a comparison between them and the supposed conduct of other cities, had they enjoyed similar advantages; "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."

Tyre and Sidon were never favoured with the divine presence of the Messiah, but left like other nations to that light which reason furnished, when she had been instructed by the Deity, who never left his creatures without a possibility of knowing their duty. To them the Sun of Righteousness had never risen; *by* them the

voice of Revelation was never heard ; and however gross and depraved their morals might have been, had they seen the miracles which Chorazin and Bethsaida saw, and been present at those merciful instances of divine love and benevolence exerted by our Saviour, they would (he tells us) “ have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” They would have humbly and devoutly broken from those sins to which they had been such abject slaves ; and, by the sincerest contrition for past offences, would have resolved on amendment for the future. They would have discovered the mighty and powerful hand of God in the various actions of our Saviour ; and, convinced of his divinity by his works, they would have received him as the Redeemer of the world, and accepted with joy and with gratitude the gracious terms of salvation, through his most precious blood. Such would have been the effect produced by the doctrines of Christ on the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, had they been delivered to them with the same degree of evidence as they were delivered to Chorazin and Bethsaida. And admitting this extraordinary difference of behaviour in the two people, when the sacred voice of divine truth had been heard by both, with equal opportunities of seeing and hearing what was done and said among them ;

our Saviour makes this important and solemn decision : “ Therefore I say unto you, it shall “ be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the “ day of judgment, than for you.”

The wickedness that universally prevailed at Tyre and Sidon was of a dark and deep cast ; and ignorance and impiety led them astray from the right path of duty ; but as their situation deprived them of the advantages which Chorazin and Bethsaida possessed, and as they would have altered their conduct had they been blessed with the glorious light of the Gospel, at the awful and tremendous day of judgment their condition will be better than the condition of those who knew their duty but never practised it, and who wilfully shut their eyes against conviction.

In applying the doctrine contained in the text to ourselves, we may observe, that our blessed Saviour makes a most important distinction between those who have *heard* of him, and those who have not ; between those who have lived in darkness and in the shadow of Death and those who have the means of learning that state of salvation into which we are called by the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Nor does he, during his ministry, cease to inculcate the *improvement* of those talents which have been committed to our charge, and the great dan-



ger we run into if we carelessly *neglect* to improve them. To whom much is given, of them, he tells us, much will be required; and to whom little is given, of them will be required little. Not that any of us can expect the pardon of our sins unless we earnestly endeavour to deserve it. Our several abilities will determine how far we were capable of knowing our duty, or not; and according to the regular and uniform exertion of those abilities, must we all expect punishment or reward. Our present situation is like that of Chorazin and Bethsaida, and we must take care that our final sentence be not the same. We have the Bible open for our perusal, where all the gracious acts of our heavenly Father, for the benefit of his creatures, are placed before us. We have the awful truths of the Gospel of Christ opened for our inspection, and these instructions and lessons, which our Saviour delivered in person at Chorazin and Bethsaida, are most faithfully delivered to us by the holy Apostles and Evangelists. In *their* writings we read of the birth, life, and crucifixion of Christ; and the end and design for which all those mysterious actions commenced, which accomplished our redemption from sin and from everlasting death. *They* also enable us to hear, through the voice of historical truth, the words of our Saviour, who

has promised salvation to all true believers. And the moral and religious duties which Christianity requires of us, such as the love of God and of our neighbour, and the doing to others as we would have them do unto us, are placed before us in so clear a light, that no one can plead ignorance or want of powers to discharge them. Above all other precepts, however, we learn this wonderful, this amazing truth, that the Son of God came into the world to save sinners, by dying for them; and that all who would benefit by his death must walk in newness of life, renounce their former vicious courses, and place all their hopes of pardon and forgiveness in the sacrifice of Christ, rendered effectual by repentance and faith. They must be united or they will be useless. Faith will never save us if we continue in our sins, and repentance will be weak and ineffectual, without that life and spirit which it can receive only from a pure and uncorrupted faith.

Placed in these circumstances, let us remember we have much to answer for. No darkness surrounds us, to prevent our knowing the truth as it is in Jesus. The Established Church, of which we are members, and I trust and hope, members from conviction, gives us every possible degree of information that the most timid can require. The eternal existence of God, and

his superintending Providence; the gracious love of Christ, and the atonement he made for the sins of the whole world, with the *conditions* of that atonement, and the comfort and assistance of the Holy Ghost, which all may receive if they pray for it as they ought, have been often and forcibly declared unto you; and in the language of Saint Paul to the Ephesian clergy at Miletus, the ministers of the gospel may truly say, “ We  
“ have kept back nothing that was profitable  
“ unto you; but have shewed you and have  
“ taught you publicly; testifying, repentance  
“ towards God, and faith towards our Lord  
“ Jesus Christ.” Thus much having been done to improve us in religious knowledge, it remains for me to say, that the harvest should answer the labour of the sower. The good seed should not be lost in the ground, or rendered unproductive for want of thought or reflection, but take deep root in the heart, and produce an hundred fold.

To conclude.—Unless our faith in Christ be strong and powerful, and shew its strength and power, by good works, uniformly performed, we shall be as blind to our real and true interest as those cities which have furnished us with reflections for the present discourse, and what Saint Peter declared to some of his converts,

may very properly be said to all negligent and thoughtless Christians, “ It had been better for “ them, not to have known the way of righteous-  
“ ness, than, after they have known it, to turn  
“ from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”

Let us then act wisely, and not convert to our confusion and ruin, through inattention and folly, those great blessings we now enjoy. We are not to live in this world for ever. Through the valley and shadow of Death, we are to pass to an eternal inheritance. And let us never forget, that it is in our own power to make that inheritance a scene of everlasting happiness, through the mercies of God, and the merits of our Redeemer Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power, and glory, for evermore.

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## SERMON V.

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ST. LUKE.—Chap. 16. Verse 25.

*But now, he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

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**T**HERE cannot be a greater or more satisfactory pleasure to a rational mind than that which results from a regular and serious perusal of the holy Scriptures. To trace the manifold goodness of the Almighty in his dealings towards the children of men ; to observe the dawning of that glorious, that marvelous light, which illumined a wretched, a benighted world, exhilarates the animal spirits, at the same time as it speaks comfort to the soul.

When the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us ; when the Son of God quitted the native glories of his Father's kingdom, and for a while took our nature upon him, he used the most tender, the most healing methods, to eradi-

cate vice, and improve the sacred cause of neglected virtue. Knowing all the secret windings and intricacies of the heart; knowing the malevolent dispositions of his enemies, and the sincerity and faith of his true friends, he delivers his admonitions and reproofs under the pleasing and thin veil of parables. By this scheme of doctrine he defeated the base designs of the former, and added strength and information to the latter.

In the chapter of which my text is a part, our blessed Saviour reproves the hypocrisy and covetousness of the Pharisees. He represents to them the great danger of trusting in riches, which, though they may do many services in this world, will be of no use in the next. He endeavours to raise their affections above the mean, the sordid enjoyments of sensual pleasure, and to fix them on that permanent, that solid treasure in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

But finding that many of his hearers were enraged, and displeased with his conduct, he, in his usual manner, checks their pride, and combats their false notions of greatness, in the following parable:

"There was a certain rich man, which was



“ clothed in purple, and fine linen, and fared  
“ sumptuously every day.”

What an object of envy and admiration! On what a rock of happiness and safety is this favourite of fortune situated! Behold, what a multitude of friends surround him, all anxious to promote his pleasures and gratify his ambition! Thus Herod, decked in all the pomp and splendour of royalty, harangued his tribe of fawning sycophants, and thought himself more than mortal. Thus the impious Belshazzar, in gorgeous state, sat on his throne at Babylon, and, swelling into greatness by the fulsome blasts of flattery, feasted with his pampered nobles,

Now, sad reverse, view a person in all respects very opposite, very different.

“ And there was a certain beggar, named  
“ Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of  
“ sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs  
“ which fell from the rich man’s table: more-  
“ over the dogs came and licked his sores.”

Poor unhappy object! The father perhaps of a little family, who have no other means of support than what is derived from his own labour and industry. The days of health were days of prosperity, when he rose with the lark to begin his toil, which ended only with the



setting sun. But alas ! those days are no more, and in a most loathsome condition of disease and poverty, we see him now, begging to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Begging only to feed on the refuse of a table which groaned under the weight of useless superfluities and foreign dainties. No doubt this miserable heir of affliction, this child of sorrow, was the sport and derision of the rich glutton, and a jest and ridicule of all around him.

Such, I need not here tell you, is often the situation of mortals in this world. Whilst some bask in the gay sunshine of ease, affluence, and plenty ; others, are shivering under the keen, the chilling blasts of poverty and wretchedness.

But let us for a moment quit sight of this vale of sorrow and trouble, and view the men before us in the other world, where externals will profit nothing, and we shall be considered only as good or bad. " And it came to pass that the beggar " died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's " bosom."

Blessed state this, for penury and patience to look up to, when all their cares and all their sorrows are no more ! Though clothed in rags, and subject to the insolent rebukes of pride, the haughty language of the great, and the contempt

of all in this world, how are they comforted, and how justly rewarded for their sufferings, in the next!

Murmur not then ye poor, at the wrongs ye sustain! In patience possess your souls; be rich in good works; and by honesty and labour journey on with content through life, and your Father which is in heaven will give you an eternal inheritance with the saints, in that state, which will soon begin and never end.

You see, then, the future condition of the neglected, the despised Lazarus; and you may see the exit and disposal of the son of riot and debauchery.

“The rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell, he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

What an amazing change is this! How are the mighty fallen from their pinnacle of false glory and fancied security! He, who a few hours before, was the greatest among the sons of men, and trampled on the miserable and wretched Lazarus, now sees the object of his scorn mixing in the society of angels, and himself thrust down into the gulph of everlasting misery, “where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Such a sight as this

called forth all his feelings, and in an agony of misery and torture he exclaims, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

How humiliating is distress! How different is the language we use when under the iron scourge of adversity, or when exercising the power and consequence of authority and might! Now, the once detested beggar becomes the subject of envied happiness, and the lordly tyrant is the poor and distressed petitioner. "But Abraham said, son, 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. And besides all this, between us and you is a great gulph fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

This declaration stings him to the very soul; and he recollects in an instant, the ill use he had made of his immense wealth, and accumulated treasures. He reflects on the morals of those relations whom he had left behind him, pursuing in all respects the same line of conduct with himself.

“ Then he said, I pray thee therefore, Father, that thou wouldst send him to my father’s house ; for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”

What an additional weight of misery must these thoughts create! He well knew the principles he had instilled into his brethren ; principles, subversive of mercy, justice, and equity, and wished, if possible, to turn them from the error of their ways, and save their immortal souls from those everlasting flames with which he himself was consuming.

“ Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them.”

As if he had said, they have the sacred scriptures, those pure, and true oracles of God, to guide them in the path of virtue, and warn them against the false, the glittering baits of sin. ’Tis in their own power to act rightly ; ’tis in their own power to do the will of God in the world below, and to reap the blessed, the glorious fruits of their sincere, but imperfect labours, in the regions above.

“ And he said, nay, father Abraham ; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.” If a messenger from the gloomy mansions of the grave should visit them, terror

and awe would seize their afflicted souls, and the ways of truth, which they have not known, would appear in their native lustre and brilliancy.

Abraham, who well knew how far conviction was to be wrought on minds totally depraved by any supernatural appearances, replies, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

If the voice of reason and revelation can produce no kind of reformation in your brethren; if the writings of Moses, immediately inspired by the holy spirit of God, claims no regard or attention from them; if the animated eloquence and prophetic strains of those holy men sent by the Almighty to instruct, improve, and reform his creatures, are treated by them with scorn and derision; be assured, nothing, however extraordinary or miraculous, will influence their practice or enliven their faith.

You may for a moment turn your thoughts on the Israelites in their passage through the wilderness, and be soon convinced of the truth of the Patriarch's strong assertion.

What great, what amazing wonders were there wrought in behalf of people, still obstinate, perverse, and rebellious! Pure streams of water gushed out of the hard and flinty rock to allay

their thirst ; manna dropped down from heaven to support them ; a pillar of a cloud by day kept the scorching heat of the sun from burning their tired limbs ; and a pillar of fire by night guided their wandering steps through a dreary, wild, and dark wilderness. But, did all these separate and distinct acts of mercy lead them to a conviction or belief of the invisible power which protected and supported them ? No,—their hearts were hardened, and they continued to provoke him to anger by their defection and idolatry.

We may now draw these few conclusions from the parable before us.

Uniformity in civil and religious conduct is the sure road to present and future happiness. Our situation in this world, as to poverty and riches, has no manner of concern with our situations in the next, where all distinctions will have an end, and we shall be punished or rewarded according to our works, not according to our different and external appearances.

Let these serious, these important truths, sink deep into the hearts of those who are mighty in wealth and greatness, that they may, in time, feed the hungry, cloath the naked, visit the sick, and be friends to the fatherless and widows in their affliction.

Let the poor and needy never murmur or



repine at their lot, but labour diligently to provide for their respective families, and the Lord will reward them, if not in this world, most certainly with Lazarus in the next.

To conclude.—Let us all reverence and regard the holy scriptures, those fountains of living water which spring up into everlasting life. Let us love, peruse, and practise them. If you do this, you will want no motive to regulate your whole behaviour by those sacred rules; but will in all things obey that God who has promised that he will never leave, never forsake those who call on him faithfully.

If you persevere in treading the paths of piety and virtue, the Holy One of Israel will be your constant protector. He will guide you with his spirit in the present vale of trouble and sorrow, and hereafter reward your fidelity and zeal, with eternal happiness in heaven.—Amen.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power, and glory, for evermore.



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## SERMON VI.

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ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL 6.—Verse 44.

*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.*

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**T**O resist conviction, and to be blind to their real interest, is very frequently the error into which men, with all their boasted powers of reason, are apt to fall. That, free agency must ever attend responsibility, is a truth not to be controverted; since, whatever religious duties may be required of us, our own choice, and not compulsion, must determine the merit or demerit of our conduct. That the light of divine truth must be sufficiently clear to guide our feet into the way that leadeth to everlasting life, is universally acknowledged; and that prejudice and contempt may obstruct the influence and effect of that light, and create a mental darkness, is to be equally admitted. The pinions of human reason are too weak to lift us up to the Deity;

but when, in his abundant mercy and goodness, he is graciously pleased to descend to his creatures, the part they are to act becomes too evident to be either doubted or disputed. The only question to be asked, is, whether the voice that calls us into action be the voice of God or the voice of man? When this is determined, all opposition must cease, and obedience become our bounden duty. In this statement every thing advanced appears clear, plain, and unembarrassed; and the *fatal consequence* of inattention, or wilful resistance to the sacred doctrines of Christianity, must ever attend those who shut their eyes against the truth. Amidst the wonderful miracles wrought by our blessed Saviour to confirm his divine mission, and to prove himself the true, the expected Messiah, the opinions of those who saw his miracles were various and contradictory. Some said, "he is a good man," others, "He stirreth up the people." And after he had fed five thousand with five loaves and two small fishes, many followed him, more from curiosity than from conviction, and hoping to be again benefited by a repetition of the miracle; and this indeed, with no small degree of emotion and concern, our Saviour informs them, "verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracle, but because ye did eat of

“ the loaves, and were filled.” To check their anxious and unremitted attention to temporal affairs, and to awake in them a desire for spiritual things, he adds, “ Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you ; for him hath God the Father sealed.” And addressing them in a figurative style of speech, very usual and frequent among the Jews, Jesus said unto them, “ I am the bread of life ; he that cometh to me, shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” After all that had been said and done to open their eyes, to warn their hearts, and to convince their understandings, they continued the most deplorable captives, to the most invincible obstinacy. And when, neither kindness nor mildness, nor the threats for wilful disobedience, produced any effect, our blessed Saviour assures them “ no man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.” Not that any irresistible force was used by our Saviour, but men are drawn by the powerful, though resistible, grace of God ; which grace is given only to the teachable and well disposed ; not to the perversely prejudiced. The will of God being made known to his creatures, that will is to

operate on their minds by the force of reason, enlightened by revelation ; and all our religious duties must make their strong and deep impression on our hearts and minds by the powerful aid of serious consideration and timely reflection. Hence, on another occasion, our Saviour, speaking of his Father, said, “ If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself ;” intimating, that whoever is not wanting in an honest and sincere mind, will at all times be ready and willing to receive just and reasonable conviction. From our regeneration, therefore, at its first commencement, through every period of our existence, the Divine Spirit sheds on us his sacred influence, by which we are enabled to discharge our respective duties with freedom and with success ; by which also our thoughts are purified, and our words and actions prove strictly just and good. He tracing the difference between those whom our heavenly Father draws by his merciful and gracious dispensations ; and those, who resolutely continue in “ an evil heart of unbelief ;” or, in other words, between those who see and believe, and those who reject every kind of information and instruction whatever ; we shall immediately discover the causes that operated, in producing effects so very contrary.

Why did the people listen with earnest attention to the admonitions and preaching of the Baptist, and declare him to be a Prophet indeed? And why did they so earnestly demand of him, in what manner they were to discharge the respective duties required of them? Because they were fully sensible, by his behaviour and his doctrine, that he was divinely inspired to teach and to reform them. Thus were they drawn to their duty by a proper use of their senses and the exercise of their reason, whilst the Scribes and Pharisees, and the rulers of the people, yielded themselves willing victims to infatuated blindness. Were not the unprejudiced officers equally open to conviction, when they listened with serious attention to the doctrines of Christ, and exclaimed to those who sent them to apprehend him, "never man spake like this man?" The answer returned to this declaration discovers the rooted aversion, and determined infidelity of those who held the reins of power, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" But this people who knoweth "not the law, are accursed." As if learning and skill, without the necessary qualifications of a good heart and honest mind, were alone able to lead us to the knowledge of divine truth. Not so, thought our Saviour, when He

rejoiced in Spirit, and said, " I thank thee, O  
" Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou  
" hast hid these things from the wise and pru-  
" dent, and hast revealed them unto babes ;  
" even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy  
" sight." Thus, we see plainly and evidently,  
that the crafty and politic, the proud and con-  
ceited, are not drawn to the profession of Chris-  
tianity ; but the modest and humble, the meek  
and well-disposed. Such was Nicodemus, " who  
" came to Jesus by night, and said unto him,  
" Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher  
" come from God ; for no man can do these  
" miracles that thou doest, except God be with  
" him." Such was the woman who had laboured  
under a disease twelve years, and who " came  
" behind him, and touched the hem of his gar-  
" ment, for she said within herself, if I may but  
" touch his garment, I shall be whole ;" and such  
was the Centurion who said to Jesus, when he  
was coming to heal his sick servant, " Lord, I  
" am not worthy that thou shouldst come under  
" my roof ; but, speak the word only, and my  
" servant shall be healed." All these persons  
display in their several actions, that love of truth  
and goodness, and that general attention to the  
revealed will of God, which is required of us.  
They appear not to have been hasty in their



decisions, but timid and cautious; observing with due attention every action of Christ, and regarding the doctrines which He delivered as the effusions of divine mercy and benevolence on the minds of those who were disposed to know their duty, and to practise it. On such tempers and dispositions (free from every sinister motive that would obscure the brightest rays of divine truth,) the glad tidings of salvation which the Gospel offers, will at all times produce the desired effect. For when the solid and sacred precepts of Christianity have not their proper influence on the human heart, it arises from their not being mixed with faith in those that receive them. All the obstacles in the way of duty are removed by faith, that worketh by love; that faith which most powerfully assures us, that the ever watchful Providence of God will never cease to protect us, and lead us into the right path, if we love him and keep his commandments. An implicit and uniform confidence in our Almighty Creator, can alone enable us to stem the boisterous tide of adversity, or bear up under the most severe pressure of casual misery and trouble. And when, of his infinite mercy and goodness, it pleaseth the author of our being to reveal himself to his creatures, their hearts and not their passions are to determine the all



gracious method by which he would draw them to their duty with the affection of a most tender parent, “ for like as a father pitieth his children, “ so the Lord pitieth them that fear him ;” and his pity and his mercy towards his fallen creatures are richly exemplified in the astonishing provision that is made to rescue them from the punishment due to sin, and to open the kingdom of heaven to all true believers. And when Jesus said to his hearers, “ my doctrine is not “ mine, but his that sent me,” and “ the words “ that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they “ are life,” he was desirous they should understand, that human learning and wisdom, mixed up with pompous skill and vain subtilty in disputes, which the Scribes employed to catch the applause of men, were not the methods he used to interest their feelings ; but, that the doctrine taught by him, was the plain doctrine of his Father, and calculated to reform their hearts and lives, to shew them the deformity of vice, and the real and true beauty of virtue and holiness. Such doctrine alone can serve to unveil the innate weakness and corruption of man, and prove the concern of our heavenly Father for the eternal happiness of all his penitent and obedient children.

Viewed in this light, we are not to be idle

spectators of all the extraordinary and astonishing events which have confirmed and established Christianity amongst us. We are not to entertain the most distant idea that *indifference* with respect to religious duties will ever pass unregarded or unpunished by that Divine Person who said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." Activity in a good cause must never be relaxed; and industry and perseverance, which can alone give energy and success to our temporal pursuits, will be the most powerful instruments we can use "in working out our own salvation," though it *may* and *must* be "with fearfulness and trembling."

Reverting again for a moment to the words of our Saviour, as contained in the text, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him," it will be necessary to remark, with particular earnestness, that nothing like unconditional election is implied in the expression "except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." The mode of speaking is very similar to another passage in the same chapter, "No man can come unto me, except it were *given* unto him of my Father." Now, the Father *draws* us, or *gives* us to Christ, that we may with true and undissembled sincerity

believe in him, when we are humble, modest, and desirous of instruction; and though the weakness of our understandings may be our misfortune. the perverseness of our wills must be our fault. It appears, therefore, that to be *given* of the Father, or to be *drawn* by him, cannot possibly mean to be absolutely chosen by him to eternal life. Their *unbelief* is represented as their great sin. And when the Comforter is come, our Saviour tells them, "He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me." And again, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now, they have no cloke for their sin;" and in a passage still more strongly expressed, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now, they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." No language can more fully, or forcibly declare, that the only reason why many did not come to Christ, was, not because they were not *elected*, but because they were not disposed in their hearts, through their evil and vicious propensities, to believe him to be, as Nicodemus believed him, "a teacher come from God."

Amidst then the full blaze of light, which revealed religion sheds around us, to lead us out

of the darkness of ignorance and error, and amidst all the advantages we enjoy from an Establishment that derives its power and its efficacy from the source of divine truth, let us not, "like children, be tossed to and fro, and "carried about with every wind of doctrine, by "the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, "whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but let "us endeavour to grow up into him in all things, "which is the head, even Christ." Acting in this manner, with that care and prudence which true wisdom and sound discretion will ever dictate, we shall resolutely adhere to those doctrines that were delivered by Christ himself, and which through the whole period of his ministry, invariably blend the free agency of man with the abundant mercy of God. And whilst, as in duty bound, we support and defend the Church to which we belong, and which, in the language of St. Paul to the Ephesians, "is built upon the "foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus "Christ himself being the chief corner stone;" let us not provoke to anger those who differ from us, but, with the true and undissembled spirit of Christian charity, "do good unto all men." And in this delightful task, for such indeed it will ever be to a real disciple of Christ, our humility must be particularly conspicuous, since

the Lord and Master whom we serve, has declared, "except ye be converted, and become like little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and we are taught to "humble ourselves in the sight of God, that he may exalt us in due time."

To conclude.—We may rest satisfied, that whilst we labour diligently and faithfully to obey the laws of God, as delivered to us in the holy scriptures; and whilst we rest all our hopes of salvation in and through the merits of our blessed Saviour alone, no merciful assistance from our heavenly Father will be wanting to any of his penitent creatures. We have seen who they were that did not come to Christ and receive his divine admonitions, having their minds warped and influenced by the most obstinate pride and self-consequence; and we have seen, also, the humble and meek dispositions of those who were not too wise to be taught, but anxiously desirous to profit by the doctrines and example of our blessed Saviour. Our own hearts must tell us how we are disposed to act in all religious conflicts. Our warfare is awful, and our victory, if we are faithful unto the end, will be glorious!

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honor, praise, and glory, for evermore.

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## SERMON VII.

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15th Chap. of St. Paul's First Epistle to the  
Corinthians.—53d Verse.

*This corruptible must put on incorruption, and  
this mortal must put on immortality.*

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**T**HERE has always existed in the mind of man a strong and active curiosity, which prompts him to search into the nature and essence of those things which appear mysterious. But the same Almighty Power which sets bounds to the sea, fixes also the limits of human knowledge, and says to both, "thus far shalt thou go, but no farther." Where revelation has removed those bounds which the darkness of ignorance had placed between things temporal and things spiritual, our understanding will be considerably enlarged, and our curiosity in this instance will not only be fully gratified, but even applauded by men and by angels.



The state and condition of our souls after death cannot, most assuredly, be matter of indifference to any of us ; and however imperfectly the nature of the soul was understood in former ages, no doubts or difficulties embarrass that awful subject in these times of light and truth. The voice of heaven has declared, that the soul never dies, being composed not of matter, but spirit. Whenever, therefore, it takes its flight from the body, and bids adieu to all the vain and trifling concerns of this life, it wings its way to that destined habitation prepared for it by its Maker, and awaits, in pious expectation, a reunion with the body ; a day of judgment, a merciful decision in its favour, and everlasting happiness. This we know to be truth ; pure undisguised truth. But if curiosity should induce us to ask, in what the happiness and misery of the next world consists, and express a desire to receive a specific and explicit description of both, we have no power given us in the Scriptures to satisfy the demand. Here a veil is drawn which we are not allowed to remove. It is enough for us to know that there are rewards prepared for the righteous in heaven, and punishments for the wicked in hell, without disquieting ourselves in vain, by attempting to sift into the nature of either. Consciousness, then, will never leave



the soul; and that intermediate state between death and a resurrection, will be a state of happiness or misery. Not so great or so complete as will take place at the final adjustment of all things, but yet sufficiently so as to make a proper distinction between the friend of virtue and the slave of sin.

And what, it may be demanded, will become of our bodies? We see them laid in the dust, return to corruption, and at length incorporated with that very dust of which they were originally composed. And is it possible, after so complete a dissolution, that the scattered particles should again unite, and form the same identical frame to which the soul gave life before it took its flight? The same Divine Power that at first formed man from the dust of the earth, can with as much ease *re-unite* all his scattered atoms; for with God all things are possible. So far, then, we may rest securely in the power of God. But an anxious wish to know something more of this intricate and awful subject will tempt us, as it were, to enquire, if the very same body which we see committed to the grave, will, on being united again to the soul, ascend into heaven at the day of judgment? Here, indeed, a question is made very similar to that which St. Paul supposes some of the philosophical teachers to

make to him, when he writes, “ but some man  
“ will say, how are the dead raised up, and with  
“ what body do they come ?” *i. e.* many, who do  
not sufficiently reflect on the great and infinite  
power of God, will be apt to think the resurrec-  
tion of the body an absurd and impossible thing ;  
and to ask how a corrupted and scattered mass  
of matter can ever be raised again, and become  
a body fine and beauteous enough for a glorified  
soul ; or what sort of bodies we can expect at  
the resurrection ? To solve these difficulties,  
and to disperse the thick and dark cloud which  
seems to hang over the mind when it indulges  
such reflections, was the wish and endeavour of  
the great Apostle of the Gentiles. He knew  
that plain *unassisted* reason would lead too many  
into erroneous conclusions on so mysterious a sub-  
ject ; and to make us sensible that the corrup-  
tion of the body after death would be no sort of  
obstacle to its future glorious appearance, he  
mentions the rotten and putrified state of grain  
after it is sown in the earth, which yet springs  
up again, and produces perfect corn. He dwells  
largely on the make and contexture of animals,  
and of men ; and compares the heavenly and  
earthly bodies with each other, pointing to the  
difference which exists between the sun and  
moon, the planets, and the fixed stars, all of

whom were formed from one and the same original matter : “ So also (he adds) is the resurrection “ of the dead.” As if he had said, apply what I have advanced to the resurrection, and see if the same Divine Power that could thus bring flesh, fish, plants, sun, earth, planets, and fixed stars, out of one and the same mass, and all originally out of nothing, cannot be able to raise an incorruptible body out of a corruptible one.

But to leave the matter beyond all possibility of doubt, the holy Apostle, animated with the sublimity of his subject, and desirous of removing every argument that might be used by his opponents against the doctrine which he taught, exclaims, “ behold, I shew you a mystery ; we “ shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, “ in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at “ the last trump ; for the trumpet shall sound, “ and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and “ we shall be changed.”

In these serious and solemn sentiments, St. Paul lays open before us a great and wonderful mystery, that the bodies of all faithful and sincere Christians, whether of such as are alive at Christ’s appearing on the awful and tremendous day of judgment, (as some will certainly be,) or of such as departed this life before that alarming period, will experience a glorious change ;

and the absolute necessity of this change in our bodies, he thus forcibly urges, "for this corruptible *must* put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality." So that whatever degree of sameness our bodies may possess, some alteration will take place in them, that they may be fit to be joined again to our glorified and happy souls; since "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption."

Our bodies then, deposited in the silent and peaceful grave, will return to corruption and to dust; but the sleep of death will not be a dark, gloomy, and *eternal* night of rest. At the sound of the trumpet, they will again awake; not such imperfect and mortal carcasses as we now carry about with us, subject to pain, disease, and misery, but incorruptible and glorious, and such as will be then admitted into the blessed society of saints and angels in heaven.

We have thus traced, from the source of everlasting truth, the Scriptures; the situation of our mortal bodies in a state of corruption; and we have also discovered, from the same divine source, that when these, our mortal bodies, at the general Resurrection, shall again be joined to our souls, they will undergo some extraordinary and wonderful change. What

that change will be, and what an effect it will have on us, is a subject in itself so great and sublime, that we must approach it with all possible humility and reverence. In the sacred page of revelation, I know not any passage that gives to the inquisitive, and, I hope, not *rashly* curious mind, more light on the subject before us than that which treats of our blessed Saviour's Transfiguration.

Wishing to give his dear and beloved disciples some idea and representation of his future glory, he took with him Peter, and James, and John, and retired with them privately into a mountain. In this retirement, "he was transfigured before them," *i. e.* he was changed into the appearance of a glorified body. And "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." And the same heavenly splendour illumined the persons of *Elias* and *Moses*, who were with him on the Mount. This bright and luminous appearance strongly impresses on the mind the change that will take place at the Resurrection; for here we see the corruptible putting on incorruption, and the mortal putting on immortality. Here we see the human body all brilliant and celestial, freed from the load of corporeal matter, and encircled with the rays of divine glory.



From this serious and sacred contemplation, let us now turn to the benefits and advantages which we may all derive from it.

And can there be a greater pleasure, or one that gives more solid and lasting satisfaction to the mind, than to reflect on our future state of happiness in heaven? Can any subject be so truly and so properly deserving the attention of rational beings as *this*? To keep the whole scheme of our redemption, through the merits and death of Christ, always fresh in our memory, is the surest method that can be taken to prevent our falling from our duty in the critical moment of temptation: and to raise our pious and devout thoughts to objects of celestial bliss, is to give them that turn and bent, which will secure our virtue and add strength to our faith. That we must all die, is a self-evident truth. “Man, that is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery: he cometh up, and is cut down like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.” And what can more forcibly describe the *uncertainty* of our existence than the short-lived flower and the fleeting shadow? But though we must all *die*, we shall not die eternally. A victory over the grave is gained by our blessed Saviour; and the gates of Death, at

his command, will fly open, and release all those who were in a state of captivity. To the good and virtuous, these thoughts are a cordial of the greatest comfort and support. They shed a bright and a shining light over the most dark and gloomy scenes of wretchedness and sorrow. To the well-informed mind, which makes religion the frequent and serious subject of reflection, the world appears, as it really is, a strange mixture of misery and joy ; joy, that is seldom uniform and solid ; and misery, that weighs down the poor and afflicted spirit with the keenest anguish.

What then is able, amidst so much anxiety and trouble, to which all are subject, and from which not one of us is completely free,—what, I say, is able to give us that internal strength which is necessary to support us in our journey through this life ? Not the *uncertain* pleasures of worldly prosperity ; but the *certain* blessings of a life to come. All doubts being removed with respect to the immortality of the soul, which never loses its vital principle, but continues to exist after it leaves the body through all eternity, in a state of happiness or misery ; and our anxiety and fears concerning the dissolution of our frail and corrupt bodies, giving no solid reason for real concern or trouble, produce,



when united, that firmness of mind and integrity of behaviour, which nothing on earth can ever shake or destroy.

But we are not to suppose that this composure and strength of judgment is *mechanical*, or the effect of art and contrivance. Steady and uniform action is acquired only, by serious and solemn reflection, on the *necessity* of a good moral conduct: a conduct which forcibly urges us to cultivate virtue out of a pure love of God. For though we may in a moment become vicious, we cannot, in a moment after we have become vicious, become virtuous. Much labour and much trouble will it cost us to turn from the error of our ways. Still, however, the task, though difficult, may be performed by us all; and when we have fortified our minds with correct and just principles of religion, and have invariably endeavoured to act according to those principles, we shall find such rays of divine hope kindling in our souls, as will make us long for immortality. And the thought of death, which, in a state of sin, makes us tremble, will, in a state of true repentance and amendment, make us rejoice. Humbly hoping that his peace was made with his God, the holy Psalmist joyfully exclaims, "The Lord is my shepherd, therefore " can I lack nothing." And such was his con-

fidence and trust in the mercy and protection of Divine Providence, that he adds, " Yea, though " I walk through the valley of the shadow of " death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with " me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me."

Such must be *our* trust and confidence; and the valley of Death, through which we are to walk, can never be productive of terror or dismay, unless we make it so ourselves. " The " *sting* of death is *sin*," and that sting we may prevent striking us, if we are circumspect in our conduct, and resolute in our duty. But if, through our manifold imperfections, and strong propensity to error, it *should* strike us, we may effectually draw it out by repentance. That repentance, however, it is proper to observe, is not the forsaking of sin, when we have lost the powers of committing it any longer. We must see our danger before we are so far gone, as not to be able to avoid it. And, as it would be the most consummate folly for any person who was steering a ship to a particular port, through carelessness and inattention to strike on a rock, and founder in the vast and gloomy deep; so it would be equally a folly in us, who are steering to the heavenly Jerusalem, to quit our direct course through the deceitfulness of sin, and finally make shipwreck of our eternal salvation.

To conclude—As the knowledge of every thing relating to ourselves, both in this world and in the next, I mean as to the state and condition of our souls and bodies, is in a certain degree to be collected from Scripture ; and as I have endeavoured to lay that knowledge before you, in as clear a manner as I could, I hope I have not laboured in vain. They who had doubts *before* will, I trust, *now* have none. They, who thought on death with *fearfulness* and *trembling*, having been told by what means they may remove *both*, will, I hope, apply the remedy, and the disease will give way. And all, who in their most serious moments have had their melancholy reflections on the possible state of the body when deprived of life, must now see the *weakness* of their reflections, and derive strength from the voice of Scripture, and the word of God.

We stand now on the *firmest* ground. We are citizens of this world for a few years only, and we have much to do in that short time. Let us then discharge our respective duties in the best manner we can. Let virtue and religion be our constant companions. Let the love of God, and of our fellow creatures, lead us to true Christian perfection. And then, when the awful moment comes (as come it will) when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mor-

tal shall put on immortality, we may with hope and with faith in the satisfaction and death of our Saviour Christ, look up with confidence to the throne of grace for mercy and for pardon.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honor, and power, and glory, for evermore.

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## SERMON VIII.

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ST. MATTHEW.—Chap. 5.—Verse 11.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

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**I**T is no uncommon thing, to connect happiness with *extraordinary wisdom, great power, and immense wealth*. Through these several channels, one is led to suppose, that a clear and uninterrupted stream of *joy and comfort* must for ever flow. The person who possesses the largest share of sense, seems most likely to combat, with success, all the difficulties and inconveniences of life, and to rise superior to those perplexities which are apt to incommode and distress the less informed and more ignorant. Did wisdom invariably confer on all those who cultivate it such substantial and important advantages, we might conclude, that happiness dwelt with

*her*; but, as the head may be enlightened and the judgment convinced, and yet the heart not amended; we are not justified in drawing the above conclusion? Solomon, with all his wisdom, (and what mortal ever possessed so much,) fell a victim to the delusions of *folly*, and the *wild enthusiasm* of *impure devotion*. We cannot therefore allow, that Solomon, in that state and condition, into which idolatry had plunged him, was a happy man. For, without *integrity* of conduct, no one can be *happy*. *Wisdom*, therefore, which unfolds the several duties we are to perform, as men, and as Christians, unless, at the same time, it influence the *practice* of those duties, will lead ultimately to our everlasting misery. For, to whom much is given, of them will be required the more. There is therefore no reason for those to murmur or repine, whose situations in this world have excluded them from that fund of knowledge, which, whilst it gratifies the curiosity of the possessor, does not always add to his real pleasures.

*Power*, indeed, may appear, at first sight, to claim a considerable share of this world's enjoyments, as well as goods. To command, and to be obeyed, is a distinction so very conspicuous in the classes of civil society, that it often excites no small degree of envy; and the *little*

look up to the *great* with too fond a desire for that eminence which is more troublesome than they can be induced to suppose. They see Herod arrayed in royal apparel, seated on his throne, and making an oration to them; and they hear the people shouting, and exclaiming, "It is the voice of a God, and not of a man." This magnificent sight, and these long shouts of joy and transport, strongly convince them, that happiness must closely and securely embrace the distinguished character, that is the object of them. Let us, however, for a moment, attend to the sequel of the history, and the consequences of that flattery which was offered by the *ignorant*, and received most greedily and foolishly by the *powerful*; "Immediately, the Angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." Thus, you see, *power* is apt to intoxicate those who possess it, and to weave around them the web of destruction amidst all the vain glitter and pomp of empire and majesty. You will not, therefore, sigh for that which so often plants thorns in the breasts of those who have it, and gives to the most favored, a much larger share of misery than comfort.

But, if neither *wisdom* nor *power* confer happiness of themselves, independently of all other



considerations, what shall we say of *riches*? Immense wealth is often thought to bestow on him who is so fortunate as to possess it, every satisfaction and every gratification that the human heart can desire. We read "that the rich have many " friends," and in the multitude of friends must consist our pleasure and our safety. We also discover that those who abound in this world's goods, receive a much greater share of respect and homage than those who are destitute of them. And when we are so advantageously placed in life as to command the love and regard of others, by the essential services which our riches enable us to do them, we cannot fail of being most completely happy. These sentiments sound well, and seem very correct; but no small defect will appear in them on a trifling examination. All the *apparent kindness* and attention which the rich receive from those whom they oblige, is not always real. A mean and sordid interest will frequently deck the face in artificial smiles, and produce that kind of respect which has its foundation in the most consummate hypocrisy. Nor is the man of wealth at all times so full of comfort and joy as we are apt to suppose. If our judgment were to be formed by what people *appear* to be, and not by what they *really are*, we should not perhaps hesitate to pronounce

*riches* and *happiness* inseparable companions. But this is not the case. Haman, who was the chief minister in the Persian Court, and who “sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh, his wife, and told them of the glory of his *riches*, “and the multitude of his children, and all the “things wherein the king had promoted him, “and how he had advanced him above the “princes and servants of the king,” was of all men the most miserable and wretched! His consequence and his wealth were insufficient to procure him even a moderate share of earthly blessings. The public eye viewed him with admiration and envy; but those who were nearest his person, and admitted to a more private intercourse with him, discovered the gloom of his mind, and the inquietude of his heart.

Solomon tells us, “the sleep of a labouring “man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; “but, the *abundance* of the rich will not suffer “*him* to sleep.” He adds also, “There is a “sore evil which I have seen under the sun, “namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to “their hurt. But those riches perish by evil “travel; and he begetteth a son, and there is “nothing in his hand as he came forth of his “mother’s womb, naked shall he return, to go “as he came, and shall take nothing of his

"labour, which he may carry away in his hand,  
 "And this also is a sore evil; that in all points  
 "as he came, so shall he go; and what profit  
 "hath he that laboureth for the wind?" This  
 is no very pleasant picture of the happy effect of  
 riches, which do not at all times give what they  
 are thought to give. "Wo unto you (says our  
 "Saviour) that are rich, for ye have received  
 "your consolation." And the Prophet Jeremiah  
 brings into one point of view, the folly and  
 the vanity of boasting in an ostentatious manner,  
 of *either* of the possessions on which I have so  
 particularly dwelt, "Thus saith the Lord, let  
 "not the wise man glory in his *wisdom*; neither  
 "let the mighty man glory in his *might*; let not  
 "the rich man glory in his *riches*; but let him  
 "that glorieth, glory in this, that he under-  
 "standeth, and knoweth me; that I am the  
 "Lord, who exerciseth loving kindness, judg-  
 "ment, and righteousness in the earth; for in  
 "these things, I delight, saith the Lord."

Where then shall we find that state and con-  
 dition which promises present comfort and future  
 blessedness? If *wisdom*, and *power*, and *riches*,  
 are on all sides beset with so many perplexities  
 and dangers, 'tis worth our while to consider, if  
 any other condition may be discovered which  
 bids fairly to produce them. Our blessed Saviour

himself has pointed out the path we are to walk in, as the only true and certain means of procuring success. He well knew all the infirmities of our nature, and how to guard us against those false and erroneous opinions which sometimes lead the most prudent and wary out of their proper road. From him therefore we shall receive every comfort and consolation that can possibly give us the true peace of God in this present state ; and the assurance of that reward that will attend our virtuous and upright conduct in the world to come. He, of his infinite mercy and goodness, draws all our thoughts from the splendid but false appearance of those objects which promise *happiness*, but end in *misery* : which *seem* to discover real and intrinsic worth, but do not *possess* it. Instead of pronouncing those blessed, who eagerly grasp the sceptre of dominion, and the most boundless power ; or the profound searchers after a vain and useless wisdom, which serves only to amuse the head, but seldom to correct the vices of the heart ; or that sordid class of avaricious beings, who are perpetually heaping up riches, without knowing who shall gather them. He, in a manner the most urgent and emphatical, thus addresses the surrounding multitude, “ Blessed are the *poor in spirit*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

What a gracious and merciful declaration is this, from the mouth of the Son of God himself ! What strength must it give to the faith of the serious and devout ; and how effectually ought it to operate on our uniform and regular practice ! The high and mighty one, who inhabiteth eternity, amidst all the glory and majesty of his heavenly kingdom, looks down with pity and concern on all his creatures, who are anxious and willing to do their duty to the best of their power. The secret workings of their minds, which are concealed from the busy eye of the world, are open to him, who “ is about our “ path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our “ ways.” Who suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground without his permission, and who regards with parental affection and love the most minute of his creatures. “ The *poor in spirit*,” whom the Redeemer of Mankind pronounces blessed, are those who are *modest* and *humble*, in whatever situation of life they may be thrown. Who strive, by honest industry, to correct whatever may be disagreeable or unfortunate in their circumstances ; and who endeavour, as much as in their power, to resist the pressure of the accidents and misfortunes of the present state, by Christian patience, and pious resignation to the will of heaven. They do not, like the haughty



and proud Pharisee enter the temple, and, as if conscious of superior merit, address the Deity in this presumptuous manner : “ God, I thank thee  
“ that I am not as other men are, extortioners,  
“ unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican ; I  
“ fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that  
“ I possess ;” but, like the publican himself, all humility, they stand afar off, lift not up so much as their eyes to heaven, but smite upon their breasts, saying, “ God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” They do not insolently *reject* the last revelation which the Almighty has made by his Son Jesus Christ, as if human reason, unassisted by the divine will, were sufficient to answer all the purposes of instruction, and teach us effectually how to discharge every duty which is required of us. Sensible of their own poor and weak endeavours, though exerted with the very best intentions, they trust in God alone for that gracious influence of his holy spirit, which, like the morning dew, at the same time refreshes and animates the enlightened heart of all true believers. The *poor in spirit* are never induced by any unfeeling acts to do the least injury to their neighbours ; or, from ungenerous motives, prevailed upon to think unfavourably of their conduct. *Suspicion* never throws in their way her *dark and gloomy surmises* ; and *resentment* and

*displeasure* keep at a considerable distance from their *mild, placid, and tranquil* presence. The *poor in spirit* look around on the gay and glittering scenes of life without any painful emotions or longing desires. With hopes full of immortality, they see *beyond* the grave; and are convinced, from the express words of divine truth, that every thing, however apparently *unpromising* and *unpleasant*, will work together for *good* to those who love and fear God. Such an impression does religion make on their minds, and so powerfully does it operate in producing good will towards men, (without which, indeed, their piety would be hypocrisy, and their devotion a deceit,) that, like the true charity which St. Paul describes in his Epistle to the Corinthians, they suffer long, and are kind; they envy not; they vaunt not themselves; they are not puffed up; they do not behave themselves unseemly. They rejoice not in iniquity, but rejoice in the truth. They bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things.

Such are the *poor in spirit*; characters, that may have nothing to attract the applause and admiration of an ill-judging multitude; but which, in the sight of God, are of great price, for of such, he informs us, is the kingdom of heaven; those regions of eternal bliss and glory



being open to all such as come thus prepared by their *meekness, patience, faith, and universal benevolence*, to enter into the everlasting joy of their Lord.

Our Saviour, in his parables, conveys to us the necessity of not dwelling too much on *worldly distinctions* in our estimate of *future happiness*; and more particularly in his parable of the *rich man and Lazarus*. We see the *wealthy glutton* in a place of torment for making an improper use of those riches which providence had given him for other purposes than those of *luxury, pride, and extravagance*. And we see the *poor, meek, and humble Lazarus*, carried by angels into *Abraham's bosom*: carried to a place of never ceasing *joy, rest, and glory*, as a reward for that *poor, modest, and humble spirit*, which attended him through life, and rendered him supremely happy after death. To acquire this spirit of *gentleness and goodness*, we need only read the page of sacred history, which would unfold to us the great advantages of a *religious life*; I do not mean a *retirement* from the active scenes in which we must, and ought to be engaged; but a *serious attendance on the public worship of the Deity*, which would not only enable us to *know* our duty, but also encourage us to put it in *practice*. A neglect of the Church, leads to a neglect of *all moral conduct*; and you will

find, that the most *abandoned* and *flagitious*, are generally those who make the sabbath a day of sport, and endeavour to shake off all the restraints of religion, that they may more freely gratify every *inordinate* and *unruly passion*. Can such as these expect favor at the hands of their maker, or hope for admission into the mansions of the blessed after death? Can the irreligious and profane, the impure and the ungodly, expect that mercy and pardon will await them in the *next world*, when they have done nothing in this to deserve either? Can any of us suppose, that when our Saviour pronounces the *poor in spirit* to be *blessed*, that he will, notwithstanding, indiscriminately confer a blessing on others also who are of an *opposite character*? Such a supposition is absurd in the extreme, for the good *only* will be finally rewarded, and the pure in heart *only* will see *God*.

To conclude.—Whatever opinion we may be apt to entertain of the sentiments of others on religious subjects, and whatever degree of credit we may be disposed to give to their assertions, the declaration of our Saviour must always have its due force and authority. And how are his declarations to be known, but from the word of his holy gospel? *There*, and *there only*, the voice of revelation speaks to us, with all the eloquence of *truth* and *conviction*. Of *truth*, which proceeds

from the mouth of the Redeemer of Mankind ; and of *conviction*, which arises from the *prophecies* and *miracles* which preceded his *advent*, and attended him in the whole course of his *ministry* whilst on earth. That it is our bounden duty to receive and to obey the doctrines of Christ, cannot be denied. Those who do *both*, as they ought, will soon discover of what profession they are, by the *fruits* of the *spirit*, which, (in the language of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians,) are "*Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ;*" and the Apostle adds, " Against such, there is no law ;" intimating, that *all* who cultivate such a temper and disposition, will preserve themselves from *guilt* ; and, by sure consequence, from every kind of *punishment*. Let us, therefore, " Lay aside all *malice*, and all *guile*, and *hypocrisies*, and *envies*, and all *evil speakings*, " and, as new born babes, let us desire the sincere milk of the *word*, that we may grow thereby." If (by God's grace) we endeavour to do this as we ought, we shall secure our everlasting happiness in heaven, through the merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power, and glory, for evermore.

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## SERMON IX.

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ST. LUKE.—Chap. 15.—Verse 29.

*Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.*

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**T**HE tempers and dispositions of people are so very strange and uncertain, that it would puzzle the most acute philosopher to account for their various workings and operations. Self-interest, that sordid, mean, (and when carried to the extreme) unchristian principle, has been productive of much envy, malice, and ill-nature. From this source has flowed a bitter stream, fraught with the most deadly poison. Public no less than private societies have felt its baneful influence; and, perhaps, a considerable share of the miseries, which on all sides surrounds us, derives its origin from this muddy, this impure fountain.

“ There was a certain man had two sons, and  
“ the younger of them said to his father, father,

“give me the portion of goods that falleth to me, and he divided unto them his living.”

What a natural picture of human life is this! A young, giddy, and thoughtless youth, anxious to break from the bonds of parental authority, rushes into the wide world, without a guide, without a friend! Buoyed up with the delusive hopes of fancied security and sure success, his gilded bark sails on in triumph, fanned by the softest gales of pleasure, of expectation! But alas! he scarce reaches the midst of the ocean, when the storm begins to lower, the tempest to howl. The dreadful rocks of luxury and dissipation on all sides surround him. In vain he strives to stem the opposing tide. In vain he calls for help: not one friendly star shines in the whole hemisphere. All is darkness! all is horror! His weak and shattered bark, unable to bear up against the fury of so enraged, so boisterous an element, founders in the vast abyss.

We now see him cast on a dreary and desolate island, surrounded with misery, distress, and famine. He, who a few days since had a multitude of servants to attend him, is now forced to serve an austere master himself, for a wretched, a precarious subsistence. He, who lately feasted on the most delicious dainties that art and refined luxury could procure, “would fain have

“ filled his belly with the husks that the swine  
“ did eat ; and no man gave unto him.”

How great, how strange a reverse of fortune, have you here painted in the most glowing colours! How sudden is the transition from affluence to penury, and from happiness to extreme misery ; and all owing to the baneful effects of imprudence and indiscretion.

“ When he came to himself ”—when the awful moment of reflection arrived, which forced him to look within, and see the ruin and misery which his former vicious conduct had brought upon him, he exclaims, “ I will arise, and go  
“ to my father, and will say unto him, father,  
“ I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,  
“ and am no more worthy to be called thy son.”

Many are to be met with in the world, who, like the prodigal son, tread the gay paths of folly and dissipation, till sorrow and anguish overtake them. Many pluck the roses of pleasure without thought, and never consider the thorns that surround them, till they are stung to the heart. Then they awake from their almost fatal lethargy ; then they begin to view their dangerous situation with all its accumulated horrors, and start at the destruction which seems to threaten them. Think on this, ye gay and thoughtless libertines, who revel in riot and



debauchery, and turn night into day, for the gratification of your rude, your sensual appetites. Think on this, ye giddy youths, who refuse to listen to the voice of wisdom, (“charm she ever “so wisely,”) and who rush headlong into infamy and ruin. Think, and tremble at the perdition that awaits you, without a sincere, a speedy repentance.

We may now for a moment take a view of the wretched, the afflicted family, on hearing of the distress and wickedness of this young profligate, without knowing, or even suspecting his reformation.

And here, what a scene of misery presents itself to us. A disconsolate and aged father sinking into his grave with all the bitterness of sorrow. A fond, tender, and indulgent mother who had lavished all her care and affection on this darling of her heart, weeping in the anguish of her soul, to see her flattering hopes blasted in the bud. Vain are the soothing words of friendship; vain are the tender exertions of domestic consolation. The wickedness of one part of the family brings misery on all.

Amidst this general scene of mourning and woe, how transporting was the news which informed them that he who was *lost* to all sense of shame and honour, was again *found*, returning

from the error of his ways, and repenting of his folly ; that he who was *dead* to every idea of virtue and duty, was *alive* to their most tender and delicate feelings. Such wonderful intelligence, (like the sudden blaze of the sun, amidst the sullen gloom of storm and tempest), dissipates their sorrow, and banishes their care. The good old man, impatient of delay, and eager for an interview, runs towards him, “ and falling on his neck, kissed him.” Here, dissolved into tears, and struck with astonishment at the returning love and affection of his father, he falls on his knees, and with all the bitterness and compunction of guilt and misery, owns his folly, and implores for pardon and forgiveness. The father (without opening his wounds to make them bleed afresh), with a most tender, a most cordial embrace, seals *both*. Nor satisfied with this strong, this convincing proof of his regard, he orders his servants “ to bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and a ring for his hand, and shoes for his feet. And bring hither (he exclaims) the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry.” Such generous orders were soon obeyed, and all was harmony, all was gladness. Music and dancing is heard through the whole village, and every heart joins in the general mirth.

Amidst this joyous scene of universal festivity, the elder brother, returning home from his business, "called one of the servants, and asked "what these things meant?" On being informed, envy, malice, revenge, and ill nature took possession of his breast, and he refused to go in, refused to join with them on an occasion which ought to have given him the most supreme felicity. Such behaviour always attends on narrow and contracted minds, who think of no bliss, but that which centers in themselves. His father, hurt at the cruelty of his conduct, and mortified at his unkindness, went out to him, and with a kind and benevolent look, intreated him to come in, and welcome his brother on his arrival. But, how useless is admonition or persuasion to minds that have no feelings. To talk to the selfish, of kindness and humanity, is to throw pearls before swine. Instead of complying with a fond parent's request, instead of congratulating him on the recovery of a child from the jaws of ruin and disgrace, he, with much arrogance and pride, enumerates his own virtues as a fine contrast to his brother's failings: "Lo, "these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandments, and "yet, thou never gavest me a kid, that I might "make merry with my friends." And here, be

it observed, that whatever merit, or whatever virtues the elder brother might fancy he possessed, the want of charity, which is the bond of peace, and of all virtue, shews him in no better light, than as tinkling brass, or a sounding timbrel. But, not contented with sounding his own praise, he with artful design and malicious intent, brings to the father's recollection all that scene of disorder, riot, and lewdness, which had nearly proved fatal to his peace of mind, before his son's happy reformation.

“ But, as soon as this thy son was come, who  
“ hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou  
“ hast killed for him the fatted calf.”

Base, ungenerous behaviour! Are the arrows of persecution to be shot at one brother by another? Is the hand which ought to protect and defend us, to be raised against us? His brother had seen his fault, repented, and was endeavouring (by the help of parental affection) to climb the arduous and craggy rock of virtue; and ought he to be pulled back by the hand of him who had so lately professed himself her constant admirer? If he really loved and practised virtue, as he pretended to do, he ought to have encouraged its growth in a soil from which it had been long banished.

Happy are we to find that the goodness of the father's heart triumphed over the mean, the

sordid designs of the elder brother ; and happy are we to see the attacks of malice and ill nature defeated by the firm and steady exertions of justice and equity.

From what I have thus faintly represented to your notice and observation, with a view to the temporal interest and concerns of mankind, the following lessons may be drawn :

The younger part of my audience (from the example before them) may learn to avoid the ill effects, the pernicious consequences of bad company ; and to prize the kind admonition, and seasonable instructions of their parents, whose age and experience enable them to point out the road that leads to happiness, the things that make for their eternal peace. Be not therefore wise in your own conceits ; never suppose that you are equal to the task of regulating your conduct at a period when all the care and all the prudence of riper years is necessary to guide your frail, your tender bark through the waves of life. Be at all times cautious with whom you associate, and enter into friendship with no one whose character (for virtue and honesty) will not bear the strictest, the most severe scrutiny. When, through a false presumption, a mistaken confidence, you fall into the snare of folly and imprudence, see your error before it be

too late, and return to your duty with that serious, that manly repentance, that need not be repented of. Having acted wrong never be ashamed to own it with that firm, that fixed resolution on future amendment, which will infallibly shew the sincerity of your intentions, and the interest you wish to establish in the cause of neglected virtue.

They among you, who act in the great and most important character of father or mother, will do well to copy (from the model before them) the soft, the amiable features of benevolence, affection, and charity. If a child, whose situation in life, may have exposed him to more than ordinary temptations, should fall from his duty, and with all the eloquence and contrition of a true, a real penitent, return again and implore your pardon, remember, you are ordered by the Gospel of Christ, to forgive him. Remember likewise what the Apostle St. James tells you, "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, saveth a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." No excuse therefore is to be made for those parents who persecute an offending child with malicious severity, and drive him to the worst extremities, such as often end in his own shameful and ignominious death, and the disgrace of all the family. Per-



chance had he been received into favour, he might have been an honourable member of society, a credit to himself and to his country.

And now, let me advise all brothers and sisters to "be kindly affectioned one towards another," and as the time is but short that they are to spend in this world, to make it as happy and comfortable as possible. If, like the character we have seen before us, any one wishes to build his own interest on the basis of another's ruin, all will be disorder, all will be confusion; and a house, thus divided against itself, will never stand with any degree of credit or satisfaction. But, if you make each other's interest the common interest of all; if your actions have no other design than the general prosperity and welfare of the whole family; all will be harmony and peace. Then will you experience "how good, how joyful a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Then will each private family be what the Christian Church was in its most pure state, "of one heart and one mind." Then may you expect that your honest endeavours will be crowned with success, and that each day, will be a day of real, of uninterrupted felicity.

May what I have said have a proper influence on your minds, and bring forth in you all the

fruits of good living ; so that, having discharged each relative, each social duty, with justice, with fidelity, you may, as good, as faithful servants, be admitted into the joy of your Lord, to dwell and reign with him for ever and ever.

**Amen,**

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power, and glory, for evermore,

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## SERMON X.

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1 KINGS.—Chap. 12.

Latter part of the eleventh Verse.

*My Father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.*

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**AFTER** a reign strongly marked with wisdom and with folly, Solomon (having, as we may charitably suppose, seen and repented of his misconduct,) closed his eyes in death; and his son Rehoboam mounted the throne of Israel. Scarcely was the new king proclaimed when all the congregation assembled, and thus addressed him: “Thy father made our yoke grievous; now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.” This request seems charged with all that mildness, justice, and equity, which became dutiful subjects; and for the present moment appears to

have have been received as such by the King, who, with great prudence, makes the following reply : “ Depart yet for three days, and then “ come again to me.” This important interval was most judiciously employed in consulting with the old men, who stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and whose advice he was disposed to follow in an affair of the utmost consequence to himself and his kingdom. Having had the advantage of age and experience, these wise statesmen unanimously give him the following counsel : “ If thou wilt be a servant “ unto this people this day, and answer them, “ and speak good words to them, then they will “ be thy servants for ever.” From the cautious manner in which the king conducted himself on his ascending the throne ; and from his earnest wish and desire to know the sentiments of those politicians, who saw much farther into the designs of men than he could ; one is led to suppose that he followed the advice given, and firmly cemented his future glory and dominion. This desirable end might have been obtained with much ease and credit, had not Rehoboam another party to consult with, whose opinion he thought it very necessary to ask, before he made up his mind on so momentous a subject. This party was composed of a number of young

men that were grown up with him, and who had no doubt administered to the gratifications of all his wishes. Basking in the sun-shine of youth and gaiety, and proud of their consequence in being thought worthy to advise so distinguished a personage, as the king of Israel, they reject with scorn the prudent and salutary admonitions of the aged senators, and with the most confident and audacious assurance thus exhort the deluded monarch: “ Thus shalt thou speak unto this  
“ people that spake unto thee, saying, thy father  
“ made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter  
“ unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, my  
“ little finger shall be thicker than my father’s  
“ loins. And now, whereas my father did lade  
“ you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your  
“ yoke; my father chastised you with whips,  
“ but I will chastise you with scorpions. The fatal consequence of pursuing this hasty and imprudent advice, was the revolting of ten tribes to that ambitious and aspiring leader Jeroboam, who waited for the event with anxious expectation, and triumphed in the extensive possession of that power which the folly of a few young men had betowed upon him. Had the king considered with himself how arduous and difficult the task must necessarily be to govern a whole nation; had he reflected how absolutely

useful penetration and much experience are to counteract the malicious views and schemes of designing men, he would never have turned a deaf ear to his best advisers, and listened to those who found it their interest to burn incense to his vanity, and to sacrifice to his pleasures. He would never have suffered his kingdom to have been rent asunder, and become the destined and devoted prey of future conquest.

Nor is rashness and imprudence characteristic only of the reign of Rehoboam. Others, amidst all their pomp and greatness, have fallen victims to their own indiscretion, and amidst the warmth of affluence and power, have forgotten that *wisdom* and prudence are the only pillars on which that power can with any degree of security rest. What could have tempted Saul to usurp the sacred office of a priest, and perform sacrifice to the Almighty? Had he no friends to advise him to abstain from so illegal an act? Had he no one near him possessed of sufficient honesty and resolution to lay before him the impropriety of such conduct? Saul was determined on the action, and, scorning the opinion of others, felt, when it was too late to repent, the full weight of Samuel's keen and just rebuke: "Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept  
" the commandment of the Lord thy God which



“ he commanded thee ; for now would the Lord  
“ have established thy kingdom upon Israel for  
“ ever. But now thy kingdom shall not con-  
“ tinue ; the Lord hath sought him a man after  
“ his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded  
“ him to be captain over his people, because  
“ thou hast not kept that which the Lord com-  
“ manded thee.”

When David, moved by vain curiosity to know the strength of his kingdom, commanded his generals to go through all the tribes and number the people ; Joab remonstrated against it with much honest warmth and indignation. He represented to him, in as decent terms as possible, the diffidence and mistrust of an Almighty Protector, which such a rash step must necessarily imply ; but the king persisted in his determination, nor did he see his error till after he had committed the offence, when his heart smote him, and in an agony of mind he exclaimed, “ I have sinned greatly in that I have done ; and  
“ now I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the  
“ iniquity of thy servant ; for I have done very  
“ foolishly.” The fatal effect of this misconduct was felt by thousands, who were the devoted victims to a dreadful and raging pestilence.

It were easy to collect a variety of examples to prove the ill consequences which have at-

tended indiscretion and obstinacy. Ruin and destruction ever follow those who obstinately pursue their own vicious courses, and never pay a proper regard to the admonitions of caution and discretion. Whoever makes his own will the sole and leading principle of every action, or listens only to those who speak the same language with himself, must unavoidably act wrong; unless you can suppose any person possessed of absolute perfection on this side the grave; a supposition, warranted by no human authority whatever. Civil wars, and all their attendant horrors, have issued from the contaminated source of evil counsel, or obstinate perseverance. Many have had too good an opinion of their own skill and ingenuity, to ask the sentiments, or search after the advice of others, better qualified perhaps than themselves, to decide on affairs of dangerous moment and real importance. Hence have arisen dissensions and animosities which timely consideration and mature reflection might have effectually prevented. Hence have proceeded a long train of evils and mischief which have shaken whole kingdoms and states, and terminated ultimately in the destruction of both.

To trace this subject through all its various and intricate parts, would carry us into a very

wide and extensive field, far beyond the limits of my present discourse; I will therefore leave the majestic scene of states and empires, and descend to domestic government, where often want of consideration has produced many and dreadful convulsions. I need not inform you that every private family is a little state of itself, and the master of that family is to all intents and purposes the monarch. Indeed, from the natural privileges of paternal authority, seems to be derived, the earliest mode of dominion with which we are acquainted; such as small principalities, each under its respective leader. To regulate and govern, by wise and salutary laws, the petty state of which I am speaking, will prove the goodness and the prudence of the parent. To obey the mild and judicious commands of those whom nature and providence have placed over them, will evince the affection and the gratitude of children. But, if the former should act like a tyrant, or the latter turn rebels, what a scene of disorder and misery must ensue! St. Paul, who well knew the necessity of good order and obedience in all communities and societies of men, amidst a variety of good advice to Timothy, concerning his conduct as a bishop, adds, that he must be "one, that ruleth well his own house, having

“ his children in subjection, with all gravity ; for  
“ if a man know not how to rule his own house,  
“ how shall he take care of the Church of God ?”  
This doctrine will hold good in every instance of domestic government. But, however well disposed some may be to govern well, and exercise their lawful authority with feeling and with tenderness, many obstacles may, and have been thrown in the way of those who have had their children’s welfare much at heart, and who have exerted their utmost endeavours to promote and to secure it. If a good disposition and proper discipline have disposed the well informed mind to receive instruction, still, the friends of Rehoboam will use every art to render the instruction ineffectual. They will insinuate the doctrine of free agency, at a time when they know not the meaning of the sentence, nor have stability or firmness sufficient to act for themselves. It is much to be feared that many a domestic throne has been shaken to its very basis by these underminers of private and public peace. The advice of the experienced and the aged has been laughed at, and ridiculed, as a grave and formal lecture, because they recommend virtue and sobriety ; whilst the dissipated ideas of their young and gay companions have possessed their esteem, and secured their imi-

tation. To guard against these deceitful friends, I would recommend to all young people a uniform and regular obedience to parental authority, as the only means of promoting real affection, and recommending themselves to the notice of the judicious part of mankind.

When the Almighty delivered the decalogue to Moses, a promise was annexed to this commandment only, "Honor thy Father and thy Mother, that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee." And shall the Creator of heaven and earth point out to us the line of conduct we are to pursue in this sacred duty, and any human power whatever draw us from our filial allegiance? Shall the voice of folly and indiscretion be heard with reverence; and a voice speaking to us from heaven make no impression at all! Shall we so far forget our own interest as to neglect those who have preserved us through all the dangers of infancy, the temptations of youth, and the vices of maturer years? Shall we be ever ready to lean to the opinion of artful and designing men, who would teach us to defy parental authority, and treat those with contempt who deserve at our hands unbounded submission, love, and respect? A house thus divided against itself can never stand, with any degree of credit,

but must remain a melancholy and awful ruin of violated affection and neglected authority. That many houses have been thus overthrown, and domestic harmony destroyed, is too evident, from the depraved morals of those who have rushed into the world without the least ballast, and have been swallowed up in the first gulf of perdition which opened to receive them. And that by far the greatest part of the misery and trouble which has rent the very bowels of parental monarchy, has been owing to the ill advice of pretended friends, is, beyond all doubt, as evident and as certain. Let no one amongst you entertain the most distant idea, that the picture which I am drawing is too highly coloured; or suppose that disobedience to parents is not a crime of the greatest magnitude. But if any be disposed to think unfavourably of authority, I must remind them that that pattern of all perfection, our blessed Saviour, was subject to *his* parents; and even in the agonies of death preserved his affection to his mother, when he so kindly recommended her to the particular care of his beloved disciple. Blush, ye rebellious children, at this part of Sacred History, and learn, after the example of your Saviour, to do your duty! Look up to him with conscious shame, and resolve to tread in his most blessed steps hereafter.



To conclude.—You have seen the great and flourishing kingdom, which Solomon left to Rehoboam, rent asunder by the ill advice of his young friends. You have viewed the fatal misconduct of Saul, and the errors into which he rushed for the want of timely consideration; and you have had placed before you, in a clear light, the hasty measures which David pursued in opposition to the salutary counsel which Joab offered, and which the king unfortunately rejected.

From all these circumstances, you may see the necessity of being considerate and circumspect. You may learn to listen, with all proper attention and regard, to the advice of those, who have no other end in view, than to promote your present and future happiness.

If what I have advanced on my present subject should serve in the smallest degree to open the eyes of those who may have seen their past conduct through a glass darkly, and point out to them their respective duties as men, as Christians, and as children, in a proper and true light, then I shall have the satisfaction to reflect, that I have not laboured in vain; that neither my preaching nor your hearing has been in vain; but that we have both contributed to make the

domestic societies to which we belong, wiser and better.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honor, and power, and glory, for evermore.

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## SERMON XI.

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JUDGES.—Chap. 10.—Verse 14.

*Go, and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen : let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.*

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**WHOEVER** seriously reflects on the general conduct of the Jews, from the commencement to the ending of the theocracy, will be at a loss to account for such gross, such repeated defection, amidst so brilliant a display of almighty power and love! Shall the ox know his feeder, and the ass his master's crib; and shall Israel be blind to the saving health and protecting arm of Jehovah? Shall mere instinct in brutes prompt them to gratitude, and shall reason in man serve no other purpose than to lead him astray? Separated in so remarkable a manner from the rest of the world, and distinguished by

a religion so splendid and majestic, one would have supposed their minds must have been naturally stricken with a veneration and awe of that divine power so visibly resident among them. They had for a long time groaned under the severe scourge of an Egyptian tyrant, and they had been freed from their barbarous servitude in the most miraculous manner, the very elements themselves being made subservient to their interest. They had wandered forty years in a barren and waste wilderness, and during the whole of that time they experienced the constant care and protection of heaven. After the wonderful destruction of those nations who opposed their progress towards Canaan, they are placed in possession of the promised land by that great and exemplary leader Joshua, whose advice to them, before he died, one would have thought must have made too deep an impression to have been soon forgotten.

Having traced the Israelites so far, and seen them particularly favoured by heaven, and preserved from surrounding dangers and threatening foes, it is a melancholy truth to declare, that rebellion and disobedience are the most predominant features in their whole character. Still, however, that great God, who led them as his chosen people, "with a mighty hand, and

“ stretched out arm,” when he saw their adversities, pitied their complaints ; and when he found their repentance to be sincere, he always pardoned their sins.

After the death of Joshua, it pleased the Almighty (who is ever mindful of his covenant and promise) to raise up judges to be their protectors and defenders, to guard their persons and property from the grasping hand of plunder and rapine. Still, however, as before, their wandering eyes were captivated by the idols of the heathens, and “ they forgot the Almighty, “ who had done so many and such great things “ for them.” Roused with indignation and resentment at their contempt of his repeated mercies and loving kindness, and provoked to anger by their continued impieties, He suffered his displeasure to arise, and stirred up the Philistines and Amonites against them, who invaded them on every side. Thus, sorely afflicted and oppressed, overwhelmed with consternation and despair, they fly to the Deity, whom they had offended, and earnestly implore his succour and protection. Whilst they felt no scourge, they persevered in sinning on, without thought, and without feeling. When distress and sorrow seized on them, as their destined and devoted prey, then, and not till then, did they

think of the Lord, who had always been their patron, friend, and benefactor! But the Almighty is not to be thus mocked by his careless and ungrateful creatures. Though, for wise ends and good purposes, he is forbearing and long suffering towards sinners; yet we are not to continue in sin, that grace may abound. Amidst the dreadful calamity and misery into which they had plunged themselves, their cries can produce no effect. Their miseries were great, their sins greater. They had abandoned every claim to protection from their Almighty King, and, as rebellious subjects, were given up to punishment. They had rejected the worship of the one true God, and hoped for salvation alone from the gods of Canaan; therefore, amidst their agonizing distress and supplications, said the Lord, "Go, and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen: let *them* deliver you in the time of your tribulation." If safety and protection are to be derived from stocks and from stones, go, prostrate yourselves before the gorgeous idol. Like the priests of Baal, call aloud, and spare not. Wake the sleeping deity, and implore him to deliver you in this season of misery, this hour of distress.

How just must you all allow this keen rebuke to have been; and how deservedly are the



Israelites thus severely censured, for honouring the creature more than the Creator, who is God, blessed for ever! Human nature seems to recoil at the idea of such foul ingratitude, such inglorious defection; and yet, if you take a view of the prevailing manners of the world, you will find many, who, like the Jews of old, set their affections on things below, and forget the only source from whence their comfort and their support are derived.

Observe the sons and daughters of Avarice, and trace them through those intricate mazes and windings by which they accumulate uncertain riches, which in a moment may make themselves wings, and fly away. Every degree of affection and duty is sacrificed to the gratification of their darling passion. Art, cunning, and fraud are sanctified as the necessary supporters of their extortion and plunder, and the golden image is the only god they adore. To this they bow with reverence; to this only they devote all their care and attention. But “what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” The fatal period will soon arrive when all the treasures of the earth cannot purchase a moment’s respite from the grave; when they are entering on the confines

of eternity, and their wealth will prove a curse instead of a blessing. At this awful and critical time, to whom will they go for protection? If (unable to grasp any longer the mammon of unrighteousness) they make a merit of flying to God for help, a voice loud as thunder will thus repel them—"Go, and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let *them* deliver you in the time of your tribulation." Go to your dear, your beloved riches, in which ye trusted, and try if they can procure for you pardon and peace; but come not unto me, as ye would not that I should be Lord over you.

The sensualist, whose unruly and rebellious appetites are for ever at war against the soul, perseveres in the beaten track of debauchery, without thought or reflection. Under the idea of gaiety and pleasure, he conceals the most enormous impurities. Sins of the deepest dye are veiled under the plausible mask of fashionable levities. Religion is a subject too metaphysical for his consideration or regard, and he knows no other deity but the passion to which he yields himself a willing slave. At length, jaded and worn out by a continued course of vice, the appetite begins to flag, the passion to cool; whilst the pampered and emaciated body seems to sink under the violent pressure of dis-

ease and misery. The still voice of reason (which he never attended to before) warns him of his imminent danger, and, unable to sin any longer, he looks up to the offended Majesty of Heaven for succour. The Almighty, who is of purer eyes than to behold such iniquity without the utmost abhorrence, bids *him* "go, and cry unto the gods which *he* had chosen, and see if they could deliver him in the time of his tribulation." Whatever lust or passion shall have dominion over you in this life, they will most assuredly endanger your future comfort and happiness. This is a truth of too serious and alarming a nature to be treated with contempt and derision; a truth, founded on the immutable laws of justice and equity, and confirmed by the strong and powerful voice of revelation. Idolatry assumes various shapes and complexions; and whoever lives in the constant commission of any one sin, has turned aside from the Lord who made him, and has suffered other gods to have dominion over him. Pride, vanity, and ambition have little less than divine honours paid them by many, who never connect the interest of both worlds, but look on the present as the only proper scene of action. But will these fashionable deities be able to deliver their votaries from destruction at the day of retribution? Will pride ever lead

us to those regions of immortal bliss and glory which are promised only to the meek and lowly in heart? Will vanity entitle us to the comforts and rewards of that religion, whose most distinguishing characteristic is humility and self-denial? Can ambition, with all its pomp and glory, procure for us a seat in the spiritual kingdom of Christ; to obtain which, we are taught that a contempt of this world, and all its grandeur, is absolutely necessary? They who trust in these imaginary gods, will find (like the offending Israelites) that they have trusted in a broken reed, and will in the end meet a just and deserved punishment. However rivalship may be justly esteemed the source of perfection with regard to arts and sciences, the Almighty admits of no rival in the religious duties we owe him. He will have all our affection, or none. We cannot effectually serve our Creator by halves, or at the same time worship him and mammon. Our obedience must be uniform and complete. With a view to establish this salutary and wholesome doctrine, our blessed Saviour himself taught us to "be perfect, as our Father who is in heaven is perfect."

It may here be urged by many, that the perfection required of us in the Gospel is difficult to be attained by frail and imperfect mortals. We are taught, that "strait is the path, and nar-

“row is the way that leadeth unto life”,—that life, which is to determine our everlasting happiness ; but at the same time we are assured, that whatever obstacles may retard our progress in virtue, if we do our best, we shall be more than conquerors, through him who hath redeemed us. You will therefore at all times be very circumspect with regard to your conduct in this state of probation. You will be particularly cautious how you act, lest you condemn yourselves in any thing you may allow. If you believe sufficient to make you repent and obey ; if you are fully persuaded that our blessed Saviour came down from heaven, and that you are to be saved in and through him ; and if you make the doctrines he taught the rule of every action through life, then may you have confidence towards God, and no species of idolatry will be laid to your charge. But if, with a fair and plausible appearance of integrity, you nourish the seeds of vice, though you may chance to deceive men, you will never be able to deceive God. That secret sin which sits enshrined in the private recesses of your heart, will (like the mole in the dark) imperceptibly work out your utter ruin and destruction. “ Judge, therefore, “ yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of “ the Lord.” Examine into the motives of every



action, and trace every worldly scheme to its original source, that you may know for certain, whether the prince of this world, or the one true God of heaven, has the greatest influence over you. This is the touch-stone by which all our pretensions to virtue and goodness can only be proved. This scrutiny, if it be impartial and severe, will lay open the inmost workings of the mind; and, like a most faithful mirror, shew you what you really are, not what, perhaps, you may appear to be. Happy is the man who starts not at the thought of this self-examination; but who, living in the constant habit of virtue, looks into his own heart with pleasure and satisfaction.

To conclude—Uniformity and consistency, can alone give weight or consequence to your actions. All deception must ultimately be productive of real and lasting misery. You will therefore keep in view the ungrateful behaviour of the Israelites, and, observing their gross and fatal misconduct, learn to correct the error of your own ways. If you do this with a pure heart fervently, present as well as future advantage will abundantly reward your labour. Minds thus disposed, and active in the cause of true religion and virtue, will receive such inward strength and support from heaven, as no temp-



tations will be able materially to shake or diminish. Actuated by these principles, when the gloomy hour of affliction approaches, and the jaws of death are opened upon you, you may look up with confidence to the throne of grace ; and instead of hearing these threatening words, “ Go, and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen ; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation ; ”—you will be comforted with the following merciful and exhilarating address : “ Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.”

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, and glory, and power, now and for ever.

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## SERMON XII.

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MATTHEW.—Chap. 10.—Verse 28.

*Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

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**M**ANY and excellent are the rules which our blessed Saviour gives to his apostles, that they might conduct themselves, in the course of their ministry, as became his disciples. Among these rules, two are of singular use, not only to the ministers of his word, but also to the professors of his religion. The first is a rule of *caution*, directing us to a well-tempered mixture of Christian simplicity and prudence. “ Behold, “ I send you forth, as sheep in the midst of “ wolves ; be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, “ and harmless as doves.”

The other is a most noble resolution of discharging our conscience, and doing our duty

in every office of life, whatever temptation, whatever opposition we may meet with in the course of our Christian warfare to discourage or dismay us. “ Fear not them, which kill the body, but “ are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear “ him who is able to destroy both soul and “ body in hell.”

The apostles were now setting out upon the perilous work of persuading the Jews to embrace the gospel, and admit the despised Jesus of Nazareth for their Messiah. Their design and employment were the most advantageous to all Jewry, it being to reform their lives, and to save their souls. Yet, in return for such wonderful expressions of kindness and goodness, their great Master wisely foresaw they must expect nothing but the most severe, the most contemptuous usage.

To arm and fortify their minds against such malicious attempts as they were likely to endure, He, with great tenderness, recommends to them the admonition in my text, which contains arguments of that force and strength, as would quicken their resolutions to go on with an undaunted intrepidity in the discharge of so difficult, so dangerous an office.

We may suppose our Saviour to address them in these words :

Behold, I send you forth thus innocent and harmless as you are, amidst a crowd of wild and savage, subtle and designing creatures, who will take advantage of this your innocence, and be ready to seize, to prey upon, and devour you. This is a melancholy and uncomfortable reflection, and human nature seems to recoil at the thoughts and apprehensions of it : but I bid you fear them not. They can (it is true) kill the body, this frail shell of earth, wherein we are all inclosed ; which, if they spare, will shortly perish of itself, and moulder into its primitive dust. But, the soul, that living principle within you, is immortal ; this is placed beyond the reach of their utmost malice. Since, therefore, they cannot hurt this noble, this better part, what reason can you have to fear them ?

But the great God, who is Almighty, who is fearful in his justice, and terrible in judgments, Him, you have the greatest cause to stand in awe of, as being able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Let it be considered, that our blessed Saviour had good reason to arm all Christians against the powerful passion of fear ; which, if complied with, will certainly betray you (in the course of your lives) into many shameful breaches of duty.

Sad instances of the base effects of this pusillanimous passion, we may learn, both from Scripture and the common practice of the world.

What made Sarah, with the advice too and direction of Abraham, play the counterfeit, and feign herself her husband's sister? A fear, lest the tyrant's lust towards her should move and persuade him to kill Abraham, and make way for the gratification of his own unlawful desires.

What prevailed with St. Peter (who a little before had resolved rather to die with his master than deny him), all on a sudden, to change his mind, and most shamefully turn his zeal for him into a flat denial, and this, too, with the aggravating circumstance of oaths and dreadful imprecations?

A fear, lest the owning of Christ at that time should endanger his own life, and involve him in the same miserable state his afflicted Lord did then labour under.

What befel the faithful Patriarch, and the great Apostle, does often happen in the world, and falls under common observation. We may observe, both in ourselves and others, and that in instances of very small peril, what dishonorable, what shameful practices this vile passion of fear will engage us in.

Now, if fear makes us cowards in cases where our lives are not at stake, can we be certain that we shall prove constant to our religion, should God (for a trial of our constancy) suffer again the enemies of it (as he formerly did) to persecute it with punishment and with death?

It is true, God has, in all ages, raised up generous and resolute spirits, who have nobly maintained the profession of our most holy religion, with the loss of whatever has been dear to them; and, no doubt, such there are in these times.

But yet there is great reason to apprehend such would be the force, such would be the power, of fear, upon the minds of many who embrace the gospel now, as to cause them to swim down wherever the tide of a hot and raging persecution may chance to carry them.

Since then the dread and terror which seize on mankind from the apprehensions of temporal evils, and such as can only hurt the body, are so prevailing, so universal, there was very just grounds for our Saviour's advice, not to "fear them which kill the body." But not contented with this bare command, he has furnished us with a very weighty reason, drawn from the immortality of the human soul, "fear them not, for they are not able to kill the soul."

A belief of the soul's immortality, is one of



the main grounds and principles of religion, and a chief pillar and support of it. "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek him." A rewarder (God certainly is) of the religious and devout worshippers of him; not always in this world, as experience every day shews; it must therefore be in another.

Hence it follows, that the soul, the only subject in man capable of enjoyment or reward after death, does, in the duration of it, extend beyond this short life to an immortal state, where a righteous God may recompense it with joy unspeakable, according to its deserts.

The more learned and wise among the heathens, plainly saw, that unless this principle of divine worship, a belief of the soul's immortality, was properly maintained, all religion must of necessity fall to the ground. They therefore not only asserted it, but confirmed and fortified it with such arguments as the light of Nature afforded them. The soul, being a thinking essence, and having a principle of knowledge, and a power of election within herself, (which properties are inconsistent with mere matter,) they rightly concluded that she must be of a spiritual or immaterial substance, which, being indivisible, as not consisting of extension or

parts, she must consequently be incorruptible, and if incorruptible, then immortal.

Thus far the heathens, by the light of Nature, could go in their discoveries of this great truth, that the soul is immortal. But, as in all other principles of religion, so in this too, we Christians have a great advantage over them. The gospel has made more clear discoveries of this fundamental doctrine to us.

Hence our Saviour is affirmed by St. Paul “to have brought life and immortality to light through the gospel;” which is not to be understood as if this doctrine was quite unknown to the world before his coming, but, because he has given us brighter manifestations of it, and stamped the authority of divine revelation upon it.

We may now with less difficulty conceive the force of our Saviour’s reasoning upon this point, why our fears and apprehensions from human power should never prevail with us at any time, or on any occasion, to forsake and neglect our duty.

Did the separation of the soul from the body; did the extinguishing this animal life we now enjoy, so far dispatch us as to put an absolute end and period to our being; it might then seem advisable, and what reason might justify,

to secure by all possible means our lives here, and defer, as long as may be, the fatal and final conclusion of our existence.

But, since (as both reason and religion jointly witness) the soul, by a principle of immortality wrapt up within itself, survives our dissolution, and shall continue to be a living soul to all eternity; since, because it is a free agent, and under the restriction of laws, it must render an account to a just Judge of all its works done in the flesh, and according to those works receive the sentence either of eternal happiness, or eternal misery: it seems the height of folly for fear of any short temporal punishment in this life, to incur everlasting punishment in the life to come.

When you consider, that a constant adherence to the rules of Christian duty, and a firm and steadfast conformity to the divine will (whatever ill treatment for so doing you may meet with from the hands of wicked men) will be recompensed, with an exceeding, an eternal weight of glory in the other world; what a strong consolation have you sufficient to make you slight and despise the loudest menaces of human malice!

What a sure anchor to your otherwise distressed souls does the hope of these inestimable rewards supply; able to buoy us up above the

rage and furious zeal of hot persecution, and preserve us from making shipwreck of a good conscience amidst all the storms that the power and malice of men or devils can raise against us.

What else was it but a belief of the immortality of the soul, and eternal rewards after this life, that bore up the spirits, resolution, and constancy of the apostles and primitive Christians?

That great variety of dangers they exposed themselves to, perils by sea and land, perils from pretended friends and avowed enemies, would have terrified them from the performance of their duty, did not their faith in this great article and their hopes of a crown of righteousness, encourage them all (as it had done the great apostle) "to fight a good fight, and to finish their course."

In imitation of such great, such glorious examples, we should fix within us this foundation and ground-work of religion, and then we shall not only go on cheerfully in the ways of godliness, in quiet, and peaceable times, but shall be provided with a good antidote against any opposition, against any persecution which may attempt to discourage us from doing our duty, and discharging a good conscience in the sight of God.

Those who in the present situation of public affairs may be called into the midst of danger, should at all times be armed with a true Christian courage, constancy, and firmness. Be sober, be vigilant. Zealously discharge your duty to your God, your king, and your country; and then you have no reason to fear the power, malice, or threats of a most enraged enemy. Then you may in holy rapture exclaim with the royal psalmist, "Though ten thousand men have set themselves in array against me round about, yet, shall not my heart be cast down; and though there rose up war against me, yet, will I not be afraid, for I have put my trust in Him."

When you are defending the just, the lawful rights of your nation, the chance of war may put a period to your existence in the flesh; but your soul it cannot hurt, that flies beyond the limits of this lower world, to a state of endless glory and immortality.

A life, therefore, so often exposed to a variety of dangers, ought to be a life of progressive virtue.

Assured, then, that your souls are immortal, by Him, who is the "Resurrection and the life, in whom whosoever believeth, shall live tho' he die, and whosoever liveth and believeth in

“Him, shall not die eternally,” let this be your hope, and the stay of your confidence.

To conclude.—From what I have said, the following reflections naturally occur to a thinking and judicious mind.

As this world is but a state of trial and probation, we should all prepare for another, where every good Christian (after he is delivered from the burthen of the flesh) will be in joy and felicity.

The troubles and afflictions, the crosses and dissappointments which too many labour under in the present state, should be instrumental and subservient to piety and virtue, by teaching us, that all things will work together for good to those who believe and obey the saving gospel of Christ.

Let no one, through a dread of incurring the censure of men, commit such base actions as must unavoidably render him odious in the sight of his God.

A life, conformable to the strictest rules of virtue, is the only life of Him who was made after the express image of his Maker, and who, by every bad action, considerably obscures that dignity which was stamped on him at his creation.

In our passage through this vale of trouble



and perplexity, let us (assisted by the eye of faith) never lose sight of those refined, those exalted joys, which are promised to us all, if we will but labour to deserve them.

Let us use the world, but not abuse it. Let us partake of the innocent pleasures of this life, but never forget there is a better, where every action, every word, and every thought, will be weighed in the strict balance of justice and equity.

Let it be the constant care, as it appears to be the sincere wish, of all present, to secure an inheritance in heaven, where there is pleasure for evermore, at the right hand of God. Amen.

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## SERMON XIII.

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ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE to the EPHESIANS.—  
Chap. 1st.—Verse 18.

*“ The eyes of your understanding being en-  
lightened ; that ye may know what is the hope  
of his calling, and what the riches of the glory  
of his inheritance, in the saints.”*

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**W**HATEVER knowledge we possess relative to the affairs of another life, must have been communicated to us from heaven. No man, by his own unassisted powers or strength, is equal to the discovery of the will and designs of God. The counsels of the Almighty and his wonderful plan, in the redemption of the world from sin and death, are beyond the reach of mortal capacities, unless the creator and preserver of all things, should, of his mercy and goodness, enable us, in a certain degree, to comprehend them. Nor is there any difficulty in supposing,

that, whilst we live in these corruptible bodies, the energies of our minds will be considerably damped and obstructed. The activity of our souls will certainly be improved, when they leave their present fleshy tabernacle; for, “we now see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.” These considerations are sufficient to keep us always on our guard, lest, in a moment of vanity and pride, we should fancy we know more than we really do, and act on a delusive scheme of imaginary rectitude.

The Ephesians had been converted by Saint Paul to Christianity; and, by the persuasive voice of argument and of truth, were induced to relinquish the rites of paganism for the worship of the one true God and faith in Jesus Christ. This great change in their conduct and mode of acting, gave the good apostle much comfort and joy; and in his epistle to them, he thus expresses himself, “Wherefore, *I* also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him.”

St. Paul was fully sensible of the benefits and

inestimable advantages which flowed from a true and sincere faith in Christ, and at the same time saw the amazing effect it would have on the lives of all those who honestly embraced it. With this conviction, strongly and deeply impressed on his mind, he informs his new converts, that his prayers would be unremittingly offered up to the throne of grace, for that divine wisdom which could alone make them wise unto salvation, and enable them not only to *believe* the doctrines of Christianity, but to *practise* what they believed; “the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”

The eyes of their understanding being enlightened, means, their understanding or reason being taught, instructed, or informed. And to give you as clear an idea as possible of the apostle's design in making use of the expression, I will dwell a little on the structure and advantage of the *natural* eye, which is of the same benefit to the body, as the understanding or reason is to the mind.

Our eyes are formed in so curious and wonderful a manner, as to be capable of distinguishing different objects; and, by their assistance, all our motions are directed, and all those

dangers and difficulties avoided, which would otherwise obstruct us in our journey through life. Of this, you must be all perfectly sensible, as every day and every hour convinces you of its truth. But, though our eyes, by their structure and power, are enabled to render us this most essential service, and on all occasions act as our faithful and true guides, yet, without *light*, they could not direct us at all. A state of darkness would render perfectly useless that fine and delicate frame of the eye, which, in the full blaze of light, we now enjoy, proves a blessing beyond all comparison, great and glorious. The eye, then, cannot see without light.

If you pass, then, from the eye of the body to the eye of the mind, which is our understanding or reason, you will discover a strong similarity or likeness between them. Our understanding or reason is capable of great and amazing exertions. The faculties of the mind, when exercised on subjects of art and science, know no bounds; and, when the concerns of a future state offer themselves to its reflection and serious meditation, to the reception of divine truths, how equal are our capacities, and how adequate our understanding. Still, however, our minds, with all their boasted powers and abilities, can know nothing without *instruction*; and the same dark-

ness that would unavoidably obstruct our bodies, without *light*, to call forth the power of our eyes, would, in the most fatal degree, cast a horrid gloom over our reason, without the aid of *instruction* from heaven.

Hence, we read, that “light and understanding were found in Daniel.” Hence, our Saviour calls his disciples the “light of the world.” And, speaking of himself, he says, “I am the light of the world ; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” In what sense our Saviour and his disciples were the light of the world, is very clear and evident to those amongst us who perceive (as we all surely must) the weakness of our understanding, when applied to the contemplation of religious knowledge, without previous information from the fountain of divine wisdom. Men always possessed reason, that precious “organ which receives instruction, as the eye admits the light of heaven.” Jesus Christ *improved* our reason, and, whilst he lived in this lower world, taught it to know the only way of appeasing the offended Majesty of Heaven, and the sure means of obtaining eternal salvation.

Without this gracious assistance from above, the mind had continued in the grossest darkness ; but, thanks be to God, we are now the children



of light ; and the fault must be our own if we stumble or fall. Every obstruction is removed that drew a veil between *us* and futurity. Enough is revealed to excite our fears, quicken our hopes, and give confidence to our faith. Thus, in the most clear and evident sense of the apostle's declaration, "the eyes of our understanding are enlightened." The intention of this gracious information or divine knowledge is, "that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

The hope of Christ's calling implies an assurance of those comforts which the Holy Ghost sheds abundantly on all true believers, who receive and practise the Gospel ; and whilst it animates our zeal in fighting the good fight of faith, it is not less active in promoting us to walk in all the commandments of God blameless. But *that* hope which Christianity inspires does not stop here ; it teaches us also, what are "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Here, indeed, a scene opens before us, the most awful and astonishing ! We are carried beyond the narrow and confined limits of this world, to those regions of bliss and glory where there is pleasure for evermore at the right hand of God. "The riches of the glory of his

“inheritance in the saints,” conveys to us an idea of the spirits of just men made perfect, into which society we shall all be admitted after death, if we walk worthy of our vocation.

As I have repeatedly mentioned already, our knowing these things, and knowing them to be absolutely certain and matters of fact, arises from our understanding being enlightened by the sure word of God; or, *again*, to use the apostle’s words, “the eyes of our understanding being “enlightened.”

Intelligence concerning the future state of our souls could not be given us by any power less than divine, or by ministers appointed by that power, to communicate it to his creatures. The weakness of frail and impotent man could never enable him to search into the deep things of God; of this the prophet Daniel was so fully sensible, that in a strain of holy rapture he thus addresses himself to the God of Heaven: “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, “for wisdom and might are his; He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them “that know understanding. He revealeth the “deep and secret things; he knoweth what is “in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with “him.”

Our ignorance, then, or our incapacity, are

circumstances which *may* make, and most assuredly *will* make, very much against us in our account with heaven. For if light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, the consequence of such imprudent conduct must be fatal to their everlasting happiness. Ignorance that is wilful admits of no excuse ; and *that* ignorance is wilful which shuts its eyes against the truths of revealed religion ; or, which is the same thing, will not learn the way of salvation. Incapacity often proceeds from a constant habit of indolence and inactivity, and not from any real obstruction in the powers of our mind. We *may* know as much of religion and morality as will serve to make us and keep us the sincere friends of God and man. And if we *may* know it, and *refuse* to know it, our ignorance and our incapacity will prove our eternal disgrace and ruin.

This consideration made St. Paul the more thankful for the blessings which his Ephesian converts enjoyed, in being sensible of the great and important knowledge revealed to them by the scriptures. But how or by what means were they sensible of it ? Who opened the eyes of their understanding, and taught them the plan of man's redemption ?—the ministers of Christ, commissioned expressly by him to call the sin-

ner to repentance, and open the gates of salvation to all true believers.

To those amongst us who may yet continue in error, and have not drunk of the waters of life freely, which from age to age have been flowing in most copious streams, it may be proper to present, as briefly as I can, the principal articles of our Christian Faith. At all times it will be of infinite advantage to refresh our memories with the sacred and saving truths of the Gospel; without this care and attention our passions will get the better of our reason, and, indeed, *with* it the contest for dominion will be very severe and violent. There cannot be a more sure way of keeping us within the pale of duty, than to reflect seriously and frequently on the being and providence of God, who created the world and all things therein; who made us free agents, *i. e.* made us capable of thinking and acting properly, and at the same time laid no violence on our will to *prevent* our going astray if we are *determined* to transgress; who taught us the difference between virtue and vice, and whilst he promised rewards to the friends of the former, denounced a curse on the slaves of the latter; who sees and knows every thing we do, and every thing that is but the subject of our most secret thoughts; who (as a father pitieth

his own children) is merciful to all those who love and obey him.

The mercy of our heavenly Father towards mankind, was abundantly poured forth by the incarnation and death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; a subject of such amazing benefit, and of such extensive consequence to the whole race of Adam, that it ought never to be absent from our thoughts and contemplation. That we were born in sin is a most melancholy truth ; and that by the laver of regeneration in baptism we were purged from original corruption, is a blessing beyond all conception whatever. Still, however, the weakness and infirmity of our natures expose us to various and violent temptations ; and “ if we say we have no sins we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ; but, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” And if any of us sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” Shall we ever then, through carelessness or indifference, *forget* our Redeemer ? *forget him* who gave his life a ransom for lost man ? who has declared himself to be “ the resurrection and the life, in whom who-

“ soever believeth shall live, though he die ; and  
“ whosoever believeth in him shall not die eter-  
“ nally.”

The love of God and the love of Christ should be impressed on our hearts in the deepest characters, and our faith should be daily acquiring fresh strength from this consideration, that we are the children of our Father who is in heaven, and who is every hour pouring his benefits upon us, and the subjects of the kingdom of our blessed Saviour, who hath redeemed us from the eternal dominion of sin and death, on condition of our *believing* in him and *obeying* the laws he has given us.

Indeed, when that *perfect* obedience to the laws of Christ is required of us, without which we cannot be saved, we have all reason to fear lest we should come short of future happiness by an evil heart of unbelief ; and we tremble at the difficulties we have to encounter, and the dangers that threaten us. In this our critical situation we are not left without hope or support equal to our most urgent necessities. When I go from you (said our blessed Saviour to his desponding disciples), I will send the Holy Ghost unto you to comfort you, and he shall abide with you for ever. That divine comforter shed in plentiful measure the most healing influence on the trou-



bled minds of the primitive Christians ; and in all their dangers and distresses, led them safely and honourably through a sea of troubles to the haven where they would be. *We*, who profess ourselves the members of Christ's mystical body, the Church, are, like his first disciples, the objects of his care and love, if we keep his commandments. And the holy spirit which *invisibly*, but yet *effectually*, wrought in them every desire of doing their duty, and powerfully assisted them in bringing that duty to perfection, will also assist each of us if we pray to *God* for his assistance, and use it properly when we receive it. All our good thoughts and all our good actions proceed from this heavenly source : our inclination to discharge the social and relative duties springs from the influence of God's Holy Spirit. With it we may do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us, and without it we can do nothing as we ought. In this state of affairs no person has reason to complain, as the same Almighty Being, who enjoins us particular duties to be performed, enables us at the same time to perform them devoutly and effectually.

To conclude.—Having laid before you in as clear a manner as I possibly could, the necessity of thinking frequently on the inestimable blessings we daily and hourly receive from the Father,

the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I hope the eyes of your understanding are sufficiently enlightened ; and if any cloud of darkness remained, it is quite removed and dispersed. The great pleasure and satisfaction which St. Paul received on finding that the Ephesians were sensible of the advantages which Christianity gave them, and the hopes it excited of a future and glorious inheritance in heaven, must always convey equal joy and comfort to every minister of the Gospel who is anxious for the salvation of those committed to his charge.

Be it then your constant wish and constant study to listen to the voice of revealed truth, and to persuade and exhort others to follow your example ; and then, neither my preaching nor your hearing will be in vain.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honor, and power, and glory, for evermore.

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## SERMON XIV.

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ST. MATTHEW.—Chap. 18.—Verse 3.

*Verily I say unto you, except you be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

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**T**HE fatal source of ignorance and error has ever been a blind attachment to forms and ceremonies, without considering their nature or their tendency. Every moral and religious system should be nicely and carefully examined before we adopt it, or its real and intrinsic excellence may chance to escape our notice, and the shadow of duty, more than the substance, engage our attention. Much caution is therefore absolutely necessary in our Christian warfare, that we may guard against the variety of delusions which, under appearances the most plausible and captivating, are too apt to lead us astray.

Our blessed Saviour appears, on all occasions, to have been particularly anxious for the welfare and prosperity of those who professed his most holy religion; and to have embraced every opportunity that presented itself of weaning them from their national prejudices, and explaining to them the nature of his kingdom, and the mode of conduct which could alone intitle them to a *seat* in it. Seeing the serious and alarming mischief that would ensue from a supposition that the Gospel admitted of, or even countenanced, a life of ease, luxury, and grandeur, in opposition to one of trial, probation, and suffering, he tells them, that "his kingdom is not of this world." For, strange as it may appear, after all they had seen, and all they had heard, of their divine Master, their minds were too deeply tinctured with ideas of *temporal* dominion, to relish objects of a refined and spiritual nature. Hence, at one time, they were desirous of making him a king; at another, they demanded, with zealous transport, if he would "restore the kingdom again to Israel."

Whilst their minds were warm with these political notions, and whilst they were eagerly contending among themselves for that pre-eminence, which they hoped to enjoy, when the Messiah should mount his earthly throne, He,

with his usual kindness, affection, and love, rebukes and checks their wild and extravagant opinion. The more forcibly and effectually to remove the cloud that obscured their sight, he “ called a *little child* unto him, and set him in the “ midst of them, and said, verily I say unto you, “ except you be converted, and become as little “ children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom “ of heaven.”

This act of their beloved Lord and master, was too plain, and too direct, to admit of any doubt or mistake. However they might have been induced before to think that the glories and honors of this life were connected with the favor of the Messiah, they were now convinced of the contrary; and the scene that opened to them presented a very different prospect. The humility, meekness, and innocence of a little child, were held forth as the necessary and essential *qualifications* of all those who would enter into the kingdom of heaven. Our blessed Saviour, in his sermon on the Mount, told them that the *poor in spirit* were blessed, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; and that the *pure in heart* should see God. And pureness of heart, and meekness of spirit, characterize the temper and disposition of little children.

To receive the gospel, therefore, as we ought,

and to entertain so heavenly a guest in a proper and becoming manner, we must ever keep in view the example, and the pattern, which are to be our faithful and infallible guides. Unless we do this, ceremonial observances will prove as fatal to *us* as they did to the *Jews*. The *letter*, and not the *spirit*, of religion, will engage our attention, and secure our regard; and the most strange ideas of divine favor and acceptance will lead us into the most erroneous, the most vicious conduct. For want of this consideration alone, Christianity has been presented to the world in a variety of inconsistent forms and shapes, divested of those attributes which shew her to be the offspring of God, and the friend of mankind. The confusion and horror that have arisen from thus perverting the plain and simple doctrines of the gospel, have contributed very largely to weaken its influence, and to contract its power. But if we were to fix on one particular enemy to Christianity, who, in all ages, has treated her with haughty scorn, and insolent contempt, and who, under the garb of sanctity, has endeavoured to unite God and Mammon, it would be *Pride*; *Pride* in every shape and form whatever. This is the daring opposer of that spiritual authority which is derived from the Apostles of Jesus Christ; this is



that all-sufficient, and all-powerful character, which knows the line of conduct to be pursued by rational beings better than the God who made them, supports, and has deigned to instruct them. This is that secret and artful contriver of those numerous and shifting systems of morality, which kindly accommodate themselves to every time and season. And this is that prevailing deity, that god of this lower world, to which thousands every day burn incense, and fall down and worship. In our blessed Saviour's time, an affected singularity of conduct, an ostentatious charity, and an outward sanctity, discovered the growing power and increasing influence of *pride*; and how strongly did its poison work in the vain and haughty breast of the Pharisee, who, even in the temple of God, arrogantly presumed on a *superiority* of virtue and goodness, because he discharged some few civil and religious duties which the laws of the State would have severely punished him for neglecting. Well, therefore, might our Saviour say, to all such, "that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." For, most assuredly a mind disposed to admit the sacred truths of Christianity, and to revere its laws, from a full conviction of its divine origin, and spiritual influence, will contribute more

effectually towards our salvation than a pompous display of words without meaning, and ceremonies void of either use or benefit. Whatever may have been our former mode of life, if we turn from the error of our ways, and listen to the voice which speaks to us from heaven ; and if we study to acquire that mild and placid temper which is the only soil where the religion of Christ will take root and flourish, we shall pursue the surest road to future and eternal happiness ; but no degree of wisdom or prudence which *pride* may furnish us with, at the expence of these qualifications, will ever render us the least service.

The same enmity which perverted the doctrines of Christianity during Christ's ministry, and issuing from the same source, continued to oppose it after his death ; and the apostles were unwearied in their endeavours to subdue it. So far were the *philosophers* from cultivating humility and meekness, and all those tender and social virtues, which the Saviour of the world exemplified in his own conduct, and recommended to all his followers ; that they proudly and insolently scorned the doctrine of a *crucified* Saviour, and infamously branded it with the name of foolishness. They were too wise to embrace a system of divinity which they could

not comprehend ; and too licentious to be governed by a morality which laid such severe restraints on the gratifications of their darling passions. We see, therefore, the strength and the force of St. Paul's sentiments in his first epistle to the Corinthians : " how that not many " wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not " many noble are called ; but God hath chosen " the foolish things of the world to confound the " wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things " of the world to confound the things which " are mighty." One is almost led to suppose that the *Jews*, from the general tenor of the prophecies, which in the most particular and correct manner delineated the character of Christ ; and from the ceremonial law, which so accurately prefigured his *sufferings* and *death*, would have received him with joy, and borne his yoke with meekness and lowliness of heart ; but here again *pride* leads their infatuated and deluded hearts astray. A *temporal*, and not a *spiritual*, an *earthly*, and not an *heavenly* king appears to be the object of their wish, and their anxious desire, and they blindly convert into a stumbling block, and rock of offence, what *might* have been the stay of their confidence, and the rock of their salvation.

It evidently appears then, that *pride*, under

whatever form or shape it may exist, will check the growth of Christianity, by depressing those virtues which constitute its vital principle. For how shall we ever be converted, how become as little children, if we are too learned to be taught of God, and too consequential to practise humility? To go to the heavenly Jerusalem by any road that our own fancy may point out, or our own warm imaginations may suggest, is a privilege allowed to none of us. The features of religion are not to be distorted. In her original and genuine appearance she is gentle, kind, and benevolent. If we believe in God, she tells us also to believe in Christ, in his divinity and atonement, and we shall most gratefully believe in both if we search the scriptures with becoming zeal and attention, and pay the same regard to divine truth as we are all accustomed to pay to other historical evidence and public records of matters of fact, founded on the most substantial testimony. As the dispositions of little children are subject to no violent prejudices, no dark suspicions, no secret doubts, and no gloomy superstitions, and as they are perfectly innocent, and by natural consequence, perfectly amiable; if we adhere to the model proposed to our imitation, it will make us "blameless and harmless, the sons of God,

without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shall shine as lights in the world.

“ A bruised reed shall he not break, and “ smoking flax shall he not quench,” was a prophetic declaration of the mild and gentle character of our most blessed Saviour; and when the inspired writer would paint his conduct under the most bitter sufferings, he represents him as a lamb led to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before his shearers; and we are all too well acquainted with the noiseless tenor of his life, not to feel the propriety and the force of the prophet’s description. All our Saviour’s precepts are enforced by the most powerful and persuasive example, and every doctrine is replete with that gentleness and meekness which he invariably recommends to his disciples.

Whatever picture may have been drawn of Christianity, divested of simplicity and humility, cannot give a true and just resemblance of the original. If we would render an acceptable service to the Lord, we must serve him with humility; if we would be arrayed in the proper robes of righteousness, we must be clothed with humility. No other dress will intitle us to a seat at the marriage feast of the lamb.

To conclude.— Let us then think no labor too



great that terminates in a reformation so very beneficial. Let us accomplish this spiritual regeneration with unwearied diligence, and unabated zeal. A regeneration that corrects every error in our moral and religious conduct, and by pointing out to us the true nature and design of the Gospel, prevents our making shipwreck of our faith. If the same spirit dwell in us that dwelt in Christ, all the tender charities of life which bind man to man in the strongest ties of affection and love, will connect us with each other, and our undisguised simplicity of manners will lead us in the end to joys unspeakable, and full of glory.

What can possibly conduce more to the harmonising of our affections, as we advance to years of discretion and prudence, than with an humble mind to guard against those passions which render us miserable in ourselves, and cruel and unfeeling to our fellow creatures ; and what can so effectually prepare us for that future state of happiness, which we are taught to expect through the merits of our Saviour, and the mercies of our God, as a mild temper and godly disposition, ever anxious to cultivate mutual kindness and universal benevolence : always remembering that the love of our brethren is the most convincing proof of our love of God ; and



that our blessed Saviour himself has declared, by *this* shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.

Happy in this world, and *eternally* happy in the next, will they be, whose faith and whose works are thus inseparably united.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, all honor, and power, and majesty, for ever and ever.

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## SERMON XV.

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GENESIS.—Chap. 45.—Verse 24.

*See, that ye fall not out by the way.*

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**WERE** we to trace effects up to their causes, we should find that envy and jealousy in families have produced a considerable share of the miseries and troubles which imbitter life. Our natural dispositions are of various complexions; and, most assuredly, receive a tincture from the tempers of those to whom (under God) we are indebted for our being. This wants no proof, as every day's experience confirms its truth. But, though we allow that *as* the fountain is so will be the stream that issues from it; yet, if the current should mix in its course with any impure substance, its colour would be altered and its nature changed. The same variation will be produced in our tempers, by an early

and irregular commerce with the world. To account for the anarchy and confusion that often takes place in the little kingdom of our minds, would perhaps be as difficult a task as to account for the strange and unexpected revolutions which sometimes overturn the most powerful states. The passions are such violent and outrageous rebels, that the strongest efforts of reason are very frequently unequal to their resistance. Like a mighty torrent, they bear down all before them, and sweep away with indiscriminate fury every thing that opposes them. This is a melancholy picture of human nature; but, however, it is a true one.

The Patriarch Jacob had a numerous family, and appears to have exercised towards them all the sincerest affection and love. Indeed, so good a man, and so pious a father, could not but act agreeably to such goodness and piety in his general dealings with his children. But though, in that *solid* and *substantial* regard which constitutes the essence of parental affection, the Patriarch was uniformly correct; yet, his two youngest sons, Benjamin and Joseph, seem to have acquired a particular degree of his tenderness and concern. How natural is this! And how apt is the heart to melt in kindness towards those who, in their present circumstances, stand

most in need of it. The fondness, however, of the father, exemplified in his conduct towards the *younger* branches of his family, kindled the envy and the jealousy of all the rest. Joseph, in particular, became the object of their severest censure and hatred; "And when his brethren  
" saw that their father loved him more than all  
" his brethren, they hated him, and could not  
" speak peaceably to him." Nor was their displeasure and their rage satisfied, till they had sold him to some trading merchants, who conveyed him to Egypt, and, as they thought, removed him for ever from their sight. Such severe treatment did one brother receive from those who could not bear to *hear* his dreams of future success in life, or *see* the little and trifling civilities which a fond and aged father occasionally bestowed upon him. The scene, after a certain time, is greatly changed; and those very brothers, who did the utmost in their power to persecute and to injure the innocent darling of their father, driven by famine, to seek relief in Egypt, pay him homage and respect; "for  
" they bowed down themselves before him, with  
" their faces to the earth." The heart of Joseph knew no resentment. Above the mean and sordid passion of revenge, he forgave all their unkindness, and, in the strictest sense of the

word, returned good for evil. “ And he wept  
“ aloud; and the Egyptians and the house of  
“ Pharaoh heard. And he said unto his brethren,  
“ I am Joseph, doth my father yet live? And  
“ his brethren could not answer him, for they  
“ were troubled at his presence.” Well, indeed,  
may they be troubled, after such unfeeling, such  
cruel treatment. Thus, shame operates on the  
mind when we receive kindness from those who  
have been treated unkindly by *us*; and thus,  
conscience makes cowards of us all, when we  
have acted in a manner unbecoming our nature.  
“ And Joseph said unto his brethren, come near  
“ to me, I pray you; and they came near; and  
“ he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye  
“ sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not  
“ grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye  
“ sold me hither; for God did send me before  
“ you, to preserve life.” Not contented with  
palliating the offences of his brothers, and in a  
manner softening the severity of their behaviour  
towards him, he loads them with presents for  
their father, and “ gave them waggons, accord-  
“ ing to the commandment of Pharaoh, and  
“ provision for the way. To all of them, he  
“ gave each man changes of raiment: but, to  
“ Benjamin, he gave three hundred pieces of  
“ silver, and five changes of raiment. So he

“ sent his brethren away, and they departed ;  
“ and he said unto them, see that ye fall not  
“ out by the way.”

This advice Joseph well knew was very necessary to be given, as during their first arrival in Egypt, after the treatment which the policy of the governor prompted him to shew them, they discovered a strong disposition to accuse each other of a want of brotherly affection. For “ they said one to another, we are verily guilty  
“ concerning our brother, in that we saw the  
“ anguish of his soul when he besought us, and  
“ we would not hear ; therefore, behold also  
“ his blood is required.” To guard, therefore, against all crimination whatever, and to prevent those bitter and most severe reflections on their past conduct, of which they were too sensible to be perfectly at ease, the kind, the merciful, the loving Joseph, could not suffer them to depart, without saying to them, in the most tender and affectionate manner, “ See, that ye  
“ fall not out by the way.” “ See, that in your  
“ journey to your beloved and dear father, that  
“ ye dwell not on any circumstances relating  
“ to my former sufferings. See, that ye provoke  
“ not one another by ungenerous and pointed  
“ observations on the cause of your displeasure  
“ towards me, at a time when my own heart  
“ was free from every suspicion.”



We may suppose, the departing brothers carefully attended to the admonitions given, and avoided entering on a subject which would have produced the most keen and painful sensations. The wonderful alteration, and the extraordinary events that presented themselves, were of a nature so very uncommon, as to engage their whole thoughts, and leave little room for other considerations, and those too, by no means suited to their present state of mind. Had they acted otherwise, and given the rein to every inordinate expression, *accusing* one another, a scene of the most implacable animosity and discord would have presented itself. For, however cruelly the brothers had behaved, we may suppose some were less guilty than others, and would have used a language more or less severe, according to the proportion of that guilt. We will therefore conclude (as we have no reason to draw any other conclusion) that they directed their whole view and attention to the prosperity that awaited them. That they contemplated in awful silence and composure, the great and good mind of their brother Joseph, and the honors and exalted dignity that were decreed him in the court of Pharaoh, as a reward of his meritorious services. Nor could they lose sight of the joy and transport that would glow in the

heart of their father, when he should see them return with such abundant, such convincing proofs of Joseph's good fortune, and established greatness. All these circumstances, and the consequences flowing from them, must have induced them to bury in oblivion (so far as it is possible to be done) every act of former unkindness, and render their destined journey peaceable and happy.

The advice which Joseph gave *his* brethren, as they were going from Egypt to their own country, may with great propriety be given to each of us, in our journey through this world, "See, that ye fall not out by the way."

The road which we are to pass, in our present state of trial and probation, is surrounded on all sides with difficulties and with dangers. With difficulties, that puzzle the most acute and discerning to remove; and with dangers, that call for the greatest exertion and most powerful resolution to surmount. As the wise man informs us, "we are born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards;" *i. e.* as sparks of fire naturally fly upwards, so man, by the very nature and condition of his being, is born to taste of trouble and vexation in this life. "We have " but a short time to live, and that short time is " full of misery. We come up, and are cut

“down like a flower; we flee as it were a shadow, and never continue in one stay;” and in the midst of life we are in death. Such fleeting events, and such uncertainty, mark our existence in the flesh; and no person, however low or however exalted may be their condition, is exempted from the common lot of humanity.

To lessen, then, the evils and the misfortunes of life, is a duty incumbent on every one, who is travelling to the same place of everlasting rest and comfort. And each member of society, and every individual in a family, has it very much in his power to remove or add to the vexations and perplexities of the journey they are obliged to take in company with one another. In the great concerns of empire, where every thing is conducted on a large and extensive scale, our minds are lost in wonder and admiration at the various movements of the immense machine; and we view with astonishment the art and the skill necessary to keep it regularly in motion. At the same time we discover, without any extraordinary sagacity, the unity of design and intention that must influence all those who hold the reins of government, in order to prevent confusion and ruin. If the governors of the state *fall out* in their *political* journey, the whole nation feels as it were a convulsive shock. Mur-

mur and discontent, suspicion and the most violent enmities, rend the bowels of the constitution; and faction and party *divide* those whose friendship and agreement would have been productive of lasting harmony; and whose hostilities and quarrels too often terminate in the most fatal events. The knowledge of effects unavoidably issuing from certain causes, if improved, as it might and ought to be, would serve the most beneficial purposes, by teaching us wisdom at other people's expence; a mode of instruction very safe and very advantageous to all those who carefully and prudently attend to it. Allowing this, and who can disallow it? we may wisely descend from the vast designs of public administrations to our own private and domestic engagements, where security and happiness, ease and comfort, will depend on the joint exertions of those who are connected together under the same roof. No one is so insignificant in a family as not to be able to disturb the peace and good order of it, by unkind and ungenerous behaviour. A malevolent temper, and a disposition to interpret actions very contrary to their original intent and design, will at all times produce discord and perplexity. All, therefore, who live in the same society, must habituate themselves to bear with each other,

and make those allowances for the frailties and the infirmities of our common nature, to which every person born into this world is, in some degree, subject.

As parents, and children, and servants, compose our domestic governments, and whilst they continue under the same authority, may be said to pursue their journey together, I cannot do better, in the remaining part of my present discourse, than lay before you St. Paul's advice to the *Ephesians*, as the most effectual means of preventing *them*, in those several capacities, "falling out by the way." "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother, (which is the first commandment with promise,) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." If the obedience and dutiful behaviour of children, according to the Apostle's exhortation, were regularly and conscientiously practised, they would do *their* part, in guarding against any occasion of falling out by the way. But, there is a power lodged in higher hands, the exercise of which contributes greatly to accomplish the design in view, and which St. Paul thus addresses: "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the



“ Lord.” Ye, who are placed in the important situation of parents, and whose smiles or frowns very frequently carry with them supreme joy or excessive sorrow, use those who are so immediately dependent on your will and pleasure with mildness, with affection, and with love. Train them up in the knowledge and practice of true virtue and religion, that they may be disposed to obey you, not less from motives of the sincerest regard, than from the purest and most disinterested principles of piety and goodness. Having directed *two members* of domestic society in what manner they should conduct themselves as the surest means of preventing any kind of discord or uneasiness, the holy Apostle felt it his duty to give the following advice to a *third class* : “ *Servants*, be obedient to them that are your “ masters according to the flesh, with fear and “ trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto “ Christ : not with eye-service, as men pleasers, “ but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of “ God from the heart ; with good will doing “ service as to the Lord, and not to men : knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, “ the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether “ he be bond or free.” No mistake can possibly arise in understanding *this duty*, so clearly and so plainly pointed out, as it includes *honesty, so-*



*briety*, and *good temper*, the necessary qualifications of so useful a member in society. St. Paul, though he had spoken to *parents*, thought it proper, after the admonition which he had given servants, to speak *thus* to all those who have authority over them : “ And ye, masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that *your* master also is in heaven ; neither is there respect of persons with him.” In these words the apostle directs *all masters* to abstain from a rude and boisterous way of speaking to those who serve them, as if oaths and curses were to make them more active in discharging their several duties. At the same time he reminds those in power and authority, that *they* have a master in heaven, who observes the treatment they give their servants, and will deal with them accordingly ; not regarding the *rich* more than the *poor*, as there is no respect of persons with *him*.

To conclude.—How much more pleasant and comfortable our journey through life would be were we to *practise* the advice given by Joseph to his brethren, must now, I trust, appear to every one of the most common understanding. Affectionate parents, dutiful children, kind masters, and obedient servants, will convince us “ how good and joyful a thing it is for brethren

“to dwell together in unity.” And *that unity* would compose all the little and numerous inconveniencies which our passage to a better country will unavoidably produce. Let us, then, all do our respective duties in the best manner we can, that we may with one heart and one mind glorify our Father who is in heaven, and merit, through the redemption of our blessed Saviour, the forgiveness of our sins and everlasting happiness.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed as is most due, all honor, and power, and glory, for evermore.

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## SERMON XVI.

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PSALM 1.—Verses 1 and 2.

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

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**HAPPINESS** is the general wish of mankind; and every one is anxious to possess so great, so invaluable a blessing. But as the road that leads to happiness, though open to all, is not, sometimes, clearly and distinctly *seen* by all, we shall do well to consider where it may be found. There certainly can be no happiness where there is misery; and as misery is the child of sin, by sure consequence, whatever is sinful must exclude us from any connection or society with real happiness. The calm and serene mind, the silence of the passions, and the moderation of our

appetites and desires, compose that exalted state of bliss which we call happiness, and which the Psalmist has pointed out to us, and at the same time shewn us how we may arrive at it: "Blessed  
" is the man that walketh not in the counsel of  
" the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sin-  
" ners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

In these words there are three obstacles which will unavoidably oppose every idea of ease and comfort which we may hope to enjoy in our earthly pilgrimage, and they must all be removed before we can possibly be happy. We are not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly. Inordinate affections and evil concupiscence, which spring from the counsel of those who treat morality with contempt, are to be resolutely avoided. The countenance and support of bad men is never to operate so powerfully on our conduct as to influence our actions, and make us think lightly of the sacred rules of virtue and honesty. We are to consider, with becoming attention, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump; and that the doctrines of the vicious and depraved, unless firmly resisted, will spread over the whole frame, and corrupt the best principles of the human heart. We are not to stand in the way of sinners. "As evil communications corrupt good manners," we must shun the society

of those who would lead us astray ; who would endeavour to convince us that it is a matter of indifference how we act ; that the rein may be given to any impetuous appetite or desire, and yet we shall be free from *criminal* indulgence. It is needless to point out the evil tendency of such advisers ; and what a horrid scene of complicated guilt would open to the world, if they were often to succeed in their exertions. Nor are we to sit in the seat of the scornful. This obstacle to our happiness finishes the gradation in wickedness which the variety of expressions used by holy David intimates to exist, before it becomes open and flagrant ; since very few commence scoffers at the mystery of godliness who have not first been the constant companions of wicked and bad men. And what, it may be asked, does our pure and holy religion contain, that can give the scoffer any pretence to attack it ? Is divine truth a proper subject for ridicule ? Is the revealed will of God, which informs mankind that there is a future state of rewards and punishments, calculated only to afford matter of derision for the scorner ? Is eternal misery threatened to the wicked, and everlasting blessedness promised to the righteous, a truth of no moment or concern ? A long and continued life of impiety must have worn out every trace of

virtue, before man, frail and imperfect man, can presume to defy the thunder of heaven, and scorn the will and the decrees of Omnipotence.

These formidable rocks in the ocean of life, "*the counsel of the ungodly, the way of sinners, and the seat of the scornful,*" being cautiously and carefully avoided, we shall steer our course with a greater prospect of success. Especially, if we listen to the Psalmist's declaration, who, describing the blessedness of the righteous, in abstaining from sin, adds, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in *his* law doth he meditate day and night."

When the deformity of sin appears in all its horror and consequences, (and it *must* appear in this hideous shape to those who reflect seriously,) the amiableness and beauty of Christian virtue, will rise before us in native simplicity and grandeur. The good man, impressed with the most exalted ideas of obedience to the will of heaven, "will delight in the law of the Lord," drawing from that sacred fountain the waters of everlasting comfort. The voice of God which he hears in the Scriptures, that still small voice will arrest his attention, and awake him from the death of sin to a life of continued righteousness. The pleasure he receives will be like that of a person who has left a "barren and dry



“land, where no water is,” for a “land flowing with milk and honey.” Such difference is there between the wild and dreary waste of a sinful life, and the fertile and productive regions of piety and virtue. And the righteous man, not only *delights* in the law of the Lord after the manner I have been describing; but, “in his law, doth he meditate day and night.” Each returning morn commences with his grateful and pious prayers and thanks to the God of heaven and earth, for the many and daily blessings which he pours upon him: and the evening closes with his adoration and praise. No season being improper for religious duties, the fair and bright day of prosperity, (when the world, with all its fancied happiness, smiles around him,) calls forth his heartfelt acknowledgments. And in the midst of ease and plenty, those treacherous supporters of human consequence and vanity, he never forgets the *Giver* of the good things he enjoys, nor the uncertain tenure by which they are held. In the dark and gloomy night of adversity, when the world and its favors are retiring from him, he sinks not into a state of indolent insensibility, but pours forth his soul to God in these tender and pious ejaculations; “How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? “How long with thou hide thy face from me?”

“ Consider, and hear me, O Lord my God ;  
“ lighten my eyes, that I sleep not in death.  
“ But I have trusted in thy mercy, my heart  
“ shall rejoice in thy salvation.” No situation  
of a good man will ever prompt him to lose  
sight of his Creator and Preserver. Day and  
night, prosperity and adversity, health and sick-  
ness, will-always find his heart reposing on the  
mercy and loving-kindness of his God. And  
those critical circumstances, which often alarm  
and terrify the vicious, excite in the breasts of  
the virtuous the most opposite sentiments. Thus,  
after repeated indignities, and the most unjust  
punishment, having been thrust into the inner  
prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks,  
“ at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang  
“ praises unto God, and the prisoners heard  
“ them.” Their doleful and melancholy situa-  
tion; their bonds, chains, and imprisonment,  
were borne with unshaken firmness and courage,  
whilst unblemished integrity, and conscjous in-  
nocence, enabled them to sing praises unto God,  
even in the midst of their enemies. If this be  
the effect produced by religion on the human  
heart, when it is properly trained in the way of  
godliness, who would wish to continue in his  
sins? Who would prefer the most sordid dross  
to the most pure gold? If a mind, composed

and tranquil by the influence of a true Christian faith, can throw a rein over the passions, and keep them at all times in due subjection to the will of reason, who would not wish most earnestly to possess such a mind? Who would not anxiously strive to acquire that temper and disposition, which is so fertile of joy, and peace, and happiness? And we may rest assured, that joy, and peace, and happiness will attend those, and those only, who “delight in the law of the Lord, and meditate therein day and night.”

To give us the most lively and natural description of a good and happy man, the Psalmist tells us, “He shall be like a tree planted by the water’s side, that bringeth forth his fruit in due season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper.” This beautiful representation of the growth of man in virtue and religion, strikes us with uncommon force, from the exactness of the comparison. “As a tree thrives and flourishes in a kindly and well watered soil,” a man of an honest heart, by frequent and repeated meditation on the holy scriptures, those sacred oracles of divine truth, improves and advances in real holiness. The word of God as naturally enriches the mind, and occasions it to grow in grace, as the cultivated field gives life and energy to the corn

that springs from it. Words and actions to us, are like leaves and fruit to trees. The good man, like the good tree, will render *both* profitable as well as ornamental. Kind and benevolent actions, implicit confidence in the Deity, and a settled desire to do unto others as he would wish others to do unto him, will be the fruits of a heart, well disciplined in the service of religion.

But, if this be the true character of a righteous man, the character of an unrighteous one is very different; for, "as for the ungodly, it is not so with them; but they are like the chaff, which the wind driveth away." The scene here changes greatly; and what in one point of view was all blooming, verdant, and flourishing, is, in another point of view, useless and contemptible. Good men are fertile trees, abounding in good fruits; bad men are chaff driven about by every blast of vice and folly, till they are finally ruined. When the baptist opened his commission as the forerunner of the Messiah, he speaks thus of our blessed Saviour. "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into his garner; but he will burn up the *chaff* with unquenchable fire." Here, we find, that the same attention that is paid to good

wheat, which has answered the labor and culture bestowed on it by the husbandman, will be paid to good and honest men, who have made a suitable improvement in the duties of religion; they will *both* be taken care of and preserved. But the incorrigible sinner and the useless chaff, will meet a similar and ignominious fate. How just all this is, and how strictly agreeable to the doctrines of revealed truth, must appear to every person who would discriminate between those who deserve to be rewarded and those who deserve punishment. Between those who have earnestly, and to the best of their abilities, endeavoured to walk in all the commandments of God, blameless; and those who have been careless and indifferent with respect to religion, during the whole course of their lives. The Psalmist, indeed, draws the same conclusion, "Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand  
" in the judgment, nor sinners in the congrega-  
" tion of the righteous, For the Lord knoweth  
" the way of the righteous; but, the way of the  
" ungodly shall perish." At the great and awful day of judgment, "When the son of man shall  
" come in his glory, and all the holy angels with  
" him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his  
" glory. And before him shall be gathered all  
" nations, and he shall separate them one from  
" another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from



“ the goats.” At that period, the ungodly shall “ not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the “ congregation of the righteous.” For the impartial Judge “ will then say to them on his “ right hand, come ye blessed of my father, “ inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from “ the foundation of the world ;” but he will say to them on his left hand, “ depart from me, “ ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for “ the devil and his angels.” And the cause of this remarkable difference, in bestowing happiness on some, and eternal misery on others, arises from the opposite characters of the parties themselves. Faith, humility, and charity, which implies universal benevolence, if properly and uniformly exercised, will lead, through Christ, to blessedness eternal. But the want of those necessary requisites, to constitute a good life, will unavoidably leave us the objects of divine wrath and punishment.

In the mean time, before the judgment of Christ shall commence, we may rest assured, “ that the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous ; but the way of the ungodly shall perish.’ In looking around us, we discover wheat and tares growing in the same field ; good and bad men members of the same visible Church ; good and bad fishes comprehended in the same net ;



but these strange mixtures are only temporal. The hearts of all men are open to the penetrating eye of Omnipotence, and he will finally reward every one of us according to our works.

To conclude.—As truth, pure, and undisguised, must ever be agreeable to a rational creature, who is responsible for his conduct, the subject of our present meditation ought to have its due and proper influence. Interest is allowed by all to operate most powerfully on the human heart, and as our truest interest is the favor of heaven, it must prove our bounden duty to lead a godly and a Christian life. In what manner that life may be securely passed I have laid before you. The counsel of the ungodly, the way of sinners, and the seat of the scornful, are at all times to be avoided, as sources of corrupt morals, and the most gross impiety. And to secure (through the merits of our blessed redeemer) the forgiveness of sin, and everlasting life, and happiness, we must *delight* in the law of the Lord, and *meditate* therein *day and night*.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honor, and glory, and power for evermore.

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## SERMON XVII.

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ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE to the EPHESIANS.—  
Chap. 4.—Verse 14.

*Ye have well done, that ye did communicate with  
my affliction.*

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**WHEN** we take a view of man, as a creature possessed of wonderful powers and extraordinary abilities, which enable him, by constant practice and uniform perseverance, to trace the mysterious sources of art and science, and when we consider his divine origin, and the amazing extent of his natural and acquired talents, we are astonished at the dignity of his nature and the rank which he holds in the scale of created beings. But those brilliant accomplishments, which are derived from a successful cultivation of the polite arts, shine with a feeble ray, when compared with the mild, placid, and steady light that encircles the Christian moralist.

To see the philosopher, with a degree of exultation and triumph, rejoicing at the victory which he has gained over the ignorance of former ages, and exploring the latent causes of effects, which were for a long time enveloped in the thickest mist and darkness, would excite our attention, and conciliate our esteem, did we not discover that, in the transport of success, he was apt to impute too much to his own strength, and forget that "every good and every perfect gift cometh from above."

This inattention to the fountain of light and truth has blunted the edge of sensibility, and done material injury to the finer feelings of the heart, which would otherwise have expanded themselves with genial warmth in the common cause of benevolence and liberality.

Hence, we often see the richest stores of learning in the possession of those whose actions are shamefully profligate and notoriously infamous. Hence, duties, which we are bound by the most sacred obligations to perform, are treated with neglect and contempt. Nor can it be otherwise, since the mind must be properly impressed with the most sacred ideas of the relation we bear to God and man, before we shall feel ourselves disposed to attend to either.

To enforce this doctrine, by the most powerful

of all sanctions, the responsibility of man in another world for every part of his conduct in the present busy and turbulent scene of action, has engaged the unwearied labour and indefatigable attention of the apostles of Christ. They have spared no pains, and shrunk from no dangers, in discharging the important and awful task imposed on them, of declaring the whole will of God to mankind; and they carefully eradicate all those noxious and poisonous weeds which vain tradition and useless philosophy had studiously cultivated in the garden of the mind.

Nor were they forgetful, in this their labour, of the injunctions of their heavenly Master, that all their actions should be directed with a view to serve the cause of humanity; and that the best proof of their being his disciples, and sincerely attached to his religion, would be, their love for each other. "By this, shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another."

To those, who thus preached the Gospel in its original purity and perfection, and laid open the extensive nature of that charity, which, in its comprehensive grasp, included the whole race of mankind, how exhilarating must be the reflection, that they had not laboured in vain; that the seed, which, with pious hope and

anxious care, had been committed to a soil prepared for it, answered the warmest expectations and most ardent wishes of the sower; that the doctrines of Christianity, untainted by the doctrines of men, preserved their native vigour, and operated with full force on the enlarged and benevolent mind.

This supreme felicity, and of all sensations whatever, by far the most grateful, was (on some occasions) the envied lot of St. Paul. Amidst the dreary walls of a prison, and that distress which is the constant companion of the miserable, he experienced the greatest comfort and satisfaction, on being assured that his converts at Philippi continued stedfast in the faith. That the religion he had taught them, with unwearied zeal and the most sincere affection, was the pride of their life, and the joy of their hearts. And when Epaphroditus, who communicated these glad tidings to the good Apostle, presented their charitable and voluntary contributions, to relieve his necessities, and mitigate the horrors of confinement, the heart of the Christian hero, melting with tenderness and love towards them, poured itself forth in the warmest effusions of gratitude and sensibility.

And though, in his epistle of thanks to those who had so amply repaid him for all his past

services, he emphatically declares, "Every  
" where, and in all things, I am instructed both to  
" be full and to be hungry, both to abound and  
" to suffer need;" intimating, that prosperity  
or adversity could neither elate or depress a  
great and good mind; yet, he adds, " Notwith-  
" standing ye have well done, that ye did com-  
" municate with my affliction." Ye have shewn  
that the true spirit of Christianity animates all  
your actions, by thus sympathising with me in  
my present distress. And to give his benefac-  
tors and faithful friends the clearest idea of the  
sentiments he entertained with respect to their  
late liberality, he calls it an " Odour of a sweet  
" smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to  
" God!"

The costly display of ceremonious worship  
may captivate the attention and secure the ap-  
probation of those, whose religion is all parade  
and ostentation; but that Almighty Being, who  
has declared, that he will have mercy and not  
sacrifice, views, from the throne of his glory,  
with complacency and satisfaction, those wor-  
shippers of him who blend faith and benevolence.  
This the Apostle enforces with all the powers of  
eloquence and persuasion, and leaves the Phi-  
lippians to draw this conclusion, that the incense  
which ascends to heaven, from the pure flame  
of Christian charity, is most acceptable to God.



The spirit of Christianity, and not the mere letter, which influenced the whole conduct of Saint Paul, presented to his enraptured mind, (when he reflected on the feelings and anxiety of his zealous and sincere friends), that glorious æra, when the benign genius of the gospel arose, amidst the most jarring interests, and attuned them all to the sweetest harmony. When one heart, and one mind, seemed to actuate one general body, in promoting the comfort and the happiness of man.

Charmed with the effect produced, he saw the friendly and hospitable asylum rising with majestic dignity, for the reception of those who had none to help them; whilst Pity and Compassion wiped the tear from the eye of Distress; and Poverty and Disease seemed to lose half their wretchedness and misery.

Such a scene we may well suppose opened itself to the great and good Apostle, who was satisfied in his own mind, that when Christianity was properly represented, and as properly supported; when Kings became the nursing fathers, and Queens the nursing mothers, of the Church, the miseries of the world would claim no small portion of their care and attention.

The sacred stream of royal bounty and beneficence, issuing from the strong and solid rock,

on which the British throne is founded, and flowing in soft and healing currents through different parts of this our beloved country, amply proves *their* attachment to the religion of Christ; and all those amiable and social virtues, which exemplify the most tender regard for unfortunate man; and the most sincere respect and love for the laws of God. And with the strictest adherence to truth, it may be affirmed, that the voice of real misery never reached the royal ear, without receiving, *instantly* receiving, those alleviating and soothing comforts, which its circumstances demanded, and its perilous situation loudly called for.

Indeed, with whatever vices the present times may be tainted, a want of feeling is by no means one of them. Our hearts, and our purses, have been put to the severest trial, and with credit to our humanity be it spoken, have firmly and resolutely stood the test, rising superior to every worldly and selfish interest.

Nor does this pure flame of Christian charity and benevolence, appear to be in the least degree weakened or diminished amongst us, since the present concourse cannot proceed from novelty or curiosity; as, what has been so often presented to your view, neither possesses the one, nor excites the other. It must therefore proceed

from that internal consciousness which you all feel, that you are the children of one common parent, and bound to each other by such strong ties as no distinction of rank or fortune can ever dissolve. It must proceed from an anxious wish and ardent desire to support an Institution, which, rejecting all local considerations, extends its genial influence to the most distant parts of the kingdom; and, with a voice as eloquent as persuasive, calls on the miserable heirs of affliction, “the maimed, the halt, and the “blind,” to come and be refreshed; to come and receive, from the most elaborate skill, perfected by experience, that renovated health and vigour, which man, under the favour of Heaven, is enabled to bestow on man.

Nor does our Institution stop here.—When the bed of sickness rouses the thoughtless and the inconsiderate from their dream of folly and profligacy; and when the hardened infidel, stung with the agonizing tortures of foul ingratitude to his God and Saviour, sees his error, as he stands on the brink of eternity; then, the still small voice of reason and religion, soothes his tumultuous soul, and leads him to repentance, and salvation.

Thus, to communicate with the afflictions of our distressed brethren, and whilst we are re-

storing strength to their infirm bodies, to speak comfort to their diseased souls, is fully answering the design of our existence in the flesh, which was evidently to promote the glory of God, and the welfare of man. And so closely connected, in the Christian system, are the duties we owe our Maker, and those we owe the unfortunate and the miserable, that it is impossible, with the least degree of consistency, to separate them; "For whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" It cannot be, that the enemy to man should be the friend of God; or, that the religion of the meek and humble Jesus, "who went about doing good," should ever inhabit that breast which is torn by the violence of sordid and ungenerous passions, hostile to its own peace, and to the happiness of thousands.

But when, as on the present occasion, faith and morality are united, and our love of God appears by the love we have for each other, there results from so amiable a union, the highest satisfaction which a rational creature can experience on this side the grave. Treasures thus laid out, are secured against that sad variety of accidents and misfortunes to which every thing

human is obnoxious. The treachery of false friends, the deceitfulness of the world, and the blackest storms of adversity, cannot destroy the lasting effects of well directed liberality, and true philanthropy.

In a word.—When hope, which has raised our expectations to the highest pitch imaginable, shall terminate in enjoyment; and when Faith, whose penetrating eye saw through the dark cloud that encircles the deity, shall be swallowed up in vision, then shall the action of the present hour open for us the gates of everlasting mercy; and that God, who created, preserved, and redeemed us, whose religion we professed, and whose commandments we revered and obeyed, will receive us into the regions of immortal bliss and glory, to live and to reign with him for ever and ever. Amen.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and power, for ever.

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## SERMON XVIII.

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ST. MATTHEW.—Chap. 6.—Verse 34.

*Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow ;  
for the morrow shall take thought for the things  
of itself : sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

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**T**HE morality of the Gospel is the most correct and pure that can be imagined. Indeed, how can it be otherwise, when it flows from the source and fountain of all perfection. Amidst the discordant sentiments of mankind on subjects of the greatest importance and benefit to society, it is a great blessing to us that we have rules of duty laid down for our practice, which, if rightly observed and carefully followed, will guard us against the most fatal errors, and lead us into the true path of obedience and happiness. The world, before our blessed Saviour made his appearance in it, was in possession of general



systems of civil and religious conduct; but those systems were not at all times equal to the task assigned them. They had not sufficient power to curb the unruly passions, and check the tumultuous disorders of the human heart; they stood in need of that strong, that irresistible sanction which Christianity alone was able to bestow. Whatever, therefore, was defective in the morality of the world before the publication of the Gospel, has been abundantly supplied by the doctrines of Christ; and not one of us can fairly or justly complain either that we are *ignorant* of our duty, or know not how to discharge it *properly*. The provision that is made by the laws of this country for the instruction of all who wish to receive it, and the stated seasons of public devotion and prayer, which the State enjoins and its ministers observe, leave every one inexcusable who is not well acquainted with his duty to God and to man.

The misfortune is, that the sacred oracles of truth are seldom consulted, and that the concerns of this life engage too much of our time for the affairs of religion to make the impression they ought, and most assuredly would make on our hearts, if duly and properly attended to; or, perhaps, many whose serious thoughts and reflections on the next world lead them to peruse

the scriptures, see, or fancy they see, a severity of doctrine and of discipline, which gives pain to their pious and timid minds. It is certain in this life we shall meet both characters, though not in equal numbers. The world has ever been divided, between some who take the language of scripture in its most literal sense, and others who start widely from the subject, and give an interpretation favorable to their own wishes and inclinations. Each extreme is perhaps wrong, and *that* explanation will ever be the best which is most agreeable to enlightened reason.

Our blessed Saviour, in his sermon on the mount, is very anxious to correct all errors respecting morality and religion ; and, observing the minds of his followers strangely perverted by false ideas and notions concerning the most essential duties, he represents to them, in a forcible manner, the opposition between this world and the next, that their judgment being once formed in a proper manner, their conduct might ever after be uniform and correct. To effect this gracious purpose, he exhorts them not to “ lay up their treasures upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal ;” *i. e.* not to be particularly careful in accumulating the riches of the present life, which may be taken from us by a thousand

unforeseen accidents and unexpected circumstances, but to “ lay up for themselves treasures “ in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth “ corrupt, and where thieves do not break “ through nor steal:” by a life of exemplary virtue and holiness, to secure the future rewards of a better and everlasting happiness, in the regions of immortal bliss and glory, which no misfortunes, no cross accidents in this world, can ever take from the worthy and the good. And to shew the extreme folly and absurdity of an ardent thirst after temporal affairs, as if we were left without a guide or friend to defend and protect us in our passage through life, he says to them, “ consider the lillies of the field how “ they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin ; “ and yet, I say unto you, that even Solomon, “ in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of “ these.” This beautiful representation of the abundant care and provision made by the Almighty for the vegetable world, cannot leave a considerate and reflecting person in the least doubt with respect to the care and provision which man may expect from his Creator, who formed him with views the most exalted, and for designs the most noble: “ therefore (adds “ our blessed Saviour) take no thought for the “ morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for

“ the things of itself : sufficient unto the day is “ the evil thereof.” As if he had said, let not your hearts be so earnestly bent on providing for this short, this transitory scene of present existence, as to wear you out with immoderate industry and indefatigable labour. Your heavenly Father will never be forgetful of those who serve him faithfully, and do their best endeavours to walk in his laws and keep his commandments : and as for the morrow, the remainder of the time allotted you to spend on earth, let not the *supposed* troubles and perplexities that may await you make too deep an impression on your minds, since “ sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” The anxieties and concerns of the present moment are enough to engage your immediate attention, without exciting your fears for the dark and uncertain events of the future.

In applying this doctrine of our Saviour, as we ought, to the advantage of our temporal as well as our spiritual interest, we must be careful that we do not go astray. He by no means recommends a life of indolence and inaction to his followers : a life spent in no employment of honor or advantage, but wasted away in the vain and frivolous pursuit of trifles, or worse than that, in doing nothing. Such characters are unworthy the name of rational beings, and a dis-

grace to Christianity. The fear is, that too many of us may chance, in our busy and active career, to lose sight of the next world, and place all our affection and regard on this ; pleased with the bright and fair prospect before us, and fully satisfied with the success that attends our pursuits. It is no uncommon thing for those who have experienced the bounty of heaven, and tasted the sweets of industry under the favor of an over-ruling Providence, to *forget* the source from whence all their blessings flow. This is a crime of the deepest ingratitude, and will, most assuredly, meet its due reward. For we cannot suppose that the Almighty will ever reward any but his true and obedient servants ; or admit into his everlasting kingdom those, who labored more for the meat that perisheth, than for that which endureth to everlasting life. This is the gulph of perdition into which thousands have rushed with heedless indifference, and thoughtless impetuosity. They have supposed that the care of their families was to have a large share of their time and concern ; and so far they supposed what was very right and proper. But when they concluded that there were no claims on them of a higher nature, and treated the momentous duties of religion with coolness and neglect, they grasped the shadow,

and lost the substance; they accumulated for themselves the unrighteous mammon, and threw away the true and most permanent riches. Such is the folly of those who are wise in their own conceits, and very fools in the opinion of the judicious and prudent.

That we may none of us act otherwise than our duty to God and man requires, in an affair of the utmost consequence to our eternal welfare, we shall do well to observe the following rules, which appear to derive all their force and strength from the subject under our consideration.

If we have hitherto been inclined to rest satisfied in the regular and faithful discharge of those several duties which relate to our well being in this life only, and have exerted all our abilities and skill to render the present state a state of lasting comfort and enjoyment, without casting one longing look on futurity, we have most imprudently taken too much thought for the morrow. We have fixed our hearts too eagerly on temporal blessings, which in a moment may take wing and fly away. For as Solomon most wisely observes, “What hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, where-  
“ in he hath laboured under the sun. For all  
“ his days are sorrows, and his travel grief;



“ yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night ;  
“ this is also vanity.”

We are to think frequently and seriously of those who depend on us for support, and who have a right to expect it at our hands. We are bound by the most sacred ties of affection and duty to provide for their present and future welfare ; and as St. Paul observes in his first Epistle to Timothy, “ If any provide not for his own, “ and especially for those of his own house, he “ hath denied the faith, and is worse than an “ infidel ;” *i. e.* No person who claims the name of a Christian, in the least degree, merits that title, whatever pretensions he may make to it, unless he carefully and regularly educates and supports his children and relations, who depend upon him.

But, though all this be allowed, and the performance of the duties I have mentioned is sanctioned by the voice of reason and revelation, yet the zeal that prompts us to discharge them may be carried too far. Are there not many who incessantly “ rise early, and late take rest,” and never give themselves any absence from their labours ? Do not some, with a view of increasing their substance, think of nothing else but how to improve their property, and heap up riches without knowing who shall gather them ?

That eagerness of mind, and unremitted attention, which leads to so much toil and fatigue, is being too thoughtful for the morrow, as if death were at our heels, and our lives at the last gasp. As if worldly affairs were the one thing needful, and our only business in this life were to scrape together as much as we could, and employ all our time and thought on no other subject whatever. In this tumult and hurry of business, what becomes of religion, and the concerns of our immortal souls? Is a provision for the body, which perishes, to be preferred before a provision for the soul, which never dies? Is that part of us, which at our dissolution will be reduced to its primitive dust, of more value than that immaterial spirit, which will live to all eternity?

When our Saviour would correct our too great anxiety for the morrow, he exhorts us to seek "the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," as the means of reducing our concern for the things here below, within their just and proper bounds. Nothing is more likely to temper the impetuosity of our love for this world, than the consideration that there is another, where our actions will be all examined, and a due estimate made of them. But, this consideration is apt to be banished from our minds

in a variety of engagements, which leave no room for more profitable reflections. When the two duties are united, and each attended to, then our course through this troublesome and fleeting life will be secure ; but not till then. The union between our moral and religious obligations, like the union between our souls and bodies, should never be broken till we quit this world and all its vanities. And much have they to fear and dread, who think not of these things as they ought, but run on in the beaten track of folly, unrestrained by the admonitions of conscience, which at times will give us all a check in the madness of our pursuits ; and, deaf to the voice of that heavenly charmer, which, in the sacred and saving gospel of Jesus Christ, so repeatedly and so affectionately calls on us to turn from these vanities to the living God, who made heaven and earth, and all things that are therein ; who would not that any of us should perish, but that we should all come to everlasting life.

It appears, then, to be our strict and bounden duty, to take the greatest care, that our anxiety for the morrow be not carried too far. That a portion of our time and industry be given to the improvement of our minds, in religious knowledge. We are not to retire from the world

with a view to dedicate ourselves more immediately to the service of our Maker, at the expence of all those social and relative duties, which, as Christians, we are obliged to perform. Nor are we to leave the concerns of religion to others, with the fond idea, that we have no time to cultivate it, from the multiplicity of business, into which we are thrown, by our daily occupations and domestic employments. We may fairly and safely leave to monks and to hermits the silly persuasion, that they shall merit heaven by tormenting themselves and persecuting their brethren; but, in our violent attachment to this world, we must never forget that he who had bought a yoke of oxen, and must needs go and prove them; and he who had bought a field, and must needs go and see it; as an excuse for not attending the marriage supper, were finally excluded from any future admission. And the five foolish virgins, who, in their want of thought and reflection, had neglected to provide oil for their lamps, were rejected by the bridegroom. They came, indeed, and earnestly requested to share in the solemnity; but the Lord answered and said, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." No excuse was allowed them, for their negligence; and their not being properly prepared, was deemed a sufficient reason for their

exclusion. Our situation, with respect to the other world, is exactly similar. If we suffer the morrow to take up all our thoughts, as if we were to live here for ever, and leave a future state out of our consideration, the gates of heaven will not be thrown open for our admission when we die. If the life to come, be not closely connected with the life present, in all we think and do, we shall make shipwreck of our eternal salvation.

To conclude. Let us then resolve to be wise unto salvation, and so provide for the morrow by a moderate and honest industry, as to keep our eyes attentively fixed on a better and enduring state. Let us remember, that the abilities we possess, and the health we enjoy, by which we are enabled to provide for ourselves and our families, all flow from the Fountain of everlasting Love. And surely in our seasons of plenty and success, when the clouds drop fatness, and the vallies laugh and sing, we should never suffer the avaricious desire of the fleeting moment to exclude every thought of that gracious and bountiful Creator, who giveth man food, and feedeth the young ravens that call upon him. Whilst we visit the Church and the field, at their due and stated seasons, we shall do well. They both call on us for duties very different.

The former requires the labour of the mind ; the latter that of the body. They who reflect on these obligations as they ought, will be influenced alike by interest in each case. The provision for the morrow will not be too great to obstruct their future and better concerns ; and their rational and uniform devotion will give life and spirit to all their temporal engagements.

May the Almighty, of his goodness, keep us steady in the discharge of these our essential duties, and lead us all to life everlasting, through the merits of our Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed as is most due, all honor, and glory, and power, for evermore.



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## SERMON XIX.

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PSALM 34.—Verse 7.

*The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*

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**WHOEVER** reflects seriously on the visible Creation, and the means by which it was called into existence, has only three solutions to which he can with any propriety resort. He must either believe the eternity of the world, or the fortuitous concourse of atoms, or the existence of an Almighty Power which formed and supports it. The very recent period which gave birth to civilization, and the late invention of arts and sciences (which could not have remained undiscovered during an eternity), destroys one hypothesis; the wonderful order and harmony of the visible creation, in its several component parts, effectually undoes the second; and that solid chain of reasoning, which leads to humility and truth, will confirm and establish the last.

- If we suppose a first cause, a Creator of all things, we cannot suppose him indifferent to the worlds he has called into being, or to the creatures which inhabit them. As the excellence of all his works speaks him kind and beneficent, he will most assuredly promote their ease, comfort, and happiness. Thus reasoning, we admit the moral government of the Deity; and if we once allow that the Deity interferes in human concerns, there can be assigned no plausible reason for our disputing any one instance of his interference recorded in the Scriptures. We may therefore safely and truly say with the holy Psalmist, "The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

The divine protection and salvation vouchsafed to the faithful, is here signified; and the "Angel of the Lord" may mean, the presence of Christ in the Church militant, as of old in the camp of Israel; or the ministration of created spirits to the heirs of salvation, as in the case of Elisha, whose servant, going forth early in the morning, saw a great army of their enemies, the Syrians, encompassing the city, and, in his terror, cried out, "Alas! my master, what shall we do? But Elisha bids him fear not; for they that be with us, be more than they that

“ he with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, “ Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may “ see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the “ servant, and he saw; and behold the moun- “ tain was full of horses and chariots of fire, “ round about Elisha.” When God had opened the eyes of the servant, he could see the hosts of angels, which encompassed his master to secure him, with the same certainty as he saw the Syrians lying round the city to apprehend him.

A man, who never had spiritual sight, can have no exact notion of perceiving spiritual objects; no more than a man, who never enjoyed natural sight, can entertain of natural objects.

St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of the angels, as messengers of God, calls them “ ministering spirits, sent forth to minister “ for them who should be heirs of salvation.”

The Jews imagined angels were conversant in an house of God, as good genii appointed by him to inspect or assist the worshippers. The heathens in general allotted to every man his guardian angel: nor is this opinion blameable, while the praise of his tender loving kindness is attributed to God alone. Hence David, or the Psalmist, describing the public worship of God, says, “ I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, “ with my whole heart; even before the Gods

“or Angels will I sing praise unto thee.” In conformity to this opinion, the angels of little children are said by our Saviour to see the face of God in heaven. Hence the disciples, at the house of Mary, the mother of John, imagined that Peter’s *angel*, not Peter himself, stood before the gate. And hence St. Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, exhorts them to behave with the greatest modesty and decency in places of public worship, “because of the angels,” in reverence to those superior beings, who, though invisible, yet saw their deportment.

The consideration of these invisible and heavenly guardians, who are constant spectators of our actions, should check us in the career of folly and sin, and incite us to pursue that line of general conduct which is most suitable to the dignity of man and the glory of his Creator.

For we must remember, that this extraordinary care and attention is paid to those only who fear God; to those who, with awful and religious reverence, look up to him, as the Creator and Preserver of all things; to those who, conscious of their own weakness and imperfections, expect strength and support in and through him alone, and who listen with all possible humility and attention to his commands, and, as far as they are able, reverence and obey them. With such

dispositions and hearts, the Almighty is well pleased; and no good thing will he withhold from those who thus fear and obey him.

Have not, in all ages, the tender mercy and loving kindness of the Lord been exerted towards those who make religion their *study*, and *his* glory their delight? Hath not, in times of real danger and distress, his guardian angel rescued, from impending misery and destruction, his faithful and zealous servants who put their whole trust in him?

The wonderful care that is taken by the Almighty of all his creatures, even the most minute, and to our imperfect ideas, the most insignificant, will never suffer him to forsake man, who is his noblest work. He who with unbounded generosity and unlimited goodness, sends the former and the latter rain to refresh and invigorate the earth, and furnishes it with such a variety of materials for the ease, comfort, and happiness of his servants, will most assuredly *protect* them, when they discharge their respective duties, and acknowledge the power that supports and the hand that feeds them.

If we trace the sacred page of history, we shall find a variety of examples to confirm us in the belief of an Almighty, though invisible, power which watches over the righteous and delivers them out of all their troubles.

When the unshaken constancy and religious zeal of Daniel, prompted his enemies, by artful machinations and treacherous designs, to prevail on Darius to sign a degree, which in their opinion must prove fatal to his rising fortune; how visible is the hand of God in the safety and protection of his servant! The anxiety and distress which seizes the mind of the king, whilst Daniel was exposed to the most cruel of deaths, would not suffer him to listen to the voice of harmony, or close his eyes in sleep. In the morning, when he sought the den with trembling step, what must have been his feelings, on hearing the Prophet thus address him: "O king, live for ever; my God hath sent his *Angel*, and hath shut the lions mouths, that they have not hurt me;" for as much as before him, innocency was found in me.

Whilst the admirable integrity and generous resolution of Daniel's three friends, urge them to tell the enraged Nebucadnezzar, that they chose rather to be thrown into his burning fiery furnace, than to obey his command and worship his golden image; how are the hearts of all sincere believers delighted on finding that, in the language of Saint Paul, "by faith they quenched the violence of fire." And what solid comfort and satisfaction does it give to a



well informed mind, to hear an idolatrous king, wrought on by the force of conviction, expressing himself in the following manner : “ Blessed  
“ be the God of Shadrach, Meshac, and  
“ Abednego, who hath sent his *Angel*, and delivered his servants that *trusted* in him, and  
“ hath changed the king’s words, and yielded  
“ their bodies, that they might not serve nor  
“ worship any God, except their own God.”

The exemplary righteousness of Noah and his family ; the integrity and resignation of pious Job ; and the innocence and unshaken fidelity of Joseph ; are strong and remarkable instances of the fear of God operating powerfully on the human heart ; and the singular and wonderful deliverance which each of them received amidst the storms and tempests of adversity, are convincing proofs of an Almighty Power interesting itself in behalf of those who know their duty, and endeavour to practise it ; who believe in a God, and are anxious to serve him.

If we proceed from a particular to a general Providence, we shall see the armies of the faithful going on with united force, and under the immediate protection of the Lord Jehovah, triumphing over the combined powers of an insolent and enraged enemy. Whilst our ears are shocked with the horrid and impious blasphem-

mies of Rhabshakey, whom the king of Assyria sent to reproach the living God, our hearts are calmed and composed by the rational and manly devotion of the good Hezekiah, who places all his hopes of succour and defence in the God of his fathers. The overthrow and signal defeat that attended the proud and haughty Sennacherib, and the tide of success which so rapidly followed the Israelites, convince us in the most extraordinary manner, and beyond all possibility of doubt, that the Lord he is God, and that he never leaves or forsakes those who reverence and fear him.

Before the walls of Jericho fell, encompassed by the victorious arms of Joshua, the Almighty, who led by an *angel* the children of Israel in the wilderness, sent a heavenly guardian to assure his faithful and true servant of the success that should crown his well directed exertions in the cause of virtue and religion.

To what shall we ascribe the victory of David over the numerous army of the Philistines? Shall we attribute to his single and unassisted arm, the skill and power which stopt the threatening voice of insolence and blasphemy, and saved his country from impending destruction? The finger of the Almighty is visible in the whole transaction, and to him alone be-

longs the glory, as from him alone proceeded the ability.

As it clearly appears, from what has been said, that the providence of God watches over his faithful and obedient creatures; if we wish, as individuals, or (considered in a collective capacity,) as a great and flourishing nation, to continue in the enjoyment of the many blessings we at present possess; let us remember the terms on which alone that possession can be secured to us—the fear of God. If a voice have spoken to us from heaven, to call us out of the darkness of ignorance and error, into the glorious and marvellous light of the Gospel of Truth; it is our duty and interest to listen to the Heavenly Monitor, and to tread in the path that is marked out for us. When a people, great in arts and renowned for commerce, blend benevolence towards man, with the fear of God; and when religion, closely and inseparably connected with morality, forms their general character, they have every reason to expect success will crown their enterprizes, and plenteousness reward their toil. Such expectations religion raises in the breast of her true and sincere votaries; and such hope, founded on the rock of genuine faith, leads on to absolute and certain fruition.

To conclude. Whilst the daring infidels

treat every thing that is serious with contempt and ridicule; and whilst they endeavour to disseminate their pernicious doctrines to deceive (if it were possible) the very elect, and counteract the gracious scheme of man's redemption; let it be our study to walk worthy of our vocation, so that having confessed Christ before men in this world, we may, when we enter the next, be confessed or acknowledged by him before his heavenly Father, when he shall come with his holy angels to punish his enemies, and to reward his friends; and when the fear of God shall finally lead us to joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honor, power, glory, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore.

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## SERMON XX.

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PSALM 68.—Verse 3.

*Let the righteous be glad, and rejoice before God ;  
let them also be merry and joyful.*

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**BY** some strange and fatal mistake, religion has been often represented as surrounded with gloom and melancholy. Her sacred and awful character, which should inspire us with the most animated sentiments of joy and peace, has been held forth by many rather as the object of fear than of love, rather as the parent of terror than of hope. From whence should this wild, this extravagant notion proceed? From whence should the mind of man derive sentiments so very repugnant to the voice of nature, of reason, and of revelation? If we trace the error to its original source, we shall find that the diseases of the body, more than those of the mind, have contributed to its existence.

When the nervous system is affected to any violent degree, when the spirits lose their wonted alacrity and cheerfulness, and the whole frame seems to sink under the pressure of distress and anxiety, then the imagination takes the alarm, and fancy dresses religion in such dark, such sable colours, as she never appeared in when reason had her full play and force upon the mind. There are thousands in the world who groan under the weight of imaginary distress, of ideal misery. There are thousands, who, with a degree of mechanism peculiar to themselves, work their passage through life in the same manner as they ought to work out their salvation, "with fear and trembling." Hence originates a dark, a gloomy catalogue of miseries and woes. Hence proceeds that horrid and dreadful sin, *suicide*, which has stained the annals of the British history. Our modern philosophers on the Continent, impute this sad, and, alas! prevailing vice, to the unsettled and changeable atmosphere we breathe in; but they may, with more justice and truth, place it to the account of religious melancholy and despair.

I know of no method more likely to correct the false notions of virtue and goodness (which many possess, and artfully cultivate, when under the pressure and weight of bad and uneven



spirits,) than to be well assured that the infirmities of the body always affect, in some degree, the powers of the mind : that irregular thoughts, and the strange, the wild chimeras of the brain, have no criminality in themselves, unless approved of by the will, and suffered to ripen into action.

We may, therefore, take it for granted, that the fears and doubts, the anxiety and distress of some serious Christians, is no more an argument of their guilt, than the cheerfulness and vivacity of many others is of their innocence. The world is too apt to be led by appearances, and often too hasty in its judgments and censures. If severe afflictions and accumulated distress bear hard upon a man, his integrity and virtue are sometimes called in question. Thus, when Job groaned under the most acute, the most agonizing tortures ; when a sad variety of woe overwhelmed him, Eliphaz, the Temanite, with all the sarcastic bitterness of false friendship, exclaims, “ Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished “ being *innocent* ? or where were the *righteous* “ cut off ? ”

But God, who seeth not as man seeth, judged otherwise ; and the sequel of this pious man’s history amply proves, that afflictions are trials sent from heaven ; and that patience under

afflictions is the most exalted virtue. When a viper fastened on the hand of St. Paul, in a most critical and delicate situation, the barbarous people, who had shewn him no small kindness, “said among themselves, no doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.” But when they saw him shake the viper from his hand into the fire, they altered their opinion, and were fully convinced of his integrity and innocence.

Never, therefore, let us suffer the hasty, and sometimes ill grounded opinion of the world, to affect us too deeply. Let us pay all proper regard to public respect, and secure our characters with the utmost caution; but, at the same time, let us not sink under the load of detraction or calumny which may unjustly be thrown upon us. 'Tis much to be feared, not a few have fallen victims to the pestilential blasts of scandal; and, though armed with native virtue and innocence, have not been able effectually to resist the torrent of defamation which has flowed in upon them.

To counteract the ill consequences of sinking under fancied or real distress; to oppose the venom of unmerited censure, or the doubts and fears which a weak constitution or bad spirits

may create; we shall do well to follow the advice of the Psalmist. He felt all the bitterness which the malice of enraged enemies or pretended friends could inflict. He fully experienced the keen anguish of mental torment, and the horrors which hope, clouded with despair, must ever produce. But amidst these severe, these dreadful conflicts, he plainly saw, that where repentance (through the merits of Christ) had washed away the stain of guilt, or where innocence (as far as our imperfect natures may be deemed innocent) required not the vigorous scrutiny of repentance, nothing was to be feared from the malice of the world, or the forebodings of a deranged and melancholy mind.

Well, therefore, (impressed with these noble and truly Christian sentiments,) might he exclaim, "Let the righteous be glad, and rejoice before God; let them also be merry, and joyful."

And surely we have great reason to rejoice, when we reflect on the condition and design of our existence in this short, though perhaps to many, turbulent state. We are not placed here without a friend, whose benevolence is equal to his power. We are not left to the mercy of chance, the sport and derision of every blast of fortune; but are under the immediate inspection

and particular care of an Almighty Protector. We are possessed of strong rational powers, and a freedom of will, which enable us to act in such a manner, as cannot fail to promote our present and future interest. And though, for wise ends, and the most beneficial purposes, the moral as well as the natural world is subject to confusion and disorder, from sin and a variety of temptations, yet an invisible guide is ever around us, to second our honest endeavors after virtue, and to conduct our steps into the paths of everlasting peace. With two such powerful friends, in heaven and on earth, we may each act our part on the great theatre of the world with satisfaction, credit, and applause. A variety of objects (particularly adapted to the refined system of Christian morality) solicit our regard, and claim our attention. The distresses of the widow, the cries of the orphan, the sufferings of injured merit, and the feeble moan of sinking poverty, are all so many incentives to virtue, and tests of integrity. When we comfort the one, wipe away the tears from the other, and raise the last from the bed of wretchedness and woe, we approach nearest to the title of true heroism in *this* world, and secure to ourselves an immortal inheritance in a better. And where is that person to be found, who will not allow

that the righteous have every reason to be glad, and rejoice, when such an extensive field for the display and exercise of virtue is opened before them? Where is that narrow-minded person to be met with, whose selfish, whose contracted views, render him incapable of discerning the beauty of universal benevolence, of unbounded charity?

If this reflection open the source of real, of exceeding great joy, how animating is the thought, that, with the strong eye of a well-grounded faith, confirmed by hope, "built on the rock of ages," we may view the regions of eternal bliss; the rivers of pleasure, that flow for the righteous, at God's right hand, for evermore! What was once the ardent wish and earnest desire of pious men, is laid open to us, with all the certainty that so important, so divine a truth, can possibly require. The darkness of ignorance, and the thick mists which human reason and philosophy had thrown over spiritual objects, are all dispersed by the glorious light of revelation. "The Day Spring from on high hath visited us;" the Sun of Righteousness is risen, and the vapours of folly and superstition shrink from his bright, his penetrating beams, leaving the way of truth clear and open to all. Rites and ceremonies, sacrifices and

oblations, are at an end ; and, instead of groaning under the severity of laws, difficult to be kept, and dangerous to be broken, our “ yoke “ is easy, and our burthen is light.”

Now, whatever difficulties or dangers may surround us, we are more than conquerors, through him who hath redeemed us ; through him, who “ hath opened the kingdom of heaven “ to all believers ;” when, by a life of habitual virtue and goodness, they are qualified and proper candidates.

If these considerations are not sufficient to animate our zeal, and quicken our industry in the cause of neglected virtue ; if these arguments and reasons, drawn from the pure, the sacred springs of revelation, are ineffectual towards influencing our practice, or regulating our conduct, I fear no motives whatever will avail. But, “ Brethren, (as the apostle expresses himself,) we are persuaded better things of you, “ though we thus speak, and things that accompany salvation.”

Let therefore the world smile or frown upon us, if we are innocent, we are safe under his care and protection, who will be our guide unto death. If it be our lot to pine in sorrow, and to drink the bitter cup of affliction, still let us trust in him, who, though he may suffer heavi-



ness to endure for the night, will comfort us with joy in the morning. If melancholy and gloom should cast a shade over the bright scenes of life, and check that cheerfulness and vivacity which is the very essence of society; if mental uneasiness should create doubts, multiply perplexities, and destroy the pleasure and comfort of our existence; in humble confidence let us look up to the Father of Mercies, who will either remove our distresses, or enable us to bear them with pious fortitude and Christian patience.

To conclude.—Whatever may be our condition in this state of trial, let us never lose sight of the rank we hold in the scale of created beings. Never let us forget the glorious inheritance in our heavenly Father's kingdom, which we may humbly expect, as his adopted children, through the satisfactory merits of Christ. Let us always remember, that the Lord careth for the righteous, however low, neglected, and poor; but the ungodly, and him that delighteth in wickedness, (however honoured or exalted in this world,) doth his soul abhor. As we are travelling to the heavenly Canaan, where the most refined and everlasting joys await us, let not the cares or troubles of life impede our progress in virtue; but, having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and the whole armour of

God, integrity, perseverance, and faith, let us  
“rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say,  
“rejoice.”

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be  
ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power,  
and glory, for evermore,

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## SERMON XXI.

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2d GENERAL EPISTLE of St. PETER.—Chap.  
3.—Verse 9.—

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise (as some men count slackness) but is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

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**WHEN** St. Peter wrote this Epistle, many false and heretical teachers were busy and active in disseminating the most pernicious doctrines and opinions. The *delay* of Christ's coming to judgment, which had been foretold by the ancient prophets, gave them occasion to declare, that he would not come at all. And they never ceased, in the most virulent manner, to insult those who expected a completion of prophecy. Observing no particular judgment to fall on the Jewish nation, and the world continuing in the same state since they had made a part of it, they

tauntingly exclaim, "Where is the promise of his coming? For, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation." As if they had said in other words, the patriarchs and prophets are all dead, those pious and holy men, as you call them, who foretold that wonderful blessings and most extensive mercies would attend the good; and severe judgments and punishments, fall on the wicked and perverse. But we see no sign of any approaching misery; no mark of any expected kindness.

The good Apostle, to guard his sincere converts against falling into any fatal errors or delusions, on account of these daring sentiments of their adversaries, in the most feeling and tender manner, thus addresses them; "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Time is nothing to that eternal and everlasting being who created all things. Whatever he has proposed to do, he will accomplish when he thinks proper. With us, dispatch is absolutely necessary; our lives are too short, to admit of the least delay in the execution of our plans; but with God it is quite otherwise; he can lose no time, he can want no opportunity. Whatever he promiseth,

he can as certainly and effectually perform a thousand years hence, as to day or to morrow ; and a thousand years are infinitely less to him, than a day is to us ; for, adds the Apostle, “ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise “ (as some men count slackness), but is long “ suffering to us ward, not willing that any “ should perish, but that all should come to “ repentance.” *Delay* therefore, in the execution of divine vengeance, is no argument or proof that it will never take place ; but an indication of mercy towards all those who have offended, that they may turn from the error of their ways, and save their souls alive. That by serious reflection, and due consideration, they may discover the enormity of their vicious conduct ; and, by resolutely breaking from their sins, avoid the just punishment due to them. Such was the forbearance and long suffering of God towards the Jews, and had they not wilfully shut their eyes against the truth, they might by repentance have averted the destruction that at last overwhelmed them. Obstinacy and prejudice pushed them on to their ruin ; and when the victorious army of the Romans laid Jerusalem in ashes, they discovered, but, too late, their infatuation and impenitence.

From hence, we may learn, that our sins will

meet a deserved chastisement, unless a sincere and hearty repentance make our peace with heaven.

Were the opinion generally to prevail, that unless punishment immediately followed the commission of sin, it would never be inflicted; every one who deviated from the path of virtue, would be induced to believe that he might sin with impunity. What a scene of profligacy and brutality such notions would produce, I need not describe to you, as your own ideas would be sufficiently descriptive. The justice of our heavenly father will prevent his suffering *offenders to elude* the sentence of condemnation; and his mercy will prompt him to be "slow to anger, and willing that all should come to repentance." Still, however, without repentance, not one of us shall be saved.

Sin is so detestable in the sight of God, and leads to such a variety of mischief in this present state of our pilgrimage, that every reflecting mind must be fully satisfied how obnoxious it must ever render us to divine wrath and punishment. Sometimes, indeed, we see the wicked in an apparent state of prosperity, and are tempted to exclaim with holy Job, "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, and are mighty in power? Their seed is established



“ in their sight with them, and their offspring  
“ before their eyes. Their houses are safe from  
“ fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.”  
These considerations are apt to give us some  
degree of trouble and perplexity ; but, how  
often, (in the language of the same afflicted and  
pious man,) “ how often is the candle of the  
“ wicked put out? How often cometh their  
“ destruction upon them? They are as stubble  
“ before the wind, and as chaff that the storm  
“ carrieth away.” Though men of no religious  
principle whatever are suffered for a time to go  
on with outward marks of ease and satisfaction,  
their own minds will be a perpetual source of  
misery and torment. Like the traitor Judas,  
they will need no other executioner than the  
stings of a guilty conscience. Like the daring  
and impious Pharaoh, their vicious impetuosity  
will hurry them into the horrid gulph of certain  
ruin and perdition. Amidst all their artful plans  
and contrivances to build their own fortune  
and success on the destruction of others, like a  
second Haman they will be deservedly exalted  
to that ignominy and death, which had been  
most craftily prepared for their supposed ene-  
mies. Were we to multiply instances of the cer-  
tain, though perhaps not immediate punishment  
of evil doers, the sacred scriptures would afford us

an inexhaustible fund. There we should discover the malignity of sin, in its most baneful influence, not only on individuals, but whole nations. We should see the agonies of despair driving those, who have violated the sacred laws of God, to inevitable death ; and we should view, with awful astonishment and wonder, the most flourishing kingdoms reduced to dust and ashes, for the iniquity of those who dwelt therein.

Where are now to be found the most distant traces of the grandeur and magnificence of the once mighty and powerful Babylon ? All its glory and greatness is fled, and divine vengeance has buried in oblivion the very place on which it stood. If sin then produces such dismal, such fatal effects, on states and kingdoms, who live in a continued scene of folly and wickedness ; and if the Almighty is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity in any shape, without the utmost abhorrence, what have we to expect if we rashly continue in sin ? Shall we fondly hope that we may go on year after year in the path of vice and irreligion, and yet escape unhurt ? Shall we be such stupid, such arrant fools, as to suppose it possible for us to carry fire in our bosoms, and not be burnt ? No other solution can be thought on for the mysterious and hardened conduct of many, who either know not

their real danger, or are resolutely determined not to see it. Are the mercies of God to be trampled on with insolent contempt, because he hurls not his thunder at the very moment we break his righteous laws, and bid defiance to his authority?

I have placed before you examples sufficient to prove that no sinner will be free from punishment. And though the eyes of man may be deceived, and incapable of penetrating the dark and thick cloud of human cunning and deceit; yet nothing can be concealed from the eyes of the Almighty. And for whatever reasons offences against God, and against man, may be suffered for a season to prevail, that in their consequences they will be destructive to those who cause them, is too evident to be denied. It is impossible, said our blessed Saviour, to those who were attentive to his doctrine, it is impossible, but that offences should come; and then he adds, with much concern, but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh. Because therefore we are not always able to account for the events which happen to the profligate and base, we are not to conclude that no notice is taken of them by the Judge of all the earth. The wages of sin ever have been and ever will be death. To suppose otherwise, is to

suppose that our actions will never be regarded, and that we may sin with impunity ; an opinion, repugnant to the plainest dictates of nature, reason, and revelation.

We may therefore rest fully assured, that nothing but a sincere and hearty repentance can make our peace with heaven.

Let us not then glide into the same idle and vain supposition, as those did whom St. Peter so justly condemned for their folly and extravagance. Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, let not our hearts be set to do mischief. The great patience and lenity of God towards us, should never make us forgetful of his goodness, but quicken our endeavours after true holiness, and the most exemplary virtue. Whatever contributes to awaken our zeal, and open the eyes of our understanding, which the vices of the world may have darkened, will most effectually secure our happiness : and repentance will do all this, if it be uniform and correct. Not those transient gleams of sorrow and trouble, which leave no impression that is sufficiently deep and lasting, but that godly sorrow for sin that worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of. Were we seriously and honestly to consider how many and various have been the offences of our youth ; and from our

youth up until the present day, the black catalogue that might be presented to us would make us start at our own deformity. And because we have not been stopped in our wild career of iniquity by death and destruction, shall we persist in our wickedness? Shall we not rather say, with holy David, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy mercies, do away mine offences. Wash me thoroughly from my transgressions, and cleanse me from my sin. For my iniquity I acknowledge, and my sin is ever before me." This is the language that best becomes *us*, miserable and fallen creatures. To use any other, is to forget what manner of spirit we are of. To forget that a thousand accidents may hurry us out of this life, and leave us in a state of unforgiven sin.

If any would hope to share in the all-sufficient and meritorious sacrifice of Christ, they must advance to the throne of grace with faith and repentance. Faith will so strongly represent to their minds the promises of God, and the efficacy of our Saviour's death; and repentance will so powerfully operate in the reformation of an irregular behaviour, and sincere contrition for past offences; that all who unite both in the perfec-

tion of Christian holiness, will make their peace with God, and enjoy everlasting life, with saints and angels, in heaven. The danger we are more especially to guard against, is, a bold presumption, that the forbearance of our heavenly Father is not only a proof of his kindness towards us, but of his intention never to call us to any account. This fatal error St. Peter points out in my text, and reconciles the wonderful mercy of God, in thus dealing with his sinful creatures, from his "not being willing that any should eternally perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Our repentance, then, must be early and active, if we mean to be sincere. St. Peter, who, in the critical moment of danger, denied his Lord and Master, *immediately* felt all the misery and distress of the basest ingratitude; "and when he thought thereon, he wept." He did not proceed in his wickedness, by adding crime to crime, but instantly recollected himself, and with tears of the most sincere sorrow bewailed his sinful conduct, and became afterwards a steady and zealous champion in the glorious cause of Christianity. David and Solomon were both led away by the violence and impetuosity of their passions, and committed crimes of the blackest dye; and had they continued in



sin, that grace might abound, their condition at the hour of death would have been very miserable ; but they did not abuse the long suffering of the Almighty, or suppose that punishment delayed would never reach them. They resolutely broke from their iniquities, by a timely repentance, and sought the Lord with tears, night and day, that he might not remove his mercy from them, or give them up to everlasting destruction ; and thus they appeased the wrath of God, and made their peace with the offended Majesty of Heaven.

We cannot do better than follow the examples before us. The nature of our sins can be known only to ourselves and to our God, unless they burst forth in so tumultuous a manner as to excite the notice of the world, and leave us the victims of public justice. There is the private as well as the public sinner ; and though the laws of our country may chance to inflict a deserved punishment on one offender, it very often happens that they cannot reach the other. From this circumstance, an error springs, of the most alarming nature, and of the most fatal consequences. We suppose secrecy, security ; and vainly and foolishly think, that, as nobody is acquainted with our offences, they will never be the objects of censure or correction. I have

already proved the contrary; and repeatedly urged, the only source from whence we may draw comfort, in the day of tribulation and affliction, is an early and active repentance.

In the affairs of this world, which more immediately relate to our comfortable existence, no one is so regardless of his present happiness as to abstain from that industry and labour which, with the blessings of Providence, will procure him the necessaries of life. We know very well, that indolence and inaction will leave us as poor as they find us; and we know also, that unless lands are properly cultivated, thorns and thistles will render them useless and barren. But what is this world compared with the next? And what is the cultivation of our fields compared with the religious improvement of our minds?

To conclude.—As dispatch and execution are productive of the greatest advantages to those who have this world's goods, and would wish to keep them, let us never forget, that the same degree of activity will secure to us those treasures in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal." And as all errors and mistakes in our worldly concerns are carefully discovered and carefully corrected, to prevent

the ill consequences that may arise from suffering them to escape our notice, so our past offences should be brought before us in their darkest colours; that seeing our wickedness, and many neglects of duty, we may reform them, and, by a true repentance, wash them from the remembrance of our Father, who is in heaven. Acting in this manner, we shall pursue the direct road that leads to everlasting salvation. And if we take care to keep our heavenly account as exactly as we do our earthly one, we shall take the best method that can be devised to make our peace with God, and with man. However careless or negligent of our religious duty we may have hitherto been, we have it now in our power to reform. Let us then embrace the favorable opportunity, and “turn unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon us, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon.”

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and power, now, and for evermore.

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## SERMON XXII.

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7th Chap. of ST. JOHN.—Part of 31st Verse.

*And many of the people believed on him.*

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**T**RUTH would always make her way in the world, were it not for the opposition she meets from those who think it their interest to check her progress. Strictly speaking, it can be the real interest of no one to oppose the progress of truth; as, the more widely she extends her dominion, the more clearly and distinctly shall we see the path of duty in which we ought to walk. As the enlivening and penetrating beams of the sun disperse the thick mists and vapours which disfigure the atmosphere, and produce a clear, calm, and serene sky; so, the bright rays of truth effectually dispel the clouds of ignorance and error, and shew us things as they really are, without the least mixture of doubt and uncertainty. If this be the case, to what shall we ascribe those follies and delusions which

have at different times taken captive so many, who have neither wanted understanding to discern the truth, nor power to put it in practice? To their depraved appetites and passions, which, determined to be gratified, have prompted their votaries to prefer darkness to light. Human nature will appear perfectly amiable and engaging, if you view her in a plain and simple dress, unadorned by the gaudy trappings of speculative philosophy, and unfettered by the chain of prejudice.

When the birth of Christ was announced to the shepherds, they received, with the most heartfelt pleasure and satisfaction, the joyous tidings, and, with all possible speed, hastened to take a view of that wonderful infant, who was to promote the glory of God, the peace of the world, and good will among men. Their honest hearts, free from all guile, and impressed with ideas suitable to the solemnity of the action, were affected in a proper manner, and they gladly communicated to others, the things which had been revealed to themselves, and which were to prove the source of universal harmony and peace.

How different was the conduct of Herod the great, whose depraved mind and vicious spirit were wholly attached to the glories and honors

of this life, and, who wished for nothing more than earthly dominion and an increase of power! Scarcely was the sun of righteousness risen, when he daringly attempts to obscure his brightness, and reduce the world again to darkness and to misery. Though he received with apparent respect the wise men who came to Jerusalem to worship *him*, who was born king of the Jews, and whose star they had seen in the East, though with seeming anxiety and regard, he collected every possible information relative to the place of his birth, and though he expressed an ardent wish and desire to pay homage and reverence to the infant monarch, should they be fortunate enough to find him, yet, under all his pretended zeal and veneration, we discover the basest deceit, fraud, and duplicity. When he understood that his secret and deeply laid schemes were discovered, a voice of lamentation, and mourning, and woe, which was heard in Bethlehem, and in the regions round about, (similar to that which many years before resounded in Ramah, when the unfortunate and miserable Rachel bewailed her children, and refused to be comforted,) clearly evinced the disappointed malice of the cruel tyrant. The charms of sovereignty, and that rooted jealousy which awakens every fear and suspicion at the thoughts



of a rival, hardened the heart of Herod, and prevented his hearing the voice of truth, and discovering the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, which he concluded would prevail to the destruction of his own. To guard against such an innovation, the tide of slaughter is commanded to flow; and whilst the artless narrative of the shepherds produces in all well-disposed and good minds the desired effect, in the royal palace every ear is shut against the voice of the charmer, and the sound of celestial harmony.

Nor are we to wonder if similar causes produce similar effects, when reason opposes passion, and virtue vice. The exemplary conduct and sacred office of the baptist were not able to screen him from the meditated vengeance of Herod Antipas. The multitude, indeed, with awful silence and profound respect, listened to the holy prophet, calling them to repentance, and with rapture heard him describe the expected Messiah who was to come *after* him; but who was *before* him, having existed from all eternity. Nay, so highly did some think of John, that they mused in their hearts whether he were not the Christ. They supposed him some extraordinary person, from his holy conversation and godliness. But how did the lustful monarch

relish the pure doctrines and sacred life of the preacher of righteousness? Herodias had kept him too long in captivity to be freed from her chains by the voice of a prophet; and though the love which the people bore him, operated for some time in his favor, the reprov'd sinner, with hypocritical reluctance, and base dissimulation, gave him up to the executioner.

The same kind of attachment, which the generality of the people shewed to the baptist, was exerted in a much stronger degree towards the doctrine and miracles of our blessed Saviour, whose character the baptist had fully delineated, and whose power (as far superior to his own) he had frequently and emphatically described.

From a variety of instances which might be produced, to shew the uniform and virulent opposition made by those in power against the mass of the people, with a view to check the easy reception of Christianity, I shall lay before you one taken from the seventh chapter of St. John, and which will clearly prove the principles on which each party acted, and the motives that influenced their conduct.

Our Saviour, amidst a variety of generous and benevolent actions, had cured a man of a rooted disorder on the Sabbath day. This circumstance roused the resentment and indignation of

the hypocritical pretenders to piety ; and with malicious rancour they persecuted and insulted him. In vain did he represent to them the absurdity of their conduct, in being angry with with him for making a man whole on the Sabbath day ; when they themselves made no kind of scruple in administering circumcision on that day, out of reverence and respect for the law of Moses. In vain did he desire them to regulate their judgment by the sacred rules of righteousness. Their displeasure burnt with so violent and so strong a flame, that all his arguments had no kind of weight ; and the meanness of his birth they urged as a proof of his not being the Messiah : “ We know this man, whence he is ; “ but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth “ whence *he* is.” In opposition to this prevailing and favourite sentiment, “ Jesus cried “ in the temple as he taught, saying, ye both “ know me, and ye know whence I am ; and I “ am not come of myself, but he that sent me is “ true, whom ye know not. But I know him, “ for I am from him, and he hath sent me.”

Blinded as they were by wilful obstinacy and perverseness, they would have carried their rage to the utmost extent, had not an Almighty Power interfered, as our Saviour’s time was not yet come. They had no idea of judging of

him by his actions; and imputed to false principles his virtue and his goodness. But amidst the tumult and confusion which prejudice and zeal, without knowledge, had raised, the still voice of truth was heard, and "many of the people believed on him." Nor was their faith built on a feeble or sandy basis. They chose to think for themselves, and make a proper use of their senses. "When Christ cometh, said they, will he do more miracles than these, which this man hath done?" That wonderful and astonishing degree of power which marked all the actions of Christ; and those bright rays of love and benevolence which shed a lustre over every thing he said or did, convinced them that he must be the Messiah. It is curious to hear the chief priests, and pharisees, and scribes, on a similar occasion, uttering their execrations on the people, for their attention to the person and doctrines of our Saviour, and imputing their ignorance as the cause of their love of truth. "Have any of the Chief Priests or Pharisees believed on him? But this people which knoweth not the law, is accursed." As if it necessarily followed, that those who enjoyed the greatest power, or were more highly exalted, should for that reason more clearly discover the difference between right and wrong.

To see objects properly is one thing; and to see them through a medium, that distorts them, is another. When so complete a decision in favor of the God of Israel was given on Mount Carmel, to the utter confusion of Baal and his worshippers, the people shouted "the Lord he is God, the Lord he is God;" but the infamous Jezebel would not own the power of an Almighty hand, but even dared to meditate the death of Elijah, who had destroyed her idolatrous priests.

The bright rays of truth shone forth with undiminished light to all around; and the hand of Omnipotence was distinctly seen by those whose minds were open to conviction, and whose senses were perfectly awake, to discern the difference between good and evil; between a worship consistent with the benevolence of the Creator and the reason of man, and a cruel and ostentatious sacrifice, repugnant to both.

When the withered hand of Jeroboam was restored at the intercession of the holy prophet, whatever effect the miracle had on the astonished and gazing multitude, its influence was momentary on the heart of the king, "Who returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people, priests of the high places: Whosoever would, he consecrated

“ him, and he became one of the priests of the  
“ high places.”

It matters not therefore, what power, or rank, or wisdom we possess, if the heart be not sound ; if we shut our eyes against the most certain and evident facts, and will not see in broad day-light the things that make for our present and future interest. Often would an attempt have been made to seize the sacred person of Christ, (before the awful period arrived,) had not the enemies of Christianity feared the people ; and much base art and cunning were used by those who held the reigns of power before they procured the baneful and horrid shout of “ away with him, crucify him, crucify him.”

From what has been advanced, we may draw the following conclusion ; that the amiableness and beauty of truth will always strike the mind with irresistible force, and produce the proper effect, unless the heart be warped by those sullen and sordid passions which aim at absolute sovereignty, and undermine the sacred empire of reason. “ They have eyes, and see not, ears have they, and hear not, neither understand they with their hearts,” was a complaint uttered against those whose senses were perfectly callous, and not susceptible of any generous or noble impressions.



The same complaint may be directed against all those who still turn from the Lord who redeemed them; who still sacrifice at the altar of appetite and passion with fancied security; and who stimulate the zeal of the corrupted and depraved, by their profane and blasphemous writings, to treat our holy and most pure religion with negligence, and contempt. To guard against the pernicious effects which may be produced by those who openly avow the cause of infidelity, and would gladly poison the sacred source of evangelical truth, is the duty of all who profess the name of Christ; and they are bound by the united force of precept and example, earnestly to contend for that holy faith, which can alone make them wise unto salvation.

We have seen, that many believed on Christ, when they saw the miracles he wrought, and the attestations given him, as the Redeemer of lost man. Many are still open to conviction; and believers will be added to the Lord daily, if we are careful to counteract the subtle arts of the deist, and to enforce divinity, and atonement of Christ, which carry with them too much comfort and satisfaction to the well-disposed, and thinking mind, to be easily neglected, or given up.

Religion appears in an amiable and engaging

light in the retired and sequestered walks of life, where her constant companions are innocence, and virtue.

If she ever appear otherwise, it is when luxury and dissipation lead her into the higher scenes of folly and vice, and array her in robes which never became her, as she hates the garment, "spotted by iniquity."

Without doubt, the cause of Christianity has been zealously supported by the two first characters in the kingdom, who have stood forth its patrons, and its defenders; wisely concluding that a "throne is established by righteousness."

Let each individual join them in the common cause, as the surest means of defeating the sullen and unsocial designs of free-thinkers, so that believing in Christ, and acting agreeably to that belief, we may finally be saved, and glorify God, even the Father of our blessed Saviour, to whom, with the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, all honour and power, now and for evermore.—  
Amen.

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## SERMON XXIII.

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FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.—Chap. 1st.—  
Verse 15.

*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all  
acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world,  
to save sinners.*

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**T**O fix our thoughts entirely on this spot of earth, which we at present inhabit; and never to suffer them to wander beyond the narrow limits of this lower world, is an argument of a weak and narrow mind. Can the pleasures of sense, mean and sordid as they are, deserve so much care and attention as we sometimes pay them? Can the *joys* of life, as they are called, merit so much of our regard as to leave no place for other and more serious considerations? It was never the design of our heavenly father, that the path of duty should be concealed from

his children ; or that they should at any time be left ignorant of what they were to believe, and what they should do. The love, and the benevolence of the Creator towards us all, is so visible in the great provision that is made for our support, that those who refuse obedience to the revealed will of their maker, are guilty of a sin of the deepest dye. The misfortune is, that too many are averse from thought and reflection on *religious* subjects. If they think at all, it is on affairs immediately before them ; affairs which concern their present, but have little or no connexion with their future and everlasting interest. But it cannot be that such conduct as this, should become a rational being ; a being who is to be the inhabitant of two worlds ; the one, a state of trial and probation, the other, a state of reward, or punishment. We *must*, in spite of ourselves, be sensible how imperfect we are. The violent and dreadful disorders created by our passions ; the amazing power and strength of our appetites ; and that unaccountable weakness which is so visible in the general actions of mankind, clearly and plainly point out to us our fallen state and condition. Sin was not originally in the world ; but the abuse of man's free will introduced it. Every thing came perfect from the hands of God ; and those many

imperfections, which are too evident to be denied, took their rise in the disobedience of our first parents. Hence, "by man, came sin;" and death followed sin, as its sore and dreadful punishment; and so "death passed *on all men*, "as all have sinned." The fountain that was in its pristine state, pure, and unsullied, became impure and tainted; and of course, the streams that flowed from it, lost their clearness and lustre; and the current was rendered foul and turbid. This great alteration in our natures and dispositions, made a most considerable difference in our circumstances and pretensions. Before the introduction of sin, when "God "made man in his own image, and after his own "likeness, and gave him dominion over the fish "of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and "over the cattle, and over all the earth, and "over every creeping thing that creepeth upon "the earth." Before the introduction of sin, I say, man *was* not as he is *now*. *Innocent* man might hope to pass from a state of happiness, in paradise, to a state of more complete happiness in heaven. *Guilty* man can entertain no such hopes. To the former, the prospect of futurity was all brilliant and glorious. To the latter, nothing appears but clouds and darkness, if we look through the glass of nature *only*. The pre-

cipice we stand on, in this view, is very tremendous; and our hopes and fears are so strangely blended, that we know not where to rest. Whilst the *goodness* of God leads us to hope for forgiveness, his *justice* makes us tremble at the fatal consequence of his wrath and displeasure. The Judge of all the earth will most assuredly do what is right. But should he be *extreme* to mark what is done amiss by any of his sinful creatures, who is there among us that will be able to abide it? We must all acknowledge, (if we ever give ourselves time to reflect for a single moment), that we are vile and miserable sinners; like sheep we have gone astray, and we have turned every one to his own way. Our own inclinations, more than a sense of duty, have influenced our practice; and it can never be supposed, that being such as we are, and acting as we do, we can ever possess sufficient power to *redeem ourselves* from that punishment which is due to those who wilfully and repeatedly transgress the commands of God. Our sufficiency must arise from some other atonement, than we are able to make. An atonement, suited to the nature of our miserable and deplorable case, and worthy the acceptance of our heavenly father. That all sufficient sacrifice and atonement *has* been made for the sins of the whole world; and



St. Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy, thus informs us, by *whom*; “this is a faithful saying, and “worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus “came into the world to save sinners.”

That the Son of God himself should quit the glories of his father’s kingdom, and become man, to rescue us from eternal death, is an instance of such exalted kindness as exceeds our comprehension. As St. Paul informs the Romans, “when we were yet without strength, in due “time Christ died for the ungodly. For “scarcely for a *righteous man* will one die; yet “peradventure, for a *good man* some would “even dare to die. But God commendeth his “love towards us, in that, while we were yet “sinners, Christ died for us.” “And we joy in “God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by “whom we have now received the *atonement*.” Our blessed Saviour himself, speaking to his disciples in the most affectionate manner concerning his own office amongst them, says, “I “am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, “and am known of mine. As the father know- “eth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay “down my life for the sheep. No man taketh “it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I “have power to lay it down, and I have power

“ to take it again. This commandment have I  
“ received of my father.”

Such a sacrifice, and made by such a divine person, must awake the most ignorant amongst us to a sense of reflection. I have already mentioned the *necessity* of an atonement for sin, which leaves such a taint on the soul of man, as nothing human could ever cleanse or purify. As preparatory to the incarnation of our Saviour, which the redemption of lost man required, the voice of prophecy spoke very distinctly ; so that no doubt whatever could possibly arise, either concerning himself or his ministry. Our heavenly father, who is merciful and gracious to all his creatures, and who (as I hinted above) never left the world in ignorance of himself, or of the duties which he expected from it, inspired his prophet Isaiah, with a knowledge of his son, our blessed Saviour, and of the sufferings he should undergo for the sins of mankind. This prophecy is so full and complete in itself, and so very descriptive of the atonement made for us by the Messiah, that I shall give it in the words of the inspired writer : “ He is despised and re-  
“ jected of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquaint-  
“ ed with grief ; and we hid, as it were, our faces  
“ from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed  
“ him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and

“ carried our sorrows ; yet, we did esteem him  
“ stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But  
“ 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 the Lord hath laid  
“ on *him* the iniquity of us all.” Who can read  
this prophecy that was delivered many hundred  
years before the birth of Christ, without imme-  
diately referring to the treatment which the  
Messiah received from the Jews just before his  
crucifixion ? “ And they stripped him, and  
“ put on him a scarlet robe. And when they  
“ had platted a crown of thorns, they put it  
“ upon his head, and a reed in his right hand ;  
“ and they spit upon him, and took the reed,  
“ and smote him on the head. And after they  
“ had mocked him, they took the robe off from  
“ him, and put his own raiment on him, and  
“ led him away to crucify him.” But Isaiah,  
whose descriptive language seems to speak of  
things already past, rather than of things to  
come, is minutely particular with respect to the  
burial of Christ, as well as the persons with  
whom he suffered, “ and he made his grave with  
“ the *wicked*, and with the *rich* in his death.”  
Do not these expressions exactly agree with  
what the Evangelist tells us, when he writes,

“ and with him they crucify *two thieves*; the  
“ one on his right hand, and the other on his  
“ left.” And do not the extraordinary circum-  
stances relating to his interment bring to our  
remembrance the following account given by  
St. Matthew? “ When the even was come,  
“ there came a *rich* man of Arimathea, named  
“ Joseph, who also himself was Jesus’s disciple.  
“ He went to Pilate, and begged the body of  
“ Jesus; then Pilate commanded the body to  
“ be delivered. And when Joseph had taken  
“ the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,  
“ and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn  
“ out in the rock.”

These passages from the prophecy of Isaiah point so correctly to the passion and death of Christ, who was the lamb of God, that took away the sins of the world, that the memory should never suffer them to escape. They should be treasured up in the mind as of inestimable value. They should operate on our hearts with all their force. The numerous prophecies relating to the wonderful birth of our Saviour; his discovery to the gentiles; and his manifestation to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, before the heathens were to be admitted within the pale of the Christian Church; I shall not now lay before you, having already produced

sufficient proof from the holy scriptures to justify the declaration of St. Paul, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

The question that might naturally be asked, after what has been advanced, is this; our blessed Saviour, out of his abundant mercy and love, having done and suffered so much for us, what will it be *incumbent* on us to *do*, that we may in some degree render ourselves objects of future pardon and everlasting life? For, though St. Paul tells us, that Christ Jesus "came into the world to save sinners," we are not to suppose that every thing has been done for us by Christ, and we have nothing to do ourselves. This supposition, if we could imagine it to exist, must be founded in the most extreme ignorance and folly. And they who fancy that their journey through this life may be taken safely, without any, or very little concern for their condition in another, which is to succeed this, deceive themselves with notions and ideas of security that are false and groundless. After all that our blessed Saviour has done and suffered for us, we may yet be lost through our own imprudence, and careless neglect. Much we have to do, and much to undergo, in breaking from the

dominion of our sins, before we may with propriety be said to be wise unto salvation, or to have arrived at that state of true repentance which may lead us to *hope* for salvation.

We must then have a sincere and hearty faith in the merits and death of Christ. We must believe and feel that there is none other name under heaven given to man, in whom, and through whom, we can receive pardon and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. When our minds have been duly affected by this article of our belief, and we are truly sensible of the great and astonishing benefits which we derive from the death of Christ, we shall then have made some advance towards the duties required of us. But if we stop here, and make no further progress, we shall be in the situation of those malicious spirits, who *believe only*, and *tremble*. Our faith in Christ is to be lively and active. "The son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." And "every one that nameth the name of Christ, must depart from iniquity." No *faith* in a Saviour will ever be of use to us, unless it influence our practice; unless it be sufficiently powerful to correct all our vicious propensities and desires, and terminate in the most undisguised contrition. We shall not enter



into the kingdom of heaven by crying out Lord! Lord! but we must earnestly and resolutely *do* the *will* of our Father who *is* in heaven, before we can ever be received into those glorious mansions of everlasting peace and happiness. A true faith in Christ, implies a close and indissoluble connection between religion and moral duties; between our duty to God, and our duty to each other. The love of our neighbour is to be a convincing proof that we are the disciples of Christ. It is no trifling task that we have to perform; and they who have been induced to think it such, will do well to alter their conduct before it be too late, lest they perish by an "evil heart of unbelief."

To conclude.—Our blessed Saviour having appeared in the world to instruct us in our several duties, and to offer himself up a sacrifice for the offences of mankind, we ought to weigh these awful truths in the strict balance of solid reason and sound judgment. Our own eternal interest being concerned in what has been done for us, and in what we may think proper to do ourselves, will leave no excuse for those who wilfully "*neglect* so great salvation." Difficulties we *must* encounter in our Christian warfare. Pain we *must* suffer, either in resisting the violence of temptations and breaking from our sins,

or in feeling the severity of punishment, if we obstinately continue in them. In the contest, warm as it ever will be, between religion and vice, between reason and appetite, the victory will always be on the side of religion, provided our faith in Christ be sincere, and our confidence in the promises of God unshaken. Religion that is only occasional and formal, possesses but little life or spirit ; but that religion which is habitually applied to the common occurrences of life, will be alone *available* to our salvation. Let us then animate our faith in Christ, by following the doctrines he taught, and then we may humbly hope to be of the number of those whom the apostle tells us he came into the world to save.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed as is most due, all honor, and glory, and power, for evermore.

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## SERMON XXIV.

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EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.—Chap. 13th.—  
And part of the 12th Verse.

*Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us  
put on the armour of light.*

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**WHEN** St. Paul declared to Ananias that he had “walked in all good conscience before God,” to the very day on which he address him; he declared those sentiments which should ever be the glory and the boast of an honest and good man. Educated as St. Paul had been in the strictest principles of the Pharisees, and possessing a mind tainted with those rigid and severe prejudices which characterised a disciple of Gamaliel, he thought it his duty to persecute the Church of Christ; and joyfully accepted a commission, which impowered him to put his darling schemes in execution. But when the rays of divine truth darted on his enlightened mind, and the errors of his former conduct ap-

peared before him, in all their original turpitude and deformity, the furious zeal of the enraged bigot was changed, for the mild and temperate zeal of the Christian saint; and a pure and steady flame of piety was kindled in his breast, which nothing afterwards was ever able to extinguish. This great and wonderful convert to Christianity, often lamented and deplored the folly and the cruelty which prompted him to oppose a religion, so well calculated to promote the salvation of men, and the glory of God. And though what he did in his state of infidelity, was "ignorantly, and in unbelief," it made too deep an impression on his feeling and generous mind, to be soon obliterated. "I am the least of all the Apostles, said he, with much concern, and not worthy to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of Christ." The sacred, and important truths, which revelation laid before him; and that wonderful mystery of godliness, "God manifested in the flesh," with all its train of benefits, and of blessings, took such strong possession of his heart, that he sorely bewailed the days he had passed in ignorance, and in darkness; and rejoiced in that marvellous, and glorious light, which the sun of righteousness was shedding, to comfort, and to illumine a miserable and a benighted world.

Impressed with these ideas of virtue, and of

religion, and anxious to remove that great mist from the eyes of others, which had for so long a time obscured his own sight, and distorted the amiable features of evangelical truth ; he, with unwearied zeal, and indefatigable labour, publishes the glad tidings of salvation to all true believers.

No dangers affright, no terrors dismay him, in his spiritual career, and, supported by the united and irresistible force of temperance, justice, patience, fortitude, and resignation, he was more than conqueror in the cause of religion, through the assistance of that almighty power which inspired, and protected him. Caution and circumspection attended every step he took ; and he blended the wisdom of the serpent, with the harmlessness of the dove, in all his actions. In his treatment of the prejudices of mankind, the force and power of which he had fully experienced, he was always mild and gentle, and he checked, without the least degree of asperity, the rooted jealousy of the Jewish, and the bold freedom of the Gentile convert. In this sense, he “ was all things to all men,” by occasionally complying with useless ceremonies, and abstaining from innocent gratifications, lest he, by any means, might offend the weaker brethren. But, whenever the fundamental doctrines of the

gospel were attacked, as they frequently were, by the rude hand of speculative philosophy, he firmly and resolutely maintained his post, and the inseparable connexion between virtue and religion; to part whom, had been often daringly attempted by the licentious, and profane.

In all those artful struggles between passion and interest, darling vices, and necessary duties, which distract and mislead the irresolute and incautious, the holy apostle pointed out, with accuracy and precision, the distinction that was to be made, and the line of conduct that was invariably to be pursued.

As strange notions had crept in amongst his Roman converts, subversive of that social order, and peace, which the gentle and benign spirit of Christianity uniformly inculcated, he gave them a comprehensive view of their relation to mankind in general, and the necessity they lay under, of practising all the virtues in the gospel, without which, their piety would be hypocrisy, and their pretensions to morality, a delusion.

Placing himself amongst them as a Gentile, which he frequently did, to win their affection, and esteem, he emphatically exclaims, "It is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer, than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand;"



and then he adds, with much earnestness, “ let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” As if he had said, let *us*, who were for a considerable time surrounded with the thickest darkness, which prevented our seeing objects clearly and distinctly, and which left us in mental ignorance, the fatal source of human depravity, and corruption ; having emerged from so gloomy and melancholy a state, by the assistance of that divine light which shined on us, even in the “ valley, and in the shadow of death ;” let *us* “ cast off the works of darkness ;” all those illiberal, and base actions, which are the genuine offspring of vicious appetites ; “ and let us put on the armour of light,” the garb, and dress of the children of light ; those amiable virtues, and graces, which characterize and adorn the true and sincere professors of Christianity.

With whatever lenity, therefore, or mildness, the apostle might have conducted himself, in compliance with the weakness, and the infirmity of his new converts, he invariably assured them that virtue, and vice, piety, and profaneness, could never have the least concord or agreement with each other ; and that consistency of character, and moral perfection, ought to be the inseparable attendants on a real disciple of Jesus Christ.

These sentiments pervade all his Epistles ; and serve to correct those errors of opinion, and judgment, which many entertained, for want of serious thought and reflection.

When some vainly and arrogantly boasted of the liberty they enjoyed, by entering the pale of the Christian Church, he checked their ill-grounded transports, and false ideas of Christian liberty, by informing them, that it was a freedom from the rigid, and severe observance of the ceremonial law ; and not from any civil restraint, that the profession of Christ's religion entitled them to ; and that, if they used their valued liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, as the means of disturbing the peace, and the tranquillity of mankind, they would add to the number of those works of darkness, which, as heathens, they had once practised, but as Christians, were in duty bound to renounce.

In like manner, when St. Paul saw the relative duties declining, and a motley fabric raised on the basis of Christianity, to the infinite prejudice of social harmony, and peace ; he pointed out the absurdity, and the folly of supposing that any privilege could be claimed by a follower of Christ, to neglect and even violate those sacred obligations, which our Saviour himself constantly and uniformly practised, and enjoined all Christians to do the same. " By this shall

“all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.” And again, “if ye love me, keep my commandments.”

This was another work of darkness which called loudly for correction; and which the apostle laboured with unceasing diligence and application to reform. For what avails the pure and clear light of revelation, if, like Chorazin and Bethsaida, we shut our eyes against it? What avails all the culture and attention that has been bestowed on the spiritual vineyard, if, when the Lord looked for grapes, it brought forth wild grapes? Can infatuation so far possess the human mind, as to make any of us believe that the *shadow* of religion will profit us, however contemptuously we may treat the *substance*?

Our blessed Saviour, speaking of a future judgment, says, “Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works?”

This declaration sets forth the activity of the *preachers* of the gospel, but mentions nothing of the *moral* conduct that accompanied it, and which can alone give it vigour or force. *That* we are fully satisfied was very *defective* and *barren*, from the answer which our Saviour re-

turns: "I know ye not; depart from me, all  
"ye workers of iniquity."

Saint Paul appears to have always kept in view this *uniformity* of conduct, which our Redeemer recommended and enforced; and the *necessity* of joining practice to theory; that the "man of God, the sincere and honest Christian, "might on all occasions be zealous of good "works."

When he exhorts the Corinthians to a life of *active* virtue and goodness, and compares the temperance and zeal which influenced the contenders at the olympic games, with those necessary qualifications that enabled the Christian hero to "press forward to the prize of his high "calling in Christ;" speaking of himself, he says, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; "so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but "I keep under my body, and bring it into *sub-*  
"jection;" *i. e.* I subdue every inordinate desire and passion, "lest that by any means, when "I have preached to others, I myself should "be a castaway."

And a short time before his death, when he recommended the care of the Christian Church to Timothy, with all the tenderness and affection of a good and honest labourer in the Lord's

vineyard, conscious of having properly discharged the sacred duty of a servant of Christ, and steward of the mysteries of God, he informs him with hopes, full of immortality, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

The apostle was perfectly sensible that notwithstanding the revelations that had been given him, his free agency, or a power to act as he pleased, was in no degree whatever checked or controuled; that he was responsible for his behaviour in common with other men, and that his future happiness and glory depended entirely on his moral conduct in this life, quickened and enlivened by a well-grounded faith in Christ.

The conclusion to be drawn from what I have advanced is this: If we wish to derive any benefit from the nativity, death, and resurrection of Christ, we must "*perfect holiness in the fear of God.*" The several duties which we are bound to perform as subjects, friends, relations, and christians, are not to be *partially* and *imperfectly* practised, since "he who offends in *one*

“ point is guilty of *all*.” As no person was suffered to continue at the marriage feast, who had not on a wedding garment, no one will be hereafter admitted to the joys of heaven, who is not arrayed in the unspotted robes of righteousness, or who has not endeavoured faithfully and conscientiously to be *perfect*, as our Father in heaven is perfect. And amidst the wildness of sentiment that prevails on religious subjects, let us guard ourselves with unremitting care against those subtle, artful, and persevering works of darkness, which would envelop in obscurity the most interesting passages in the doctrines of Christianity; and render miserable and unhappy the soundest moralists, and the most sincere believers. Much need have we in these times to put on the armour of light, so that, whilst we listen with seriousness and with attention to the sacred voice of divine truth, we may earnestly and zealously endeavour to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Let us then, agreeably to the advice of the Apostle, whose doctrine, and whose example, we have briefly considered, “ walk honestly, as in the day; “ not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ,



“ and not make provision for the flesh, to fulfil  
“ the lusts thereof.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be  
all honour, power, glory, and might, for ever  
and ever. Amen.

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## SERMON XXV.

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EPISTLE to the ROMANS.—Chap. 13.—Verse 5.

*Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

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**H**OW to curb the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, and produce that order and peace which are the essence and being of society, has, from time immemorial, been the object of political disquisition ; and those states which have contributed most effectually to the progress of political refinement, have deservedly ranked highest in the esteem and admiration of succeeding ages. He who first drew men from a scene of barbarism and profligacy, (as they are generally inseparable companions,) and taught them to provide for each others happiness, by mutual alliance and mutual dependence, performed an action truly praiseworthy and merito-

rious. But that wise statesman, who planned the populous city, and framed a salutary code of laws for the protection of virtue and discouragement of vice, is viewed with a degree of reverence and respect, like some bold artist, who, from a variety of materials, rears the stately and magnificent palace, where the several component parts, so aptly joined together, discover the greatest order, harmony, and design.

It was evidently the intention of the almighty, that his creatures should be happy ; and to accomplish so desirable an end, as the welfare and comfort of mankind, he has planted in us the social affections, which, with a kind of magnetic power, draw us to each other, and prove, that solitude was not the sphere for man to move in, but that the world at large was to be the theatre of his actions, and every rational being in it the object of his regard. The Deity has also infused into our hearts the sympathetic feeling, which not only prompts us to “ rejoice with those that rejoice, but also to weep with those that weep ;” “ so that the effect produced by this amazing power, may be compared to the action of light upon the optic nerve ; as it transfers the picture from without, and seats it in the soul.”

Thus formed for society, one is not surprised

at a very early period to see men uniting in small principalities, each under its respective leader, and governed by such salutary laws, as the exigencies of the times, or their own peculiar circumstances and situations may deem necessary. But, as ambition and a love of conquest prompted each petty state to look on its rival with a jealous eye, and wish for a more extensive territory than the small circle that circumscribed and confined its infant greatness; we observe Monarchy rearing her majestic head, and, with fostering arms, embracing these small principalities, which, whilst single, were exposed to the sudden blasts of ill fortune; but when firmly cemented into one solid body, were able to resist the loudest storms and tempests of hostile rage and fury. To this power, the arts and sciences pay their homage and adoration; and in return, receive nourishment and respect. To this power, commerce opens all her sails, whilst the most distant nations and countries gladly throw their invaluable treasures into the lap of labour and industry.

Whilst obedience to the laws, influenced the busy and active minds of men, Monarchy made a very distinguished figure in the world; and virtue, the vital principle of harmony and of peace, like the sun in his meridian splendor,

diffused a genial warmth over a civilised and well governed state. But when errors crept in, and vices by degrees, and as it were imperceptibly took root, which it was not perhaps in the power of laws to eradicate; or which indeed in some systems were sanctioned by the law itself; a power greater than human seemed necessary to nip the growth of impiety, and check the current of iniquity; that those vices, which a a fear of human censure could not effectually controul, might receive an immediate check, from the fear of divine wrath and future punishment. This essential and invaluable service to the private and social interest of mankind, was afforded by the publication of the Gospel, whose glorious light was scarcely risen, when all those enormities, which, by art and cunning, had evaded the punishment of the civil magistrate, were forced from their lurking places by the vengeful thunder of Omnipotence; and man, *offending* man, plainly saw two powers armed against him, a human and a divine.

The Jewish converts, to whom St. Paul addresses the words of my text, were not sufficiently weaned, in the infancy of their regeneration, from those prejudices and wicked principles which they no doubt derived from the insurrection and followers of Judas of Galilee; and

which taught them that they were neither to be subject nor pay taxes to the Roman power.

To check the growth of such strange, wild, and pernicious sentiments, and to crush ideas of liberty, subversive of all order and harmony amongst men, the apostle tells his new converts that it never was the design of Christianity to dissolve the sacred bands of society, or draw men from their allegiance to constituted authority ; but to enforce and recommend that regular and uniform obedience which it was the duty of the subject to pay, and which the sovereign had an undoubted right to demand. After drawing a pleasing and interesting picture of the origin of government, and the absolute necessity of submission to legal establishments, he adds, " Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, " but also for conscience sake ;" intimating, that whatever power the terror of law might have to keep the mass of the people within the pale of duty, there was a tribunal higher than that constituted by any human authority, to which the bold and daring sinner would be amenable, who should presume to disseminate rebellion, or countenance the insolent pretensions of treason.

The apostle was too well acquainted with the dark and sacred workings of the mind, as well



as the imperfection of all human systems, not to discover, that it is impossible to make the boundaries of law so secure, as effectually to prevent an occasional escape from the hands of justice. That moral principle within us, of which philosophy talks so feelingly, has been found to give way on the day of trial, and its loudest clamours have been silenced by the powerful persuasions of interest ; whilst offence's gilded hand has ever attempted to shove by justice. But if this moral principle be reared on the solid and permanent bases of religion, you will have every possible security against the encouragements of power, or the artful machinations of faction. " How can I commit this great wickedness, and sin against God," is a sentiment that will often rise in the mind, when we are tempted to violate the sacred laws of society, and when the sword of the magistrate cannot reach the bold, though secret offence.

The page of history teaches us, that the insolent invaders of public property, and the disturbers of social harmony, and peace, have (generally speaking) commenced hostilities, by directing their whole force against the barriers of religion, which being thrown down, poor, despised morality, deprived of her best and only support, has sunk disconsolately in the general

ruin. A contempt of religion preceded civil profligacy and defection, in the destruction of Jerusalem; and the elegant satyrist informs us, that profaneness and impiety opened a passage to that torrent of wickedness, and debauchery, which overwhelmed the once virtuous and flourishing state of imperial Rome. I need only point to the conclusive, and expiring pangs of a neighbouring monarchy, which were brought on by the same causes, and effected by the same means.

Though Christianity has not altered, or enlarged our political duties, or civil obligations, yet, the awful sanction, impressed by her, on obedience to the established laws, must ever give additional force to the voice of magistracy, and contribute largely to the promotion of public peace and safety. Whoever traces the character and conduct of St. Paul, in the many dangerous, and critical situations, into which he was thrown, by the fury of an enraged populace, or the severe persecutions of zeal without knowledge, will find his behaviour uniformly consistent, and dignified. Whether you view him insulted at Athens, or accused of sedition at Thessalonica, before the tribunal of Agrippa, or in prison at Rome; you view a man superior to his misfortunes, and supported by the justness

of his cause, and the testimony of his conscience.

All his epistles breathe that goodness of heart which prompted him to check the tide of anger, and resentment, and to keep his passions in dutiful submission to the dictates of reason. Never did he solicit his followers, and friends, to break the public peace, or insult the Majesty of the State, with the plausible pretext of procuring his enlargement. The spirit of revenge, was of too turbulent and fiery a nature, to inhabit the calm breast of the christian philosopher ; and he thought personal liberty purchased at too dear a rate, if the price were insurrection, tumult, and public confusion. So closely did he connect the interests of both worlds, and weigh in the nicest balance of prudence, the magnitude of evil, against the supposed good, that might result from any particular action. But, we have a higher authority than that of St. Paul, to which we may direct our attention, when obedience to civil power is the object in view. Our blessed Saviour, during his ministry, cautiously avoided every interference with established laws. With what circumspection and care does he repel the malicious designs and artful snares of the disciples of the Pharisees, and the Herodians, when they demand of him the lawfulness of paying

tribute to Cæsar! And at another time, when he was importuned to give his sentiments concerning the punishment of a detected criminal, so far was he from assuming to himself any judicial authority, that he defeats the secret, and ungenerous schemes of his enemies, by desiring the most virtuous amongst them, to throw the first stone. If these passages shew his attention to civil establishments, the tears he shed over Jerusalem, when he foresaw her ruin and desolation, discover the most generous, and noble patriotism. If the restless, and turbid sons of faction, could be brought to a sufficient degree of seriousness, to consider their real interest, the exalted pattern before them would prompt them to exert all their skill in the support of that political system, the key stone of which, is religion. The celebrated Roman orator was so well convinced in his own mind, of this essential aid, that he declares, "without piety, the mutual confidence and society of mankind, or that most excellent of all virtues, justice, could not subsist."

It appears, then, that there are two powers necessary to secure obedience to established laws and societies, the sword of the magistrate, and the voice of revelation. In whatever system those powers act in concert, that government bids fairest to promote the welfare of the subject and

the dignity of the sovereign. If this position be true, we may see a majestic pile rising before us, which has reached its present state of dignity and splendor, not from the desultory efforts of chance, but the united and combined powers of wisdom, sagacity, and experience ; and the British constitution, for its real and intrinsic worth, stands unrivalled in the annals of history. The firm and indissoluble union that subsists between the Church and State ; the mutual aid they render each other, and the dependence of the former on the latter, will ever guard it against a return of those horrid calamities, which in the ages of ignorance and superstition have always kept it in the most abject servitude. The several departments of the state are filled with men of the first abilities, and very often the first fortunes ; a circumstance this, which strongly marks the sagacity and wisdom of the sovereign and his ministers ; as all usurpers have (generally speaking) been men of desperate fortunes, actuated more by views of private interest than true patriotism, or a zeal for the welfare of the public.

Whilst the religion of former states was merely political, and confined to a certain system of manners, contrived for the regulation of their own personal concerns ; it was no more than an art of settling certain rules and behaviour upon

a principle of interest, convenience, or pleasure ; and the hold it had upon the conduct was very weak and feeble.

Christianity, the real and true religion, when properly examined and proved, strikes conviction on the mind, and takes deep root in the heart, leading its true and zealous professors from faith to practice ; *i. e.* from a belief of the soul's immortality, and the atonement of Christ, to a conscientious discharge of every civil and religious duty. In a word, when we seriously reflect on our present situation, and the admirable constitution we enjoy, which has so amply provided for our social comforts, by blending the terrors of the law with the absolute certainty of a future account ; we may with grateful hearts exclaim, in the animated language of the holy Psalmist ; “ Happy are the people that are “ in such a case ; yea, blessed are the people “ who have the Lord for their God.”



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## SERMON XXVI.

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ST. LUKE.—Chap. 9.—Verses 55 and 56.

*But he turned and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.*

*For the son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And he went to another village.*

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**T**O know our respective duties, and to ascertain with accuracy to what extent they ought to influence our general conduct, is of the utmost importance to every member of civil society. Nor is this knowledge to be acquired, but by the most serious thought and reflection. The seeds of virtue may be planted at a very early period in the human mind, and every possible attention may be paid to its cultivation, and yet the fruit may be blasted before it grow up, or, after it has arrived at perfection, suddenly wither and decay. So uncertain are the consequences of moral and religious instruction ;

and melancholy as the contemplation of such events may be, the fact is too notorious to be disputed. Were pure and undisguised reason, aided by that strong and unerring light which revelation sheds around her, to have the sole regulation of our conduct, our actions would then be, what they *ought* to be, proper and consistent. But, unfortunately for us, our passions, those lawless tyrants in the human breast, are ever active to acquire an absolute and universal dominion over us. To *resist* this dominion, by no weak or feeble efforts, is a warfare in which we are all engaged, and in which we are exhorted to quit ourselves "like men, and to be "strong." The necessity of such exhortation and such exertion will appear, when we consider to what wild and extravagant excesses a warm and intemperate zeal, may hurry those who have had the best opportunities of knowing their duty.

When the awful period approached, and our blessed Saviour, having fulfilled his prophetic office, was to finish his ministry, and to leave the world, "he stedfastly set his face to go to "Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his "face; and they went and entered into a village "of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. "And they did not receive him, because his face

“ was as though he would go to Jerusalem.” There had always existed an irreconcilable enmity between the Samaritans and the Jews ; and a difference in their religious sentiments had kindled such a violent flame of animosity and resentment, as was not easily to be allayed or quenched. Indeed, when our Saviour asked the woman of Samaria at Jacob’s well to give him to drink, she seems astonished at the request, and with no small degree of surprise, said unto him, “ how is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh “ drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria ? “ For the Jews have no dealings with the “ Samaritans.” Though, therefore, the Samaritans might not possibly refuse to entertain all Jews indiscriminately, who were going to Jerusalem ; yet, they could not be prevailed on to shew any civility to so great a prophet as Jesus, who was going to Jerusalem upon a *religious* account, to worship at the feast, and whose very act was likely to determine the controversy about the *place* of worship. The effect produced by this conduct of the Samaritans on the minds of our Saviour’s disciples, was very extraordinary ; and seeing the offence given to their beloved master in too strong and powerful a light, they forgot that reverence that was due to his person and his doctrine ; for “ when his

“ disciples, James and John, saw this, they  
“ said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire  
“ to come down from heaven and consume them,  
“ even as Elias did?” What a hasty and in-  
temperate demand was this! And how very  
different was *their* situation and that of Elias!  
The life of the holy prophet was in immediate  
danger from the armed force which an idolatrous  
king had sent to apprehend him. And, as on  
Mount Carmel, Elias had confirmed his divine  
mission by the destruction of the enemies of the  
one true God; on another occasion, he was per-  
mitted to *vindicate* the honor and just severity  
of his law. To check, therefore, such incon-  
siderate and rash desires, and to correct those  
errors in judgment which are hostile to the  
repose and happiness of mankind, our blessed  
Saviour “ turned and rebuked them, and said,  
“ ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,  
“ For the son of man is not come to *destroy*  
“ men’s lives, but to *save* them. And they  
“ went to another village.”

That our Saviour’s disciples, who had been  
eye witnesses of his mild and gentle treatment  
of all who opposed or offended him, should so  
loudly call for immediate vengeance, is a striking  
proof of the weakness of our nature, and of the  
dreadful impetuosity with which our passions

assail us, unless we are constantly on our guard. They had seen no part of his conduct which *justified* such a request ; as his whole life had been spent in doing good to the miserable and afflicted sons of men. Well, therefore, may he turn and rebuke them, and, with a look of compassion for their infirmity, say unto them, “ Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of ; “ ye know not the difference between the dispensation of the law, and the dispensation of the gospel. Ye know not that the necessary rigour and severity of the one, hath given place to the gentleness and love of the other.” “ For the son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them ;” for I am not come with severe judgments to *compel*, but with meekness and tenderness to *persuade* and *intreat* men to *repent*. I am not come to be the *destroyer*, but to be the *Saviour* of mankind.

Having thus taught them that he proceeded only by merciful and gentle methods, and endeavoured to win men by patience and forbearance, “ they went to another village.” No signs of resentment or displeasure discover themselves in the benevolent and gracious Redeemer of lost man. He would have kindly accepted any hospitality that had been shewn him ; but, as it was refused by the *Samaritans*, he sought it elsewhere.

Without doubt this most seasonable rebuke had its proper influence on those who heard and received it. And the true spirit of Christianity appeared in all its amiableness, divested of every spark of rancour or revenge. During the whole ministry of our blessed Saviour, he appears particularly anxious to harmonize the affections of mankind, and to inculcate the constant practice of universal benevolence, and Christian charity. As he well knew what was in man, and was perfectly acquainted with all those secret springs of action which influence their general conduct, he lost no opportunity that offered itself of giving them a proper direction. Thus, when Peter, in great zeal for his master's safety, drew his sword, and smote the high priest's servant, Jesus said unto him, "put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And after our blessed Saviour had returned an answer to the high priest, who "asked him of his disciples and his doctrine," when one of the officers, who stood by, struck him with the palm of his hand; Jesus replied, with the greatest *patience* and *meekness*, "if I have spoken *evil*, bear witness of the evil; but "if well, why smitest thou me?" And in his last moments, when he was suffering the most agonizing and dreadful tortures, so far was he



from uttering any expression that savored of vengeance towards his most bitter enemies, that he gave a most remarkable instance of his piety and clemency towards sinful and deluded men; and amidst the acutest pangs of lingering death, thus address his heavenly father, "*forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" Such an example of tenderness, compassion, and mercy, in circumstances so very extraordinary, points out to us of what materials the true spirit of Christianity is composed, and of what nature that temper and disposition must be, which will effectually qualify us for the kingdom of heaven. To reach this sublime pitch of virtue and goodness, and to confine our resentment and displeasure within those proper bounds which it has pleased the Almighty to prescribe, is a task great and difficult for such frail and imperfect creatures as we are to attempt; and yet, great and difficult as the task may be, the attempt is to be resolutely made; and if made, with zeal, and with earnestness, we need not doubt of success. We have all more strength than we are disposed to allow. We are inclined to think that an innate weakness prevents those exertions which would counteract the fury and turbulence of our passions. And whilst we are able to plead *no excuse* for irregularity of conduct, and to suppose

that *impossible*, which is only *difficult*, much mischief will arise, to destroy that peace and tranquillity without which this transitory life can have no comfort nor happiness. The influence of resentment for supposed injuries, on minds of warm and violent feelings, is apt to hurry us too soon into actions of the most fatal consequences. Such *would* have been the blind impetuosity of the disciples, James and John, and such *was* the sudden vengeance of Peter. But if we direct our attention for a moment towards those who have *checked* the wild sallies of anger and revenge, and in the midst of the most severe provocations, have preserved that calmness and composure which a true sense of duty inspires, we shall discover, that we have it more in our power to act consistently on trying occasions, than we are sometimes disposed to believe. Who could ever have received more unkind, ungenerous, and cruel treatment, without, in the smallest degree deserving it, than David received from Saul? Every attempt that anger of the most savage nature could suggest to deprive him of life, was put in practice. Art and cunning, fraud and duplicity, were on various occasions made the instruments of his barbarous designs. And yet David, when an opportunity offered of taking the most ample vengeance on his avowed enemy,

and when he had completely in his power the person who sought his own life, so far from *availing* himself of the opportunity, he only made Saul *sensible* of his dangerous situation, but did him no injury whatever. Such treatment from one whose destruction he so eagerly wished to accomplish, (the sacred historian informs us,) had such an effect on Saul, that he “lift up his voice, and wept. And he said unto David, thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. And thou hast shewed this day, how thou hast dealt with me; forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thy hand, thou killedst me not. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? Wherefore, the Lord reward thee good, for that thou hast done unto me this day.” This declaration proves not only that the mind may be kept in due order, by reason and reflection; but, that the fiercest enmity may be subdued by gentleness and mercy. This triumph of rectitude of conduct, over all those vicious propensities which start up in battle array against us, is a most pleasing consolation to a serious and good Christian. And if we would trace the wonderful influence of religion, strengthened and confirmed by an entire confidence in God,

we need only take a view of the innocent and pious St. Stephen, in his last moments. When the rage and fury of his merciless persecutors, so violently agitated their prejudiced minds, that “ they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him, with one accord, and cast him out of the city to stone him ;” instead of calling for fire from heaven to consume them, or wishing for divine vengeance to fall on them, “ he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” In the severest agonies of a most cruel death, the holy martyr implored the *forgiveness* of his enemies ; and died with the same calmness and composure as if he had fallen into a sweet sleep. How anxiously, in this extraordinary act, does St. Stephen tread in the steps of his Divine Master, who, in his sermon on the Mount, thus exhorts us, “ Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.” When St. Paul’s Christian brethren and acquaintance *forsook him* at his first trial at Rome, he discovers no acrimony nor bitterness of resentment against them ; but represents the circumstance, and his own disposition towards them, in the following manner, in

his second Epistle to Timothy : “ At my first  
“ answer, no man stood with me, but all men  
“ *forsook* me ; I pray God that it may not be  
“ laid to their charge.” It is worthy of *particu-*  
*lar remark*, that after our blessed Saviour had  
taught his disciples how to pray, he made the  
following comment on *one part*, and on one  
*part only*, of his prayer : “ 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 *for-*  
“ *give* your trespasses.” We may be assured  
that our Saviour, by thus emphatically urging  
the absolute necessity of mutual forgiveness, in-  
tended to inculcate, in the strongest manner, the  
uniform cultivation of all those milder virtues  
which compose the very essence of Christian  
benevolence. He would not suffer his true dis-  
ciples to imagine that their prayers could ever  
be effectual, if they contained any mixture of  
displeasure or revenge. The heart must be free  
from those sordid passions which war against  
the soul, before it offers up any petition that can  
possibly be acceptable to the Deity. Impressed  
with these ideas, St. John, in his first general  
Epistle, admonishes his converts “ to love one  
“ another, for love is of God ; and every one  
“ that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God,

“ He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love.” This is very strong language, and too powerful to be evaded by any who really and truly would be thought to profess and to practise the sacred doctrines of Christianity. Can we then, in our present state of trial and probation, be too circumspect in our conduct? Are there not reasons to fear that when *we think we stand*, we may be in the greatest danger of *falling*? We have seen the error of the disciples, James and John, and we shall do well to profit by the *rebuke* they received from their Lord and Master. We have seen also that the duties which we are all required to discharge, as members of Christ’s Church, however severe on some occasions they may appear to be, are within the bounds and limits of our *improved capacities*. I say *improved capacities*, because our Saviour has promised to be with his faithful servants to end of the world. To be with them in all their honest endeavours after virtue and godliness, by the divine assistance of his holy Spirit, which will enable us not only to *think properly*, but to *act righteously*.

To conclude. We can discover in the moral as well as in the natural world, mists and vapours, storms and tempests; and as the harmony of the elements is effected by the grateful and



glorious light of the sun of heaven ; so the clouds and darkness that would obscure our bounden duties, are effectually dispersed by the united rays of reason and religion. We need only give them their proper influence, and we shall be very justly admitted into the number of those who are "wise unto salvation." Our tempers then must be so moderated, and our dispositions so carefully regulated, as not to obstruct us in our pursuit of that *perfection* which is required of us in the Gospel. We are to remember what manifold imperfections and infirmities we all labour under, and then we shall feel disposed to make proper allowances for each other's errors and mistakes ; for those many and hasty deviations from the strict line of conduct to which we are too often prone. And, in the sentiments and advice of St. Paul to the Ephesians, " 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,  
" tender hearted ; forgiving one another, even  
" as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven *you*."

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power, and glory, for evermore.

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## SERMON XXVII.

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ST. LUKE.—Chap. 16.—Verse 8.

*And the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely : for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.*

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**T**O bestow commendations on an unjust steward, and to justify those commendations, by saying he had done wisely, in defrauding his master, must, at first sight, strike us with wonder, and astonishment. I will, therefore, lay before you the whole scene, in which the transaction took place, that you may see clearly, and distinctly, the doctrine which our blessed Saviour meant to inculcate. Observing the very great attention which too many were apt to pay to their worldly interest ; and how watchfully they exerted themselves, to turn their money to the best account ; and at the same time, remarking their

great neglect, and indolence, in providing for that lasting treasure in heaven, which never fails, and which no man can take from them; he said unto his disciples, "there was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, how is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." The master, finding that his property had been shamefully abused, and by the most fraudulent practices wasted, and diminished, acted on this occasion as all other masters, of the least sagacity, and penetration, would have acted in similar circumstances; and had the steward's conduct been fair, and honest, he need not to have blushed at being ordered to settle his accounts, which every one of real probity, and known integrity, is always ready to do. But there appears something wrong at the bottom, for "the steward said within himself, what shall I do? For my Lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig, to beg, I am ashamed." Why should he hesitate a moment, on this occasion, concerning his future situation in life, unless his conscience had feelingly told him, that he had been a rogue? Why should he talk of not being able to dig,

and being ashamed to beg, as if either conditions were necessarily the consequence of a steward's resignation of his office, provided he had discharged it properly? That was not the case here; he knew how he had acted, and was cunningly resolved to secure the friendships of the world in the worst of times, by the most artful policy. "So he called every one of his Lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, how much owest thou unto my Lord? And he said, an hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, and how much owest thou? And he said, an hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, take thy bill, and write fourscore." What a scheme of iniquity here opens before us! Being fully sensible that he must lose his place, as he had forfeited ever claim to future trust, and confidence; and knowing that his distress would be very great, when he had no probable means of getting a livelihood; he still continues to cheat his master, and reduce the legal claim of his rents; in order to make lasting friends of those to whom he was iniquitously kind. When this depraved, and crafty action of the steward was made known, "the Lord commended the unjust steward, be-

“ cause he had done wisely : for the children of “ this world are in their generation wiser, than “ the children of light.” He could not, and indeed, did not commend him for *being* a knave ; but since he *was* one, he commended him for acting in his way, with so much forecast, and sagacity. He commended that care which he had taken, to secure a permanent interest amongst those, whom his fraudulent practices, had made safe, and as he fondly hoped, lasting friends. “ For the children of this world are in “ their generation, wiser than the children of “ light.” The children of this world, are those who place all their comfort, and happiness in the transitory enjoyments of this present life. Who, so far from considering the duty incumbent on us all, to set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth, invariably set their affections on things on the earth, and never think of those blessed mansions above, where there is joy, at God’s right hand, for evermore. The children of light, are they, who place their happiness in heaven. Who, amidst all the troubles and afflictions of this mortal life, (and poverty, disease, and misery, present a long, and mournful catalogue), look up to their heavenly father with all that confidence, which a sound faith, and upright conduct must ever in-

spire. Who, persuaded of the uncertainty of every thing below, and that, in the midst of life, we are in death, depend solely on a future state of real, and endless bliss, which God himself has promised to those who love, and obey him. Now, though the children of this world propose a wrong end ; yet, they generally pursue it, with great industry, and use the proper means conducive to it. Quickness in dispatch, exertion, and activity, mark every step they take. The children of light, though they propose a right, the only right end, are generally deficient in using the proper means. The former, therefore, are the wiser in respect of the means, though not of the end ; for they are wise only in their generation, that is, in their own peculiar way upon their own crafty and artful principles ; which principles, being all wrong, they are the most consummate fools that can possibly exist.

Having *explained* the parable, it remains for me to inform you, what object our blessed Saviour had in view, when he delivered it. Indeed, your own reflection must have already suggested to you the only, and proper conclusion ; that we should not suffer bad men, and those who think of no other world but the present, to *excell* us in diligence, industry, and application.



We are to consider, coolly, and seriously, what we have to do as Christians, and how it is to be done. We are to "make to ourselves *friends* of the mammon of unrighteousness," *i. e.* we are to apply the riches we may have acquired by our honest industry, in alleviating the miseries, and soothing the distresses of our afflicted brethren. The "mammon of unrighteousness," means riches, which are sometimes though not always gotten by unrighteous actions, or rather false, fallacious, and deceitful riches, in opposition to the true, and real treasure, the treasure in heaven. This is confirmed by the eleventh verse, where the unrighteous mammon is opposed to true riches.

The most deceitful error in conduct, against which, we are particularly to guard, is an opinion that our interest in the next world may be promoted, and secured, with much less trouble, and concern, than our interest in this. As if God Almighty would allow us to neglect his holy and righteous laws, with impunity; and receive us hereafter into the arms of his mercy, for merely honouring him with our *lips*, whilst our hearts are far from him. The sentiments of our Saviour, expressed in the parable, which we have considered, differ very widely from such fallacious, and dangerous notions. During his

ministry, he omitted no opportunity that offered, of calling forth, into immediate action, those powers which derive all their force and strength from real integrity, and pure, undissembled virtue. And fearing that a superficial devotion may be thought available to salvation, and that if the ceremonial part of religion, were duly, and regularly discharged, the substantial part might be dispensed with ; he assures his hearers that “not every one that saith unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Not every one who *talks* only of religion, and makes an outward show, and parade of it ; nor every one, who calls on his holy name with ostentatious, and *external* devotion ; “but he that doeth the will of his father, who is in heaven.” He, who studiously, and sincerely, examines into the nature, end, and design of the gospel, and regulates all his actions accordingly. He, who from the sacred voice of revelation collects the real, and true will of God, and endeavours most heartily, and fervently, to obey it. To render the children of light as active in their holy calling, as the children of this world are in *theirs*, he exhorts his disciples to “enter in at the strait gate : for wide (says he) is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be

“ which go in thereat ; because strait is the gate  
“ and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto  
“ life, and few there be that find it.” The path  
of vice, though beset with thorns and briers,  
appears to the thoughtless and inconsiderate to  
be strewed with flowers, and rose buds ; they see  
the gay and tempting scene, with eyes of rap-  
ture, and transport, and fall into the snare of  
death, and destruction, for want of timely  
thought, and reflection. The path of virtue,  
which presents a rough, and uneven journey to  
the eye at first sight, though it most assuredly  
leads to everlasting life, affrights the giddy and  
airy steps of those who are too trifling to be  
serious, and too indolent to work out their sal-  
vation as they ought. Is it any wonder then,  
that the broad path that leadeth to destruction,  
should be so much frequented ; and the narrow  
way, that leadeth unto life, should have so very  
few disposed to encounter its dangers, and  
difficulties ?

Were we to ask our fellow travellers in this  
world, what expectations they have after death,  
and on what their hopes of futurity rest ; they  
would possibly tells us, that they expected after  
death, to enjoy eternal happiness in heaven ; and  
that their hopes of futurity rested on the merito-  
rious death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Were

we still to ask them, if they thought the meritorious death and sacrifice of Christ, was of itself sufficient to secure our salvation, without some duties being performed on our part, to render that sacrifice effectual? The answer I presume they would give, and indeed in reason, *must* give to this second question, would be, that God will reward every man according to his works. Some works then, are to be performed by us; for as we are all labourers in the Lord's vineyard, no man must stand idle. And the gracious benefits of our Saviour's death, will not be applied to those amongst us who *continue* in their sins; but to those, and those only, who *renounce* them. "Let not sin, therefore, (as St. Paul exhorts), reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members, as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members, as *instruments* of righteousness unto God."

Aware of the necessity of immediate, and resolute action in our Christian warfare, "we are to put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil," *i. e.* that we may be able to resist all the temptations to sin, which in such a variety

of appearances beset, and surround us. We are to stand resolutely, and firmly to our post, as members of Christ's Church on earth, that we may be deemed worthy hereafter, to be admitted into his glorious kingdom in heaven. Our obedience to the laws of our creator, and preserver, is not to consist "in eye service, as men pleasers, " but in singleness of heart, as the servants of " Christ, with good will, doing service, as to " the Lord, and not to men, knowing, that " whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the " same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he " be bond, or free."

And can these exertions be made, or these religious duties performed by us, without any care, or thought, to give them animation, and spirit? Is the high prize of our calling in Israel to be secured without pains, or labour? Do we think that all those virtues, which compose the harmony, and the essence of Christianity, can be effectually practised by us, whilst we neglect the most necessary acts of piety, and devotion? Let us blush when we reflect how cool, and lukewarm we have been, in the religious homage we owe our Maker; and how very active we have shewn ourselves, in all those busy scenes of life where we have too fondly, and too foolishly placed our

warmest hopes, and expectations. Well may the love, benevolence, and mercy of our Saviour, prompt him to rouse us from our lethargy, and false security, by representing the alacrity, and diligence of the unjust steward in a *bad* cause, as far greater, than that, of *his* pretended friends in their *good* one. Well may he repeatedly warn us against that neglect which begins in shame, and ends in ruin. As it is never too late to see our errors, and to correct them ; and as “ to the  
“ Lord our God, belong mercies, and forgive-  
“ nesses, though we have rebelled against him,  
“ and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our  
“ God, to walk in his laws, which he set before  
“ us.” We have it still in our power to regain his favour, and make our peace with his offended majesty. Though we profess ourselves children of light, we have not acted on those principles, which such profession demands. How often have the sacred duties of this day been given up for the vain, and idle engagements of worldly interest ? One day in seven, the Almighty requires to be kept holy, in remembrance of our creation, and the glorious resurrection of our Saviour from the grave ; but I fear, this duty has been shamefully neglected by some, and irreverently treated by others. Still, as I have already observed, it is never too late to see our



errors, and correct them. To account for bad habits, is no difficult matter, where morality, and religion, appear to have neither weight nor influence. But, as habits of virtue are as easily contracted as habits of vice, the children of light can as certainly secure their future happiness in heaven, by walking in all the commandments of God, blameless; as the children of the world can secure their present interest by motives and views, which justice and equity may not always allow, or approve.

To conclude.—Be it then, our future care, and study to look beyond the present scene of things, which are frail, and imperfect. Not that we are to neglect to make a proper and necessary provision for our respective families, but to be cautious lest we bestow too much concern on our present welfare, and forget the state, and condition of our future existence. “For what will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” May the anxious wish of our blessed Saviour, to make us see our duty, and excite in us a love of the practice, impress on our minds a proper sense of its obligation; and may we continue “steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we

“ know that our labour shall not be in vain in  
“ the Lord.”

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be  
ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory,  
and power, both now, and for evermore.

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## SERMON XXVIII.

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ACTS of the APOSTLES.—Chap. 8.—Verses 14  
and 15.

*When the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John.*

*Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the holy ghost.*

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**T**HE benefits we derive from the Christian religion, are of such a nature, that we can never value them too much. Whatever keeps us steady and correct in our duty to our God and to each other, must be of the utmost importance to the true happiness of mankind. This our religion professes to do ; and where it is properly received and duly attended to, the effect is too visible to be denied. Our Church, therefore, to keep alive the flame of pure and uncorrupted

faith, and to secure the moral conduct of those who enter her pale, carefully maintains those orders and ceremonies which have been sanctioned by the apostles themselves. Without some regular form and establishment, religions, as well as civil society, could not exist. Hence, at a very early age, we provide for the spiritual welfare of children. And because they are not capable of acting for themselves in an affair of the utmost consequence to their present and future interest, we allow their sureties to engage for them. What that engagement is, you all know; as baptism is a rite performed in public, and in a particular manner calculated to make a deep and lasting impression in *this place*, being administered during divine service. Now, as infants amongst us are baptized, and their godfathers and godmothers answer for them, till they come of age to answer for themselves; so we find it to have been with respect to circumcision amongst the Jews. *They* always circumsised their children on the eighth day, and had proper sureties of the covenant. But when those children were thirteen years old, their parents brought them before the congregation, where they religiously professed a willing mind to be subject to the law of Moses. After their solemn profession, the congregation prayed for them,

that they might prove diligent observers of the law, and be careful to lead an honest and an upright life. In this ceremony of the Jewish religion, we seem to discover a feature that is very like one part of that solemn duty which we are called upon to discharge at our confirmation. As guardians answer for minors in every thing that concerns their property or civil interest; and when the parties concerned are of full age, they themselves confirm all that has been done for their advantage; so, the Church provides, that the same care should be taken of spirituals as of temporals. That the concerns of another life should not be neglected, whilst the concerns of this are so carefully protected and secured. All this is undoubtedly strictly proper and right. From the earliest times of christianity, attention has been paid to the faith in Christ, and to prevent that faith being mixed with gross and unmeaning superstitions, baptism has been followed by confirmation. And although baptism was administered by priests and deacons, to *confirm* was ever held to be the peculiar office of the apostles themselves, who were the first bishops in the Christian Church. This fact it will become us to lay up in our minds, that our religious knowledge may never be defective, and that we may be able to satisfy ourselves and

others, as to the reason of our actions. For it is greatly to be feared, that many, for want of this satisfaction, continue in error and ignorance all the days of their life.

When the religion of Christ made its first appearance in the world, the passions of men were not immediately convinced of its divine authority. To some it appeared an innovation which laid too great a stress on moral behaviour, and as they were determined not to relinquish their sins, they turned a deaf ear to the calls of repentance. Others, who, in the conflict between reason and appetite, felt all that uneasiness which a state of doubt and uncertainty creates, most cheerfully embraced the offer of salvation made them by the ministers of Christ. The conditions they were told, were faith and repentance. And in full conviction of the spiritual benefits to be received from a sacrament ordained by our Saviour himself, they flocked with ardour and with zeal to his holy baptism. The inhabitants of Samaria, and the adjacent places, were particularly anxious to become members of Christ's Church; and St. Luke informs us in the Acts, "when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. Who, when they were come down,



“prayed for them, that they might receive the “holy ghost.” The conversion of the people of Samaria, and their eagerly embracing baptism, as an admission into the society of Christians, was matter of joy and comfort to the apostles. Placed at the head of that Church, which Christ had purchased with his own precious blood, and seeing the desire which animated thousands amongst the Gentiles to rush into it, how natural it must have been for those good men to be filled with holy consolation and sacred transport. To complete, therefore, the work that was so well and so devoutly begun, *Peter* and *John* are sent to pray for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. This solemn act of religion was performed with all possible solemnity due to the occasion: and whilst they prayed to the Almighty for the influence of his holy Spirit on the minds of the new converts, that their professions might be such as to call forth into action every grace and every virtue of the gospel; they frequently conferred on them miraculous powers. In the infancy of the Church, these wonderful privileges were granted for the more speedy propagation of Christianity; but when the light of Divine Truth had spread itself over the habitable world, mankind was left to that

solid and irresistible testimony, which was fully sufficient to establish their faith ; and the power of working miracles ceased. But although these mighty powers are removed, the Holy Ghost continues to work in us in a secret and invisible manner. And as the apostles formerly laid their hands on those who had been baptized, and prayed over them that they might have grace and courage to discharge all their christian duties ; so do our bishops now ; in all things following their example, for the edification of the Church ; and the salvation of those who are members thereof.

Thus you see the necessity and the use of confirmation. The *necessity* is apparent, from the imperfect state of our understandings at the time we received baptism. Since, not being able to speak for ourselves *then*, it is incumbent on us to speak aloud in the face of the Church, when we *know* and *confirm* what was promised for us. The *use* of confirmation shews itself in that regular discharge of all social and religious duties, which the rite itself *implies* and *enforces*. To renounce the devil, and all his works ; to believe in God, and to serve him ; comprehends a system of practical actions, which the early converts to christianity never neglected. They felt all the force of piety and virtue, and were anxious

to break from the chains of those sins, which had for so long a time held them captive, in their state of heathenism. Salvation, through the satisfactory merits of Jesus Christ, rendered effectual by a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; appeared to the rational and considerate part of mankind, a scheme of mercy and love, worthy the goodness of God, and suited to the exigencies of his creatures. And to partake of so inestimable a benefit, people of all ranks and degrees quitted the worship of idols, and resolutely broke from those vices which the prejudice of education, and the power of example, had taught them to look on as innocent and venial. And to receive such numbers as were disposed to enter into the fold of Christ, not only Peter and John were sent to the converts in Samaria, but Paul and Silas, “went through Syria and Cilicia, *confirming* “the Churches.” “And so were the Churches “established in the faith, and increased in number daily.” And what a change did the publication of the gospel make in the general manners of the world. All those enormities of conduct, which disgrace human nature by the most foul actions, gave place to decency, sobriety, and temperance. The voice of true religion, called those nations who were wandering in the

thickest darkness of ignorance to partake of the glorious light of revelation. No obstacles were of power sufficient to retard the progress of the gospel. Difficulties were surmounted, that seemed almost invincible. And to receive the blessing, and have the prayers of the apostles, after they were baptized, animated them with courage to continue, unshaken and undismayed, in their Christian warfare.

The wisdom then of our own Church is visible, in directing her bishops to *confirm* all those who make a public declaration of their faith in Christ; and at the same time engage to keep all the commandments of God. And it is, most assuredly, the duty of parents and masters to inculcate the use, and great benefit, of *confirmation*, that we may be not only *hearers* but *doers* of the word. Our Redeemer has graciously assured us, that those who are not ashamed of him, and his doctrine, in this world, of them will not he be ashamed when he appears in the blessed kingdom of his heavenly Father. He has also declared, that those who *deny* him before men, them will he also *deny* before God and angels. Our eternal interest is therefore concerned in perfecting holiness in the fear of God. And what we say and do in our own persons, is more effectual and conclusive than what is said

and done for us by others. The kindness of our friends in promoting our happiness, by the most cautious and benevolent attention, is deserving our best thanks; but we should remember that *their* engagement was to expire as soon as we were of a proper age to take it upon ourselves. That age is arrived, when we solicit *confirmation* at the hands of the bishop. When, in his presence, we give new force to our baptismal covenant made with God; when we not only acknowledge ourselves bound, by the promises of our *sureties*, to obey the laws of Christ, but *bind ourselves*, in the presence of the bishop, and in a most religious and solemn form of words, to direct our lives, by the rules of his holy gospel. Besides this, it has ever been the opinion of the Church, that the Holy Ghost is in a particular manner conferred by the solemn benediction of the bishop, on all those who devoutly and reverently receive it. We allow, indeed, that the exercise of this sacred office, does not give to those who are *confirmed*, as it formerly did, any miraculous powers, but it gives them a spirit of exertion and activity in the discharge of all religious duties, and makes them ready and willing to obey the doctrines and observe the laws of their Saviour and Redeemer. Where the disposition is good, and the mind open to conviction

and to truth, the salutary effects of *confirmation* have appeared in the subsequent behaviour of those who have been confirmed. But, as I have already mentioned this circumstance, I need not again repeat it; it is sufficient just to point to it, that your memory may preserve it the more tenaciously.

The Church presumes, that all godfathers and godmothers will be careful to bring those children, for whom they engaged at their baptism, to the sacred rite of *confirmation*. And the presumption *arises from hence*, that at the close of the baptismal ceremony, the officiating minister thus addresses the respective sureties: “Ye are to take care, that this child be brought to the bishop to be confirmed by him, as soon as he can say the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, in the vulgar tongue; and be further instructed in the Church catechism, set forth, for that purpose.”

Whoever, therefore, has taken upon him the sacred, and important office of a surety, should be particularly attentive to the execution of it. He should make it his business to inspect the morals, and examine into the religious improvement of those children whose surety he was, at the time of their baptism. He should see that they are taught as soon as they are able “to



learn what a solemn vow, promise, and profession, they made by him, when they partook of that holy sacrament. And for this purpose he should advise them to come regularly and devoutly to Church; that no occasion might be lost of learning their duty to God, to their parents, and to the world. It sometimes happens that parents are snatched from their families, before they are grown up to years of prudence and discretion, and their infant minds are left to the cultivation of others. In this orphan state, what a serious charge devolves on the sureties of such children!

In the common intercourse of society, if we make ourselves responsible for the character, and behaviour of our friend, or neighbour; the law compels us to satisfy to the full, our engagement, and no excuse is admitted. The preservation of human comfort, and happiness, on certain occasions, requires the nicest regard to the observation of this part of our public conduct. And can we suppose the promises made in the name of infants, at their baptism, to be less binding, or less important to be kept? Does not the peace of the world depend on the good order, and moral deportment of those who inhabit it? But how shall the good order, and moral deportment of mankind, be ever main-

tained and supported, if those who have in the most solemn manner declared their intention of bringing up infants in the fear of the Lord, and the love of mankind, wilfully, and carelessly omit doing it?

Sometimes it happens, that age overtakes people before they have been *confirmed*, owing to the neglect of their parents, or their sureties. When this is the case, it becomes the bounden duty of such persons to embrace the first opportunity that offers, and shew their readiness at last to declare themselves publicly the children of Christ's Church here on earth, that they may be admitted into his heavenly kingdom, after death.

To conclude.—Thus have I laid before you, the necessity, use, and great advantages of *confirmation*. I have shewn, that it was administered by the apostles, who were the first Christian bishops. And from their time to the present, it has continued to be administered by their successors. I have also pointed out to you, the effect produced by the bishop's benediction, and the comfort and assistance of the Holy Ghost, which the first converts to the Church of Christ received, and which all, in a certain degree, may hope to receive from this rite, if their faith, and their actions are uniformly correct,

and good. Nor have I omitted to inform all those who are sureties for infants at their baptism, how much depends on their regular discharge of *their* duty.

In explaining this rite of our Church so carefully, and as I trust, so plainly, I have sincerely done *my* duty. It now remains for you to do *yours*; and by correcting all past errors, and neglects, to walk circumspectly, as becomes the true disciples of Christ. If these religious duties were performed as they ought to be; if the engagements of godfathers, and godmothers, were properly observed; and if those who receive *confirmation*, were to discharge the duties they so publicly profess themselves *willing* to discharge; the present age of the Christian Church would be as pure as the former. We should be all of one heart, and one mind. We should love as brethren. And being all the children of one Father in Heaven, we should laud and magnify his holy name; and humbly hope for salvation, through the death and merits of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power, and glory, for evermore.

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## SERMON XXIX.

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First Epistle general of ST. JOHN,—Chap. 5.—  
Verse 7.

*There are three that bear record in heaven,  
the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost :  
and these three are one.*

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**WHILST** we exist in this lower world, we must be satisfied with such a degree of religious knowledge as it hath pleased the Almighty to bestow upon us. It is not for man, who is but dust and ashes, to pry into the nature and essence of the Deity, or to attempt with fond presumption and vain curiosity to investigate causes which lie far beyond his reach and comprehension. The light which it hath pleased our heavenly father to shed around us, is fully sufficient to guide us in the path that leads to everlasting life. Nor, if we read and inwardly digest the sacred word of God, as delivered to us by his holy prophets and apostles, can we

ever be ignorant of those duties, which, as dependent creatures, we are bound to discharge. Nothing mysterious appears in the *morality* of the gospel. "To love the Lord our God, with  
" all our heart, and with all our soul, and with  
" all our mind; and to love our neighbour as  
" ourself," is a doctrine within the limits of every one's capacity; and the sure and certain hope of everlasting happiness or misery, as our conduct, during our earthly pilgrimage, may deserve, is so frequently and so earnestly excited in the scriptures, that we cannot have the least doubt concerning the state and condition of our souls after death. As far then as our knowledge may be allowed to extend, so far we may safely and usefully cultivate it.

When our *faith* is called on to exert itself, a duty will appear, of a nature very different from any to which I have pointed; a duty, which teaches us to place the highest confidence and trust in the promises and revelations of God, though we are by no means able to fathom the depth of eternal wisdom. The redemption wrought us for by Christ, is a subject into which the angels desire to look; and if that sublime and awful subject is concealed from those blessed spirits, can we wonder that it should remain a mystery to *us*? When St. John tells

us, " there are *three* that bear record in heaven, " the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost : " and these three are *one*," we are unable to comprehend the unity in trinity, and the trinity in unity. But, though we cannot comprehend it, we may believe it, since the voice of scripture clearly speaks of the mysterious union. The divinity of God the Father is universally allowed. The divinity of the son is proved from St. John, who says, the " word was God ;" and from St. Paul, who affirms, that " God was manifested in " the flesh," and that " Christ is over all, God " blessed for ever." And our most blessed Saviour, speaking of himself, says, " I and my " father are one; and he that hath seen me, " hath seen the father." The divinity of the Holy Ghost rests upon the following proofs, among others, " Lying to the Holy Ghost," is " called, Lying to God." Because Christians are the temples of the Holy Ghost, they are said to be the temples of God. " His teaching all things ; " his guiding into all truth ; his telling things " to come ; his searching all things, even the " deep things of God," are plain characters of his divinity. Besides, the Holy Ghost is joined with God the Father, as an object of faith, and worship in baptism, as our Saviour's command to his apostles was, " Go and baptize all



“ nations in the name of the Father, and of the  
“ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

This doctrine of the Trinity must ever remain to us a great mystery, unless our understandings were more improved than we have reason to expect on this side the grave. As we have in the collect for the day prayed, that the Almighty would “ keep us *stedfast* in this faith,” I have laid before you some of the portions of scripture which *confirm* the doctrine, that no one may be ignorant, who wishes honestly for information on so particular a subject.

We are, therefore, not to suppose that whatever exceeds the powers and the strength of our reason, is a subject with which we have no concern ; for, on this plan, we shall every moment of our existence, be lost in the wildest conjectures. Man, is a mystery to himself, and can no more account how the union is supported between his own soul and body, than how the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, make one God. If we look into the vegetable world, and trace the growth of plants, can any of us unravel the mode of operation which produces such an infinite variety in the garden of nature ? Can any of us explain the *causes* of vegetation, or find out the wonderful works of God, where he has thought fit to *hide* himself from his creatures ?

If, therefore, we are disposed to believe nothing but what we fully and perfectly comprehend, we shall be infidels through the whole course of our lives. We shall prevail on ourselves to think that objects of sense only claim our attention and regard; but that objects of faith, exceeding our confined and narrow intellect, are therefore to be rejected, as in no case proper or necessary. This is an error of considerable magnitude, and into which many have carelessly glided. An error productive of much mischief, and leading men into modes of conduct very unbecoming those who have been *taught of God* how they ought to walk and to please him; but, who have wilfully shut their eyes against the light of revelation, and obstinately continued in the grossest darkness. The Almighty, from the creation of the world to the present day, has occasionally discovered his will to his creatures. At all times he gave sufficient proof of his existence, and of a particular, as well as of a general Providence. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.” Look at the sky glowing with stars, and at the moon shedding its light, and from contemplating those glorious bodies, learn to adore the great and wonderful author of them. In the animated language of the holy psalmist, “one day telleth

“another, and one night certifieth another.  
“ There is neither speech nor language ; but  
“ their voices are heard among them. Their  
“ sound is gone out into all lands ; and their  
“ words into the ends of the world.” So that  
no reasonable being, who reflects for a single  
moment on the works of God, can be ignorant  
of his *power* in creating the world for the habita-  
tion of the human race ; and of his *mercy* and  
*loving kindness*, in giving them plenteously all  
things to enjoy. The senses which we in com-  
mon possess, and which are the fruitful sources  
of comfort and happiness, point out to us the  
amazing provision that is made for our safety  
and satisfaction. A provision which enables us  
to pass through life in the full enjoyment of those  
blessings which divine wisdom and goodness has  
largely bestowed upon us. Were I to direct  
your view to all the objects of sense which con-  
stantly minister to your well being, the prospect  
would be boundless, and the mind would be  
lost in the contemplation of so great a variety  
of subjects, which, with endless succession,  
would open upon it.

In the works of nature, then, the Almighty  
has shewn his love for his creatures in the great  
care taken to supply them with every thing that  
is proper and good ; and this supply should

prompt them to discover the hand that feeds them in the bounty which they enjoy. For what child can be so ungrateful, as to forget the parent, whose tender affection and anxious concern, have saved it amidst the dangers of infancy and childhood, and prepared for it, in every state and condition, the necessaries, and the comforts, which are more immediately suited to its nature and circumstances. Or how can we suppose it possible for obligations so numerous and so great, ever to escape the memory, and be lost in oblivion. If then our *earthly* parents have so strong a claim on our affection and gratitude, for all their kindness towards us ; what great and deserved claims on us has our Father who is in heaven, in whom we live, move, and have our being. Who has in part discovered himself to us, by his works ; “ for “ the invisible things of him, from the creation “ of the world, are clearly seen, being under- “ stood by the things that are made, even his “ eternal power and godhead.” If we pass from the works of nature to the works of grace, we shall find the light we enjoyed in contemplating objects of sense, is by no means strong enough to bring before us objects of faith ; and we shall be ready to exclaim with the prophet Isaiah, “ verily, thou art a God that hidest

“ thyself, thou God of Israel, the Saviour ;” or, to say with the Holy Psalmist, “ clouds and “ darkness are round about him.”

It must ever happen, that when man attempts to know more than is permitted him, he will be lost in the mazes of ignorance and folly. He will wander in the paths of the most imperfect science ; and presuming on his own sufficiency, will often embrace error for truth. Every day’s observation convinces us how weak our reason is when applied to the mysteries of our religion ; when employed in that useless, and ineffectual curiosity, which would urge us to know more of the Deity than he has thought proper to reveal to us. What is said of the boundless and unfathomable ocean, “ Whose waters rage and “ swell, thus far shalt thou go, and no farther,” may be strictly said of the bounds that terminate our religious knowledge, and keep us in that state of ignorance best suited to our present circumstances, and our present condition. Of the nature and essence of God, we must always speak with fear and trembling, lest our vanity or our pride should betray us to deserved censure and rebuke. Here our *faith* must be continually employed ; for faith being “ the substance of “ things hoped for, the evidence of things not “ seen,” we shall want no other security to con-

firm us in the ways of godliness, if that be sincere and unshaken. The divinity of our blessed Saviour, and the union and distinction which compose the Trinity, are objects of faith; and I have already observed to you, incomprehensible to us at present. When we have quitted these frail and corruptible bodies in which we are now inclosed, we shall assuredly enjoy a larger share of knowledge, and have a view of spiritual objects. Then our sight will not be clouded and obscured, as we now know it to be. But till that blessed period shall arrive, which places us on the confines of eternity, with "the spirits of just men made perfect," we must continue as we are, and, in the language of St. Paul, "see through a glass darkly."

We can never sufficiently adore the wisdom and the goodness of God in our creation, preservation, and redemption. These are subjects on which we may dwell with endless satisfaction, astonishment, and delight. Subjects, that open to us a range of duties, the most necessary and important. For we are not placed in this world as idle spectators of the scenes that open around us, but are called into immediate action by the voice of reason and of revelation. We have each a part to perform, and each is responsible for his conduct to that Almighty Judge



who "will reward every man according to his works." Let us not then come short of the glory that is prepared for the good and faithful, by any wilful indolence or negligence. Let us study the characters we are to support, and acquit ourselves like men, who, fully convinced that they "have here no abiding city, look for one to come; a city, whose maker and whose builder is God." Let us, with the utmost care and attention, investigate the essential difference between virtue and vice; that the nature of this may appear in all its deformity, and the beauty of that shine forth with its native lustre and brilliancy. And if we do this, with humility and with patience, we shall take the most effectual steps to correct whatever is faulty in us, and "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." For who, that reflects on the evils that attended the fall, and the immense price that was paid for the redemption of man, can continue wallowing in sin, which was the sad and fatal occasion of so much misery and mischief? And who is hardy enough to shut his ears against the saving truths of the gospel of Christ, who, when he had overcome death, opened the kingdom of heaven to all true believers? To all, who, by patient continuance in well doing, and a sincere and hearty repentance, trust and hope, through the all suffi-

cient sacrifice of a blessed Saviour, to obtain a remission of sin, and everlasting happiness in heaven.

To conclude. Forbearing then, to be too inquisitive concerning subjects, which exceed our powers of intellect ; and zealously endeavouring to practise those Christian virtues which adorn the true disciples of Christ ; let us walk as children of the light, that divine light which was abundantly shed abroad in the world, when our Saviour was made man, and dwelt among us. When the gross darkness of ignorance was effectually dispersed by the full blaze of revealed truth. When the last will of God was in the most miraculous manner made known to man ; and all those serious and alarming difficulties, which proved a stumbling block to nature, were removed by revelation.

To possess these assurances, and to have it in our own power to make " our calling and election sure," is the most inestimable blessing. Let us all then do our respective duties, in the best manner we are able. " Let us work while it is called to day, before the night (of death) cometh, when no man can work." Let us shew the strength of our faith, by the purity of our conduct ; that, when the Lord of the spiritual vineyard, shall come to reward his labourers, he

may say to each of us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honor, and power, and glory, for evermore.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

THE  
MUSEUM  
OF  
SALISBURY  
AND  
THE  
SOUTH  
WILTSHIRE  
MUSEUM  
AND  
GALLERY  
OF  
ARTS  
AND  
SCIENCE  
SALISBURY  
WILTSHIRE

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BRODIE AND DOWDING,  
SALISBURY.

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PRACTICAL  
**S E R M O N S,**

SELECTED FROM

**The Manuscripts**

OF THE

**REV. JOHN SKINNER, D.D.**

Late Rector of Poulshot, Vicar of Shrewton, and of the Cathedral, Salisbury;  
formerly of Trinity College, Oxford.

—  
IN TWO VOLUMES.  
—

*DEDICATED (BY PERMISSION)*

TO THE

**RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF SALISBURY.**

—  
**VOL II.**  
—

PRINTED AND SOLD BY BRODIE AND DOWDING, SALISBURY;  
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## CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE.
SERMON I. Psalm 90.—Verse 12. <i>So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.</i>	1
SERMON II. St. John.—Chap. 14.—Verse 27. <i>Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.</i>	12
SERMON III. Acts.—Chap. 24.—Verse 25. <i>As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judg- ment to come, Felix trembled.</i>	22
SERMON IV. St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians.—Chap. 10. Verse 12. <i>Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall.</i>	35
SERMON V. Epistle to the Romans.—Chap. 8.—Verse 31. <i>If God be for us, who can be against us?</i>	47
SERMON VI. 9th Chap. of St. Luke, last Verse. <i>And Jesus said unto him, no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the king- dom of God.</i>	57
SERMON VII. Psalm 31.—Last Verse. <i>Be strong, and he shall establish your heart, all ye that put your trust in the Lord.</i>	71
SERMON VIII. St. Paul's 2d Epistle to Timothy.—Chap. 3.—Verse 7. <i>Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.</i>	81

	PAGE.
<b>SERMON IX.</b>	<b>92</b>
St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians.—Chap. 4th. Verse 7th.	
<i>Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?</i>	
<b>SERMON X.</b>	<b>105</b>
First St. Peter.—3d Chap. 15th Verse.	
<i>Be ready always to give an answer to every man (that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you) with meekness and fear.</i>	
<b>SERMON XI.</b>	<b>116</b>
15th Chap. of St. John's Gospel, and the latter part of the 5th Verse.	
<i>Without me ye can do nothing.</i>	
<b>SERMON XII.</b>	<b>129</b>
St. Matthew.—Chap. 18.—Verse 35.	
<i>So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother, their trespasses.</i>	
<b>SERMON XIII.</b>	<b>141</b>
St. Paul's 2d Epistle to the Corinthians.—Chap. 5. Ver. 10.	
<i>We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.</i>	
<b>SERMON XIV.</b>	<b>152</b>
St. John.—Chap. 5.—Verse 39.	
<i>Search the Scriptures.</i>	
<b>SERMON XV.</b>	<b>162</b>
St. Matthew.—23d Chapter, and the latter part of the 23d Verse.	
<i>These ought ye to have done, and not leave the other undone.</i>	

CONTENTS.

v.

	PAGE.
<b>SERMON XVI.</b>	<b>173</b>
St. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy.—Chap. 3.—Verse 15. <i>That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.</i>	
<b>SERMON XVII.</b>	<b>184</b>
Ecclesiasticus.—Chap. 38.—Verse 6. <i>He hath given men skill.</i>	
<b>SERMON XVIII.</b>	<b>193</b>
Acts of the Apostles.—Chap. 6.—Verse 15. <i>And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face, as it had been the face of an Angel.</i>	
<b>SERMON XIX.</b>	<b>203</b>
St. John's Gospel.—Chap. 5.—Verse 25. <i>Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear, shall live.</i>	
<b>SERMON XX.</b>	<b>215</b>
St. Matthew.—Chap. 26.—Verse 39. <i>O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXI.</b>	<b>225</b>
4th Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, latter part of the 18th Verse, you have this word, <i>Amen.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXII.</b>	<b>234</b>
St. Mark.—16th Chap.—19th Verse. <i>After the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXIII.</b>	<b>247</b>
The 68th Psalm.—Verse 19. <i>Praised be the Lord daily; even the God who helpeth us, and poureth his benefits upon us.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXIV.</b>	<b>255</b>
St. John's Gospel.—Chap. 1st.—Part of 14th Verse. <i>The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.</i>	

	PAGE.
<b>SERMON XXV.</b>	<b>267</b>
1 Corinthians.—Chap. 15.—Verse 22.	
<i>As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXVI.</b>	<b>277</b>
St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians.—Chap. 15. Verses 21 and 22.	
<i>For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ, shall all be made alive.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXVII.</b>	<b>288</b>
St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews.—Chap. 9.—Verse 26.	
<i>But now, once, in the end of the world, hath he ap- peared, to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXVIII.</b>	<b>298</b>
11th Chap. of St. Matthew's Gospel.—10th Verse.	
<i>Behold, I send my messenger before thy face; which shall prepare thy way before thee.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXIX.</b>	<b>312</b>
3d Chap. of the 1st Book of Maccabees, 58th and 59th Verses.	
<i>And Judas said, arm yourselves, and be valiant men, that ye may fight with those nations, that are as- sembled together against us, to destroy us and our sanctuary: For it is better for us to die in battle, than to behold the calamities of our people and our sanctuary.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXX.</b>	<b>325</b>
St. Luke.—Chap. 22.—Latter part of the 19th Verse.	
<i>This do in remembrance of Me.</i>	
<b>SERMON XXXI.</b>	<b>339</b>
22d Chap. of Proverbs.—Verse 6.	
<i>Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.</i>	

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## SERMON I.

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PSALM 90.—Verse 12.

*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

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**AS** you have all very lately entered on a new year, it will be no improper, no unprofitable task, to reflect seriously, in what manner you have spent the former. In thus numbering your days, in thus applying your hearts unto wisdom, discretion and prudence will most certainly give you their applause. Every virtue which exalts, which ennobles the human race, will dart a lustre on those actions that are the result of discernment, sagacity, and penetration.

Has your time rolled on in the gay circle of dissipation, folly, and extravagance; or been occasionally chequered with sobriety, temperance, and charity? Has the God of this world

engaged all, or only a part of your affection and regard? Has religion met with that veneration and respect, which her sacred, her immortal character, and the glad tidings of salvation, which she with brings her, so richly deserve and demand of you? Or, in an age like the present, when the deist is publishing abroad his execrable doctrines, to the subversion of weak and irresolute minds, have your itching ears caught the unholy sound, and turned you away from the Lord who redeemed you? Has your neighbour, your friend, and yourself, been properly and regularly attended to; and have the respective duties, which, as moral and free agents, you are bound to perform, been all honestly and uniformly discharged?

These circumstances should be nicely weighed in the strict balance of solid and sound reason; that, if wanting, you may see the error of your ways, ere it be too late, and repent: if not wanting, you may give thanks to God for his saving grace, and enjoy the testimony and approbation of a good conscience.

And what employment in this world can be of more real advantage, or more worthy a rational and dependent creature? To look into the heart, and regulate all its motions; to observe the windings and various turnings of the



mind, and fix them all in one point, the sacred point of virtue; is a task of no small skill, a labour of no mean artist. This is the proper office, this the necessary duty of man; and he has lived to very little purpose who neglects it. Consider, then, the time that is past, and dart your searching eye through those former scenes, where your conduct, perhaps, has been more vicious than you at present think, more culpable than you are aware of. Thus wisely judging yourselves, you will not hereafter be judged of the Lord. Thus cautiously treading back each path which you have already past over with too hasty a foot, you will discover many irregularities which your future care and attention may rectify. Thus acting, you will walk circumspectly, not as fools, who wander about in the idle and beaten tract of ignorance and folly; but as wise, who mark each step they take; who observe the end of their being, and regulate all their behaviour by the rules of right reason, and sound judgment.

It was by a conduct similar to this, the holy patriarchs and prophets arrived at such perfection in piety and virtue as rendered their names immortal. It was by such a conduct as this, all the great men of antiquity became living examples of the beauty of holiness, and though dead,

still flourish with never fading honours and glory.

The resolute necessity of thus looking back, and numbering your days, will not only appear just, but even claim the resolute and immediate attention of those who for a moment reflect on the shortness of life. The vapour which appears in an instant, and then vanishes away ; the shadow which passeth by us ; the flowers of the field, which in the morning open all their sweets, and in the evening wither, and are no more ; exhibit to you strong emblems of the uncertainty of things here below.

These are monitors which speak a language more powerful and affecting to a serious mind, than all the learning of the most acute or refined philosopher.

These are faithful and true friends, who, by their own mortality, point out our's ; who, by their short continuance, remind us, that " we have no abiding city in this world, but must look for one above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." With silent, but still most eloquent admonition, they instruct us, that if this our earthly tabernacle is dissolved, we have one far better, far more glorious, reserved in heaven, for all who love and obey the truth.

The holy psalmist, meditating on the instability of sublunary things, thus pathetically exclaims: " We bring our years to an end, as  
" it were a tale that is told. The days of our  
" age are three score years and ten ; and though  
" men be so strong that they come to four score  
" years, yet, is their strength then, but labour  
" and sorrow ; so soon passeth it away, and we  
" are gone."

No one amongst you is so weak, so void of understanding, as not to feel the whole force of the psalmist's reasoning. You all observe, each returning day, the departure of some friend or neighbour around you. You see youth cut off in its prime, and the fond hopes, the sanguine expectations of parents, buried in the grave. You see the man of activity and business, whose thoughts are constantly employed in the pleasing, the delightful idea of amassing wealth, and enlarging his property, suddenly snatched from all his golden dreams, to those regions of spirits, where only the true riches of piety and virtue will pass current. You see the sons and daughters of gaiety and pleasure scattering the roses of delight, and mixing in the festive circle of fashionable amusement ; you hear the song of melody, and the sound of the sprightly dance ; but ah ! the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely,

cannot soothe the brow of Care, or check the grasping hand of Death. Fevers, coughs, and a melancholy train of disorders, rush into this scene of joy and pleasure; and the flower is blasted ere it be full blown.

Though you may remark some few, who, from strength of constitution, come to four score years, yet, they are but few. Thousands, and tens of thousands, drop before they reach half that period.

Should it be your lot, should Providence grant such length of days to any here present, you will do well to remember that the season of virtue and active goodness will then be passed by. The faculties of the mind will be all dead, and the close of the day nothing but labour and sorrow.

Well, therefore, might the Psalmist advise us "to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Having thus shewn you in what manner you should reflect on, and improve the last year, I will now endeavour to point out, for your immediate practice, the wise and proper way of spending the present year.

When spring returns, and all nature is smiling around you, when the fields teem with fertility, and the clouds drop fatness, then seriously re-

fect on the culture, and attention which is due to yourselves.

Will any of you pay more care to the improvement of your lands, and estates, than to the necessary cultivation of your minds?

Shall the ground bring forth its fruits in rich abundance, and man, the Lord of this lower world, be unproductive of good works?

Let this genial season be alike employed by all. Let it remind you of industry, in religious as well as civil matters; and that the garden of the mind is to be particularly attended to. Ill thoughts, like ill weeds, are for ever springing up in our hearts, and a good man will spare no pains to rid the soil of such noxious inhabitants. Let the rich wardrobe, and blooming beauties of the earth at this season of the year, exhibit to the youth, a picture of himself; and let him observe how frequently the fatal blight destroys all the variegated hues of the field; and how rapidly the stroke of unexpected death, may destroy himself.

When summer advances, and the different fruits appear hastening on to their full beauty, and perfection; when the "vallies stand so thick with corn, that they laugh and sing;" ask your own hearts, if you find a similar progress there, in all the noble and sublime virtues

of the gospel. Consider how far you have improved those many, those valuable talents which the Lord of the harvest committed to your care, and which he will expect to receive again with proper interest. Consider, that the summer of your life is to abound in good works, to the praise, and glory of your God; and if you are found deficient, you must expect the just punishment of an unprofitable servant.

Shall not the growth of every plant remind us, that we ought always to grow in grace, and goodness? Shall not the flowers of the field, which receive the dews of heaven, and smile after they have received them, teach us to bring forth the fruits of holiness, and virtue, after we have been enlightened with the spirit of truth?

All nature calls us to our duty; and things inanimate prompt us to pursue the path of integrity, and wisdom.

When autumn appears, and all the toil and labour of industry, is well repaid by a copious store of wealth; when abundance pours in upon the faithful husbandman with a torrent of plenty; when the voice of joy and gladness is heard in the village, and a generous crop rewards all the care, and anxiety of its possessor; you will do well to observe, how far your own moral and religious conduct has been instrumental in pro-



noting the grand, the important cause of virtue, and goodness. How far the improvement of your time, (a portion of which the concerns of another state require), have been regarded, or attended to.

It will be a mark of prudence to reflect on the whole scheme of your behaviour at this season, and to consider, if the good seed, which each returning Sabbath has been sown in your hearts, answers the well directed intentions, and honest endeavours of your pastors. To consider their labour of love, in leading you out of the darkness of ignorance, and pointing out to your notice, and observation, the marvellous light of the Gospel. They have reason to expect from you all, a suitable degree of excellence, and perfection. They have reason to hope that the saving doctrines delivered unto you, will bring forth fruit in every honest, every good heart, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.

Let not then the autumn of your lives be less productive of good actions, than the earth is of good fruits. Let not the heart be as unfruitful as a barren and dry land, where no water is; a hard and flinty rock which admits of no growth; but let it receive with patience the sacred word, and produce in you those refined and pure ac-

tions which may declare the goodness and value of the soil.

When Nature puts on her gloomy robes, and all the beauties of her former cheerfulness decay ; when the trees drop their leaves, and the flowers of the field wither and droop with sadness, then dreary Winter makes her cold, her chilling, approach. Then the earth locks up its treasures, and a universal blank seems to prevail over the whole world.

How strongly should this melancholy season remind you of that period, when the voice of singing men, and singing women, will no longer delight you : when life is drawing near to a conclusion, and all the pleasures, all the enjoyments of sense, are no more.

Look at the face of Nature, and you will observe a solemn, a serious sadness. You will find all things in a state of apparent dissolution.

Look at Man in the winter of his days, and you will find him feeble and decrepid, unable to support his poor tottering frame ; and, like decaying nature, gradually sinking into his grave.

But how animating, how glorious is the thought, that both shall rise again in newness of life ; both shall recover their lost beauty, and shine with additional splendor.

To conclude.—If the past and present year

be thus improved to the best, the most noble purposes ; if your days are thus numbered, and wisdom made the companion and friend of your hearts ; public, no less than private, virtue will flourish and abound. Let me beg of you to consider the short plan for the regular improvement of your time, which I have placed before you. Its necessity must appear to all, who wish to act well ; and its advantage will be experienced by all who give it a fair trial.

They who wish to extract the essence of virtue and piety, by a life of active charity and benevolence, will find it sweeter than honey and the honey-comb ; a sovereign remedy for all infirmities here below ; and the balm of future happiness, life, and immortality.

Be it then your principal concern, so to consider your ways in this world, that you may not fail of a due, a proper, reward in the next.

Be it your study to live well, that you may die in the faith and hope of Christ, who will admit you into the society of just men made perfect, and open for your reception (through his most precious blood) the glorious kingdom of his Heavenly Father.

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

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## SERMON II.

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ST. JOHN.—Chap. 14.—Verse 27.

*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

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**W**HENEVER our blessed Saviour mentioned his departure to his disciples, they received the information with fear, and trembling. Their tender and weak hearts, were susceptible of every impression, which the idea of the most accumulated distress could possibly excite. To part from a dear and beloved master, who had raised their hopes and expectations of happiness, to the highest pitch; to be deprived of the only true friend, who had often promised to be their guide unto death; and to be left, like harmless and innocent lambs, a prey to devouring wolves; was such a dreadful shock to their aspiring notions of temporal grandeur, and consequence, as all the united force of human reason could

not reconcile. They plainly saw the torrent of misery, and distress, that would immediately break in upon them, when *He* was gone, who could alone check the rage of the sea, and “the madness of the people.” They saw persecution armed with all her tortures, starting up to oppose their “labour of love,” and obstruct them in their mild career of public virtue, and benevolence. And seeing thus far into the melancholy, the gloomy scenes of futurity, their “hearts fainted in them,” and they were almost ready to sink under the weight that so heavily oppressed them.

To compose these tumults of the mind, and give them every assurance of real, and permanent comfort, our Saviour weans their affections from things below, and by degrees raises them to heaven. The gorgeous fabrick of earthly pomp and glory, which had long dazzled their weak eyes, he changes for a spiritual mansion in his father’s house, where he tells them he was going to prepare a place for them.

The afflictions and terrors which they so much dreaded, and shrunk from, he assures them, were to be the instruments for working out their salvation, and securing their future, their eternal happiness. In the most animated, and affectionate manner, he repeatedly tells them, that

patience, and perseverance, were the essential requisites to gain a Christian triumph ; a triumph which did not consist in the applause of a giddy multitude, or the gaudy display of earthly banners and trophies, but in the testimony of a good conscience, and the approbation of our Father, which is in heaven.

After opening by degrees to them the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and declaring that he would always support and comfort them, against every temporal enemy, he adds, " let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Thus situated, these holy men see their Saviour ascend up into heaven ; and, with the strong eye of faith, they trace him till he takes possession of his glorious kingdom, having completed that wonderful, that amazing work, the redemption of man.

In humble and devout expectation of the friendly support, which their departed master had promised them, they continue in prayer at the throne of grace for those comforts, which heaven alone can bestow, and which man is then most worthy to receive, when relying on the bounty and mercy of his Maker.

How should this pious act of the disciples of Christ animate our zeal in the cause of virtue, and goodness ! How strongly should it remind



us of that firm, that steady confidence in God, which can alone render us the objects of divine favour ! His almighty power can illumine, with the brightest rays of transport, scenes, the most gloomy, and disconsolate. His never-failing mercy watches over his creatures; and “ as a father pitieth his own children, so is the Lord kind and bountiful to all those, who love, fear, and obey him.”

When the day was fully come for the display of God’s infinite care of man, and the increase of his holy religion, a variety of awful and alarming circumstances plainly evinced the advent of the blessed Comfortor. The sacred visitation was powerfully felt, and the virtues imparted, conspicuously seen by all, whom curiosity, or religion, had led to Jerusalem, at this great, this important feast.

Man, who, if left to himself, and his own natural powers, often shrinks from the appearance of danger ; when upheld by Providence, surmounts the greatest, and most alarming difficulties. After the descent of the Holy Ghost, the fear and anxiety which had possessed the minds of the disciples before their Lord’s departure, gave place to the most astonishing fortitude and resolution. They, who, a few moments before, were rude and illiterate, unacquainted with

the depth of science, and beauties of language, immediately spoke all the known languages in the world. They, who looked on the rage and fury of mankind as the greatest scourge, and affliction, braved the terrors of the mighty, and, in the sacred cause of Christianity, smiled at earthly misery, to secure a crown of celestial glory.

Thus armed with native innocence, and under the immediate care and protection of heaven, they proceed to reform the manners of the world, and teach the deluded votaries of heathenism, that "God was a spirit, and that they who worship him must worship him in spirit, and in truth."

The clouds and darkness which obscured that most comfortable doctrine, the immortality of the soul, they effectually disperse, and bring life and immortality, into a clearer, and more distinct point of view, by the publication of the gospel of Christ.

To confirm their divine mission, and to prove that they acted under the amazing influence of superior power, disease and torment, pain and misery, obey their sovereign command. They are eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and health to the sick. The most distant parts of the earth receive the benefit of that glorious light,

which was not only to dispel the gross darkness of ignorance, and superstition ; but to warm the heart, with real benevolence, and universal charity. So true is that expression of the inspired writer, " their sound is gone out into all " the world."

We cannot want a stronger, or more effectual proof of the heavenly assistance which accompanied the first preachers of the gospel, than the wonderful, and rapid success which attended their ministry. Though they opposed virtue to vice, weakness to strength, and poverty to riches, they were more than conquerors, through him that saved them ; through him that gave them strength far beyond the idea, or conception of frail, and imperfect man.

Thus, like a small grain of mustard seed, which spreads its luxuriant branches, and becomes a large, and noble tree ; the gospel, whose origin appeared weak and ineffectual, extended its sacred influence widely over the habitable globe.

Thus, like the leaven, which diffuses itself through the whole lumps, by imperceptible degrees, the word of God insinuated its sacred and healing virtues, into the hearts of men, and converted many from the error of their ways.

On viewing this extraordinary interposition of Providence, in favour of a wicked and miserable

world, we cannot forbear exclaiming, "O Lord, " wonderful art thou in thy dealings towards " the children of men ; thy truth, most mighty " Lord ! is on every side."

The proper use to be made by us of this solemnity, is, to consider the nature, end, and design of that gospel, which has been so miraculously propagated, and preserved amongst us. As to its *nature*, I trust, from what I have advanced, we are fully convinced, its origin is divine ; as to its *end*, it is the salvation of mankind, through the satisfactory merits of a crucified Saviour. As to its *design*, it is the reformation of the world from error to truth, from flesh to spirit, in order to accomplish that most gracious end, the forgiveness of sin, and assurance of everlasting life, after death.

And where could we hope for a prospect that opens to our desires, and expectations, a more delightful scene ? Where shall we go for information, how to direct our wandering steps through the mazes and intricacies of our present journey, but to the gospel, which is the way, and the truth, and the life ? The *way*, that leads to heaven ; the sacred *truth*, given by God himself ; and the *life*, which must soon begin, and never end.

Remember always, that it is a concern of no small moment, whether we *embrace*, or *reject*

the doctrines of Christ. If we oppose Christianity with that acrimony, and bitterness, which many, (who are wise in their own conceits,) have done; we must abide the consequences at that awful period, when, as our blessed Saviour declares, "they who have denied him before men, them will he also deny before our father who is in heaven." If we adhere to those sacred rules, calculated to make us all wiser and better, then will our life and death be supremely comfortable, supremely happy.

Let us examine therefore ourselves, the scriptures, and we shall find them agreeable to revelation and reason; though some modern philosophers have, in the height of their pride, given more weight and consequence to the latter, than she ever possessed, in order to obscure, and render useless, the glorious light of the former.

After we have seriously considered the gospel of Christ, and reflected on the miracle, as on this day wrought to support, and further its publication, we shall do well to imprint on your minds this assurance; that the same holy spirit which proved a rock of defiance, and a tower of strength, to the first preachers of Christianity, against all their enemies, will, in like manner, comfort and support us in every danger, both temporal and spiritual.

Though the power of working miracles be removed ; though we cannot effectually say to the sick, be thou cured, or to the lame, stand up, and walk ; yet, with the testimony of a good conscience, and the secret workings of the Holy Ghost, we may be enabled to act resolutely in the midst of dangers, and to rise superior to accumulated distress.

However frail man may value his own abilities, however highly he may rate his perfections, they are all derived from this sacred source, the holy spirit of God. Aided by this spirit, we have nothing to fear or dread ; but remove this saving grace, and we have no support whatever to depend on.

Let these important, these essential truths, sink deep into your hearts ; and sensible of the great love of heaven towards us, let us act as men, and as Christians : as men, who know their own weakness ; and as Christians, who gladly embrace the offer of mercy, to improve in wisdom, and grow in strength.

To conclude.—As the comforter whom our Saviour sent to conduct and support his faithful disciples in their earthly pilgrimage, still sheds his benign influence on all who call on him with a sincere and true heart, let us never sink under the weight of sorrow, or yield to the trouble



that may heavily oppress us. Let us, with confidence, in all our distress, look up to him for assistance, and he will be ever ready to receive our righteous prayers, and remove our misery. And now, what situation can be more enviable than ours? We know, or may know, our duty, and need only to be particular in practising it, and shall be happy here, and blessed hereafter. What could the Almighty do more for us than he has done? Let us all therefore be cautious, lest, after the kindness and mercy so wonderfully displayed in the salvation of man, any of us should eternally perish through a wicked heart of unbelief. Let us devoutly offer up our prayers to the Almighty, that he would vouchsafe to direct, sanctify, and govern, both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of his laws, and in the works of his commandments; that, through the most mighty protection of his holy spirit, both here, and hereafter, we may be preserved in body and soul, through our Lord, and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power, and glory, for evermore.

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## SERMON III.

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ACTS.—Chap. 24.—Verse 25.

*As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.*

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**THERE** are times and seasons when our minds are fully open to conviction. Why they are not always so arises from the powerful influence of our passions. When Nathan related to David the conduct of a man who had behaved with the foulest ingratitude and villainy, the king, in a fit of rage and displeasure, exclaimed, “the man that hath done this thing, shall surely die.” All the horror of sin and guilt rushed on his mind, and he could not refrain from expressing his resentment in the severest manner. But what can we suppose were the feelings of David, when the prophet said unto him, “thou art the man!” Thou art this ungrateful, this infamous person. Thou hast committed adultery, and murder; murder, the most foul, the

most unnatural ; as the object of thy vengeance was thy best friend and servant. That the conscience of this royal sinner was most keenly and most deeply *probed* ; and that his sufferings were great and extensive ; and his repentance strictly uniform and exemplary ; we have the most powerful of all testimony, the testimony of the sacred scriptures. Happy would it be for us all, to awake from that lethargy of sin, which we are too apt to contract, from a want of thought, and timely reflection. For though our sins may differ in their nature, and in their complexion, yet sins we have, and nothing but the voice of religion, strong and loud, will ever make us repent and amend them. The Roman Governor, Felix, and his wife Drusilla, sent for St. Paul to give them an account of the Christian religion. They had heard much of those who professed the faith in Christ, and they wished to know what particular advantages were to be derived from the doctrines he taught. The holy apostle was pleased with the opportunity that presented itself of enforcing those those duties which the gospel of Christ, in a particular manner, inculcates ; and which the present occasion seemed more immediately to require. He considered the situation in which he stood before them ; and the conduct of the per-

sons to whom he directed his discourse. And having duly weighed in his mind, the necessity of some *pointed* address, he reasoned of *righteousness*, of that immutable law of God, which includes in its very essence, justice, goodness, virtue, and honesty. He explained to them the nature of that trust which Felix, as a chief magistrate, was in duty bound to discharge, without the least partiality or respect of persons. A trust, which required the most correct behaviour towards all who claimed protection at his hands ; and called for an unblemished character, and the purest integrity. Nor did he forget to remind them, that faith in Christ was then most visible, when they who professed it were zealous of good works ; and by the constant exercise of those good works, shewed their faith to be real and solid ; a rock, which nothing human could ever shake ; and against which the temptations of the world spent their fury in vain. Had we seen St. Paul on this occasion, animated by his subject, and, at every expression, looking with firmness at his audience, how must we have admired the Christian orator, in the discharge of so important, so sacred a duty !

After he had reasoned of *righteousness*, he passed on to *temperance*. And here, he opened to their view, the inestimable benefit which flowed

from the due regulation of our affections and appetites; and pointed out the absolute necessity of moderation and self-denial, without which, society and friendship must unavoidably suffer many and great inconveniencies. But, chiefly, he urged the duty of resisting the sensual passions, which, if we once give them the rein, will hurry us on to actions the most gross, infamous, and sinful. And, for this purpose, he described the beauty and excellence of chastity, whose mild, and amiable deportment, rendered her the object of admiration, and love, to all those who scorned to violate the laws of matrimony, or prey on the weakness of unsuspecting innocence. Christianity, he declared, required this obedience to her laws. And whilst the subjects of other religions suffered their votaries, to live without any restraint on the vicious inclinations, and, in some degree, connived at irregular conduct; the religion of Christ forbid, in language the most unequivocal, every kind of deviation from the strictest temperance in our thoughts, words, and actions. And, without this guard of our virtue and purity, man would degenerate into a beast, and his reason, which was intended to be his greatest blessing, would, by the abuse of it, become his greatest curse.

But St. Paul had seen too much of the actions

of men to suppose that the moral virtues, by their own innate force, were strong enough to keep them within the pale of duty. He knew with what art and cunning the mind was imposed upon, and how frequently the most vicious and debauched inclinations were indulged; when secrecy drew a curtain between the sinner and the world. And knowing this, he not only reasoned of *righteousness* and *temperance*, but of *judgment to come!*

This was an awful and alarming subject, and replete with all that fear and apprehension, which must seize the very best person that ever lived, when he reflects on the tremendous period, when the “trumpet shall sound, and the dead “shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be “changed. When all that are in their graves “shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and “come forth; they that have done good unto “everlasting happiness, and they that have done “evil to everlasting misery.” This was a truth which the apostle drew from our Saviour’s own words; and, therefore, the force and strength which they possessed, were not to be resisted. All he had said before, to recommend *righteousness* and *temperance*, from the influence they have on the moral conduct of mankind, might have glided through the thoughts of those who



heard him, without making any deep or lasting impression; but the certainty of a *judgment to come*, must rouse the most careless and indifferent. This told them, that no action in our commerce with each other, was concealed from the eye of God. That the governor, as well as those whom he governed, would be summoned to answer before the tribunal of Christ, for their respective behaviour. That though the hypocrite in this world might pass for a saint, in the world to come, the mask would be plucked from him, and he would appear as he really is. This told them, that greatness and power, dominion and authority, gave no sort of licence for the commission of actions injurious to the public; and that those who ever committed them, were to be answerable to the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, for the daring violation of his most holy laws. Such an assurance as this, from one so well versed in the true principles of the Christian religion, and before those, who were desirous of information on the subject, could not fail of producing some effect, and the effect produced, was, that "*Felix trembled.*"

But, why, when St. Paul reasoned of *righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*, should Felix tremble, more than any other person? Why should the Roman governor,

who was appointed by the state, to be the friend, and the father of those committed to his care, appear shocked, and alarmed, when he heard the social, and the Christian virtues, described in language the most expressive, and with authority the most powerful? Because he was the most notorious, the most infamous sinner. Felix, during the time of his government, instead of mildly, and honestly discharging his important office, acted the part of a cruel, and merciless tyrant. Instead of protecting his subjects against wrong, and oppression, he most severely oppressed them, himself. How could such a man hear with calmness, and composure, the good apostle reasoning of *righteousness*, when he had broken the sacred laws of justice, and trampled on the tenderest feelings of humanity. How could such a man's conscience avoid being greatly troubled, when every word that was pronounced, seemed a dagger pointed at himself, and thirsting for vengeance, on his devoted head! But Felix was not only the avowed enemy of *righteousness*, but also of *chastity*. He had suffered personal beauty, and elegance of form, to rouse those turbulent, and lawless passions, which prudence, and discretion would have kept dormant. He had used those mean, and pitiful arts, which seduction countenances,

and married Drusilla, the wife of another man. All this he had done with a boldness undaunted, and with an assurance seldom equalled. Lessons of *temperance* to so depraved a heart, where few traces remained of decency, or shame; and those lessons urged in a manner too close, to lose any of their force, could not but disquiet the filthy mind of the most profligate Felix.

And when the day of judgment was laid open by the great champion in the Christian cause, as the concluding scene, and final act, that is to pronounce us happy, or miserable to all eternity; can we wonder at the horror which ensued, or the *trembling* that seized him?

In this whole transaction, you cannot fail perceiving the invincible power of truth, when opposed to the weakness, and timidity of guilt. Not all the gay splendour of his court, nor the smiles of his flatterers, could compose the troubled mind of Felix, when St. Paul was addressing him. He too well knew the blackness of his own heart, and every nerve shook with fear, and terror, at the consequences of his accumulated sin. Such feelings will ever accompany those, whose hearts have been corrupted by the sordid, and mean gratifications, which unlawful, and violent passions, too often produce.

The important advantage we may derive from

the extraordinary subject before us, is *this*. To estimate properly, and truly, the real value of innocence, and of virtue. The holy psalmist, gives us most excellent advice, when he exhorts us, to “keep innocency, and do the thing that is right;” and then adds, for our encouragement, “for that will give a man peace at the last.” That uniform, and good conduct, will make us calm, and happy, on the bed of sickness, and on the more awful bed, the bed of death. But, we find from the example before us, that vice, whatever she may promise to her friends, and slaves, always deceives them; and we need not wait till the grave shall open her jaws to receive us, to be convinced of her deformity, and vileness.

There is something so generous, and noble, in virtue, and integrity, that not only raises our admiration, but instantly, as it were, conciliates our warmest affection, and esteem. A good, and honest man, fears no person. His pure conscience is a perpetual paradise; and amidst all the various changes, and chances of this mortal life, he enjoys the favour, and protection, his Maker, which constitutes the sum of all human joy, and happiness. Hence, the sacred voice of revealed truth, which makes the sinner tremble, and shudder at the destruction which

threatens to fall on him, sound in the ears of the righteous man, as the voice of the charmer, which assures him that there are rewards prepared for the virtuous in the next world ; and that there is a God, that judgeth the earth, which assures him, that virtue only is the true road to everlasting happiness ; and that those who expect to arrive at it, by any other path, will be lost in error, and perish through their own delusion. The just, and religious man, never gives the rein to those violent, and inordinate appetites, which, his reason informs him, are to obey, and not command. For, if our passions are to know no restraint ; but with wild impetuosity, hurry us on to the commission of any actions they shall think proper, the world would become one general scene of confusion, and horror ; men would degenerate into brutes, and every social, and relative duty, would be banished from the earth. This fact, the good and pious man, is well convinced of ; and this fact it is the business of religion to imprint on our minds, in characters too strong to be easily obliterated. And, however we may strive to drown thought, and reflection, by the gay pleasures of life ; however, we may attempt to silence the voice of conscience, by amusements, dissipation, or any unlawful exercises ; the voice

of religious truth *will* be heard, and make *us*, as it did *Felix*, tremble. What made Judas, in an agony of despair, throw the money he had received, as the wages of iniquity, before his cruel and merciless employers? A deep, and intolerable sense of guilt. What plunged such sharp, and envenomed stings into the breasts of Joseph's brethren, when they discovered that he was still living in the court of Pharoah in spite of all their ingratitude, and barbarity? Remorse of conscience; and what made Ahab, with fear and trembling, exclaim, when he met Elijah, "hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" a *conviction* of his repeated, and abominable wickedness. Thus you see, sooner, or later, the sinner *must* tremble. If he keep at a distance from the voice of admonition, and reproof, he may for a while suppose, that nothing is to be feared from either. But, I have shewn, that our own minds will perform, and with severity, too, the sacred office of judge, and the more painful one, of executioner. Our own minds will *tell us*, and force us to *see* our iniquities. And although darkness surround us on all sides, and no human eye penetrate into the private, and secret actions of our lives; yet, the light of conscience will compel us to feel the terrors of guilt, and the dread of punishment. So wisely, and so won-



derfully, has our maker formed us, and so very acute has he made the sense of guilt, and the fear of everlasting misery.

To conclude.—The best thing we can do, is, to be good in earnest. To act the *part* only of honesty, and virtue, and to appear what we really are not, is the most fallacious mode of proceeding. Truth, and falsehood, have their respective stamps; and, like good, and base coin, will be weighed in a just, and true balance. Dissimulation is not only unbecoming the dignity of human nature; but, imperceptibly as it were, works out its own destruction. Felix, David, Judas, and Ahab, were all brought to a sense of their wickedness, when they each thought to escape detection. When, in fancied security, they supposed it possible to be happy, without being virtuous; and to be sinners, without being sufferers. This illustration of my text, serves better to inform our understandings, and correct our vices, than a thousand fine moral sentiments on the decency of virtue, and the fitness of human actions. A day of retribution is a day of terror to those who continue in their sins. And the thought of that day, will never leave the guilty easy, or composed. Be it then our aim always to do our duty to God, and man; and then, so far from *trembling*,

when we hear of *righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*, we shall hope, through the merits of Jesus Christ, for the pardon of our sins; having endeavoured to the best of our power, to walk in all the commandments of God, blameless.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power, and glory, for ever, and ever.

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## SERMON IV.

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ST. PAUL'S 1st EPISTLE to the CORINTHIANS.  
Chap. 10.—Verse 12.

*Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest  
he fall.*

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**WHOEVER** seriously considers the weakness and imperfection of human nature, will immediately perceive the absolute necessity of caution and circumspection, in our moral and religious conduct. As the apostle teacheth us, “ We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God.” The freedom which Christianity hath given us from the heavy yoke of rites and ceremonies imposed on the Jews, and the great and glorious privileges we enjoy, since the last dispensation of divine grace, must excite our thanks and our gratitude to the author of “ every good

“and perfect gift ;” but, at the same time, these inestimable benefits should prompt us “to work out our salvation, with fearfulness, “and trembling.” The sound part of St. Paul’s Corinthian converts, to whom he had opened clearly and fully the comforts and the blessings of Christ’s religion, were frequent in their applications to him for advice, in what manner, on particular occasions, they “ought to walk, and please God.” And, as he discovered in them, *ideas* of strength which they did not really possess, and of *liberties* which it would have been dangerous for them to indulge, surrounded as they were “by the weaker brethren,” he mixes gentle and kind reproofs with the most friendly and affectionate admonitions. He reminds them, that though they are new members of Christ’s true Church, yet, they were not on that account rendered *incapable* of going astray, or *secured* against the possibility of error and corruption. He feelingly points out to them, the situation of the antient Israelites, who were once the true Church, and the covenanted people of God ; but who, presuming on their distinguished advantages, and careless and inattentive to the most essential duties, were never suffered to enter the promised land. “Now all “these things happened unto them, says the

“ apostle, for ensamples ; and they are written  
“ for our admonition, upon whom the ends of  
“ the world are come.” He then adds, “ Where-  
“ fore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take  
“ heed, lest he fall.” Let him, who, conscious  
of his high title, as a disciple of the gospel of  
Christ, thinketh his salvation perfectly safe,  
independently of all considerations whatever  
respecting his future behaviour, take heed, lest  
he fall into crimes, which, notwithstanding his  
exalted privileges, will lead to certain and  
severe punishment.

From this caution of the apostle, we learn the  
most beneficial and interesting truths. We see  
the fallacy of supposing that we can ever be so  
circumstanced as not to need the most vigilant  
and active exertions of mind to guard us against  
the approach of folly and of sin. We see too,  
that the enlightened period can never arrive,  
when our calling and election will be made so  
sure, as to exclude every care and anxiety on  
our part, respecting so important a subject.  
Indeed, common sense and common reason are  
sufficient to assure us, that unconditional secu-  
rity belongs to no person. What the warmth  
of imagination, and the weakness of credulity,  
may have prompted some to admit into their  
creed, weighs nothing against the goodness and

the justice of Almighty God. He hath declared by his holy prophet, "The soul that sinneth it shall die. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon *him*." A progressive state of virtue, as well as of vice, is universally acknowledged. "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. But, when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, all his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned. In his trespass, that he hath trespassed, and in his sin, that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." We discover nothing in the sacred voice of the prophet, that can lead us to suppose that divine grace is ever so deeply rooted in the human heart, as absolutely to prevent our *falling* from our duty, or exercising that free agency, which can alone constitute the responsibility of rational creatures. The barriers, which religion opposes against the tumultuous assaults of vicious inclinations, would be feeble and ineffectual, if such doctrine were to be countenanced and acted upon by those who included themselves in the number of such *chosen vessels*. A state of warfare, and such undoubtedly is Christianity



represented to be, calls for that serious watchfulness which our blessed Saviour most affectionately recommended to his disciples. But we never find in any of his discourses, that he assures his hearers they would be placed in such a state of spiritual safety, as to be certain of salvation, without any further concern on their part to deserve it. So far from this, our Saviour checks, on all occasions, the too high opinion he well knew they entertained of their own strength and confidence. And when he mentioned to his apostles his approaching death, and the dreadful circumstances that would attend it, and told them they would desert him in that awful moment of distress and danger; though Peter vehemently declared, "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise;" and though they all said the same, our blessed Saviour, looking at Peter, "saith unto him, verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice:" Soon after this declaration, the infirmities of human nature, which his disciples laboured under, moved him thus affectionately to exhort them, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation: the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak." He knew the sincerity of their hearts, and their good disposi-

tions towards him ; but, he knew also their natural weakness, in the season of danger (if the resolution of their minds were not strong enough to overcome it), would certainly betray them. The melancholy event proved too sadly on what an uncertain foundation the high opinion we are sometimes apt to entertain of ourselves may rest. The season of apparent safety, when every thing around us wears a calm and serene aspect, begets in us a thoughtless security and unwarrantable confidence ; but, when the prospect becomes gloomy, and the dark clouds of distress are gathering about us, we discover, but too plainly, that we are fallen creatures indeed. We discover that we are not what we vainly imagined ourselves to be, in every circumstance, and on every important occasion. St. Paul, who well knew the uncertainty of human resolutions, and all those artful and delusive methods, by which the passions and appetites draw us from our duty, and, insensibly as it were, lead us into error, thus feelingly exhorts his converts at Philippi : “ Brethren, be followers together of me, and “ mark them who walk so, as ye have us for an example.” He then adds “ Therefore, my dearly “ beloved, and longed for, my joy and my crown, “ so *stand fast* in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” To the Thessalonians, (reflecting on the victory

they had gained over their former imperfections, and iniquities, and hoping they would *persevere* in well doing,) he warmly exclaims “ For now “ we *live*, if ye *stand fast* in the Lord.” And again, he assures them “ we are bound to give “ thanks alway to God, for you brethren, beloved of the Lord. Therefore *stand fast* and “ hold the traditions which ye have been taught, “ whether, by word, or our epistle.” And great reason had the holy apostle to embrace every opportunity that offered of adding strength to their faith, and life and spirit to their moral conduct. For amidst the strongest evidence of divine truth, some had been known to wander far from the right path, through fear, or a vicious inclination. Demas, one of St. Paul’s disciples, who, during his imprisonment at Rome, had rendered him the most kind, and essential service, afterwards left him ; forsook the Christian faith, and embraced the most pernicious heresy. This desertion of duty, at a time when sincerity of attachment was particularly called for, St. Paul thus mentions with concern in his second Epistle to Timothy, “ Do thy diligence “ to come shortly unto me ; for Demas hath “ *forsaken* me, having loved this *present world*.” Temporal considerations, and the sight of danger, which, at one time perhaps, Demas might

have thought himself able to resist, took such full possession of his mind, that he relinquished the inestimable advantages of a true Christian faith, for the wild, though safe, doctrines as he concluded of Cerinthus. Tracing the silent and secret operations of the human mind through all its various and intricate labyrinths, how justly does the great apostle call on his *Ephesian converts* to be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. To put on the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” And to convince them of the absolute necessity of such regular and unremitting exertion, he goes on, “for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” The dark schemes and designs of those who violently and cruelly opposed the progress of Christianity in the apostle’s days, were so deeply laid and so dreadfully executed, as to require every care, and every attention, in the ministers of the gospel, to keep the true worshipers of Christ within the sacred pale of religious duty.

Though the profession of the religion of Christ be *free* from those horrid persecutions which attempted to *lessen* its divine influence on the

human heart ; and though our faith can meet no interruption, unless we *wilfully deny* the Lord who redeemed us with his most precious blood ; yet, the apostle's exhortation, " Let him " that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he " fall," is very applicable to every one, who hopes for salvation through the merits of a Saviour. We may fondly think ourselves in safety when we are in the midst of danger. We may, in the silent and calm hours of retirement, when our minds are at ease, form many and admirable rules for our future conduct in life ; but they may all vanish when affliction or disappointment visit us. Like the children of Ephraim, we may be harnessed, and carry bows, and yet turn ourselves back in the day of battle. To make a goodly appearance is one thing ; but to act uniformly and resolutely in every contest with our inordinate passions and desires, is another. Our love of God may be devout and fervent, and those sacred and solemn duties, which the stated periods of public worship call on us to discharge, may be regularly and zealously performed ; but unless the real and undissembled love of our neighbour accompany the love we profess for our Creator, our piety will be hypocrisy, and our devotion an insult. Nothing can recommend us so effectually to the regard of our Hea-

venly Father, as kind, benevolent, and generous actions towards each other ; and that religion is a shadow only without the substance, which mixes not with the common occurrences of life, and acquires strength and effect by the close and indissoluble union of faith and good works. Our blessed Saviour, speaking of the awful day of judgment, informs his hearers, “ Many will “ say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we “ not prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name “ have cast out devils, and in thy name done “ many wonderful works ? ” This is the language of persons apparently confident of acceptance ; and who did not discover the danger that threatened them till it appeared with all its horrors. “ And then will I profess unto them, “ I never knew you, depart from me, ye that “ work iniquity.” The humble publican seems to have felt the ground on which he stood to be uncertain and dangerous ; not so, the haughty Pharisee ; *he* stood, in his own opinion, on a rock ; but that Divine Power which seeth not as man seeth, and judgeth not as man judgeth, assures us that the *meek* candidate for mercy was justified rather than the other, who *vainly* supposed himself sufficiently correct and perfect. So very little do we know of ourselves, and so apt are we to neglect an investigation into our *own*



*conduct*, whilst we eagerly and keenly examine the most minute and incautious actions of other people. Satisfied, then, as we must be, how imperfect, irresolute, and vain, we are, when judging of our own merit; and how well-disposed we are to *deceive* our own hearts; “ what manner of persons *ought* we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness.” To be careless and indifferent about our spiritual welfare, and through a stubborn and inflexible indolence, to neglect a provision for our future and immortal state, is, most assuredly, very disgraceful to those who call themselves Christians. And with an idle vanity, and proud presumption, to seduce *ourselves*, as Ezekiel represents the false prophets to have seduced their thoughtless votaries, with an assurance of peace, when there was no peace, is the very extreme of folly and absurdity. For no lethargy can prove more fatal than the lethargy of the soul, which enfeebles all those intellectual powers, by which alone, under the divine assistance, we are enabled to discharge our bounden duties to our God, and to our neighbour.

To conclude. It appearing absolutely necessary to our comfort *here*, and to our eternal happiness *hereafter*, that we should always be on our guard, and act with the most consummate

caution, lest we think better of our spiritual state than we ought ; let us awake from those *dreams* of purity and perfection which we may have fondly and foolishly indulged. Let us look earnestly and resolutely into our own hearts, and search their most secret recesses ; lest, in the pride of self applause, we should say we have no sin, no sin of any deep or pernicious dye, and deceive ourselves, a deception the most gross and the most destructive. But, if led by the hand of humility and contrition, we advance to the throne of grace, and confess our sins, we are assured, by the sacred voice of scripture, that God “ is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, “ and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Wherefore, in the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians, “ take unto you the whole armour of “ God, that ye may be able to withstand in the “ evil day, and having done all, to *stand.*”

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and power, for evermore.

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## SERMON V.

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EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.—Chap. 8.—  
Verse 31.

*If God be for us, who can be against us?*

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**T**HE strength of argument which the apostle uses in this chapter ; the force of reason which he exerts, in behalf of the Gentile converts ; carry with them no small degree of power, and conviction, to every dispassionate, and impartial mind.

He shows how weak, how insufficient the *ceremonial* law was, to cure the corruption of the heart, or atone for the guilt of sins committed against the virtue, and purity of the *moral* law. He proves the great weight, and importance of the Christian religion, which is able to effect both. He tells the obstinate, the perverse Jews, that the death of Christ has made ample satisfaction for the sins of mankind ;

that the spiritual nature of his laws, and the divine influence of the holy spirit, on our habitual purity of conduct, will qualify all (without respect to persons) for a resurrection to eternal life, and happiness. He declares (with that assurance, which the tender mercies of his God inspired), that the Gentiles were never left destitute of all *hopes* of a future happiness; a happiness, which, from the foundation of the world, mankind has ever desired and wished for. In the character of a Gentile convert, he then exclaims, "If God be for us, who can be "against us?" *i. e.* if it appears, that God has actually taken us into his covenant, what has any zealous Jew to do, or speak against it?

From these words, I would first draw your attention to the grand object of dependence, for present, as well as future comfort, which you should always have in view.

In the second place, I would recommend universal charity in religious matters, in opposition to the narrow and contracted notions of the Jewish converts who wished to exclude the Gentiles from the benefits of Christ's death, and keep all its advantages to themselves.

It is a maxim of worldly policy, to secure an interest in that power which is most likely to check or promote our advancement in life. It

is the strong, the uniform dictate of prudence, to have an eye always on that quarter, from whence the streams of health and comfort flow.

But why should I point out to you those cautious, those wary steps, which self-love prompts you to take ?

Why should I show the worldling the many arts and contrivances by which a fortune in this world may be gained ? Or why should I describe to the miser the golden idol, which has long captivated his heart, and to which he every day pays sacrifice ?

These scenes of activity, and craft, these methods of " heaping up riches, without knowing who shall gather them," are sufficiently practised in the world, and too often with success.

It is my design, no less than duty, to show, that the art of the politician, the cunning of the man of business, and the wealth of the miser, are all false meteors of happiness, which frequently lead their deluded votaries into real, to certain destruction.

What are all the contrivances of the head, unless supported, and fortified by the goodness of the heart ? What are all the deep laid schemes of human wisdom, independent of the wisdom that cometh from above ? The wheel

of fortune is in perpetual motion, and they, who to day are on the highest pinnacle of power, and glory, may, to-morrow, be sunk in the lowest pit of despair, and misery. They who at present boast in the multitude of their treasures, who pride themselves on the strength, and number of their friends, may (ere another moon) lose their treasures; and then it is ten to one, but their friends will at the same time, take wing, and fly away.

It requires, therefore, no extraordinary degree of philosophy to discover that little support, or affection is to be derived from the *human* assistance; and that we must look for a friend beyond this world, who is able to save us in life, and in death.

This real, this true friend, that I am speaking of, is not far from any of us, "for in him we live, and move, and have our being; he is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways." What a pleasing, what a comfortable reflection is this to a man of virtue and integrity! How does the thought of an Almighty Protector animate him to work out his salvation with resolution, and perseverance! How does the assurance of a friend above, enable him to bear with fortitude, all the troubles, and difficulties here below!



Since no one is so ignorant as to be unacquainted with the loving kindness, and tender mercies of his God, since his goodness, and benevolence, are over all his works; why does the pure flame of religion burn so dimly, and the piety of many grow feeble, and cold? Why does the care, and anxiety of the present state prevent every thought of a future; and when we ought to be wise unto salvation, why are we wise only unto this life? Let me advise you (with that freedom which my situation amongst you justifies,) to think more seriously of these matters; to make religion your chief, your ultimate care, and at all times to secure the favour, and protection of your God, who will never leave, nor forsake you.

Let the young men think of their Creator in that tender period of life, when vice, and debauchery, are calling them from their duty by the false and deceitful bait of pleasure. When they think they stand, let them take particular heed lest they fall into divers temptations. Be not led away by false, and designing friends, to treat religion with scorn. Love and embrace the doctrines of the gospel whilst you are young, and then as you grow up, your ways will be ways of pleasantness, and all your paths peace.

Let every one act in such a manner, as to

have a lasting, and permanent interest in heaven. There, and there alone, must we hope for all the blessings, and comforts we enjoy here below, and for that exceeding, and eternal weight of glory, which shall be revealed hereafter, when faith is swallowed up in vision.

Secondly.—I would now recommend universal charity in religious matters, in opposition to the narrow, and contracted notions of the Jewish converts who wished to exclude the Gentiles from the benefits of Christ's death, and keep all its advantages to themselves.

Serious and melancholy is the reflection, that there has been more blood spilt, under a pretence of serving the cause of religion, than in any other cause whatever. The holy wars (as they were called) give ample, and convincing testimony to this my assertion. Whoever reads a history of those dreadful, those desperate conflicts; whoever views the tide of slaughter which flowed through whole nations and countries; will tremble to consider, that the sacred name of the God of Peace was used as a sanction for the most cruel, the most barbarous outrages.

Is it possible, that a religion which inspires the amiable virtues of love, gentleness, mercy, benevolence, and compassion, should at the same justify malice, revenge, and ill-nature!

Persecution never had, nor ever can have, any real, any true and proper connection with religion. They are as opposite to each other, as light and darkness. The one is peculiar to the angels in heaven; the other resembles that gloomy habitation, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

The Jews being once the chosen people of God, supposed they were always to continue such, without any regard to piety, virtue, or integrity. They looked on themselves as the chosen, the elect of heaven, and on all others as despised and rejected for ever. This savage temper and disposition pervaded their whole conduct; and the real goodness of the gentile convert, was thought far inferior to the pretended sanctity of the Jewish convert. But when the ceremonies of the law (which were but the shadows and types of good things to come), gave way for the appearance of the substance, in the person of Christ, then the gentiles saw themselves in an equal situation with the rest of mankind. They plainly discovered that "God was a spirit, and that they that worship him, must worship in spirit and in truth;" whatever the perverse and obstinate Jew may assert to the contrary. In this humble confidence, in this steady hope of acceptance through the merits of Christ,

provided their conduct was agreeable to their faith, well might they exclaim, "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

'Twere much to be wished that the acrimony and bitterness of the Jew towards the Gentile, prevailed less amongst all ranks and degrees of Christians.

As we are children of the same father, as we are all heirs of the same common salvation, let us love as brethren, "be pitiful, be courteous."

Though the road that leads to eternal life be one and the same to all, the sacrifice and death of Christ, yet the mode of applying that sacrifice to the soul's comfort, is differently used by many.

Let us not quarrel about forms and ceremonies, which have no weight in themselves unless they lead to purity of manners and integrity of heart. Whilst we observe the gross superstition of some, and the rigid bigotry of others, let us not be tempted to persecute the one, or calumniate the other. Let us pray God to bestow on all his creatures, a ray of that heavenly light, which can alone guide their wandering steps into the path that leads to immortal life.

Whilst we enjoy the glorious benefits of revelation, and are members of the true Church of Christ, let us pity those who leave us, but never

draw the sword to compel their return, or force converts to our cause. Our religion speaks for itself. It is dictated by the God of love and peace, and breathes the glad tidings of eternal joy to all those who, from conviction, love and embrace it.

They who differ from us, and think our mode of worship wrong, surely deserve not our ill will. If in essentials we all agree, let us not act with malice and revenge, about matters, which, when made the subject of controversy, serve only to amuse the head, but never to correct or amend the heart.

To conclude. Let us form our judgment of each other, not by the profession of any party, but their *practice*. Let each endeavour to show forth the faith that is in him, by honesty and benevolence; honesty, in his dealings, as a man of business; and benevolence to all, as a disciple of Christ. If this spirit be in us, the spirit to do and to think rightly, we may then be assured that God will be for us, and the hatred or rage of the world can never hurt us.

Know then, my brethren, the things which belong unto your eternal peace. Know, that your whole dependence is to be placed in God, for every earthly or heavenly comfort; and know likewise, that whilst you live in this world, you

are to be charitable and kind to each other. You are to exert the most affectionate friendship for all your brethren in Christ Jesus.

May the God of heaven give us his grace to perform this so necessary a work, and after we have thrown off the burden of the flesh, lead us all to the mansions of joy and felicity. Amen.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power, and glory for evermore.



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## SERMON VI.

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9th Chap. of ST. LUKE, last Verse.

*And Jesus said unto him, no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

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**RELIGION**, which not only implies the true knowledge of God, as far as he has thought proper to reveal himself unto us ; but also teaches us the mode of worship most agreeable to his divine will ; requires, an honest and an active mind. The temporal and eternal blessings, which the gospel offers us, are not to be enjoyed without the regular performance of certain stipulated conditions. A quiet conscience in this world, and a crown of everlasting glory in the world to come, are to be procured only by a life of virtue and piety. Nor is it to be supposed, that the road which leads to heaven, is to be travelled on by us, without thought or concern ; and the end of our journey, the salvation of our

souls, secured, before we have diligently laboured to make our calling and election sure.

During our blessed Saviour's ministry, the opinions of mankind, concerning him and his doctrine, were various and opposite. Some, very wisely and justly, thought him a good man, from the miracles which he wrought, the diseases which he cured, and the salutary and sacred precepts which he delivered. Others, not understanding the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and instigated by the most violent and ill grounded prejudices, looked on him as a mover of sedition. To correct these errors, and to convince all who heard him with a good intention, of the nature and design of his divine mission, was his most anxious wish, his most earnest desire. For this purpose he went about doing good, and embraced all opportunities that presented themselves of informing the ignorant, and confirming the wise. On a certain day, as he was walking with his disciples, a man, who had observed him with some degree of attention and observation, and expected that he would shortly come to great honour and power, said unto him, "Lord I will follow thee, whithersoever thou goest." Supposing, that by commencing his disciple, he should be exalted to some kind of distinction and consequence in this

present life, and share in the greatness and dignity of his royal master. But, his hopes and his expectations were soon frustrated, by our Saviour's reply, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but, the son of man hath not where to lay *his* head;" intimating, that those who followed him, from motives of temporal interest only, would most assuredly be deceived. And when another person was disposed to receive his doctrines, with a view to improve by them, and said, "Lord I will follow thee; but let me first go and bid them farewell which are at home at my house;" as if he had said, Lord, I am convinced of your power and your goodness, and happy shall I be to join your sacred society; but let me first settle my worldly affairs, and take leave of all my relations at home: "Jesus said unto him, no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God;" *i. e.* no man can be a worthy and perfect Christian, who, after he has commenced my disciple, looks back on the vanities and pleasures of this life, and ceases to improve daily in all virtue and godliness of living.

In pursuing our present subject, we shall find that the concerns of *another* life, as well as the concerns of this busy scene, in which we are all

engaged, require diligence and thought. The earth must be properly cultivated, or it will yield us no fruit. The plough will remain useless and indolent, unless forced into action by him who is to guide it. And if the hand which directs this powerful machine become careless and slack, the work will be imperfectly done, and the benefit derived from such impotent and trifling exertions, will be useless and insignificant. The effects that may be produced by well directed labour and industry, are too apparent to need illustration; and the fatal consequences of indolence and inactivity, daily present themselves in the shame and the poverty which they give birth to. They, therefore, who put their hands to the plough, who apply to any business of moment or concern, without a fixed and determined resolution to attend to it, and execute it with all their best skill and ingenuity, must unavoidably ruin themselves in the end. For if we once suffer the follies and the vanities of life to draw us off from duties which *must* be discharged, no work will be done as it ought to be done, and all will be confusion and disorder. If this be true, as it most certainly is, of *temporal* affairs, which require much anxiety, care, and attention, to be regulated properly; we cannot but conclude, that the affairs of another and

better life, must require equal, if not *greater* exertion.

Here, then, the contest begins, between our reason and our passions. We have all put our hands to the spiritual plough, and we are told by our blessed Saviour, that if we look back, we are not fit for the kingdom of heaven.

The ministers of the sacred gospel of Christ are bound to discharge, with sincerity and truth, their important office in teaching the doctrines of eternal salvation, as delivered by their Lord and master. They are to avoid all those worldly pleasures and gratifications which retard them in the progress of their respective duties, lest, after they have preached to others, they themselves should be cast away. The grand object which they should always have in view is the salvation of mankind. The turning of sinners from the errors of their ways, and prevailing on them, by all the powers of persuasion and argument, to walk in newness of life ; not forgetting “ that he who converteth a sinner from the error “ of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and “ hide a multitude of sins.” They must convince all who hear them, that the Lord is merciful and gracious unto all who call upon him faithfully ; that he would not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should repent and live.

And they must never cease to inculcate this important doctrine, that salvation is to be obtained only by faith in Christ. That " God so loved " the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, " to the end, that all who believe in him, should " not perish, but have everlasting life." That, " this is a true saying, and worthy of all men to " be received, that Christ Jesus came into the " world to save sinners." That, if any " man " sin, we have an advocate with the Father, " Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the pro- " pitiation for our sins."

If the ministers of the gospel of Christ thus discharge their duty, and walk circumspectly themselves, giving strength to precept, by the amazing, and generally speaking, successful power of a good example, they may then be said to have put their hands to the plough, and not to have looked back ; and they may hope, with humble confidence in the merits of Christ, to be admitted, as good and faithful servants, into the joy of their Lord.

Having pointed out, though briefly, the sacred office of the ministers of the Gospel, I will next lay before you those duties which the profession of Christianity requires from all those who name the name of Christ. At your baptism, that sacred office, instituted by our blessed Saviour,



who commanded his disciples to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, you all promised “to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps, and vanities, of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. And, at the same time, you promised “to believe all the articles of the Christian faith, and to keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life.”

Thus have you engaged to discharge duties of the utmost consequence to your eternal welfare. Duties which must be performed, and with resolution too, or the performance will be a mockery and an insult. The confession of the mouth must be followed by the obedience of the heart. All promises and engagements, between man and man, are to be observed most religiously; and those which we make to the Almighty on entering the pale of the Church, cannot be violated without the grossest impiety. “*Promise unto the Lord (says the psalmist) and keep it, all ye that are round about him. Bring presents unto him that ought to be feared;*” *i. e.* bring the offering of a pure and contrite heart, to that God whose majesty and whose goodness should excite the highest respect and reverence,

“Renouncing the devil and all his works, the  
“poms, and vanities, of this wicked world,  
“and all the sinful lusts of the flesh,” implies a  
firm and unshaken resolution to give up all the  
insinuating pleasures of sense, which war against  
the soul, and bring it under the absolute dominion  
of unruly and destructive passions. To keep  
your eyes attentively fixed on that treasure in  
heaven, “where neither moth nor rust doth  
“corrupt, and where thieves do not break  
“through nor steal,” as, where the treasure is,  
where the chief object of your wishes and desires  
is, there will your heart be also.

And this exertion in the discharge of your  
baptismal vow, however arduous and difficult it  
may appear, is very practicable. For it would  
be strange if the duties of religion only threw  
such obstructions in your way, as to prevent  
your arriving at that state of perfection to which  
we are called by the voice of Revelation.  
Christian morality, the most pure and refined,  
and free from those errors which ill habits and  
bad customs had occasionally introduced into  
the morality of the heathen world, offers itself  
to your notice, with the strongest force of  
recommendation.

And nothing will more effectually secure the  
uniform observance and regular practice of it,

than a belief in all the “articles of the Christian faith.” To be influenced in our conduct towards each other, by worldly motives and respect, and to act fairly and honestly, because the eye of the public is directed towards us, may so far operate on our minds, as to keep us within the bounds of duty, with a certain degree of decency and propriety: but, if we have no other claim on our obedience to the laws of morality, than the good opinion of mankind, as soon as that can be either deceived or imposed upon, for purposes of what is commonly called self interest, the sandy foundation gives way, and every species of artful villainy will be practised without fear or concern.

Now, a belief “in all the articles of the Christian faith,” (which makes a serious part of that solemn engagement which your godfathers and godmothers entered into in your behalf when you were made members of the Christian Church,) lays so strong a foundation for true morality, that, like the house built upon a rock, though the rains descend, and the floods come, and beat vehemently against it, it will never fall.

A belief in a God, who made the world and all things that are therein; who out of darkness called light, and from a scene of con-

fusion, produced the most regular beauty and order ; who continues to preserve the magnificent fabric which he has formed, and the most minute parts that appeared to his Almighty wisdom necessary to its composition ; who exercises towards all his creatures the most tender affection and concern ; and who would not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should repent and live : a belief I say, in a God who has thus discovered himself to mankind, must give the most lasting support to moral conduct, and prevent its ever accommodating itself to the shifting policy of the world. If we add too, in the next place, a belief in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord, who left the glories of his father's kingdom, and took our nature upon him, agreeably to the sacred voice of prophecy which published his future birth for the salvation of lost man, immediately after the sin of our first parents ; such a wonderful scene of things will open to our view, that we shall be steady in our duty, from a fear of offending God, who is invisible to our mortal eye, but clearly seen with the eye of faith ; from a fear of rendering ineffectual all our Saviour has done for us, in dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification. A belief in a Saviour, will remove every doubt that might otherwise hang on our minds con-

cerning the state of man after death. A state which for ages employed the thoughts and reflections of the wise and the learned, who frequently drew conclusions the most erroneous and absurd. Who, in their reasoning concerning matter and spirit, were frequently carried beyond that sphere of knowledge to which the Deity has confined his creatures, and the limits of which he suffers none of us to pass. But, the gospel of Christ sets us free from all these perplexities, and the grave now has lost its greatest terrors. We believe that the soul and body, those dear and closely united friends, will part at the hour of death; but, we believe also, that they will only part to meet again, “when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality;” and we believe too that they shall live together to all eternity.

To these articles of our faith, it was also promised for us, “that we should keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same, all the days of our life.” That all our actions should be regulated properly, and, according to those divine rules, which teach us to “walk in all the commandments of the Lord, blameless.” That our behaviour in every circumstance, and in every situation, should be such as the doctrines of Christ require, and our

our duty demands from us. And that the performance of our several duties should be uniform and constant ; not shifting with the uncertain blast of humour and caprice ; but steady and unchangeable during the whole course of our lives !

In this most perfect and correct sense of duty, you have put your hands to the plough, and nothing must ever prevail on you to look back, if you would be fit for the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, there is little fear that any of us shall look back, or be materially entangled with the affairs of this world, if we do but exert ourselves in acquiring a true knowledge of our Christian duty. It is a state of ignorance, that is most fatal to the repose and comfort of our souls. It is being placed in the midst of the light of divine truth, and yet preferring the works of darkness. A state similar to that of Chorazin and Bethsaida, over which our blessed Saviour pronounced this awful denunciation : “ Woe unto thee Chorazin ! woe unto thee Bethsaida ! “ for, if the mighty works that have been done “ in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, “ they would have repented long ago in sackcloth “ and ashes.” So that having opportunities of knowing our duty, and through indolence or carelessness neglecting to embrace those oppor-



tunities, is a sin, in the eye of the Almighty, of the greatest magnitude. A sin that will render us obnoxious to future punishment, for not improving those talents that were committed to our charge.

To conclude.—Let us, then, work out our salvation with fear and trembling, whilst it is called to day ; whilst our faculties are equal to the task ; as the night of death will soon come, when none of us can work. Let us remember that the soul is to be provided for as well as the body, and that the real value of one is far beyond that of the other ; since the body is mortal, and the soul immortal. The provision therefore that we make for both, must be according to their respective merits. The affairs of our present uncertain existence, require, most assuredly, our care and attention ; but not to such an extravagant degree, as to exclude our regard for that better part, which cannot be taken from us. To discharge these several duties as we ought, is the best proof of our wisdom, and of our goodness. If our intentions are just, our diligence correct, and our faith properly actuated by a uniform and regular practice, we shall be received at the day of judgment, with this comfortable declaration, “ Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power, and glory, both now and for evermore.

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## SERMON VII.

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PSALM 31.—Last Verse.

*Be strong, and he shall establish your heart, all ye that put your trust in the Lord.*

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**T**O be well assured that you are free agents, and responsible creatures, is the best, and strongest preservative against sin. If you reflect with any degree of seriousness, and attention, on your present state of existence, you will find that this world is preparatory to a better; that you are placed here for a certain given time, to act in the important character of a rational being; and when “this your earthly tabernacle is dissolved,” that you are to give an account of your conduct before an almighty Judge, “who will render unto every one according to his works.” These sentiments religion has always invariably inspired. These sentiments have ever met with the approbation of nature and reason, who unite in connecting the

interests of both worlds, and making our future happiness depend on our present conduct.

It is true, clouds and darkness have sometimes obscured that light, which the Creator of the universe gave his creatures to guide them in the path of piety and virtue. It is true that many philosophers, soaring into the airy regions of metaphysics, have greatly injured the cause they meant to support. But still, the truth prevailed; and though mixed with error, has continued to flow through all nations of the habitable world.

When we view mankind possessing these innate sentiments; when we see them occasionally degenerate, and become obscure through the false reasonings of some, and the depravity of others, how ought we to rejoice, and exult under the glorious light of revelation! How ought we to offer up our praise and thanksgiving for that full and complete information, concerning every moral and divine truth, which it has pleased the father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, to bestow upon us!

In the present state of things, our duty is so clearly pointed out in all its respective branches, that nothing short of absolute infatuation can lead us astray. If we turn aside from the plain path of innocence, and virtue, to walk in the

beaten track of vice, and infamy, the error must proceed from the corruption of the heart, not from the darkness of the mind. No man can now complain of the rigour, or severity of the laws, which are to regulate his actions. No rites, no ceremonies, are exacted as essentially necessary to salvation, but such as evidently tend to remind us, of our gratitude towards God, and our love towards each other.

Thus situated, the troubles, and perplexities of life, (which often overwhelm weak and uninformed minds) lose half their weight. The storms of adversity may beat furiously on the house of a just and good man; but, as it is founded on a rock, it will never fall. In all conflicts with distress, and misery, the pious soul hears the comfortable exhortation of the psalmist in every breeze, "Be strong, and he shall establish your heart, all ye that put your trust in the Lord," *i. e.* in other words, be strong in faith and good works, all ye that look up to heaven for protection, and the Almighty will send his holy spirit to comfort, and strengthen your hearts, in every trial of your constancy, and goodness.

That we receive this divine help to support us in the time of need, is evident from many passages in scripture, as well as from daily ex-

perience. What, but the strength of a well-grounded faith, prompted Abraham to make the necessary preparations for the sacrifice of his son? How was it that the prophet Daniel braved the terrors of persecution, and all the horrors of immediate death, to which his enraged enemies exposed him? To what shall we ascribe his firmness, his resolution, his courage? Not to any human art, or magic, but to that secret, and invisible power, which cometh down from the father of lights, and ever protects the virtuous, and the good.

Nebucadnezzar's burning fiery furnace creates neither terror, nor dismay, in the minds of those whose hearts are firmly attached to the interest of religion; and who would rather die, than renounce their faith. The tyrant may rage, and the flames ascend, but the servants of God are safe, and unhurt amidst the violence of so devouring an element.

If these examples of firmness, and constancy in the sacred cause of virtue, and piety, excite your admiration; trace for a moment the fortitude, and resolution of the first preachers of the gospel, and you will find, that we have every reason to depend on God alone for strength, in the hour of misery, and distress.

Observe the manly, and resolute conduct of



St. Stephen! Hear the base, the shameful charges brought against him, to shake his integrity, and to undermine his virtue; and then see the divine complacency, and angelic appearance of that countenance, which innocence, protected from above, always wears to the astonishment of the wicked, and malicious. What variety of difficulties, and dangers were offered to retard St. Peter, and St. John, in their work of love! Punishments the most severe, and all the gloomy horrors of a prison, were the rewards of their active benevolence towards the benighted sons of men. The former they bear without a sigh, without a murmur; from the dreary habitation of the latter, they are freed by an angel from heaven. These good men found their trust in God crowned with success, and all the threats, and terrors of the world ineffectual towards shaking that heart which has the Almighty for its supporter.

Many examples may be produced from the sacred volume which opens to our view the future expectations of mankind, by which we learn, that confidence in our Creator is the only source of present safety, and future happiness. Those I have mentioned will, I trust, be sufficient to animate your zeal in the cause of religion, and neglected virtue.

Let us now turn our eyes on the scenes which immediately open to our view. Let us survey mankind in those severe conflicts which have at times engaged every feeling heart, and we shall find the Deity still active in the service of his suffering creatures.

We are told by the holy psalmist, that our heavenly Father “is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways;” and we must all have experienced so much of his divine protection, as to subscribe to the sentiment. Who is there that has laboured under the tortures of agonizing pain, and not felt those tortures mitigated by a holy trust in Him, who suffers heaviness to endure for a night, but comforts us with joy again in the morning? Who is so far lost to every sense of gratitude and love, as not to remember the many exhilarating moments which have cheered his heart in the bitter season of sorrow and distress? Many rise early, late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness through the whole period of their lives, but still an Almighty Friend is ever with them, and whilst they preserve their integrity, they are more than happy, possessing that peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

That all-good and all-gracious Being, who would not suffer the cruse of oil to fail, nor the

barrel of meal to waste, will ever be a father to the fatherless, and defend the cause of the widow. He who feedeth the young ravens that call upon him, and careth for the most minute, and insignificant of his creatures, will at all times be ready and willing to defend and preserve those who obey his laws, and truly trust in him.

Does the storm of adversity beat hard upon you? Does the world frown upon your honest endeavours after a livelihood? Neither the one, nor the other, can materially injure your interest, if you are but good; and in every thought, word, and action, a lover of your God. He has himself promised that he will never leave, nor forsake those who call on him faithfully, *i. e.* those, who with a pure heart, believe, and practise the Gospel of Christ. Thus acting, though an host of men should rise up against you, yet need not your hearts be afraid. Though you should walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet you need not fear the least evil; for his rod, and his staff, would always support you. Under the guidance of your heavenly friend, you have nothing to fear from the perplexities, or cares of *this* world; and much to expect from the constant exercise of each Christian virtue, in the *next*.

“ O! how great (exclaims the Psalmist) how

“ great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up  
“ for them that fear thee ; which thou hast  
“ wrought for them that trust in thee, before the  
“ sons of men !” O love the Lord, all ye his  
saints, for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and  
heareth all those that call upon him ; and then,  
with a degree of transport, he exclaims, “ Be  
“ of good courage, or strong, and he shall esta-  
“ blish your heart, all ye that put your trust in  
“ the Lord.”

After what has been said, who will think so  
meanly of religion, as to sacrifice every thing to  
the interest of the present state ? Who will be  
so far an enemy to himself, as to be anxious for  
temporal comforts, and forget the one thing  
needful, those solid, those lasting comforts,  
which God only can bestow, and which he has  
declared he will bestow only on the deserving.  
Dare then to be what you profess ; dare to shew  
in your conduct those refined, those exemplary  
virtues, which may evince the purity “ of your  
“ minds, and the foundation of your hopes.”  
Be assured no man trusts in God, who makes a  
deity of his pleasures, or his wealth. Covetous-  
ness is justly named idolatry, as it engages the  
whole attention, and turns every thought toward  
riches, which though they may do many, and  
great things here below, will never pass current

above. The dominion of pleasure is, and ever has been, so universal, and extensive, that I need not mention the altars that are erected to her honour, or the votaries which every day do her service. Such actions are beneath the dignity of a rational creature, and an insult offered that being who is of purer eyes, than to behold iniquity without the utmost abhorrence, and displeasure. Uniformity of conduct is the best proof of a clear head, and an honest heart. You must be as exemplary at home, as you are abroad. Your private behaviour to your relatives, and dependants, must correspond with those outward actions which are performed before the world. Then only you may be said to trust in God, when, by an honest industry, and active benevolence, you do your best to provide for your respective families, and serve your fellow creatures; leaving the event of your labour to him, who will ultimately make every thing work together for good, to all those who walk uprightly.

To conclude.—As we are fully assured, the Almighty is not an unconcerned spectator of our actions; as all our thoughts are known to him, in and through whom we move, and have our being; let us cultivate that proper, that true sense of our duty as rational creatures, which

may make us rise unto salvation. This is the only true wisdom ; the wisdom of the world is false, and deceitful ; and like a delusive meteor, will ever lead us astray. If we were to live here for ever, it would be worth our while to set the highest value on the comforts, and conveniencies of the present state ; but, as we have no abiding city here below, let us raise our affections to that heavenly Canaan, where we may taste of joy and bliss which never cloy, never end. Let us always keep in view those immortal regions of future glory which are to reward our labours of fidelity, and constancy ; and then we shall never sink under the distresses of the present life, aided by his power, who will be our guide unto death ; and after that awful debt is paid, will open for us (through the satisfactory merits of his son) the gates of everlasting life.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and power, for evermore.



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## SERMON VIII.

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ST. PAUL'S 2d EPISTLE to TIMOTHY,  
Chap. 3.—Verse 7.

*Ever learning, and never able to come to the  
knowledge of the truth.*

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**T**HERE is nothing which we ought more to guard against than the admission of error into our moral or religious conduct. The strongest poison which can be infused into any liquor we drink, will not more endanger the health of our bodies, than pernicious and false principles will the peace and integrity of our minds. “Take heed *how* ye hear,” was a caution given by our blessed Saviour to many who listened with careless attention to *his* doctrine; but swallowed with a *greedy* appetite, and *keen* relish, the absurd traditions of the *elders*. It is not, perhaps, the atural wish, or anxious desire, of any set of

men to pursue a wrong path, *knowing* it to be such; but the fault is, they take not sufficient pains to learn the right way, wherein they ought to walk. *This, and this only*, is the real and true source of all the mischief which hath broken in upon the morality and religion of the world, from the first publication of Christianity to the present day.

As the *truth* of which the apostle is speaking, is *evangelical truth*, we shall discover, (if our investigation be rightly conducted), the causes which retarded, and sometimes obstructed, its reception; and when we become acquainted with the *cause*, we shall cease to wonder at the *effect*, and may (if we would be wise unto salvation) greatly profit by the inquiry.

The predictions of our Saviour concerning the disorders, and disturbances, which would be introduced by crafty and designing men, to check the progress of the gospel, appear to have made a deep impression on the mind of St. Paul from the time of his conversion; and feeling, as he ever did afterwards, his own unworthiness, in having persecuted the Church of Christ, though he did it ignorantly, in unbelief, he was particularly desirous of guarding others against the artful sophistry, and plausible delusions, of all those who lie in wait to deceive the unthinking,

and the unwearied. For this purpose he gives Timothy a sketch, but very masterly coloured, of the tribe of teachers who assumed an authority in the court of conscience, to which they had no legal claim; and who exercised a spiritual dominion over the souls of their hearers, which often terminated in their present and future misery and destruction.

“*Perilous* times shall come,” (says the inspired apostle) “for men shall be lovers of their own selves, boasters, unholy, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a *form* of godliness, but denying the *power* thereof; from such turn away.”

The several qualities which compose these characters, shew us how unfit they were to instruct others; and how impossible it was for the blind to lead the blind, without the most fatal consequences ensuing. To unhinge those ties which connect us to each other in a civil capacity; and to take off the fetters from that necessary restraint which keeps all within the proper bounds of duty; and to give a loose rein to pleasure, and to that strange and wild liberty which allows every one to do what seemeth right in his own eyes; must render these novel and

factious teachers the most severe and bitter enemies to social harmony and peace.

To give their doctrine, base and corrupt as it was, as good an appearance as possible, they assumed the dress of religion, and with a serious and composed countenance, put on "the *form* of godliness, but denied the *power* thereof."

The real merit which arises from conscious virtue, they little regarded; and if they could but so far succeed as to *appear* holy, they were very indifferent as to the *possession* of true piety.

Thus prepared to disseminate the most vicious and corrupt principles, the apostle adds, "they creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts. Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Thus we see the activity of their zeal, and the perseverance they use to gain converts to their party; and we at the same time have a view of the pupils educated in these depraved seminaries, whose success has always been in proportion to the art made use of to alienate the affections of their hearers from the Church of Christ. And under such tuition, however active or inquisitive the mind might be, it was not possible "to come to the knowledge of the truth." Every sect, anxious to establish its

own system on the most secure and firm basis, would render its doctrines as palatable as possible, and mixing an indulgence of the appetities with the common duties of religion, would artfully endeavour to *reconcile* virtue and vice.

Some would loudly declaim in favor of useless ceremonies, and religious observances, placing the whole merit of christianity in vain and unmeaning rites, which contribute not at all to the welfare of the soul, but to a ridiculous mortification of the body.

Others, with an apparent attachment to a strong and resolute faith, would give it more force, and a greater degree of power, than it ever possessed by any scriptural authority whatever ; a power, which enabled its votaries, under its particular sanction, to *act* as they thought proper. The enemy of mankind has reaped a most abundant harvest from this pernicious heresy, which of late years hath been industriously sowing *tares* among the good *wheat*.

A third class, rejecting all ceremonies, and *slighting*, nay, absolutely *opposing* a saving faith in Christ, rests all its hopes and expectations on a severe and rigid morality ; and claims admittance into the joys of heaven by its *own* good works. This sect, though not so injurious to society as the former, is grossly mistaken as to

its object: for, if we were able to secure our salvation by any works which we have already done, or could hereafter do, without any supernatural assistance or help, the redemption wrought for us by our blessed Saviour would appear an *useless* display of Almighty love and power.

From such contaminated sources, what impure streams must always flow! And whoever drinks of so foul and so muddy a current, must, in time, lose all relish for the real and true springs of eternal health and comfort.

Wandering in these mazes, and prompted by the easy and short rule which is to regulate their conduct, and secure their future acceptance, thousands are led captive by the ministers of sin; and though with "itching ears they are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine; and though they are ever learning, they are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

The *residence* of evangelical truth is only to be found in the Church of Christ; and whoever seeks for it in any other place, will grasp at a shadow, and lose the substance. All who *separate* the laws of christianity, and, selecting a part only for their attention and regard, are totally indifferent as to the rest; and all who suppose a *partial* obedience will answer their



purpose ; or that they may put whatever construction they please on its most mysterious doctrines, have erred from the faith of Christ, and must abide the fatal consequence.

The voice of God, is the voice of truth, and always to be heard in his holy temple ; where a reasonable service is paid him by his true worshippers ; where the power and love of the Creator ; the tender mercy, and loving kindness of the Redeemer ; and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, are invariably inculcated and enforced on the pious and well disposed minds of all true and sincere christians. And we must not omit adding, where every thing that is righteous, and good, and just, and honourable, is for ever taught, and by arguments the most conclusive, zealously recommended.

In such a Church we may seek, and find, we may knock, and it shall be opened to us ; and the light of *divine truth* (if we will but compare spiritual things with spiritual) will preserve us from error, and lead us into the path of everlasting life. “ But, evil men and seducers, shall wax worse, and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” The apostle, though perfectly satisfied in his own mind that Timothy would in all things *obey*, and by his *example recommend* the virtues of the gospel, yet, from his sincere

love of *truth*, and the violent opposition which he saw would arise against it, could not refrain from this warm and most powerful exhortation, “*Continue* thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a *child* thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ *Jesus.*”

The affection which discovers itself in these sentiments, and the early instruction in religious principles, which it was the good fortune of Timothy to receive from his near relations, shew the feeling heart of the *apostle*, and the love of truth, which, from the earliest period, had taken possession of the heart of this *pious disciple*.

Nor can we wonder at St. Paul's more than common zeal in the sacred cause, since, in his own language, “all scripture is given by inspiration of God;” not the mere result of human ingenuity and skill; but the effusions of that holy spirit by whom the prophets spake as they were moved: not the enthusiastic rant of those ungovernable and frantic orators, who under the veil of religion open the door to licentiousness; and whilst they recommend to their hearers to take up the cross, are very indifferent as to the

moral character that accompanies it. This is not the mode St. Paul points out to us of learning the way of God in *truth*. This may be worldly policy ; but it is not christianity. *Evangelical truth*, scorning to accommodate its principles to the shifting vanities and capricious follies of weak and sinful mortals, is “ profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ;” and all this, with views the most noble and glorious, “ that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

As we see there is but one road that leads to saving truth, and that road is plain, and open to all ; and as we discover a variety of errors, into which (from an evil heart of unbelief) many have imprudently, and rashly hurried themselves ; we shall do well to consider how much we have at stake in every contest between virtue, and vice ; religion, and passion. As we are none of us tempted beyond what we are able to bear, our failings will very justly be imputed to our own want of firmness, and resolution ; and if we fall in the combat, the disgrace, and the punishment will be as inevitable, as deserved.

If we *neglect* the perusal of those oracles of divine truth, which contain the ground of our present and future hopes, we shall in vain seek

for support in the day of trouble, and affliction, from any other system, that may be offered us. “ Without controversy, says the apostle, great “ is the mystery of godliness ; God was manifest “ in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of “ angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed “ on in the world, received up into glory.” In these sentiments, the apostle embraces the manifold advantages we have gained by the incarnation, and satisfaction of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the great benefit derived from his doctrines, and his glorious ascension into heaven.

Be it then our anxious care, and our constant study to seek for *truth* at the fountain head of all *truth*, the sacred word of God. In every other science, no one is so weak, or so foolish to expect proficiency, or success, without previous labour, and diligence. The mysteries of any art do not open themselves of their own accord to the comprehension of those who are desirous of practising them : nor is it a matter of indifference to the student from what source he draws his information. All are ambitious to excel in what they undertake, and by the soundness of their knowledge, and correctness of their skill, endeavour to establish their fame, and ensure success.

If this be the case in matters of a temporal concern, and where error is most cautiously avoided; how very careful ought we to be in all spiritual concerns, lest we make shipwreck of our salvation! To suppose all religions equally good, and to give to each, the same degree of credit, will be exposing ourselves to the delusions of every artful deceiver, which I have endeavoured to *prove* in what I have advanced.

To conclude.—Let us all listen to, and obey the call of our blessed Redeemer, who is the *way*, and the *truth*, and the *life*, and who thus affectionately draws us to him, “Come unto *me*,  
“all ye that travail, 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.  
“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Till we arrive at this point of knowledge, all other knowledge is but vain. And when we have once tasted the sweets of religious truth, and shewn forth in our daily actions, the fruits of good living, we may look on ourselves as the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed as is most due, all honour, and praise, and glory, for ever and ever.

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## SERMON IX.

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ST. PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.—Chap. 4th.—Verse 7th.

*Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*

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**A SENSE** of our own unworthiness in the sight of God, and of our weakness, and numberless imperfections, in the discharge of the several duties required of us, will prevent us from thinking more highly of ourselves, than we ought. Pride, and conceit, are the offsprings of a very narrow mind, which foolishly imputes to its own strength, those abilities, which are derived from a superior power; and arrogantly claims esteem, and respect, for the exercise of extraordinary faculties, independently of that



great, and first cause from whom alone descendeth every good, and every perfect gift. St. Paul, having preached the gospel with great success at Corinth; and turned many from the darkness of heathenism, to the clear and pure light of Christianity; was much hurt to find, that strange notions had crept in among them, subversive of the true doctrines of Christ. Humility, and Christian charity, were banished from the minds of those who presumed to teach others their duty; and a silly vanity, and an ostentatious display of useless philosophy, took place of solid sense, and sound argument. These mighty pretenders, treated the apostle who had converted the Corinthians from their former vices, with great neglect; and seemed desirous of gaining the admiration, and applause of those disciples, at the *expence* of St. Paul, “ who in Christ Jesus, had begotten them, through the gospel.” Such behaviour, from those who were far inferior to the great, and good apostle; and such an opinion of their own sufficiency, without considering to whom they were really indebted for it, drew from St. Paul the following warm, and serious address, “ who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”

To point out to them the weakness, and the absurdity of their conduct; and at the same time supposing, that they really possessed such gifts, and endowments, as exceeded his own; he demands of them, “who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?” Are the powers, and the learning you boast of, the effects of human skill and ingenuity alone? Can the imperfect efforts of frail man, by his own exertions, lead him to the acquisition of superior knowledge, and wisdom? If you are what you profess yourselves to be, men of extraordinary abilities, did you not receive them from the same holy spirit, that gave mine to me? And admitting that the arguments of the apostle had a proper influence on their minds, he adds, “now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” Why are you puffed up with vanity and pride, which ill become those, who have nothing to boast of? Those who have every possible acknowledgement to make to the author, and giver of all blessings, for the mercies vouchsafed unto them; but not the least pretence whatever, for imputing any merit to themselves.

It seems strange, and most extraordinary, that when divine favours have been conferred on men for the promotion of piety and virtue,

any should be found so ungrateful as to forget the original source of them. Such, however, was the case among those to whom St. Paul directed his reproof. And it was the sincere and anxious wish of his heart to correct a conduct so erroneous. Indeed, if we ever lose sight of the superintending care and providence of God, and suffer his omniscience and omnipresence to escape us, it is impossible to say into what gross follies and absurdities we may any of us rush. For, let a person once prevail on himself to think, that all he does proceeds from his own innate wisdom and foresight, and that he stands in no need of divine help, he will become the most abject slave of the most ridiculous vanity. It is this opinion that has occasioned all the confusion and misery which disturbs the peace and happiness of mankind; which opens the flood-gates of iniquity, and lets loose a mighty torrent that bears down all before it.

Now, if the powers of the mind, by which we are enabled to reflect on the consequences of actions, and to regulate our conduct with respect to the civil and social duties of life; and if a profound skill in the sciences, or indeed in the various branches of trade and commerce, be the sole gift of our Heavenly Father, we must

naturally conclude, that our *bodily*, as well as our *mental* strength, is derived from the same divine source ; and that *both blessings*, for most assuredly such they are, call for our sincerest thanks and most humble acknowledgements. To be convinced of this important truth, and to act on all occasions agreeably to that conviction, will be an evident proof of the soundness of our judgement, and of the goodness of our hearts. Whilst an opposite conduct, or the supposition, fondly and foolishly entertained, that we are sufficient of ourselves to do any thing as of ourselves, will expose us to the just censure of all those who think rationally and act wisely. But the censure of men is of small moment and concern, in an affair of the utmost consequence to our *eternal* welfare. If we are blind to the repeated mercies of God ; if we confide in our own strength, independently of the divine help ; and if we exclaim, in the haughty and imperious language of the proud and self-conceited, “ mine own hand hath saved me,” we shall subject ourselves to the severe and just judgment of an offended God. The transition from joy to sorrow, and from ease and plenty to misery and poverty, is frequently more rapid than we are aware of. Nor is human sagacity, with all its artifice and cunning, able to secure us against

the accidents and the misfortunes of life. A good man, therefore, will seriously reflect on the mutability of circumstances and situations in this world; and he will often call to his remembrance these strong expressions of holy David—  
“ In my prosperity, I said, I shall never be  
“ moved; thou, Lord, of thy favour, hast made  
“ my hill so strong.” Thou didst hide thy face from me, and I was troubled. David, after his success against his enemies, was *hailed* by the acclamations of the people, and enjoyed a glorious triumph over an insolent and vanquished foe: but future troubles awaited him, and the scene of joy and triumph was soon changed to one of sorrow and mourning. That the same Almighty Power, which confers blessings, can, when he shall think proper, remove those blessings, is too evident to admit of the least doubt; and of this awful truth the humble and pious Job was fully sensible, when, in the midst of his deep and severe affliction, he thus resigned himself to the sovereign will of his Heavenly Father—“ The Lord gave,  
“ and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be  
“ the name of the Lord.” This singular and extraordinary person appears to have *felt* all that dependence on a superior being which St. Paul inculcates in his epistle to the Corinthians.

He *differed* from *others* in his worldly circumstances and advantages, for “ he was the greatest “ of all the men of the East;” and his prosperity, so far from making him *forget* the author of it, or impute his affluence to his own abilities, led him to a life of exemplary virtue and holiness; “ for “ he was perfect and upright, and one that “ feared God and eschewed evil.”

Do any of us, then, at present, enjoy a comfortable share of health, by which we are enabled to discharge the duties of our respective situations, whilst others are groaning on the bed of sickness, with no other companions than those sad ones, pain, and sorrow, and trouble? Do any of us possess that complete strength of body which, regularly exerted, proves the source of of happiness to ourselves, and to those whose support depend on our industry and labour; at the same time that thousands are incapable, through some defect or weakness in their limbs, of rendering the least service to their distressed families? *Such difference in health and in strength*, wherever it exists, should warm the heart with the most lively gratitude and praise; and indeed the voice of praise and of gratitude would never cease to be heard in the temple of God, if our condition in life were properly and frequently investigated; but it is much to be



feared, and much to be regretted, that that is very seldom done as it ought to be: I mean, that our well-being in life is not traced to the promoter of it, with that sincerity and faithfulness that the subject requires; and that those who receive from Heaven health, and strength, and abilities, glory as if they had not received them, glory in the efforts of that ingenuity which, if they thought justly, ought rather to make them humble than vain; “for what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?”

If it be asked, how does it *appear* that men often glory in their *own* powers and exertions, the answer will be easy and obvious—all those who believe in a God and a Saviour, the creator and the redeemer of mankind, will be studious of paying that religious homage and veneration which are required at their hands; and where we find a reluctance, or unwillingness, in the performance of necessary and most essential duties, we are unavoidably led to conclude that more trust is placed in the arm of flesh than in the arm of God, and that the creature presumes to oppose the revealed will of the Creator, and to act in direct opposition to the holy doctrines and positive commands of the Saviour of the

world. That self-consequence, and self-sufficiency, will lead to this vain glory and presumption, appeared very evident to St. Paul, who, whilst he reproveth the Corinthians for thinking more of themselves than of the powers which they had received, exclaims, with honest warmth and sincere zeal in the cause of Christianity—  
“ Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us; and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.” Such a fatal effect easy circumstances and successful designs often produce, when the mind is not well informed, and the heart influenced by what is right and proper. So sensible was Agur of the fallacy of wealth, and the danger that too often attends those who *thrive* in the world, that he made it his earnest and particular prayer to God, that he would remove far from him vanity and lies, and by no means give him riches; and he gives this reason for his humble petition to his maker, “ Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?” A state of affluence appeared to Agur a state of extreme peril, being so often apt to draw men from the consideration of that almighty being, who “ giveth us richly all things to enjoy :” strange ingratitude this, that we should forget our only friend and benefactor, at the very season when

he is pouring his benefits upon us, and when our hearts ought to expand in the most lively transports of adoration and praise. Our blessed Saviour himself, during his ministry on earth, warned all his hearers against too great confidence in themselves and their possessions, which he foresaw would beget a carelessness and indifference with respect to virtue and religion; and to point out to them the great hazard of *receiving* blessings from Heaven, and of *forgetting* from whom they are *received*, he says, “Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation;—woe unto you that are full for ye shall hunger;—woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep.” Not that riches of themselves, or by any secret and irresistible power, compel men to be sinful; but producing a state of independence, they frequently bring on a languid and indolent disposition with respect to the concerns of a future state; and that disposition, by degrees, gaining power and strength, men are too often prone, in the fulness of their plenty, to *forget* the God who made them to *differ* from *others*, by placing their habitation amidst scenes of real comfort. These are the rich whom our Saviour mentions as having received their consolation; they lose sight of the *foundation* of their wealth, employ it

to ill purposes, and perish for want of gratitude to the giver, and for abuse in the distribution of it.

Let us, then, shun the dreadful and horrid gulph that has proved fatal to thousands. It cannot be, that human actions are ever left to the wild direction of chance; or that we may on all occasions steer our course with *safety*, according as fancy or a perverted judgment shall influence us. There must be a right road, and there must be a wrong; as we take one, or the other, our happiness or misery will be the sure and infallible consequence.

After what has been said on the subject before us, we can stand in no need of arguments to prove that we have all received blessings at the hands of God;—health, strength, riches, power, honours, and a variety of gifts, are distributed amongst the sons of men by the bountiful mercy of Providence: we each of us best know our own peculiar benefits, and having *received*, we are not to glory as if we had *not received*; as if we were more indebted to our own industry than to the favour of Heaven for what we possess, and what we enjoy. This is the sum and substance of the whole; and to correct this error, where it exists, is a duty becoming a good man and a sincere Christian.

To conclude.—It is our bounden duty, and our true interest, to lose no opportunity that offers of shewing our dependence on God, by our humility and our gratitude;—humility will correct all those vices which, like noisome weeds, spring up in our minds, and choke the seeds of virtue and goodness; whilst gratitude will open our hearts in prayer, and in praise to the bountiful giver of all earthly comfort and prosperity. To cultivate this pious temper of mind, and to render it effectual in the promotion of our everlasting peace and happiness, we must discover, by our actions, the real sentiments of our hearts: and though private prayer, in our own closets, when the eye of the world is removed from us, be a duty incumbent on us all, after the example of our blessed Saviour, who frequently *retired* to pray; yet we are to acknowledge our daily and hourly support, which we receive from heaven, by the most public acts of devotion and praise. Each of us, in the words of the holy Psalmist, should say—“ I will declare thy name  
“ unto my brethren; in the midst of the congrega-  
“ tion will I praise thee.” And to stimulate our gratitude and our zeal in this, so necessary a duty, let us imprint deeply on our hearts the declaration of the Almighty, by his holy prophet, “ He that honoureth me, I will honour; and he  
“ that despiseth me, shall be lightly esteemed.”

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and power, both now and for evermore.



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## SERMON X.

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FIRST ST. PETER.—3d Chap. 15th Verse.

*Be ready always to give an answer to every man  
(that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in  
you) with meekness and fear.*

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**AS** you are surrounded on all sides with deists, who, boasting of the sufficiency of nature and reason, would exclude the necessity of revelation; you would do well to be fully assured of those sacred truths on which you build your faith, a faith which carries your expectations far beyond the narrow confines of this world, and opens to to your astonished view scenes of immortal bliss and glory; purchased by the merits, and revealed by the doctrines of a crucified Saviour. You cannot view with unconcern and indifference the many attacks that have been made to shake the foundation of that holy religion, which Christ sealed with his own blood, and in confirmation

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of which his apostles smiled at persecution and suffered martyrdom.

It is your duty to examine into the nature and design of that system of divine truths in which you have been educated: after a serious and proper investigation of the several parts which compose that wonderful, that amazing scheme, the redemption of man, it is your interest to follow wherever a voice from heaven shall call you.

Without this attention, in your enquiries after religious truth, you will most assuredly be led astray by enthusiasm and zeal, without knowledge. I need not describe to you the confusion and misery into which a superficial study of divinity may sometimes throw you—I need not urge the incapacity of the illiterate to teach others, or point out the weak, the feeble resources from which alone they must draw strength and comfort to support themselves in the day of trial. The folly and madness which spring from misguided zeal, and ignorance of the true principles of Christianity, are fully displayed in the history of the reformation: that important period gives you an insight into the actions of men, and shews you how liable they are to be deluded by every pretender to inspiration, and how prone to be led astray by “every wind of

“ doctrine;”—the mind being unsettled, and having no fixed and uniform rule of action, becomes an easy prey to those who have art and cunning enough to veil their interested designs under the plausible semblance of purity and virtue. But if with a manly fairness and resolution you search the Scriptures, and make religion your serious study and concern, then, on the day of trial and distress, you will be able to withstand all the allurements of temptation which the adversaries of our faith may throw in your way; then you will be always ready to give an answer (to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you,) with *meekness* and *fear*, (*i. e.*) with prudence, modesty, and humility.

As you are all candidates for heavenly bliss, and hope (after the various troubles of this world are ended) to live in joy and comfort above, with those dear friends who are gone before you; how necessary is the conduct which I am pointing out to be pursued, in order to secure those incalculable blessings, and make your calling and election sure!

Shall the arts and sciences be cultivated with unremitting diligence and attention, and religion alone have the least share of your trouble and concern? Shall perfection in the former be the

grand, the sole object of your regard, and the latter be totally neglected and despised? To a reflecting mind (whose views are not confined to this spot of earth, which we at present inhabit,) the impropriety of such behaviour will immediately appear. To those who wish not only to live comfortably in this life, but to enjoy eternal happiness in the next, religious knowledge will ever be esteemed as of the first consequence, since it secures us peace of mind *here*, and the favour of God hereafter.

Seek, then, for that pearl of inestimable value, revealed truth; and when you have found it, keep it, reverence it, defend it: the creation and redemption of man are subjects which must excite your wonder and astonishment; but, yet, awful as these subjects are, it has pleased the Almighty, in part, to reveal them to us;—what his infinite wisdom has thought proper to discover to his creatures, they are bound by every tie of duty and gratitude to receive with thankfulness;—what he has been pleased to hide from your sight, as a means of exercising your faith, you are to reverence with a religious and godly fear, relying on his mercy and goodness, that nothing is concealed from his true servants which (in the present state of things) it would be their interest to know.

Thus disposed, you will peruse, with much pleasure and advantage, those sacred pages which contain the grounds of your present and future expectations; but, lest pride and vanity should have too great influence on your minds, always remember that many things may be above your reason, which are not contrary to it. Let humility accompany every thought and every action, when the works of the Deity are the objects of inquiry, “lest haply you be found even “to fight against God.”

The situation of man, in his original state of innocence, when he was formed after the image of his Creator, and the introduction of misery and death, as the fatal consequence of his unhappy fall, will furnish ample matter for the most serious reflection. If so large a body of light as could be wished for is not thrown on this subject, yet a sufficient portion of it is afforded us, by which we are enabled (in the infancy of the world,) to trace the merciful goodness of the Almighty towards the children of men.

Here the deist of the present day will oppose his strange, his wild hypothesis; he will boldly deny an original state of innocence, and affirm that man was formed that poor, frail, and imperfect creature we now see and know him to be.

Strange reasoning this! As if there was more difficulty in allowing, that man was at first made pure, and upright, from which by transgression he fell; than in granting, that an all-gracious, good, and wise God, should form him from the beginning, that inconsistent being, which our own hearts discover him to be.

The early promise of a Redeemer will next engage your attention. And in tracing the particulars of this interesting part of scripture, you will find such a chain of evidence, as cannot fail giving you the strongest conviction. You will peruse the different prophecies of the *old*, and observe their regular and exact completion in the *new* testament. You will have too the strongest testimony of heathen writers, to support a doctrine which is the basis of our faith, and the rock of our salvation.

But, exclaims the theist, there was no need of a Saviour. Morality was taught in as great perfection, and purity, *before*, as *since* the publication of the gospel. And it is inconsistent with the wisdom and justice of God, to punish one man, for the sins of another. We may readily grant, that a new system of morals was little wanted at the time when our Saviour made his appearance. Many of the admired writers of antiquity, Xenophon, Aristotle, and Plato,



have furnished us with a system of ethics, very little short of perfection, In the reign of Augustus, arts and civility generally prevailed within the compass of the Roman Empire ; and what was deficient in the writings of philosophers, common sense, and common utility, amply supplied. But still some strange and gross ideas prevailed, which tainted the minds of the most admired sects, and called loudly for a teacher sent from God, to point out to us, those sublime truths, which human philosophy could never have discovered.

Why it was absolutely necessary, that the crimes of us, for our first parents, should not be forgiven, without a Redeemer ; why the happiness of one creature should depend on the conduct of another ; and why sin was not to be pardoned, without the sufferings of the most exalted innocence ; are points, which the infidel may scoff at and deride ; but which the pious and good Christian, will reflect on with admiration, and gratitude.

You will therefore arm yourselves with those necessary weapons, good sense, and a good heart ; that you may be able to ward off all the subtile and designing blows of our common enemy. Wishing to overthrow the whole fabric of revealed truth, the Deist will endeavour to

propagate notions injurious to the sacred person of Christ, and he will insinuate, that the doctrines which bear his name, are not authentic ; and that the whole history of the gospel, is all a fiction. Happy are we on this occasion, in having a cloud of witnesses, to confirm, and settle our faith. Happy are we, in having the fullest assurance, that those sacred volumes, which we receive as the word of God, were dictated by his holy spirit, and contain all things necessary to salvation.

You see, then, how incumbent it is on all, who profess the name of Christ, to lay up a sufficient stock of religious knowledge, that they may be able to stand against the wiles, and artifice of “ those who would rob them of their “ dearest hopes, and expectations.” The adversaries of Christianity are busy, and active, in the cause of infidelity ; and ought not we, who boast of being its zealous, and true friends, to be alike active in its defence, and support ? But remember, this activity, and support, is to be shewn, not by the warm effusions of an enthusiastic faith ; but by a manly, and uniform adherence to the immutable laws of sound piety, and strict virtue.

If you wish to give others a reason of the hope that is in you, let your general conduct

speak the sentiments of your hearts : if the promises in the Holy Gospel captivate your attention, and the doctrines of Christ win your affections and esteem, shew yourselves worthy of the former, and true lovers of the latter, by walking in all the commandments of God blameless. They who observe the uniformity of your conduct, unmixed with superstition, untainted with pride, and unsullied by persecution, will be prompted to enter the pale of that Church which the prejudice of education may have taught them to view with a suspicious eye.— Our religion is a practical thing, addressed to the heart, and not to the head only. We know that we are rational and accountable creatures ; we know that we have no abiding city in this world, but look for one above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God ; and we know, too, that repentance and faith are the only means by which we can secure that everlasting happiness which we all so ardently desire, and hope to obtain.

Whilst some boast of the strength of their faith, and, in the warmth of their visionary schemes, lose sight of morality ; and whilst others talk loudly of morality, and treat the faith of a Christian with contempt, let it be your concern to unite both in that charitable and

benevolent conduct, which will shew clearly your present dependence and future expectations.

When St. Peter gave the advice in my text to his religious converts, there was a powerful opposition formed against the Christian Church, which he exhorts them to defeat in the spirit of meekness and godly fear. The same advice may not be improper in these days. It is the duty of every one to be watchful, and at all times ready to defend and support the established church of which he is a member, and not suffer its just rights and privileges to be abused or insulted.

To conclude.—May all who profess themselves members of Christ's mystical body, the Church, have resolution enough to act up to those professions; that, whereas many speak against us as evil doers, they may, by our good works, which they shall behold, allow our hopes to be well founded, and our actions praiseworthy.

May every one endeavour to be so properly grounded in the necessary and essential duties of Christianity, that neither the terrors of persecution, nor the threats of the most enraged enemy, may be able to turn them from the Lord, who redeemed them. Never forget these important expressions of our blessed Saviour—"They

“ who confess me before men, them will I also  
“ confess before my Father, which is in heaven ;  
“ and they who deny me before men, them will  
“ I also deny.” At that awful period, when  
the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be  
raised incorruptible ; and when we shall be  
happy, or miserable, to all eternity.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be  
ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory,  
and power, both now and for evermore.

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## SERMON XI.

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15th Chap. of ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL, and the  
latter Part of the 5th Verse.

*Without me, ye can do nothing.*

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**A** BETTER, or more essential service cannot be rendered us, by those who would teach us our duty, than to point out to us the weakness, and the imperfections of our nature. To suppose we are right, when we are wandering in the path of error, is the fatal mistake of too many in this busy, and active world. An opinion of our own judgment, and the powerful force of example in others, is very apt to lead us astray ; and when we have once received a false idea of the nature, and consequences of particular actions, it will be no easy matter to correct it. Of so much importance is it to our



present comfort, and future happiness, to know our duty correctly, that we may practise it properly. And this knowledge (for I would be understood to speak of *religious* duty) is not to be acquired from those who are too much engaged in the gay, and profitable occupations of *this* world, to entertain the least thought of *another*. Serious reflection, and manly resolution, are necessary requisites in that investigation, which will discover to us what we *are*, and what we are to *do* to be saved. Think we must, and effectually, however painful may be the task, before we can work out our salvation, with any probable degree of success. But, as the prize of our heavenly calling in Christ, is a jewel of two precious a value, to be trodden under foot; and a treasure, which a good man would be disposed to sell all he hath to purchase; it is surely our bounden duty, and most reasonable service, not to lose *that*, through a wilful negligence, which we may secure by a regular, and proper line of conduct. Whatever reluctance, therefore, we may feel, in breaking from too close an attachment to things temporal, and in fixing our hearts, and minds, on things eternal; and whatever powers to fascinate, and to charm us, the present sense might possess, being *visible*: yet, we are firmly to stand to the post assigned

us, and quit every earthly advantage whatever, in the full hope of enjoying after death, the *certain*, though at present *invisible*, happiness of a future state. And in this important struggle between our reason, and our appetites, (for important it most assuredly is,) the conquest we are to gain, will depend entirely on the manner with which we conduct ourselves, during the long and most difficult contest. I say the *manner*; as in spiritual affairs, which relate to the present comfort, and future safety of our immortal souls, the industry, and the care that is necessary to accomplish both, is very different from that, which regards only the concerns of our bodies. With respect to the meat that perishes, and how it may be procured; and to what interesting purposes it may be applied, by those who acquire it; no instructions need be given, except such as recommend unblemished purity, and integrity of conduct, in the acquisition. But the meat that endureth to everlasting life, and which our almighty father hath signified, that he will give to those who ask it; is not bestowed on the careless, and indolent; and requires the utmost energy, and exertion of mind, to procure it. Nor is this all; we are to be very cautious to whom we apply for information on a subject of so much consequence, and

moment, and which involves in it our eternal felicity. For though each of us may be able, with a tolerable degree of accuracy, and propriety, to regulate our temporal concerns ; and, from the common knowledge we possess of men and things, discharge with success, all the claims, and the calls of a well-directed business ; though, I say, each of us may be able to do this ; when we come to duties of a higher nature, and duties too, which carry our thoughts beyond this spot of earth, on which we are so busily employed, to those blessed, and immortal regions, where the pure in heart only will see God ; we stand in great need of a teacher sent from heaven, to conduct us into the sacred path we are to pursue, that our calling, and our election may be sure. *That teacher*, was discovered by Nicodemus, to be our most blessed Saviour. And so deeply was the idea imprinted on his mind, that Christ was designed to be the reformer, and the redeemer of the world, that, on observing with minute attention his several acts of mercy, and benevolence, he exclaimed, “ Rabbi we know, that thou art a teacher come from God ; for no man can do these miracles, that thou doest, except God be with him.”

From this divine master, then, we are to learn our duty, and from no other : out of his great

love to mankind he condescended to take our nature upon him, and to live for a certain time amongst us; that he might teach us how *we* ought to live with each other, and in what manner we might best worship God, and do good to our neighbour;—for this purpose he often inculcated the necessity of a *vital* principle of religion; or that close and indissoluble union with *him*, the source of all wisdom, purity, and perfection, which nothing should be able to weaken or destroy. And so very essential is this union to the existence of our virtue and our religion, that if we suppose it away, neither the one nor the other will have the least degree of life or spirit; so that, in fact, as the body and soul compose the real and true man, the union betwixt Christ and his faithful servant, composes the real and true Christian. But, to be more particular, our blessed Saviour, in discoursing with his disciples, in order to point out the close connexion that ought invariably to subsist between them, compares *himself* to a vine, and his *disciples* to the branches;—“ I am the vine, ye are the branches;” *i. e.* I am, as it were, the root and stock of a vine, whereof ye are the branches.—“ He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” He that, by a true and most sincere faith, continues to

imitate my pure and perfect example, and endeavours, the best in his power, to obey all my commands, will bring forth the sacred fruits of holiness and righteousness; fruits that will procure for him everlasting life, even as a branch, which, whilst it continues in the vine, derives *sap* and *nourishment* from it, and brings forth fruit in great abundance. And to imprint on their minds, in the most forcible manner, that the cause of improvement in the heart, and fertility in the branch, proceeded entirely from their respective union, he adds—"for without me ye can do nothing." His hearers might not so nicely have weighed the great and essential advantages of his doctrine, as to be ready, at all times, and on all occasions, to *adhere* to him: their hearts might not, as yet, have been so fully awakened to their real and true interest, as to forsake all and follow him;—they might have supposed that their own abilities possessed more power and strength to support them in the various contests, between the vices and the virtues of life, than they could ever justly claim. A variety of causes might operate to draw off their attention to the one thing needful; he, therefore, in the most plain, and, at the same time, in the most strong language, informs them, "without me ye can do nothing." "Without

*me.*—Unless, with all your heart and all your mind, ye look up to me as the Saviour of the world, the Redeemer of lost man; unless ye believe that I am sent by my father, who is the good husbandman, to give life and growth to those branches who abide in me, “ye can do nothing;”—ye can of yourselves, and by any natural powers which ye may fancy ye possess, “do nothing.” And to shew, then, the ill effects that would flow from a dissolution of that union, which constituted their highest perfection, he thus proceeds in his instruction—“If a man “abide *not* in me, he is cast forth as a branch, “and is withered, and men gather them, and “cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” These expressions meet our most common notions and ideas. We all know, and observe, that useless limbs and withered branches are never suffered to remain on trees, but are cut off and thrown into the fire; and, in like manner, useless members of Christ’s Church, whose immoral and irreligious conduct renders them odious and detestable in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with pleasure, are rejected by him with disdain, and consigned over to everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Seeing, then, the situation in which we stand



as Christians, and feeling we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, “ what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?”

Effectually to discharge our duty, and conscientiously to practise those saving doctrines which can alone secure our eternal salvation, through the merits and death of Christ, we must be comforted and assisted by the sacred influence of his holy spirit. This divine help he promised to the first preachers of the gospel, when they were commissioned to “ distribute the food of knowledge and instruction to the starving multitude;” and when he most kindly told them, “ Behold I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”—*i. e.* The Holy Ghost the comforter, whom he would send to support them in their difficult and arduous task, would never leave nor forsake them, whilst they continued faithful and true to *him*, their Lord and master, and executed, with becoming firmness and constancy, the trust reposed in them. The Apostles well knew, and felt, that without Christ they could do nothing, amidst the discordant sentiments and jarring opinions of a deluded world: they were perfectly sensible that God Almighty wrought in them the power both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. They

did not presume to act from themselves, from any *internal* strength which they possessed.— Convinced of the divine mission of our Saviour, and having a strong, lively, and active faith in his all sufficient merits; and preserving a close and uninterrupted union with him, by walking in his commandments blameless; they were protected and defended, whilst they resolutely preached the Gospel “in season and out of season; whilst they reprovèd, rebuked, and exhorted, with all long-suffering, and doctrine.”

These good men proved themselves to be the true branches of the true vine, and brought forth the richest and most highly flavored fruits of virtue, and piety, and holiness;—the whole world was largely benefited by the production, and by *their* means the Church of Christ was founded on a rock; and the same eternal power that enabled them to found it, has declared that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.

It now remains for me to apply to ourselves the passage we have now been considering.

We cannot, any of us, suppose that Christians of the present day stand in less need of divine help and assistance, than those who have gone before us, professing themselves members of Christ's Church here upon earth, and hoping to be ad-

mitted into his everlasting kingdom in heaven after death. This being the case, *their* example ought, in reason, to influence ours; and as their *prayers* and *alms* went up as a memorial before God, ours also should do the same. When the religion of Christ was in its infant state, and the imperfection of man taught him to seek strength from his maker, and to mistrust his own weak and feeble efforts, prayer and praise were his joy and delight; nor did he pray in vain, for “the eyes of the Lord are over the “righteous, and his ears are *open* to their “prayers;” and we may add, too, “that his “face is against them that do evil.” The same God who is rich in mercy and in goodness, and who so wonderfully preserved those who called on him faithfully, is ready and willing to help every one whose faith is sincere, and whose practice is steady and correct: and no good thing will be withheld from those who diligently seek him, and obey him. Knowing these things to be strictly true, and that unrighteousness and immorality will most certainly prove our utter ruin and destruction, let us “rend our hearts, “and not our garments, and turn unto the Lord “our God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow “to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth “him of the evil.” And in this necessary work

of faith and repentance, let each of us say, with the holy psalmist, "As for me, I will come into thy house, even upon the multitude of thy mercies; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness; make thy way plain before my face." When a proper sense of our own weakness has made us humble, the law of God will become our pleasure and chief concern, and we shall meditate therein day and night. We should be cautious, lest we shut our eyes wilfully against the light of everlasting truth; and, blind to our eternal interest, suffer our life to decay, by imperceptible degrees, without making a provision for a future state, or even thinking how, or in what manner, we are to set about it. If we can do nothing to the accomplishment of our salvation, without Christ, we must not neglect praying for his aid till our intellectual faculties are exhausted, when it will be too late to apply for it. We must reflect seriously on *this* world and the *next*, and weigh the concerns of both in equal balances, that we may not bestow too much care and trouble on the *one*, and too little on the *other*.

To conclude.—Always keeping in mind the comparison of our Saviour, that he is the true

vine, and we, who profess ourselves his disciples, the branches; we shall see, too plainly to be mistaken, the several duties that we are to perform. Our own imbecility, or weakness, can be no sort of obstacle in the path of virtue and religion, which we are to pursue; for we presume not on our own powers, but rely entirely on assistance from heaven. To conquer vice—to rise superior to temptations—and to gain dominion over sin, in all its various forms and fallacies, is too much to be expected from human exertion alone, in our present frail and imperfect condition; but whilst we adhere firmly and faithfully to our spiritual vine, we shall never be defective in any of those essential powers, which will not only keep us from falling, but make our election and salvation perfectly secure: for though *without* our blessed Redeemer we can do nothing, yet, as St. Paul expresseth himself, “I can do *all* things through “Christ, who strengtheneth me.” And Christ will strengthen every one of us with his holy spirit, if we serve him as we ought, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life. This reasonable service, then, let it be the study of our hearts to pay him; that, when we die, our sins may be forgiven, and our souls saved through his meritorious passion and death.

Now, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and power, and glory, for ever, and ever.



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## SERMON XII.

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ST. MATTHEW.—Chap. 18.—Verse 35.

*So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother, their trespasses.*

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AS our almighty father is ever anxious to promote, and secure the happiness of his creatures ; the virtues which are most effectual to produce universal love, harmony, and peace, must be particularly pleasing in his sight. United as we all are, or ought to be, in our expectations of future bliss, and glory ; why should our present interest, and concerns, kindle the flame of discord, or sow the seeds of hatred and revenge amongst us ? Why should resentment inhabit that breast which was intended to be the “ temple of the “ Holy Ghost,” pure, and spotless ? We are told in the emphatical language of scripture that “ God is love ;” and indeed, the love of the deity towards us, is manifest, and clear by our

creation, preservation, and redemption. Why is not the benevolence of man towards his fellow-creatures, alike exercised, alike displayed? We are ordered to be "perfect, as our father which is in heaven, is perfect;" and yet, so unaccountable are the actions of many, that they never aim at consistency of conduct, through the whole period of their lives. The mistake originates from hence; every person will think for himself; and so in strict justice he ought, provided he draws the substance, which is to compose the favourite code of laws, which are to regulate his actions from the sacred source of scripture. Without this caution, he will certainly go astray. Philosophy, nature, and reason will severally lay claim to his heart; and after many a vain contest, he will be an easy captive to one or the other.

But, if religion be looked up to as the standard of perfection; if the word of God be consulted on all occasions; there will then be peace on earth, and the most extensive good will towards men.

St. Peter, wishing to know how far the forgiveness of injuries might be practised, and how long the furiousness of displeasure might be allowed to rage, applies to our blessed Saviour for information. Happy at all times to dart the rays of

conviction on those minds that were well disposed to receive it, he informs him, that a “ certain king would take account of his servants, and when he began to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents; but forasmuch, as he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.”

You may easily figure to yourself the situation of this unfortunate debtor;—justice demanded punishment, and such punishment was about to be inflicted, as must inevitably plunge his whole family in distress and wretchedness—a thousand anxious thoughts rush into his troubled mind concerning the welfare of those whose happiness he valued far beyond his own, even beyond life itself. Thus situated, he determines to throw himself on the mercy and goodness of his Lord: he hopes that his numerous family, the dearth of provisions, scarcity of work, and a full resolution to pay the whole debt, (when, by his honest labour, and well-directed industry, he should be able to procure it), would plead in his behalf, and produce a respite of the impending ruin.

Fraught with these sentiments, “ he fell down

“ and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.”

To a feeling mind, the voice of misery never pleads in vain;—to a heart susceptible of all the tender emotions of humanity and benevolence, the tear of distress powerfully represents the uncertainty of sublunary things, and turns resentment into compassion.

Such was the case here.—“ Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.”

What a noble, what a generous action! To give up so large a sum, and to check the fury and rage of those sordid passions which set themselves in array against us, on these trying occasions, must evince an uncommon goodness of heart, and superior goodness of mind. Let the warrior, decked with his crown of laurel, boast of his repeated conquests over distant kingdoms;—let the man of the people glory in his national consequence and unbounded popularity;—yet both of them must hide their diminished heads, when the Christian hero appears, who has courage enough to gain the victory over his unruly passions, and to do as he would be done by.

The sudden and unexpected change of cir-

cumstances must have produced a scene of domestic festivity in the family of the last debtor, which we cannot but hope and wish may be lasting. Having experienced all the accumulated horrors of misery and want himself, how must his heart bleed should he ever see a friend or neighbour in a similar situation;—having felt the genial, the reviving warmth of benevolence, when he expected to be confined within the damp and dreary walls of a prison, how must he rejoice should *he* ever be able to speak comfort to the miserable, or wipe the tear from the faded cheek of distressed poverty!

Alas! the sequel of the parable shews him in a very different light. “The same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence, and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, pay me that thou owest.

“And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

“And he would not, but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.”

What a monster of iniquity! How hardened, how callous must that breast be which can receive forgiveness at the hands of others, and not be sufficiently affected by it, as in turn to forgive

itself. *His* debt was the amazing sum of ten thousand talents: the debt of his fellow-servant only an hundred pence—what an astonishing difference! And yet the former was cheerfully remitted; the latter rigidly exacted. Such base, such inhuman behaviour excited the sorrow of his fellow servants: they were concerned to discover a want of feeling in that heart where it ought chiefly to have prevailed:—they were hurt on observing the most severe resentment practised by him, who a few hours before had himself experienced all the comforting sweets of tenderness and mercy.

Impressed with these justifiable ideas of indignation, and displeasure, “ they came and told “ their Lord all that was done.”

The sentiments which must arise in the mind of the good man, on being acquainted with the ingratitude of his late petitioner, may be supposed by those amongst you, who have hearts capable of thinking and acting as he did—he must view him now as the object of his wrath—he must conclude he was a sly, fawning, and audacious hypocrite—he must determine to assure him that the merciful only are deserving of mercy, and that those who are incapable of exercising that God-like virtue, compassion, should be thought unworthy of receiving it.



“ Then his Lord, after he had called him,  
“ said, O, thou wicked servant! I forgave thee  
“ all that debt, because thou desiredst me;—  
“ shouldst not thou also have had compassion  
“ on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on  
“ thee. And his Lord was wroth, and delivered  
“ him to the tormentors, till he should pay all  
“ that was due unto him.”

How just must we allow this punishment to be! How deservedly did he meet the treatment which his cruel, his uncharitable actions provoked! No doubt St. Peter, whose question had occasioned the parable, saw the most extensive bounds of Christian benevolence, and the great danger which threatened those who ever presumed to limit or contract them. But our Saviour, not satisfied with having delivered his sentiments on so important a duty, under the veil of a similitude, compels his hearers to make the proper and forcible application themselves, by adding, “ so likewise shall my Heavenly  
“ Father do also unto you, if ye, from your  
“ hearts, forgive not every one his brother their  
“ trespasses.”

And who is there amongst you (after so solemn a declaration by our blessed Redeemer); who, I say, is there amongst you, so daring as to cherish the seeds of malice, or thirst after revenge?—

Will any one presume to justify resentment, and, at the same time, boast of his great love for Christianity, which, almost in every page, condemns it? Shall the most dark and gloomy passions disfigure the moral, like the dreadful storms and tempests which deform the natural world, and the sun-shine of charity and benevolence never dart a friendly ray to comfort the miserable or cheer the afflicted? Shall the great end and design of our existence in the flesh be quite forgotten and lost? The Creator of the Universe showers down his blessings on the righteous, and on the wicked, on the just, and on the unjust; and shall man, who receives so much, do so little? Shall persecution be the grand object of those who expect to receive, at the hands of their God, tenderness, mercy, compassion.

Let consistency mark every part of your conduct, and always act in such a manner as to merit the kindness and mercy of your God, by being kind and merciful to your fellow creatures! Reflect on the errors of youth, the indiscretions of manhood, and the negligence of old age, and then view the amazing debt which may, with the strictest justice, be exacted of you hereafter. If the judge of all the earth should be extreme to mark what you have done amiss,

who is there able to abide the fatal, the awful decision? When you enter on the boundless confines of eternity, there will be no room left for restitution, none for repentance. Now is the accepted time; now is the only season for you to perform those several duties, which, as Christians, you must zealously perform, or abide the dreadful consequence of neglect and inattention.

Thus critically situated, who will be so blind to their own interest, as to remark, with rigid attention, the mote in their brother's eye, and forget the beam that is in their own eye? Who will resent all the little affronts and insults which he may chance to receive from the careless and imprudent, when the Majesty of Heaven is so often offended, and yet so slow to punish?

As your present comfort and future happiness totally depend on a mutual intercourse of kind and charitable offices, quickened by a well grounded faith in Christ, let me exhort you diligently to practise those important and essential duties. Has your neighbour offended you by any imprudent or improper conduct? If he asks your forgiveness, pardon him, as you hope and trust to have your own imprudencies pardoned hereafter. Has a child, brother, or friend, strayed from their respective duties to-

wards you? Only consider, for a single moment, how often you have strayed from the duty you owe to your God; and if you expect a remission of your own sins, on repentance, shew the same lenity and tenderness yourself.

But let care be taken that no one deceives himself, and by a partial mode of acting, frustrate the very nature and design of this divine attribute. Our blessed Saviour commands us all to forgive from the heart; not that cold, lifeless, insipid pardon which drops, indeed, from the lips, but leaves the mind as much exasperated against the object of its displeasure after as before. It is to be feared there are many who act in this manner, and endanger their salvation by observing the letter, and not the spirit, of the Gospel.

At that awful and tremendous day, when we shall appear before our Judge in heaven, to answer for all our past offences, who do you think will be most entitled to mercy and forgiveness? The man who through life always was wrapt up in himself, and never exerted the least benevolence and charity towards his fellow creatures; or he who ever made it his care and study to promote the happiness of all, and to live on terms of amity with every one?

The answer is to be collected from our Sa-

viour's own words, and the application must be made by yourselves.

Happy will they be, who, with a holy confidence and lively faith, can look up to the throne of grace, and see the mansions of eternal joy and peace opening for their reception, through his merits, whose example they have copied in the forgiveness of injuries, and whose gospel they have always obeyed.

To conclude.—Having ever in view the command of our blessed Saviour, that we ought to love one another, let us do it with pure hearts fervently. Let us lay up for ourselves a treasure of good actions against the great day of account, that we may be able to stand before our Judge without fear or trembling. To have the prayers of the unfortunate and miserable, whose distresses we have relieved; to have the supplications of all those who might have offended us, and whose offences we have kindly pardoned, offered up in our behalf, will mitigate the severity of wrath, and procure for us mercy and loving kindness.

If there are any who are insensible to the claims of benevolence, and who refuse the gratification which arises from the forgiveness of injuries, let me rouse their immediate attention to so necessary a duty, by the powerful motives

of self-interest. "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven." Your own welfare is at stake if you indulge a rooted and malicious revenge, and the most severe, the most exemplary punishment, will await you in the *next* world, if you forgive not from your hearts every one his brother their trespasses in *this*.

May the God of love and peace enable us, by the assistance of his holy spirit, to live in perfect harmony with each other; that when we depart hence we may all be the deserved objects of his mercy and compassion, through the merits of his son Jesus Christ.

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



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## SERMON XIII.

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ST. PAUL'S 2d EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.—Chap. 5.—Ver. 10.

*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

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**AS** we are rational creatures, and capable of reflecting on the nature and propriety of things, we are certainly accountable for our actions. As we are placed here in a state of probation, and possess free agency in its fullest extent, we may rest assured, that the God who made us is no unconcerned spectator of our conduct, but observes all our works with the eye of justice, (tempered, I trust, with mercy,) and will, hereafter, reward or punish us according to our behaviour. This seems so consonant to every principle of nature and reason, and so agreeable

to our own inward feelings and sentiments, that the doctrine is no sooner offered to our consideration than we immediately subscribe to it. Can it ever be supposed that we are sent into the world to live a few years only, and then sink into the grave, and be quite forgotten? Can it be imagined, that all the wonderful faculties of the mind are to terminate in dust? That the soul, which gives life and energy to the body, should *perish* with that body, and never exist after death? The idea is absurd, profane, impious!

However erroneous the opinions of many may have been on this subject, the general voice of nature and reason pleads loudly in its favor. What if some, during the prevalence of heathenism, lost in ignorance, doubt, and uncertainty, looked forward, with sullen acquiescence, to the gloomy prospect of annihilation; others conceived a more exalted idea of human nature, and concluded that death, though it might suspend, did not put, a final period to man's existence.

Look into the writings of the poets, and you will find them making every advantage of that important intelligence communicated by nature. Trace the workings of their fancy through its different stages, and however the superstructure may displease, yet the foundation is certainly

good and solid, which nothing can ever shake, as it was laid in the heart of man by God himself. When, to captivate the minds of their votaries, they painted the scene of the future world in all the rich colouring of poetic imagery, and filled the apartments of the wicked with every degree of gloom and horror, can you suppose they meant nothing? Did so many of the heroes amongst the heathens meet death in the cause of national virtue and patriotism, without some hopes and views which were extended beyond this world? Did they not expect that their good actions would be rewarded after they left this scene of misery and wretchedness? I mean not to rank amongst the exalted characters, to which I have alluded, any of those who fell by their own hands, and had not resolution sufficient to bear up against the pressure of calamity and distress. I mean not to rank a Cato and a Brutus with a Socrates and a Seneca.

We have sufficient testimony from heathen writers, that a future state of rewards and punishments, was not a mere matter of speculation, but an object of sincere belief: the strange mixture of error and superstition, which sometimes obscured the light of immortal felicity, prevented the rays of divine truth from being

clearly seen by *all*; but that they were seen by many is beyond a doubt.

It appears, then, that nature and reason united in assuring man, that he was to answer in the next world, for his whole conduct in this;—that his conscience was to direct him in his journey through life, as a law written and engraved on his heart by his maker, to which he might always apply for information, and to whose dictates, if he paid proper attention, he could never act wrong. This seems to be the sentiment of St. Paul, who, speaking of the gentiles, whilst in a state of heathenism, says, “ these having no law, are a law unto themselves; their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another.”

But how supremely happy ought we to think ourselves, who have a law to guide and direct our wandering steps through the mazes of this troublesome pilgrimage! How ought we to thank the Father of the Universe for giving us such a portion of his heavenly light, as will enable us to see clearly the path wherein we may walk with safety, comfort, and success. By the glorious revelation of Jesus Christ, all doubts are removed, and the mind receives the strongest

conviction—our expectations are gratified, our hopes confirmed, and futurity opened to the eye of a well grounded faith. If mankind formerly saw through a glass darkly, now we are able (by comparing spiritual things with spiritual) to trace the dawnings of that almighty love which began with Adam, and was confirmed towards us, in Christ: now we can view the wonderful scheme of redemption in all its various parts, supported by prophecies and miracles, and intended to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of men. Now we can rest satisfied that we are all candidates for eternal happiness in a better state, where misery, pain, and sorrow, never enter; where the spirits of just men made perfect will dwell in uninterrupted joy for ever and ever. To merit this exalted state of heavenly bliss and glory, is the necessary duty of a Christian. The promise of happiness is made to all, and the terms and conditions are laid before you in the Gospel. Let Infidelity shoot all its poisoned arrows against the rock of our salvation, still we are, and shall be triumphant, if we act up to our calling. As you enjoy the light, always remember to “walk as children of the light.” Suppose your house of this earthly tabernacle were dissolved? “you have a build-

“ eternal in the heavens.” To arrive at that pure, that refined state of joy and bliss, was the earnest wish and desire of St. Paul. To secure to himself the favor of his God in another life, he always kept his body under proper discipline in this. In every action he directed all his views to that future life which was to commence when the present scene of mortality should cease.— How pathetically does he express himself to the Corinthians; “ We that are in this tabernacle “ do groan, being burdened, not that we would “ be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality “ might be swallowed up in life.” Wherefore “ we labour, that whether present or absent, we “ may be accepted of him.” Then he adds, “ For “ we must all appear before the judgment seat “ of Christ, that every one may receive the “ things done in his body, according to that “ he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

How naturally will the present awful season (when the violated laws of our country call loudly for redress) direct our view towards the tribunal of Christ! National justice is now about to inflict those exemplary, those severe punishments, which national security, and the welfare of commerce, require and demand. Now, the traitor and assassin will suffer for their respective crimes, which are charged with an



uncommon weight of guilt. Now, the turbulent destroyers of public and private peace, and all those miserable and deluded wretches who have lived on the property of others, will be sentenced to perpetual toil, or perpetual banishment.

But, are there not many, who, by art and cunning, escape the notice of Justice? Are there not many who elude the vigilance of the law, and triumph in a fancied security? Let these remember, however exalted their situation in life may be, that they must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Man may be deceived; God cannot. Shall a poor, unhappy creature, forfeit his life, for rudely plundering his neighbour of a small part of his property, and the villain, who robs him of his good name, go unpunished? Alas! the former crime, though stained with less guilt, is open to the eye of Justice; the latter, infamous and base as it must ever appear, may always avoid detection in this imperfect state, but will assuredly meet with its due punishment hereafter.

When you therefore visit a Court of Justice, always remember that you are every one to appear before a Judge who seeth not as man seeth. When the sentence of the law is pronounced on any wretched victim, consider with

yourselves how unhappy must have been the situation of thousands in the world, who never have received the least instruction from their parents, or who lost those parents perhaps before they were capable of receiving any ; who were thrown on the wide world without the least assistance, and exposed to every temptation that assailed them ;—consider this, and be thankful to heaven for the advantages you enjoy ; advantages which may serve to make you all good men and good Christians.

Many, like Felix, may bribe the sordid hand of earthly greatness for a while, but vengeance will in the next world await the ungodly.

Look, then, into your own hearts, and examine all their motions—mark the progress of every action with the greatest care and attention, and whilst you use the good things of this life, take heed that you do not abuse them. God only knows how soon any of you may be summoned into the world of spirits, to answer for your present and past conduct—to his all-searching eye, alone, is open that wonderful change, when “ this mortal shall put on immortality, and this “ corruptible shall put on incorruption.”

Have you made it your study to discharge every relative and social duty with affection and sincerity ? Have you endeavoured always to act

agreeable to the laws of God, and that sacred rule which is laid down for you in the Gospel? Have your words and actions constantly and uniformly agreed, and the love of virtue, more than the applause of men, influenced your conduct through life?

If, in answering these questions, your hearts condemn you not, then may you, with humble confidence and lively hope, wish for the glorious appearance of the Son of God, when he shall sit in judgment, and the books be opened which contain a regular and exact account of the sins of all the world. When, after a strict scrutiny into the motives of every thought, word, and action, he shall say to those who have conscientiously done their duty, "Come ye blessed children of my father, receive the kingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the world."

But be careful, lest whilst you deceive others, you at the same time deceive yourself! Lest you suppose religion to consist in outward ceremonies and external rites, and not in inward purity and integrity of heart. This is the rock on which the hypocritical Pharisees split, and made shipwreck of their immortal souls—this is the rock on which many fall, who hold the "truth in unrighteousness:" who in *words* profess God, but in *works* uniformly deny him. To

all of this complexion, how dreadful will be the sentence!—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

To conclude.—As we know for a certainty that we are to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and receive either rewards or punishments, as our respective actions shall deserve, nothing is to be said in excuse for those who, when they know their duty, neglect the practice of it. No doubt the scene of final judgment will be very awful, very tremendous! But however it may strike the sinner with terror and dismay, the good Christian, who has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, and endeavoured, through life, to do as he would be done unto, has nothing to fear, and much to expect, from that all righteous, all powerful, and all merciful God, who has promised to reward every one of us according to his works. Who has declared, that he will render to "them, who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish."

May God, of his infinite mercy, give us all

grace to know and follow the duties of our most holy profession, as candidates for the Heavenly Jerusalem, through the merits of our Saviour Christ Jesus.

To whom, with the Father, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and power, both now and for evermore.

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## SERMON XIV.

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ST. JOHN.—Chap. 5.—Verse 39.

*Search the Scriptures.*

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**A THIRST** after knowledge is natural to the mind of man. Endued with reason, and capable of reflecting on the fitness, the propriety of things, he traces with an eager eye the records of antiquity, and observes the motives which actuated the heroes of old, those celebrated men of honour, of renown.

To gratify this prevailing curiosity, (which we all in some degree possess,) History opens her laboured, her voluminous page.

To improve, to satisfy the inquisitive mind, Philosophy exhausts all her hidden stores of theory and speculation. To charm the ear, and at the same time to comfort the heart, poetry introduces a system of moral and divine truths,



under the delusive veil of fiction, which the studious reader may with care remove, and discover virtue in her native innocence and simplicity.

From these different sources we draw information, and observe by what springs the wheel of government was formerly put in motion ; by what policy the most subtle statesmen curbed the licentious rage of party, of faction ; and by what laws public tranquillity and peace were provided for and secured.

From these sources we learn to correct our political errors, form our taste, and acquire that insight into men and manners as may enable us to pass through life with pleasure, with satisfaction.

There is a species of reading at present very much pursued, but of a nature too trifling, too insignificant, to merit any serious attention or regard. The students of this class are of such delicate constitutions, as never to relish solid, substantial food. They are fed with light and simple diet, such as serves to amuse the fancy, but never regulates or improves the morals. I will therefore leave the novelist to feed on air, and sport with folly.

It evidently appearing that we have a natural desire to know the times and seasons which

have given birth to extraordinary revolutions and wonderful events, I shall beg leave to recommend to your notice a book, which of all others best deserves your attention, and (I am sorry to say it) of all others has the least share of it. The book I mean, opens a large, a spacious field of instruction and improvement, for the historian, the philosopher, and poet. The one will find every thing that is great, every thing that is wonderful, to engage his attention or excite his astonishment. The other will meet with such solid, such full assurance of present comfort and future happiness, as far exceed all his own ideal blessings, and visionary schemes of joy. The last will be transported into such a delightful scene of poetic imagery and true allegory as the most successful votaries at Helicon or Parnassus have never yet been able to produce.

And is it possible a book, so replete with information, so abounding with entertainment, and charged with such a pleasing variety to amuse, instruct, and charm the mind, should remain unnoticed, neglected, despised?

The beauties I so faintly point out to your regard, are to be met with only in the Bible; and the Bible is perhaps the last book you would have looked in to find them.

But whence springs this inattention to those

sacred volumes which alone contain the oracles of your God? Whence arises that dislike to those divine writings which were dictated by the spirit of Truth?

Shall the works of frail, of imperfect man, possess a greater power to please, than that amazing, that awful page, which gives you a view of two worlds at once? That page which begins with time, and ends only with eternity?

When the Scribes and Pharisees were enquiring after the road that leads to truth and happiness; when they had put a variety of questions to our blessed Saviour, in hopes of gaining a proper, a satisfactory answer; He said unto them, "Search the Scriptures." *i. e.* examine those holy writings, and you will find all things necessary to your present conduct and future comfort. The same advice may be given to all you who have an equal desire and wish to gain that saving knowledge which may make you wise unto salvation.

And if a voice, speaking from heaven, can charm your ears; if the tender mercies of the Almighty, dropping like the gentle dew on his faithful patriarchs and true prophets, can move your affections, or affect your hearts; in the scriptures both are displayed in a most eminent degree.

You will there trace the wonderful operations of that omnipotent Being who called the world from a dark, rude, and confused chaos, into all that beauty, order, and regularity, which you now behold. You will there trace the formation of mankind, the origin of society, laws, and government. You will see religion in its infancy, and observe by what acts of piety and virtue the new world rendered their Creator propitious; and by what obstinacy, defection, and idolatry, they forfeited his protection, and were given up devoted victims to their folly and weakness.

In pursuing this regular order, this progressive advancement of things, you will discover the power of God visibly exerted in behalf of his chosen people. You will see the elements of fire and water rendered subservient to their interest; and the course of nature checked, to promote their welfare, to secure their happiness.

Whilst this astonishing scene is gradually opening to view; whilst you mark with regret the baneful effects and horrible consequences of original sin; and whilst you shed a tear of pity, of commiseration, on the frailty of our first parents; how reviving, how animating, will be the task, to survey the wonderful, the amazing work of our redemption! To be assured, that “as in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made

“ alive ! ” To see the son of God incarnate ! The Holy One of Israel descending from his original glory, his native greatness, to teach and exalt the corrupt nature of man ! To view a Saviour lying in a manger, and expiring on a cross !

This is a subject which the angels themselves desire to look into. This is a subject which calls forth every sentiment of gratitude, of praise, which created beings are able to bestow. Mysterious as this subject may appear, still, with the eye of faith, we may, at an awful distance, view the mercies of our God dawning on a corrupt, a sinful world, immediately after the fall.

Scarce had our first parents tasted the forbidden fruit, that fruit, whose violated flavour entailed on all their posterity, woe, misery, and death ; when the Almighty (who in the midst of judgment thinketh upon mercy) promised them that “ the seed of the woman should bruise “ the serpent’s head.”

Blessed and most comfortable promise this ! Excluded from their earthly paradise, once the seat of innocence, and therefore the seat of happiness, they hoped, hereafter, to enter a heavenly paradise, through the merits of a future Saviour.

To the great, the faithful patriarch Abraham, it was revealed that the promised seed should arise out of his family, "in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed."

To Jacob it is made known that this extraordinary person, this mighty deliverer from the baneful effects of sin, should spring from the tribe of Judah; and before that body should cease to exercise a regal or judicial authority: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh, *i. e.* the Messiah, come."

Under the Mosaic dispensation, that multitude of rites, ceremonies, and ordinances, were but types and shadows of good things to come, which received their completion when the immaculate Lamb of God offered himself a sacrifice once for all; when, in the agonies of death, our blessed Saviour assured us, that all things necessary for man's redemption were finished.

From this period, what a noble, what a glorious succession of prophets make their appearance! Inspired with wisdom from above, and a knowledge of futurity, how did they point out in the most strong, the most animating language, every particular relative to the promised, the expected Redeemer! With what force and energy did they describe the manner



of his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension ! Every feature of that divine person was so nicely delineated by the prophecies of those holy men, that when he appeared it was impossible to be mistaken.

Surveying these wonderful and extraordinary predictions, which the old testament opens to your view, if you dart your searching eyes through the sacred pages of the new testament, you will there find an exact, uniform, and regular completion. You will there discover the sun of righteousness rising on a folorn and benighted world. You will perceive the bright rays of truth dipersing the dark, the gloomy mists of error, ignorance, and superstition. You will see the holy one of Israel descending from his throne in heaven, to teach and instruct wretched and unhappy mortals on earth. You will hear the divine wisdom, which, like honey, dropped from his mouth ; and you will at last see him expiring on the cross, triumphing over sin and death, and opening the kingdom of heaven to all true believers.

Such are the exalted, such the important truths which the Bible offers to your consideration. Your future and eternal happiness is the grand object in question. The streams of everlasting life are (through the tender mercies

of our God) opened for all to drink freely. And will any of you live in a perpetual thirst after righteousness, when the sacred fountain is in your possession? Will any of you, by a careless indifference, and habitual neglect, shut your eyes against the truth, and refuse to hear the voice of the heavenly Charmer?

Let me beg of you to act more agreeably to the dictates of wisdom and prudence. Let me adjure you to value your bibles as the true oracles of your God, and consult the scriptures on all occasions.

They speak a language very different from the world. They are real and sincere friends, who scorn to flatter. They will guide you with safety through life, and speak comfort to your souls in the hour of death.

To conclude.—If what I have urged on my present subject should have any influence on your practice, my labour of love will be amply rewarded.

I can only add my hearty prayer to the Almighty, that he will bestow on you all the spirit to think and act rightly. That he will shed on you the gracious and benign assistance of the Holy Ghost, to guide your searches after sacred knowledge.

In a word.—I pray that after you have found

and examined the truth of our most pure and holy religion, you may have resolution to act up to it; and after this life shall end, may each of you enjoy the fruits of a well grounded and lively faith in heaven. Amen.

Now, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and power, and glory, for ever, and ever.

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## SERMON XV.

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ST. MATTHEW.—23d Chapter, and the latter part of the 23d Verse.

*These ought ye to have done, and not leave the other undone.*

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**O**F all deceptions whatever, that is by far the most gross, the most fatal, which originates in too good an opinion of ourselves. Not that we are to pass through life enveloped in a thick mist of diffidence and suspicion, which will serve only to render us contemptible in the eyes of others, and not very pleasing in our own;—the misfortune is, we are all apt to think more highly of ourselves than we ought—we are all apt to suppose that the lustre of our own virtues is brighter, the number of our own sins less, than our neighbours.

These ingredients of self-consequence, and self-sufficiency, form a composition charged with

the most deadly poison: a composition which proved too powerful for the purity of angels, and must necessarily overcome the imperfect strength of frail irresolute man. The effects of this subtle, this insinuating poison, were never more visible than in the whole conduct of a Pharisee, whose pride became notorious even to a proverb.

The mere superficialities of piety and virtue engrossed all the care and attention of this strange sect. The mask of integrity, put on with some art, served for a while to engage the attention of an ignorant multitude—they appeared, to men, holy, righteous, and devout—they acted their parts sometimes so well, that many thought them the real characters they personated.

Strange infatuation this, to take so much pains in deceiving others, forgetting, at the same time, how fatally they deceive themselves.

Our blessed Saviour, who was of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without censure, who saw through the fine spun veil of human art and cunning; plucked off the sacred garb from the pretended saint, and showed him in all his inward deformity and baseness.

The Sun of Righteousness darted the bright rays of his virtue on the splendid hypocrite, and he shrunk away from the sight, unable to bear

the sacred, the penetrating beams of divine truth.

Alarmed at the rapid progress of impiety, and falsehood; astonished to see the empire of vice reared on the ruins of national virtue, he, with indignation, reprov'd the base, the inglorious defection. He expatiated largely on the internal beauty and excellence of the moral law. He urged the necessity of universal obedience, and painted the consequences of that obedience in the most amiable, the most glowing colours. By a life of exemplary resignation, and patience, he proved that his commandments were not grievous; that the laws which he imposed were such as became the goodness, the mercy of an all-gracious God, and in every respect were calculated to promote the convenience, ease, and happiness of man. He purified the hearts of his believers through faith, and dispersed that dark cloud of superstition and ignorance which had long disfigured the true, the natural beauty of holiness.

Thus did he amply shew, that “the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.”

This foe to our eternal peace for a long time deceived, betrayed the world. His fatal illusions corrupted the heart, and philosophy herself



was not totally free from the general infection. But when the word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, then his power began to decline, his oracles were dumb, and he was seen like lightning to fall from heaven. So rapid was the decline of impiety, so extensive the propagation of the Gospel, whose healing sound went over all the world, denouncing a catalogue of woes on the hypocritical Pharisees, whose varnished conduct gained them too great success in life, a success chiefly aimed at the applause of men; our Saviour lays open the gospel in its full, its true colours. He shows them that it is a complete system of moral, of divine truths—a religion perfectly uniform and consistent in itself, and requiring from all its professors a uniformity and consistency of conduct.

“ Wo (says he) unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not leave the other undone.” As if he had said, wo unto you hypocritical teachers and pharisees; for ye are superstitiously precise in things of smaller moment, in little external rites; but the things of great, of eternal obligation, justice and equity, mercy and charity,

faithfulness and truth, towards God and man, these ye slight and neglect. Now, although those smaller things ought indeed, in their true and proper place, to be respected and observed, yet, most assuredly, these great, these important duties ought to engage your chief, your principal concern.

Having thus settled the text in its full, its most extensive meaning, we may now take a view of mankind in general, and observe how far they act agreeably to the doctrines of Christ, whose religion is as seamless as his coat, and admits not of a division between God and Mammon.

Are there not many who, with a scrupulous nicety, a religious exactness, discharge every social, every moral duty, and yet shut their eyes against the glorious, the quickening light of the gospel? Are there not many who believe in a God, but deny a Saviour? Deny a Saviour who redeemed them, who laid down his life for them, by whose merits and intercession alone, salvation is to be obtained?

Are there not others, who, soaring aloft in the regions of faith, lose sight of morality?—Who think to make their calling and election sure, by a strange fantastic call of their own, dictated by folly, inspired by superstition, and kept alive by the wild, the raging flames of enthusiasm?

To the notice of the former I would recommend the character, the conduct of the first Gentile convert, Cornelius. He, like themselves, was all that society might wish for, or morality effect. He, like themselves, was “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway:” but still he was far, far remote from perfection, till converted by St. Peter to Christianity. Then, (with the eye of faith) he saw clearly and distinctly a crucified, a triumphant Saviour, a vanquished enemy, and the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers.

To the latter I need only apply the strong, the nervous address of our blessed Saviour, “not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.”

Hence, we find, that a mere faith alone in Christ, will not conduce to our salvation; but such a faith as proves itself to be true and genuine, by the constant practice and exercise of each virtue in the gospel. “For as the body, without the soul, is dead; so faith, without works, is dead also.”

Where then shall the deist flee for succour, for

protection, on the awful day of retribution? Where shall he seek for shelter, when the Righteous Judge appears to convince all ungodly sinners “ of the hard speeches which they “ have spoken against him?” What hill, what mountain shall then be able to cover them, when the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, is about to inflict the severe punishment due to their treachery, rebellion, infidelity?

And what (at this solemn period) will become of the airy dreams of those visionary saints, who, after a life of continued folly and wickedness, thought to fly on the pinions of a bold, a resolute faith, into the heavenly paradise, the bosom of Abraham?

Alas! In these havens of comfort, they will be neither known nor accepted.

To both, therefore, it might be said, “ these “ things ought ye to have done, and not leave “ the other undone.”

There is a third sort of people who have not faith sufficient to animate their morality; nor morality sufficient to give life or energy to their faith. Who, like certain vapours and exhalations, serve only to raise in weak, in tender minds, mistrust, doubt, perplexity. They think to play their parts on the stage of life with perfect indifference, and hope, at the close of the scene, all shall be well.

But as Christianity is often, and very justly, compared to a warfare, it is impossible to observe an absolute neutrality—they must either combat under the banners of the kingdom of light, or the kingdom of darkness. No person can be a tame unconcerned spectator in the field of battle. They who gather not with Christ, scatter abroad. They who are not for him, are against him.

Let, then, the sons and daughters of indolence, who are never active, but in folly, rouse from their lethargy, and trim their lamps, lest, when the bridegroom come, they be found wanting, and refused admittance to the marriage feast. Let the family of sloth, who (from too rigid, too severe an opinion of the master) kept their talent wrapped up in a napkin, bring it forth, and improve it to the best advantage, that when the Lord returns he may receive his own again, with regular, with proper interest.

It remains, now, for me to observe, that the duty you owe your God, your neighbour, yourself, all unite, all center in one point. To attempt a division, and at the same time to suppose you act rightly, is wilfully shutting your eyes against the truth, and indulging an idle, a deceitful dream.

Awake, then, from that fatal slumber into

which self-interest, prejudice, or ill nature may have plunged you. Awake from that strange, that wild delirium which the passions too often create when they war against the soul.

Think not by a religious, a public homage to your Maker, one day in seven, that you discharge the whole duty of a true, a sincere Christian :— No. Unless each day be marked with the performance of some relative, some social duty, you are but in the number of those who honour him with their lips, but in their hearts are far from him.

Your respective families demand, at your hands, a proper share of affection, tenderness, regard.

The world at large calls on you for love, benevolence, charity.

Your God justly expects to receive the grateful tribute of a pure, a contrite heart.

Your blessed Saviour (who died for your sins, and rose again for your justification,) richly deserves your strong, your unshaken faith.

This sacred union of relative and social duty, of moral and divine virtue, constitutes the true spirit, the genuine essence of Christianity.

Arrayed in these strong and impenetrable arms, you may advance boldly to the throne of grace, and be enabled to do all things necessary



to salvation, through Christ, who will strengthen you.

And how comfortable, how transporting is this thought! The Son of God himself will infuse into every good and well disposed mind a portion of his holy spirit, to counteract the wickedness, and the malice of the world; and in all your combats with your spiritual enemy he will make you (if you are but constant to him) more than conquerors.

To conclude.—Knowing the critical situation in which you all stand in this world; knowing the exact proportion of duty which will be demanded of you, at the awful day of judgment; pursue the regular, the uniform path of integrity and virtue.

Remember, the scrutiny will be very strict, very severe. Not only your actions, but even your words and thoughts, will be examined.

Guard then your hearts with all diligence, and dare to be what you profess. Avoid all gross, and alas fatal deceptions. Deceptions which lead to present contempt and future ruin.

Let each, with an humble confidence, act fairly and honestly through the different scenes of this transitory state. Let all your conduct be directed with a view to serve mankind, and show forth in you the lively hopes of immortal

felicity, founded on the merits of a blessed Saviour. Amen.

Now, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and glory, and power, both now and for evermore.

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## SERMON XVI.

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ST. PAUL'S 1st EPISTLE to TIMOTHY,  
Chap. 3.—Verse 15.

*That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

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**ST.** Paul, observing the wavering dispositions, and erroneous opinions of many of his new converts on the subject of religion, embraces every opportunity that presented itself, of infusing into the minds of those who were to govern the Christian Church, the purest and the soundest principles. He had frequently noticed the cunning and artful attempts of the enemies of Christ to sow tares amongst the good wheat ; and their unwearied zeal in inculcating the absolute necessity of useless rites and ceremonies, in

opposition to that reasonable service which required mankind to worship God "in spirit, and in truth." To correct and reform such abuses as had made considerable progress at Ephesus, and in the neighbouring places; the apostle directs Timothy, whom he had placed over the Church, to be particularly cautious in delivering such sound doctrines of faith and manners, as may effectually declare the truth, as it is in Jesus; and powerfully convince all gainsayers. For this purpose, the characters of the several ministers in the Church of Christ, are particularly described; and that purity of conduct, and exemplary behaviour, which should accompany each, are in strong and forcible language pointed out; that Timothy might "lay hands suddenly on no man." This care was very necessary to prevent divisions and animosities, and to guard against the admission of improper persons into the ministry, who would have taught doctrines contrary to the faith in Christ, and subversive of all order and obedience amongst men. Anxiously wishing for the prosperity of the Christian cause; and, at the same time, desirous of giving as full an idea as possible of that holy society, which was to keep alive the pure flame of religion; nor suffer it ever to be quenched by the neglect, or inattention of its

votaries ; St. Paul, after a variety of admonitions relative to the conduct and administration of a good and wise pastor, adds, “ These thing write  
“ I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly ;  
“ but, if I tarry long, that thou mayest know  
“ thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of  
“ God, which is the *Church* of the living God,  
“ the *pillar* and the *ground* of the *truth*.”

Well may St. Paul call the Church of Christ, the *pillar*, and the *ground* of the *truth* ; being that holy assembly of the faithful ; dedicated to the honor and worship of the true God ; and fully instructed in all the important, and sacred truths of revelation. The Jewish temple, with all its external splendor, and magnificent apparatus, was not to be compared with the glory of the second temple, being the shadow only of the substance. And as for the gaudy shrines of heathen worship, they were the nurseries of ignorance, and superstition. Worldly policy, and not a true love of God, influenced the actions of those who taught a deluded people, all the folly, and madness of idolatry. But, in the *Christian Church*, the sacred voice of revelation calls on a guilty world, to repent, and believe ; promising salvation to all those, who, forsaking their sins, trust in the merits, and mercies, of a crucified Saviour. Here, no veil

is drawn over our eyes, to conceal the prospect of the future. No clouds, nor mists, nor darkness, obstruct our view of the truth. The “day star from on high hath visited us, and we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

But let us, with awful reverence, and pious gratitude, trace our most Holy Church to its original founder; and see, how far the apostle was justified in stiling it the *pillar*, and *ground of the truth*; and what reason we of the present day, have, to *honour*, and *support* it.

Our blessed Saviour, after his resurrection from the dead, continued forty days on earth, conversing with his disciples, and speaking to them of the things “pertaining to the Kingdom of God.” He then proceeded to the regular establishment of his Church. For this purpose, he appointed his apostles to meet him in a mountain in Galilee, that he might give them their commission, and such directions as were necessary for so important a trust. When they were assembled, in obedience to the commands of their beloved master, “Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven, and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them, in the name of the Father, and of the



“ Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them  
“ to observe all things, whatsoever I have com-  
“ manded you: and lo! I am with you alway,  
“ even unto the end of the world.”

It is to be observed, that, though our blessed Saviour’s disciples at this time were very numerous; the commission to preach the gospel, and administer the sacraments, was particularly given to the apostles, or eleven *chosen* disciples. *All* were not to engage in this arduous, and sacred office; but those only who were thus solemnly appointed; “ as my Father hath sent  
“ me, (said Christ,) so send I you.” Every one, therefore, is not to take on him the office of a teacher in the Church of Christ; or to look on himself as qualified to act as a minister of the gospel, from any *inward call*, which he may fancy he hears; unless by some *outward call* and legal appointment by the head of the Church he be duly authorised to officiate in the same, “ for no man taketh this office upon himself,  
“ but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”

Fully instructed, then, in the grounds, and principles of Christianity; and assisted in their spiritual welfare, by the sacred aid, and influence of the Holy Ghost, who brought all things to their remembrance, whatever their Lord, and master had said unto them; the holy apostles

with animated zeal, and pious confidence, preach the glad tidings of salvation to all who were disposed to hear them; and convert a wicked and perverse generation, from the error of their ways. The extraordinary effects produced by their doctrine, was visible, in the wonderful reformation which it wrought in all those who sincerely embraced it. From being the slaves of passion, they became the disciples of reason. Instead of being carried to and fro by every wind of doctrine; they adhered to the uniform, and sound principles of Christianity. Their former vicious course, and licentious conduct, was broken from, with that resolution and intrepidity, which faith in a crucified Redeemer naturally inspired; and, whilst the primitive converts subdued the violence of natural antipathies, and loved even those that hated them; whilst they extinguished the rancour of enmity by patience, of envy by humility, and of malignity by kindness; they bent in humble, and grateful acquiescence to those incomprehensible mysteries, which the Almighty had been pleased to conceal from his dependent creatures.

To preserve the essential, and peculiar doctrines of the gospel from corruption, the several Churches established by the apostles were placed under their respective bishops; and the priests,

and deacons officiated, as they were ordained to that sacred office. Thus the delusions of error were subdued by the powerful voice of religious truth; and the world was taught to seek for information on subjects of everlasting moment, and concern, where alone it could be found, in the Church of Christ.

Hence, it clearly appears, that St. Paul was justified in stiling the Christian Church, the *pillar*, and *ground* of the *truth*.

We will now see what reason we, of the present day, have, to honour, and support it.

“ To form a proper judgment of the Church,  
 “ we must take a view of its original plan,  
 “ established by its divine founder. Now, every  
 “ figure under which it is described has applica-  
 “ tion, not to a confused multitude of men,  
 “ independant of each other; but, to a regular  
 “ society under an appointed government. It  
 “ is a body having many members, of which  
 “ Christ is the head. It is a kingdom of which  
 “ Christ is the king. It is a family, of which  
 “ Christ is the master. It is a building fitly  
 “ framed together, built upon the foundation of  
 “ the prophets, and apostles, Jesus Christ him-  
 “ self being the chief corner stone.”

All these figurative expressions imply a religious society, deriving their power of life,

and action from one head, and principal. By consequence, *schism*, or a separation from the Church, and a setting up of teachers independent of its authority, and subversive of its unity, is a sin of the deepest dye. As such it must appear to all who reflect on the “solemn prayer addressed by our blessed Saviour to his father, almost immediately before his suffering; where, after having first prayed for those particular disciples, to whose immediate care, and direction, he thought fit to commit his Church, that they might be duly sanctified for the great work of their ministry, he thus proceeds; ‘Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, who shall believe on me; through their word; *that they all may be one*, as thou father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.’”

Whatever Church, therefore, preserves the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace; following the example of that holy society of *Christ's* forming, and not of *man's*, may expect the mercies, and the blessings of heaven. “Religion is a comprehensive system of faith and morality; faith, the ground work, and morality the superstructure of the Christian edifice. For we have no claim on our Maker,

“ but, by virtue of an act of grace, passed in  
“ our favor ; which act of grace contains cer-  
“ tain conditions, absolutely necessary to be  
“ performed, though by no means our *title* to  
“ salvation.”

The established Church, of which we are members, purified from the gross errors, and corruptions of Popery ; and preserving the original form, as instituted by the apostles, calls on us in the affectionate and persuasive language of its holy founder :—“ 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.  
“ For my yoke is easy, and by burden is light.”

And shall any of us separate from this holy communion, which our Saviour hath promised to be with alway, even unto the end of the world? Shall self-constituted ministers, “ teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” draw disciples after them, and call the societies they form, the Church of Christ? Is Christ divided? Or is that the Church of Christ, where his sacraments are not administered, and his priests rejected? It is much to be feared that many well meaning but unthinking persons, leave the Church, and connect themselves with

other religious societies, without suspecting the danger they incur, and the apostacy they are guilty of. The benefits of Christianity, can be had only in the Church of Christ; and the Church of Christ is one uniform, and regular body; not many scattered and divided parts, acting in opposition to each other, and producing endless confusion, and disorder. We therefore of the present day, who enjoy the light of the gospel of Christ, have every reason to honour and support his Church. We see the various attempts that are made, to weaken the bond that holds us together; and to divide those, who should be of one heart, and one mind. We are not ignorant that in proportion as our zeal in the Christian cause is exerted the rage and fury of our adversaries will encrease. If we abate our zeal, and neglect our duty, we shall most assuredly be deprived of those blessings we are unworthy to enjoy. The vineyard which we have neglected to cultivate, will be taken from us, and given to other husbandmen, who will bring forth the fruit thereof. To guard against these fatal errors, it will be a mark of wisdom to listen attentively to the voice of heaven, and follow, wherever it may call us. And whilst many, who are wise in their own conceits, wander about in unknown paths, without



either light to direct, or strength to support their steps, deceiving, and being deceived, let us, with hopes full of immortality, never leave nor forsake our Church, the *pillar*, and the *ground* of the *truth*.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, now and for ever.

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## SERMON XVII.

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ECCLESIASTICUS.—Chap. 38.—Verse 6.

*He hath given men skill.*

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**T**HE growth of pride, arrogance, and vanity, would be considerably checked, if the prosperous voyagers on the sea of life could be prevailed on to trace their success to its original source.

Whilst human cunning and ingenuity, (independent of the divine assistance,) is supposed to give rise to the different arts and sciences which flourish amongst us, the most sublime ideas of religion must be weakened and obscured.

Frail and imperfect mortals have nothing to boast of, with regard to their own powers and abilities; since “ every good, and every perfect “ gift is from above, and cometh down from the

“Father of lights.” We have nothing but what we received from heaven ; and we can effect nothing without *His* spiritual aid, who “worketh in us both to will and to do.”

The skill of the physician ; the penetration and discernment of the good and wise statesman ; and the refined excellence and perfection of the artist ; all flow from that gracious, that Almighty Being, who crowns well directed industry with success.

This is a truth so very clear and evident, that we find (even among the heathens) a firm belief in the superintendance and influence of the Deity on the minds and actions of men. And though some (with a degree of arrogance peculiar to human vanity,) attributed every successful enterprize to their own sagacity and prudence ; others (and they not a few,) referred every good, every prosperous event, to the overruling care and immediate power of Heaven.

One of the first orators and statesmen\* that Rome ever produced, after he had defeated a conspiracy, in its nature and design very similar to that which had nearly effected the ruin of the British Church and State, in the reign of the first James ; instead of imputing the success to his own diligence and activity, refers it

\* Cicero.

all to a superior power. It is pleasing to hear a Grecian\* chief, amidst the warmth of contention and debate, telling his antagonist, that if he possessed real and true courage, it was the gift of heaven, and therefore no proper subject for insolence and pride.

We could produce a variety of examples from Heathen History, to support the doctrine I am establishing; but what I have advanced is sufficient to prove, that in the school of *reason* human excellence was not supposed to proceed entirely from human means, but from that God “who giveth man skill.”

Since the gracious Revelation of the Gospel of Christ, we who live in this enlightened age can want no motives to strengthen and confirm our faith in this important article. In all our victories over temporal or spiritual enemies, we may justly exclaim, “I will not trust in my bow; it is not my sword that shall help me; but it is thou that savest us from our enemies, and puttest them to confusion that hate us. And therefore, not unto *us*, O Lord, not unto *us*, but unto thy name, be ascribed the honour, the glory, the praise.”

When Peter and John, (touched with pity, and moved with compassion towards a poor

\* Agamemon, Il. 1.

cripple, whom they beheld at the gate of the temple,) in a most wonderful manner, cured him of his infirmity ; all the people came about them in vast numbers, full of amazement. These holy men, fearing that their power of healing might be imputed to the effect of human art or skill, exclaim, “ Ye men of Israel, why  
“ look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our  
“ own power we had made this man to walk ?  
“ The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob,  
“ the God of our fathers, hath given him this  
“ perfect soundness in the presence of you all.”

When Paul and Barnabas restored to perfect health and spirits, a wretched and miserable object, who had been lame from his birth, they check the extravagant applause, and admiration of the astonished multitude, with this lively, this animated address, “ Sirs, why do ye these  
“ things? We also are men of like passions  
“ with you, and preach unto you that ye  
“ should turn from these vanities, unto the living  
“ God, which made heaven and earth, and the  
“ sea, and all things that are therein.”

Far from arrogating to themselves any degree of merit or consequence from the power imparted to them, they direct the whole attention of the gazing, the astonished multitude, to that divine, that almighty source of perfection, from

whence alone the sacred streams of health and comfort can ever flow.

In imitation of these great and good men, we shall do well not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think ; not to suffer wild, extravagant, and imperious thoughts, to subdue that humility and gratitude, which is the true criterion of piety and virtue.

When we contemplate and admire the knowledge, skill, and ingenuity, with which the three great and learned professions so amply abound ; let the successful practitioner seriously reflect to whom he is indebted for the success that crowns his labours.

If by the magical touch of solid reason and sound argument, the knotty points of law unfold their intricacies and latent mysteries ; if the book of science is opened by the ingenuity and dexterity of those who guard the sacred rights of our invaluable constitution, and on principles of honor, secure the property of the public ; let them always have a grateful sense of the goodness of their God, who blessed them with such superior talents ; and possessing the key of knowledge, let them honestly open the door of information to all those who in the present wicked and deceitful world are often led astray by their own imprudence, and by the delusions of ill men, and ill fortune.



As “the Lord hath created medicines out of the earth,” and often grants success to the labour and skill of the physician, it would be most horrid ingratitude to suppose that human sagacity alone could effect those wonderful cures, which the medical art frequently accomplishes. On seriously considering the nature, end, and design of medicine; on observing the wonderful construction of the human frame, and the many diseases to which we are all liable; and at the same time to reflect on the salutary effects of this extraordinary art; we cannot but admire the bountiful goodness of the Almighty, who has given such power unto men. A power to relieve the infirmities of our frail and sickly bodies; a power to restore the dying patriot to his afflicted country; the industrious father to his distressed family; and the tender, fond, and indulgent husband to his almost distracted wife.

They who from their medical skill have gained the favour and applause of mankind, should, (amidst the warmth of affluence, and the pleasure of success), look up with confidence and gratitude to that Being, who alone gave them those abilities which raise them so high in the esteem and admiration of the world.

The sacred ministers of the gospel of Christ will find it their duty, as well as interest, to give

all the merit which may originate from their poor and imperfect labours in the spiritual vineyard, to their Lord. They can want no motives to influence them in a belief that without the divine assistance they can do nothing effectually; and with it they can surmount the greatest difficulties, and subdue the most mighty opposition. So true is that expression of the holy Apostle, "We can do all things, through Christ, who strengtheneth us." Arrogance and presumption, in consequence of mental abilities, never appear with so ill a grace as within the pale of the Church. Humility, not pride, is the characteristic feature of a disciple of Christ. When the Apostles, after their mission, found their honest endeavours crowned with uncommon success; they return with joy to their divine master, and giving all the glory to his superintending care of them, they exclaim, "Lord, the very devils are subject to us, through thy power."

It behoveth, therefore, the ministers of Christ always to remember that their sufficiency is from above; and that they must discharge their respective duties, with the most extensive benevolence towards men, and the most unbounded gratitude towards God. Otherwise, they may chance (if carried away in the vortex of self-

consequence), after "having taught others, to  
"be themselves castaways."

All among us who support themselves and their families, by their several and respective occupations, will do well to remember from whom they receive those powers and capacities, which are the comfort and support of their lives. The wonderful provision that is made for the being and ease of society, calls loudly on us for the most grateful tributes of praise and thanksgiving. And that heart must be lost to all the soft and tender feelings of humanity, which can extract the sweets of a well directed industry, without bestowing one grateful thought on the source and fountain from whence they flow.

If these religious sentiments were properly impressed on the mind; if the causes of our well doing in life, were traced to their divine origin; how just should we be in our dealings towards each other! How pious in our acknowledgments to God! And how happy with all the world!

To conclude.—Knowing from whom we receive our different talents, which are at all times to be improved for the benefit of man, and the glory of God; let the moral and social virtues unite in forming that perfect character which

can alone recommend us to the favour of heaven. Having in view the great and awful day of judgment, when we are to give an exact account of our conduct in this life; and the manner in which we have improved those various powers that have been given us; we must never forget that *active* piety and virtue are the necessary and essential duties of a Christian.

If this rule be regularly observed, and each member of society should exert his utmost endeavours to act his part on the theatre of life with becoming dignity, and grace; then would this world, (which the *vices* of men might render an aceldema, or field of blood,) become, by their virtues, a paradise; and the golden age of the poets, would be no longer a fiction, but a reality.

Let us all, then, do our duty conscientiously, as the only means of being happy here, and blessed with a glorious immortality hereafter.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and power, both now and for evermore.

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## SERMON XVIII.

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ACTS of the APOSTLES.—Chap. 6.—Ver. 15.

*And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face, as it had been the face of an Angel.”*

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**T**HERE is something so base, so ungenerous in falsehood, that it is astonishing any person should so far forget the dignity of his nature, as to deal in it. Much low art and dirty cunning are necessary to complete the character of a deceiver; and where one is successful, hundreds are detected and exposed to ridicule, to contempt. Shall man, possessed of reason, and capable of connecting the interests of two worlds, in the gracious scheme of Christianity, obscure the brightness of that virtue which can alone secure him peace *here*, and immortality *here*

after? Shall he prostitute to the vilest purposes those talents, which were meant to raise him to the most exalted rank in the scale of created beings? Shall he sink to a level with the brutes, and become the slave of every mean, every sordid passion? Reason and nature revolt at the idea of such treason. Treason, against the laws of God, which require purity in thought, in word, and in action. Treason, against the common welfare of society, which can exist only by mutual confidence and mutual probity. But yet, however odious, or detestable falsehood may appear, neither the deformity of its features, nor the ruin which attends its steps, have been sufficient to check its progress. Do not our hearts burn with indignation and resentment, when we behold Gehazi secretly disposing of those treasures, which he obtained from the grateful Naaman, by making an improper use of his master's name? And how just do we allow his punishment to be, when we see him groaning under the dreadful leprosy, of which Naaman was a few hours before completely cured! No doubt he flattered himself that his treachery would be concealed; and that he should in secret enjoy the sweets of his falsehood; but ah! the triumphs of liars are but for a moment, and their torments last for ever.



When Christianity began to extend its genial influence over the world, and to warm the heart with unbounded charity, and universal benevolence. When the true disciples of a crucified master had all things in common, and from their respective property, formed one general stock, to relieve the distressed and to comfort all;—how are our feelings wounded, on viewing the duplicity and falsehood of Ananias and Sapphira! They give only a part of their substance, and wished to have the credit of giving every thing they possessed; hoping to be maintained out of the common fund, in a manner equal with those who had generously resigned all their effects. But, as the prophet Elijah detected the baseness of *his* servant; so the Apostles discovered the treachery of these pretended saints, and instant death was the consequence of their perfidy.

Such severe, such exemplary punishments were inflicted on three notorious offenders, whose lies, falsehood, and prevarications, had provoked the just resentment of an offended God. Let no daring sinner, (whose guilt is of a similar complexion), glory in his shame, because he is not immediately punished. Justice may slumber awhile, but will awake armed with redoubled fury and indignation. This world is only a passage to the next; and if for the present

moment, the liar should escape destruction, at the awful day of retribution, by his own words he will be either justified, or condemned. Never, then, in your dealings with each other depart from the purest principles of honour and honesty. Never deceive any one, with a view of promoting your present interest; as you may rest fully assured that however you may enjoy the fruits of deception for a season, in the end, the wages of sin will be endless misery and torment.

Let us now turn from the horrible and distorted features of falsehood, to the composed and exhilarating countenance of truth.

And here, what an amiable and captivating object presents itself to your view! At all times, and on all occasions, her power, and influence, are sacred and immortal. Every virtue pays her homage; and every vice shrinks from her penetrating looks, like darkness from the sun-beam. I may say of truth, as the animated writer does of wisdom; “she is more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold; she is sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are *peace* ;” such peace as results from a tranquil and composed mind;—such peace as flows from a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

And who would exchange such pure, such refined gold, for vile and sordid dross? Who would not rather triumph in the possession, and die in the support of her? Fear, self-interest, and a variety of low and dirty passions, have at all times opposed our progress through life; but she is more than conqueror through him, who is the *God* of truth, and who protects those who love and obey him.

As our blessed Saviour was giving sight to the blind, health to the sick, hearing to the deaf, strength to the lame, and happiness to all; a poor woman labouring under a severe infirmity touched the hem of his garment, and was immediately cured of her disorder. The Lord of life and death, knowing that virtue was gone out of him, enquired who it was that touched him; and here some surprise was expressed by one of the disciples, seeing so large a multitude around him. But she, whose faith was strong enough to depend on a cure, had too great a reverence for truth, not immediately to own the benefit she had received. When Peter and John are persecuted for their zealous attachment to the cause of Christianity; when they are brought before the Council, and severely reprimanded for speaking in the name of the Lord Jesus, they always confessed the truth, and never to save

their bodies, endangered their souls, by the least falsehood or prevarication. What was the consequence? They are cast into prison by an order of the council; and they are released by an angel from heaven. They are scourged with wanton cruelty; and they depart rejoicing, to think they were worthy to suffer for so good a master, and in so good a cause. No doubt our Saviour's declaration bore them up under the accumulated barbarity of their enemies; "blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are ye, when men revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad."

If we view with secret pleasure and admiration the perseverance of St. Peter and St. John, in the sacred cause of truth, how will our esteem and approbation be excited, by the zeal, integrity, and constancy of St. Stephen. His virtue, and his innocence, were strictly uniform and exemplary. His conduct as a deacon, was diligent, humane, charitable. By such a man, and such an orator, how would the sublime doctrines of Christianity have been opened to the feelings of those who hunger, and thirst after righteousness! How would he have explained to them

that comprehensive system of religion, which inculcates universal charity, love, and peace! How would he have assured them that all distinctions were at an end; that rites and ceremonies were abolished; that God was a spirit, and to be worshipped in spirit and in truth! But alas! his work of reformation was opposed with all the fury, that zeal without knowledge is apt to kindle in the breast of enthusiasm. Still he kept his ground, and with the shield of faith warded off all the subtle attacks of his enraged adversaries: still he continued to condemn those national prejudices, under which they groaned; and boldly preached salvation in the name and through the merits of Christ, only amidst the warmth of debate, and the rage of party, "All that sat in the council looking stedfastly on him, saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel."

From whence could proceed this extraordinary brightness, this wonderful brilliancy of countenance? From whence could be derived that dazzling splendor, which excited the attention and astonishment, even of his enemies? They were the rays of divine, of immortal truth, with which each feature of this good man was charged. They were the most convincing proofs of that rooted innocence, which nothing can shake,

terrify, or dismay. Had we seen the looks of his persecutors at this critical moment, how different would have been the appearance! In them we should have discovered eyes fired with indignation; cheeks glowing with resentment; mouths uttering the most abominable falsehoods; and hearts, agitated and convulsed with those dreadful passions, which sometimes, in a bad cause, war against the soul.

But, however the angelic appearance of the saint might have excited their attention, it did not in the least degree cool their displeasure; and the tide of popular prejudice flowed strong against him. Seeing to what severe extremities their rage would hurry them; and knowing that their vengeance would be satisfied with nothing but his death; he perished in urging the sacred cause of truth; and before he died the first and glorious martyr, it pleased the Almighty to give him, in a vision, a foretaste of those refined joys which were to reward his fidelity, constancy, and perseverance.

From what has been said, you may learn this necessary and important lesson, that it is far better to die in the defence of truth than to triumph for a season in the success of falsehood. A man of strict veracity and principle, amidst all his troubles and afflictions, will receive com-



fort and support from heaven ; whilst the liar is universally hated and despised, and always carries about him the worst of torments, a guilty conscience. Duplicity in youth, becomes perfidy in manhood, and rooted villany in old age. They who sport with lies in that soft and tender season, when the mind is capable of receiving any impression, will be ripe for any degree of wickedness when they enter on the great theatre of the world. They who sacrifice their truth at the altar of falsehood, will make no scruple (when an opportunity offers) to sacrifice either their country or their friend, if their own interest require so precious a victim.

Be always therefore on your guard, and as every idle word is to be accounted for in the next world, (before that Almighty Judge, who seeth not as man seeth, but who knoweth the most secret thoughts and intentions of your hearts), never deviate, in the least degree, from the strictest veracity. “ I have no greater pleasure” (writes St. John in one of his Epistles) “ than to hear that my children walk in the *truth.*” What the holy Apostle says to his Christian converts, may with the greatest propriety be said by all parents, guardians, and masters. Your characters are your only honourable passports through this life, and your only security for eternal happiness in a better.

If you make shipwreck of truth, you make shipwreck of a good conscience ; and not only forfeit the favour and protection of men, but the love and kindness of God.

If you adhere to truth, the Almighty will of his goodness guard and defend you in every trial of your fidelity and constancy, as he did the apostles Peter and John ; or he will infuse into your souls such heavenly comforts as shall make you smile (like the expiring martyr) in the moment of death.

To conclude. May these considerations make a deep, a lasting impression, on your hearts ; so that seeing the beauty of truth, and the deformity of falsehood, you may with one consent exclaim, in the animated language of the Psalmist, “ As for lies, we hate and abhor them ; but thy law, do we love.”

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and power, both now and for evermore.

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## SERMON XIX.

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ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.—Chap. 5.—Verse 25.

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God : and they that hear, shall live.*

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**T**HE doctrines, and the miracles of our blessed Saviour, proved him to be the true, and the expected Messiah. Prejudice indeed, of that strong, and inflexible nature, which possessed the Jews, endeavoured to throw obstacles in the way of his ministry ; and retard the beneficial effects of his teaching. An humble, and a suffering Messiah was a character very opposite to that which the Jews expected in their king. And whilst the ideas of temporal grandeur, and royalty, were playing around their imagination, the mother of Zebedee's children came to Christ, and requested him to grant, that her two sons

might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on the left, in his kingdom. Nothing could more clearly point out the error into which they had fallen, than this desire. But, the blindness, and infatuation of the scribes, and pharisees, led them to draw conclusions, respecting the conduct, and actions of our Saviour, the most strange, and unaccountable. His benevolence, and mercy, instead of moving their hearts, and affection, to love, and adore him, excited their displeasure, and hatred. And when he cured a man on the *sabbath day*, of an infirmity, under which he had suffered “ thirty “ and eight years, the Jews persecuted him, “ and sought to slay him.” Such treatment as this, from those who were repeatedly eye witnesses of his goodness, and miracles, drew from our blessed Redeemer, this mild, and gentle answer “ my father worketh hitherto, and “ I work ;” my father, whom ye ostentatiously pretend to worship, is *daily* pouring his benefits on the sons of men; though he instituted the *sabbath* in commemoration of his having rested the seventh day from his great, and glorious work, the creation of the world; and I, who have received my commission from him, without regarding your ritual and ceremonial observances, to which the eternal laws of God have

a prior, and superior claim, exercise myself, constantly, and uniformly, in doing good to the bodies, and souls of men.

Thus obviating their prejudice, and their malice against him, for a *supposed* violation of of the sabbath, by an act of the greatest mercy; he assures them, that the reception of him, as the true Messiah, was a duty of too serious a nature to be rejected. That faith in God, strengthened by faith in Christ, would rescue them from condemnation; and prepare them for everlasting life, and happiness; and however violent *their* passions, or *their* obstinacy might be, in resisting evidence so strong, and powerful, the voice of divine truth would not always remain *unheard*. In pressing on them the necessity of a calm, sober, and rational belief, he thus addresses their feelings, and their understanding: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and *now is*, when "the *dead* shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that *hear*, shall *live*."

In this declaration of our Saviour, *the dead*, that shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and *live*, are not the dead that shall be summoned from their graves, at the general resurrection. Were that the meaning, his expressions would have been very different. His words are,

“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is  
“ coming, and *now is*, when the *dead* shall hear  
“ the voice of the Son of God : and they that  
“ *hear*, shall *live*.” It is not altogether confined  
to a future period ; but the hour *is coming*, and  
*now is*. At this present time, the *dead* shall  
hear the voice of the Son of God, and *live*.  
Who then are the dead here spoken of ? Who  
are intended by those who shall thus live, *being*  
*dead* ? All those who had walked in the dark-  
ness, and shadow of death. All those of whom  
St. Paul speaks in the second chapter of his  
epistle to the Ephesians, when he writes *thus* :  
“ And you hath he *quicken*ed who were *dead* in  
“ trespasses, and sins. Wherein, in time past,  
“ ye walked according to the course of this  
“ world, according to the prince of the power  
“ of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the  
“ children of disobedience.” These are the  
*dead* who had been buried for ages in ignorance,  
idolatry, and the most abominable wickedness,  
who should “ *hear* the voice of the Son of God ;”  
*hear* the sacred sound of his holy gospel ; and  
sincerely repenting of their sins, *live* a life of  
grace, holiness, and obedience to the laws of  
Christ. But, the *dead* to whom our Saviour  
alludes, when he says, the hour *now is*, that  
they shall *hear* the voice of the Son of God, and



*live*, are those who were *immediately* attending to him, and his doctrines. Who saw the divine complacency that illumined his countenance ; heard the mysterious truths of the redemption of lost man as they came from his mouth ; and being *convinced* by what they saw, and what they heard, instantly awoke from the *death* of sin, to a *life* of righteousness. Such were the many converts to Christ, when his ministry commenced ; and he came to call sinners to repentance. Such were those who forsook all, and followed him ; forsook the pleasures, the vanities, and the riches of this world, in the pursuit, and love of which, they were *dead* to every sense of virtue and religion. The change in their conduct was such, that it effected a moral resurrection, and raised them to newness of life. They no longer continued in a torpid, and indolent state of stupidity, and wickedness ; but, roused from their *deadly lethargy*, they became active soldiers under the banner of Christ ; and fought the good fight of faith, with sincerity of heart, and unshaken perseverance.

To these Christian disciples, both present and future, our blessed Saviour frequently points, in his discourses to those, whom he addresses ; as, when, foreseeing the multitudes that were disposed to listen to the voice of

evangelical truth, whenever an opportunity should offer for their instruction, he saith, “ the harvest truly, is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” And speaking of the earnest and eager manner of those who, with fervent zeal and anxious desire, would press for admittance into the Christian Church, he uses this very strong expression, “ the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” And when the seventy whom Christ commissioned to preach the gospel, had been successful in their ministry, “ they returned again with joy, saying, Lord, the very devils are subject to us, through thy name.” And he said unto them, “ I beheld Satan, as lighting fall from heaven.” I beheld the kingdom of Satan founded on lies and hypocrisy, crumbling away to one general mass of ruin; and all his arts and delusions, whereby the world has been so long, and so fatally deceived, laid open, exposed, and defeated.

And were not the thousands, and tens of thousands, led captive by the malicious cunning, and wily craftiness of the devil, literally *dead in sin*? Were they not so deeply and so sadly sunk in vice, that nothing could release them

but the voice of the son of God? The reformation therefore that took place in the depraved and corrupted hearts of mankind during our Saviour's ministry, and that which followed on the preaching of his holy apostles, clearly and fully explains to us, who are intended by the *dead* that shall *hear* the voice of the Son of Man, and *live*.

The words of our Saviour being thus opened to our understanding, we will now consider how far a proper attention to them may be of the greatest advantage to ourselves, who enjoy the glorious light of revelation. We are to consider that all those who were deprived, or rather, who never enjoyed, the advantage and benefit of the Christian religion, were in a situation the most melancholy and deplorable. Reason, which should have been their guide and director, proved too weak to be either the one, or the other; owing to the violence, and impetuosity of the passions, which hurried those who were subject to them, into the most extravagant follies and excesses. They were, therefore, spoken of as *dead, dead* to every sense of virtue and integrity. To people in such a state of vice and infamy, how comfortable must have been the voice of salvation from sin, and *eternal death*, which the gospel uttered?

To those, who were wandering, without any person to put them in the right way, or inform them where real safety might be procured, how satisfactory must have been the call of our blessed Saviour, "come unto me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." The prophet Isaiah wishing to imprint on the mind a proper idea of the gospel covenant; and, at the same time, to shew the difference between our situation in a state of sin, and a state of grace, thus forcibly expresses himself: "The people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light; and they that dwell in the land of the *shadow of death*, upon them, hath the light shined." *Darkness* and the *shadow of death* appears to the inspired writer to convey a just and proper notion of *their* condition who were left to the guidance of uninstructed reason; and *light* shining in the darkness, and dissipating all its gloomy horrors, seems to the same writer a fit resemblance of the effect produced by the *reception* of evangelical truth. Nothing can more strongly represent to us *both situations*. We feel, we see, we acknowledge, the comparison to be correct, in all its parts. And the more we reflect on the follies and the vices of mankind before the coming of Christ; and the wonderful alteration that took place in the

morals of the world, after his mission; the more we are convinced, that the former state was like a state of *death*, and the latter state, a *newness of life*. A state that produced in all those who were sincere in their professions, and regular in their practice, such a visible sign of regeneration, as nothing could altar or weaken.

If such prove to be the consequences of the publication of the gospel; and if they to whom it was first preached felt its divine influence so strongly operating on their hearts, and minds, that from being sensual, they became moral; and from being sinners, they became saints; how ought we of the present day to be affected? We who live under the most mild and gentle government, which cherishes every principle of true and pure religion; and which encourages the growth of genuine piety and faith in the merits and death of a crucified Saviour. Surely we ought to profit by the example of those who are gone before us; and listening to the voice of the Son of God, become converts to that system of revealed truth, which he came from Heaven to make known to a guilty world. Let us remember, that in the infancy of Christianity, all those who were ignorant of its value, and had never seen its glorious and wonderful light, were deeply buried in the dark and gloomy grave of sin. We, on the

contrary, see its most beneficial effects every day. We can observe its silent and serious operations on the charities of life ; whilst it produces “ glory to God ; on earth peace, and good “ will towards men.” Let us not then be of the number of those, who, amidst all the spiritual advantages they enjoy, “ heap up unto themselves wrath, against the day of wrath, and “ revelation of the righteous judgment of God ; “ who will render to every man according to his “ deeds. To them, who by patient continuance “ in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality ; eternal life. But unto them “ that are contentious, and do not obey the “ truth, but obey unrighteousness, indigna- “ tion and wrath ; tribulation and anguish, “ upon every soul of man, that doeth evil, “ of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.”

To awake us from a fatal, and most alarming lethargy ; and to prevent our sinking, as it were insensibly, into the *grave* of *sin* ; let the strong and most powerful expression of St. John, in his revelation, be deeply imprinted on our hearts : “ Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the “ *first resurrection* ; on such the *second death* hath “ no power.” Hence, it appears, that we must all *exert* ourselves to the utmost of our power to have a part in the *first resurrection*, i. e. a resurrection of the soul, whilst we are in this mortal



state, from the *death* of sin and unbelief; or never blessed, never holy, we shall be doomed to everlasting punishment, at the *second resurrection*, “when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. When this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.” A consideration this, so very weighty, and so very interesting, as to induce “all, who call on the name of Christ, to depart from evil;” to depart from the contracted pollutions of the world, and cultivate that heavenly temper and disposition of mind, which “perfects holiness, in the fear of the Lord.” To reflect for a moment on our present situation; how much we have to do to be saved, and how careless and indifferent we are in doing it; will serve to stimulate our future conduct, and give faith the victory over each sensible object, however gay, delusive, and powerful. But if this serious and earnest reflection, be laid asleep by the follies and vices of a wicked life, our condition after death will be most wretched and deplorable.

To conclude.—Having such great advantages as we possess, in seeing the correct path of duty, in which we ought to walk and please God; let none of us “perish, through an evil heart, of unbelief.” Let us not only break from the *grave* of sin *ourselves*; but exhort others, who

are gone astray, to follow our example. Let us keep fresh in our memory, this passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, "He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace."

Our future salvation, through the merits of Christ, is not to be treated but as a subject of the first moment and consequence; and we should each ask ourselves the following questions. Am I as sincere in my duty to God and my neighbour, as I ought to be? Do I strive, as far as human frailty will allow, to unite faith with practice? And do I endeavour to lead those into the way of salvation, who have wandered into the mazes of error and wickedness? If, in answering these questions, our hearts condemn us not, then may we have confidence towards God; then may we "reckon ourselves to be *dead* indeed unto *sin*, but *alive* unto *God*, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and power, and glory, for ever, and ever.

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## SERMON XX.

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ST. MATTHEW.—Chap. 26.—Verse 39.

*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

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**I**T has ever been the study of philosophy to sooth the loud throbs of affliction, and calm the tumultuous and agonizing pangs of distress; but, no medicine which she could prepare fully answered her wishes or design. Whether the variety of the schemes proposed, or the want of substance and solidity, in every one of them, obstructed her success, she was never able to speak peace to the sorrowful, or administer comfort to the wretched and miserable. All her arguments being drawn from speculation, and reared on a basis too sandy for a firm and permanent structure, she glided into delusion, and was lost in

error. To some she recommended a rigid and stern apathy, under the severe pressure of pain and grief; and would have persuaded them to believe, that feeling existed only in idea. Others she advised to rush with brutal and savage violence out of the world, that their calamities and their being might end at one and the same awful period. It would be tedious and disgusting to enumerate the long train of doctrines which at different times she introduced into the world, and which had their respective followers, not one of which possessed the sovereign remedy, which afflicted and disconsolate human nature stood so much in need of. What are opinions and sentiments, however finely worded, or elegantly expressed! Can animated language, or brilliant oratory, without some strong and powerful support from an Almighty Creator, give strength to our hopes, or quicken our zeal? Can airy and unsubstantial promises, which have no effect on those who deliver them, operate on the minds or inclinations of those who receive them? It cannot be that "opposition of science falsely so called," should ever teach us our duty, or enable us to discharge it with decency and propriety.

Christianity alone points out to us the line of conduct we may with safety, and with honor,

pursue. Equally an enemy to indifference and to violence, she instructs us to cultivate that mild and placid temper of mind, which gives us strength in the time of adversity, and patience in the season of affliction. She does not call on us to conceal or dissemble our feelings, or suppose what is real to be only imaginary; but she recommends to us a steady confidence in God, when all human means are ineffectual, and the necessity too urgent to be resisted.

In the last trying scene of that distress, which our sins brought on a most gracious and merciful Redeemer, “who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities,” we have an example of the most sublime virtue, fortitude, and resignation. To that pattern of divine perfection our eyes are ever to be directed, that, in all circumstances of complicated distress, we may neither *sink* under our troubles, nor impiously *break* from them in disgust.

Though his *divine* nature was incapable of suffering, yet, in his *human* nature, he was “touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are, yet, without sin.” His heart, susceptible of the most tender impressions, which often called forth the silent sigh, or pitying tear, was at

all times awake to the most benevolent and generous sentiments. He wept over his unhappy and devoted country ; and in silent, but expressive sorrow, shewed his friendship and his love for the departed Lazarus. A mind so tender and apprehensive, could not but shrink back from the accumulated horrors of a most ignominious death, and shun the dreadful conflict. Hence, his agony in the garden, when “ he “ prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was, as “ it were, drops of blood falling down to the “ ground.” Hence, that strong and feeling exclamation, “ O my Father, if it be possible, “ let this cup pass from me : nevertheless, not “ as I will, but as thou wilt.”

What must human nature, though so highly dignified in the person of Christ, have felt at this moment, to express itself in language so earnest and powerful? And what must have been the impression made on the heart, which thus discovered its fears and its aversion? The scene was critical and awful ; and the innocent sufferer viewed it with that fixed, that steady composure which nothing but virtue could inspire, and purity of heart sustain. When the the wrath of God in all its terrors surrounded him, the thoughts of so severe and bitter a position, made him wish for the removal of the



deadly cup, if it were possible to save mankind from the baneful effects of sin and death, without his drinking it. If in the councils of heaven any plan for our redemption could have been formed, by which his agonies and tortures might have been avoided, the meek and humble Jesus implored his Father to adopt it. Such is the real and true voice of nature, which then spake in the Son of God incarnate. Such are the sentiments and such the language of mortals, when sorrow and distress approach them in forms too ghastly and terrific. But, though our blessed Saviour was desirous that the cup of affliction might pass from him, it was only with the approbation of his heavenly Father, and *his* will was to determine the whole action, “nevertheless, not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt.” Such resignation to the decrees of God, and such unbounded love and mercy towards a sinful world, did he display, when he offered himself up as a lamb without spot or blemish, that he might “purge us from all sin, and purify unto himself “a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

In all the various and trying circumstances into which our Saviour was thrown, by the malicious designs, and artful contrivances, of his many and enraged enemies, his conduct was uniform and steady. Whenever a mode of

escape presented itself, consistent with self-preservation, and that love of safety and of life, which we all possess, he readily embraced it; but when firmness and resolution were necessary, he spake "as never man spake before," to the dismay and confusion of his opposers, and to the comfort and support of his real and true friends.

As man, he felt, and he suffered all that our nature is capable of feeling and suffering, with this important difference, that innocence mitigated the poignancy of *his* sufferings, which were borne for the benefit and inestimable advantage of others; whilst the sting of sin adds acrimony and bitterness to all *our* afflictions. In his whole behaviour during his ministry, and at the awful close of the wonderful and mysterious scene, he has left us an "example that we should follow his steps who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

At whatever distance we may follow, or attempt to imitate so exact a pattern of goodness and virtue, the attempt is to be made; since our Saviour himself hath taught us to be "perfect, as our Father who is in Heaven, is perfect;"

and he never would have given us the precept, if the practice of it, in some degree or other, had not been possible. Nor should the splendour and brightness of the great original, prevent all human endeavours to produce a copy, a copy indeed, which, if executed with our utmost diligence and skill, must be charged with many, and prominent defects. Still, however, amidst all the weakness and timidity, to which the sons of men are heirs, there have sometimes appeared those who seem to have fixed their attention (in the most trying and interesting moments) on the conduct of their blessed Saviour.

When the martyr, St. Stephen, after he had experienced the most gross and repeated insults, was about to yield to the fury and insatiable prejudice of his enemies, he never lost sight of the mild spirit, and pious resignation, of the humble Jesus; but he “ called upon God, “ and said, Lord Jesus receive my spirit.— “ And he kneeled down, and cried with a “ loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their “ charge. And when he had said this, he fell “ asleep.”

So closely did this good man wish to imitate his Redeemer in praying for, and forgiving his persecutors; and in the most humble submission to the will of heaven.

That great champion in the cause of Christianity, St. Paul, appears to have had in view our Saviour's address to his weeping and disconsolate disciples, on his informing them of the expediency of his departure, when he told the Ephesian clergy at Miletus, that "bonds and afflictions awaited him," and added, "but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God." In all his actions, and in that unwearied zeal which he displayed in the Christian cause, St. Paul never lost sight of the "Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." To animate the Hebrews, and enable them to support the bitter conflicts to which their profession might expose them, he calls on them to consider the blasphemies that were directed against the doctrine, and the reproaches that were thrown on the person of Christ, "who endured such contradiction of sinners, against himself, lest they be wearied and faint in their minds;" and he tells them "ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin," intimating that they had not suf-

ferred the worst that their adversaries might inflict ; and to give out before they had made a proper resistance, would be unworthy their great and glorious cause. “ Resisted unto blood,” is an agonistical term, it being the most scandalous thing, for any combatant to give out, before any blood was drawn.

From what has been observed, we may learn to arm ourselves with the shield of faith, which will effectually repel all the fiery darts of the wicked. And though our situation in life (from circumstances the most unexpected, and from causes the most intricate) should be particularly calamitous, we have it in our power to lighten the weight and lessen the pressure of distress and sorrow, by a pious hope, and steady trust in Almighty God. When James and John requested of our Saviour that they might sit one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom, he asked them if they were able to drink of the cup that he should drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that he should be baptized with, intimating, that the road to true glory and happiness lay through the most severe and acute sufferings. That our blessed Redeemer was made perfect through sufferings his whole life, from the manger to the cross, fully declares. And that in his sorrows and

afflictions, the love of his Heavenly Father soothed and comforted him, is very clear and evident, from the celestial messengers sent to minister unto him after his temptation in the wilderness; and from the angel who strengthened him during his most bitter agony in the garden.

And can any of us doubt the affection, or loving kindness of God towards his creatures, if they strive to do their duty, and persevere unto the end?

Sorrows, and troubles, and afflictions we must all expect, and if they surround us; we must wait the appointed season of deliverance, and by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and immortality. And a scene of future and eternal happiness is a reward too excellent to be bestowed on any but those, whose indefatigable labours and sufferings justify their claim.

Let us, therefore, in all our troubles and miseries here below, “commit the keeping of our souls  
“to God, in well doing, as unto a faithful  
“Creator.”

Now, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and power, both now and for evermore.



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## SERMON XXI.

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4th Chapter of ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE  
COLOSSIANS, latter part of the 18th Verse,  
you have this word,

*Amen.*

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**WHAT** sight can be more pleasing, or more agreeable to the Creator, than to view an assembly of his creatures pouring forth the grateful tribute of praise and thanksgiving for mercies already received, and imploring his kind favour and assistance on their imperfect, but sincere endeavours after righteousness for the future? And what can be more worthy rational and dependent mortals, than thus to adore that Almighty Being who "is about their path, and about their bed, and spieth out all their ways?" Who has promised, that when two

or three are gathered together in his name, there will he be in the midst of them : who has assured us, that whatever we ask in prayer with a faithful and true heart, he will (out of his bounty and goodness) bestow it on us.

To promote this sacred, this important duty, all nations of the earth, from the very infancy of creation, have in some degree or other aspired. The voice of nature, with rude, but unaffected eloquence, summoned her children to unite in a religious homage to that great, that wonderful benefactor, who gave them all things richly to enjoy : who sent his gracious rains to refresh and invigorate the teeming earth, making the vallies thereof laugh and sing.

When reason united her strong and salutary powers to correct the rudeness and asperity of natural worship, the Deity received a sacrifice more pure, more refined : but still, nor nature, nor reason, were of themselves sufficient to oppose the wild torrent of error and superstition, which (at a very early period) flowed in upon the Church.

Seeing the imperfections of human nature, and the weakness of frail, unassisted reason, it pleased the father of the universe to give his creatures a nearer and more distinct view of his glorious attributes, his divine perfections. He

removed that thick cloud of darkness which obscured, and dimmed the eyes of men, and gave them sufficient powers to know him as their parent, their benefactor, and their friend.

For this purpose we find him conversing with his holy patriarchs; inspiring his sacred prophets; and at different times manifesting himself by visible signs and wonders, to his faithful people.

Under these various declarations of the divine will, you will trace, with a religious veneration and awe, the united devotions of men, upheld and supported by the immediate hand of Providence.

Now, if this gradual display of almighty love fills your hearts with gratitude and admiration, how ought you to rejoice and triumph at the last and most perfect revelation of himself, which he has made by his son!

A revelation, whose marvellous and glorious light has effectually dispersed that gross darkness which covered the world! A revelation which frees our timid and doubtful minds from all uneasiness, and furnishes us with every means of doing our duty properly as rational creatures, animating us to obedience by the most noble rewards.

To keep up a lively sense of our duty to God;

to secure these great, these permanent blessings to us; our Church has in her wisdom compiled that form of prayer which we have all this day devoutly used, in addressing our great and common benefactor. I need not here point out the religious fervency and ardour with which our holy liturgy glows. I need not describe the vein of pure, of unaffected piety which runs through the whole, animating us to a strong, a lively faith, and raising each thought to heaven.

It is not my design to illustrate, or dwell on beauties, which you must all be acquainted with, but to speak of the manner we use, in applying them to the soul's comfort.

On these solemn occasions, when we meet as children of the same Almighty Father, heirs of the same salvation, and candidates for the same heavenly Jerusalem; how ought our minds to be composed, our hearts purified, and our whole conduct uniform, regular, and devout!

The minister, as shepherd of his flock, ever watchful for their present and future happiness; ever anxious to draw them from the barren waste of sin, and lead them to the pure, the healing streams of spiritual comfort, pours forth with strong, with animated zeal, the prayer in behalf of his humble and contrite brethren. To the God of heaven, (who seeth not as man

seeth,) he pours the prayer, and at the close you all say amen, *i. e.*, so be it. Be it unto us agreeable to the petition, which, in the *name* of all, you have offered up *for* all; be it unto us, agreeable to the kind, the affectionate assurance of that supreme, that all gracious being, who has promised to hear them, that ask in his son's name; be it unto us, agreeable to the expectations of those miserable, those penitent sinners, who are turning from the error of their ways, and who look up to the cross of Christ for help, for salvation.

But what shall we say of those who look on religion, as mere form and ceremony? Who treat it (as they would a very distant relation) with a little outward compliance and cool respect?

Are there not many whose ideas and notions of piety are confined within very narrow bounds? Whose contracted hearts, never expand with that generous, that benevolent warmth, which a true love of the Deity always inspires? Who suppose that a weekly oblation of the *lips*, (for the heart seems little concerned,) is all that is required of us?

Are there not many, who, like the pharisees of old, place the whole merits of virtue in externals? Who vainly imagine, that if they

keep up appearances, and clean the outside of the dish, they discharge properly the sacred and important duties of a Christian ?

But, if as Saint Paul justly observes, no person can with any degree of propriety or satisfaction cry *amen*, to one, who prays in an unknown tongue, not feeling himself at all interested in a subject of which he is perfectly ignorant ; by parity of reason, the faint and languid *amen* of those who have been totally inattentive to every other part of the service, will, in the end, prove alike useless, absurd, ineffectual.

Can any of you suppose, that the world itself possesses any magical power to charm away sin ? Do you look on it as a certain talisman, which comprehends the whole system of piety and virtue ? Is it of that sovereign efficacy, that healing quality, as to cure the depravity and corruption of the heart, by being pronounced without any care, attention, or regard ?

Strange as the idea may appear, it is to be feared it really exists, and that there are many " who have ears and hear not, eyes and see not, neither understand in their hearts" the true end and design of public prayer.

To correct this careless mode of acting in an affair of the utmost consequence to your future happiness ; to guard against a delusion so fatal



in its progress, and so pernicious in its effects; you will do well to observe, that God seeth not as man seeth. Your hearts, and not your looks, your actions and not your words, are to recommend you to his favour and protection.

Sacrifices and oblations lose all their weight, all their merit, unless sanctified by a life of active piety and virtue.

How often were the vain and useless ceremonies of mankind condemned by the prophets of old! How often did they urge the necessity of good actions, in opposition to the formality and parade of religion, to which they were particularly addicted.

As the service that is required of you is a *reasonable* service, such as it becomes penitent and contrite sinners to offer; and such as we are fully assured in the gospel, will be accepted through the merits of Christ; never lose so great so inestimable a reward, for want of proper care and attention. Never let the form, the shadow of godliness, supply the place of the substance. Never suffer your hearts to be corrupted by the influence of the devil and his angels, whilst with your mouths you give praise to the Lord. The primitive Christians were particularly careful in observing the utmost decency and decorum in their public assemblies. They behaved with

all that reverence, humility, and respect, which the divine attributes of the Deity naturally inspired. They considered the eye of the Almighty as inspecting every action, and tracing the secret, the invisible workings of their hearts. They considered his amazing love and goodness in redeeming them from all sin, and (as in gratitude bound), were particularly zealous of good works. They were of one heart, and one mind, whilst benevolence and universal charity, added strength to their virtue and piety. So amiable, pure, and uncorrupted was the Christian Church in its infant state. A Church, in all respects correspondent to that noble doxology which ushered in the advent of its illustrious, its immortal founder, "Glory be to God on high, in earth peace, good will towards men."

Let us imitate these great, these glorious examples. As we know the terms on which eternal salvation is to be obtained, (repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,) let us discharge each duty with sincerity and with candour.

The advice of the wise king is particularly applicable to these our solemn meetings; "keep thy foot when thou goest in the house of the Lord, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not that

“ they do evil.” And the sacrifice of fools you most certainly give, when your mouths speak without the approbation of the heart ; when your eyes are lifted to the regions above, and your thoughts are centred in the world below.

To conclude. May the duty which I have been endeavouring to recommend to your observation and practice, appear in its true and proper light. May all your thoughts, words, and actions, unite in forming a regular and uniform character ; such a character as suits the disciple of Christ, a member of his Church on earth, and (as you each trust to be) a future inheritor of his kingdom in heaven.

May you all in “ such wise hear, read, mark, “ learn, and inwardly digest the holy scriptures,” that after this troublesome world shall end, you may enjoy the blessed fruits of your pious conduct, and be admitted into the mansions of everlasting happiness ; there to reign with the spirits of just men made perfect, for ever and ever. Amen.

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## SERMON XXII.

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ST. MARK.—16th Chap.—19th Verse.

*After the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.*

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**AS** a true Christian faith, and such as is available to our eternal salvation, implies an undissembled and entire confidence in the revealed will and promises of God; no one can expect to enjoy the benefits of redemption, who does not strive, to the utmost of his power, to perform the conditions annexed to those unspeakable benefits. Nor is it necessary, that the foundation of our faith should be ocular demonstration, but we are to rest satisfied with the testimony of others, concerning events of which they themselves were competent judges. This doctrine is so very clear and undisturbed

to the eye of reason, that it admits not of a doubt ; and unless it be allowed its proper force and weight, all evidence whatever must fall to the ground. That human nature is frail and imperfect, and that the mind of man, with all its acquired knowledge and wisdom, is apt to draw hasty conclusions, cannot be denied. Experience too often rises in opposition to our desires, when we would fondly confer on shining abilities, that light and strength which they do not always possess. The light of reason is one thing, and the light of revelation is another. And where the latter shines on us without the least mist or cloud, to obscure its brightness, the dim rays of the former must in a certain degree be lost in a superior blaze.

To *correct* a natural disposition to doubt, on subjects of awful moment and importance, when related by those, who could not be deceived themselves, nor were desirous of deceiving others, was the anxious wish of our most blessed Saviour ; and he had frequent cause of exhorting his disciples to exercise their faith. Though he had frequently taught them to expect events the most astonishing, and at the same time the most beneficial, yet, when those events took place, they were timid and wavering in forming their judgments concerning them.

Thus, after our Saviour's resurrection, " Mary  
" Magdalen went and told *them*, that had been  
" with him, as they mourned and wept, and  
" when they *heard* that he was alive, and had  
" been seen of *her*, they believed not." Instead  
of being all joy and transport, at the sound of  
such good tidings, they were too disconsolate  
and too doubtful to give the least credit to her  
words. After that, he appeared in another form  
unto two " of them, as they walked, and went  
" into the country. And *they* went and told it  
" unto the residue, neither believed **THEY**  
" *them*." Even this further evidence, which  
one is induced to suppose would have made a  
very deep impression on their minds, was not of  
sufficient force to influence their faith. After-  
ward, when the intelligence of his resurrection  
communicated by Mary Magdalene, and the  
information of it, given by the two others, did  
not produce that belief which was necessary,  
" he appeared unto the eleven, as they sat at  
" meat, and *upbraided* them with their unbelief,  
" and hardness of heart, because they believed  
" not them, which had seen him, after he  
" was risen." To believe in his resurrection  
from the dead, because they themselves now  
really and truly saw him, was not that faith  
which our Saviour expected to receive from his



disciples. The promise which he had repeatedly made them, in his life time, of rising again, should have convinced them, that the event had taken place agreeably to the declaration of those who had seen him alive. And this severe reproof of their beloved master must have had a powerful influence on their subsequent conduct and ministry; since, when he commissioned them, to “ go into all the world, “ and preach the gospel to every creature,” he at the same time mentioned the extraordinary protection and miraculous powers that should await them. “ These signs (said he) shall follow them that believe: in my name they shall “ cast out devils, they shall speak with new “ tongues, they shall take up serpents; and “ if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not “ hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, “ and they shall recover.” Such an assurance of divine help, in circumstances the most critical, when the glory of God and the welfare of man were immediately concerned, produced effects the most beneficial, and most wonderful. “ So then, after the Lord had spoken unto “ them, he was received up into heaven, and “ sat on the right hand of God.”

Having given instructions to his disciples with respect to their future conduct in life; and

having pointed out to them in what manner his religion was to be propagated ; and with what strength they themselves were to be endued, in order, effectually, to accomplish the gracious design of man's redemption ; our blessed Saviour visibly ascended into heaven, having all power committed unto him in heaven and earth, for the good of his Church.

This important fact being fully ascertained, it will be our bounden duty and interest to derive an immediate benefit from the consideration of so awful a subject. The resurrection and the ascension of our Saviour, so nearly concern all those who profess Christianity, that to be satisfied of its truth, is a matter of the first consequence. And to acquire this satisfaction, we have no difficulties to obstruct us, which reason and reflection do not instantly remove. We have the clearest testimony handed down to us, from those who were eye witnesses of the facts they relate. And we are guarded against an error of judgment, which is apt sometimes to require stronger proof than the accounts of others may be thought to convey, by the censure passed by our Saviour in a similar situation, on his own disciples. We have historical evidence of the success of the Christian doctrines, and of the miracles wrought in confir-

mation of them. Our faith, indeed, can want no further support from any other circumstances, and we should make it our constant endeavour and study to grow in grace, and be wise unto salvation.

If all, who call themselves Christians, were to do this; if faith in Christ acted on our practice, as the soul does on our body, giving it life, energy, and spirit, the conduct of a Christian would be very different to what we sometimes find it. And unless the state of our minds, and our actions, be in perfect unison, we shall labour under a defect in point of moral duty, which may prove fatal to our everlasting happiness. To be convinced that the grave can have no dominion over us, since Christ "is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept;" and to be assured, that as our blessed Redeemer is ascended into heaven to be our judge at the awful day of retribution, *we* shall also ascend incorruptible, to receive our final sentence and eternal doom, is a truth too serious to be lightly regarded; and yet, perhaps, not sufficiently reflected on by any. As we sincerely believe, that our Lord Jesus Christ is ascended into the heavens, we must also ourselves in heart and mind thither ascend, if we would render our faith conspicuous by our prac-

tice. If we would preserve a consistent character, in matters of religion, and not make shipwreck of our salvation, through a careless indifference, or criminal inattention. This is the only method we can take to render effectual all that hath been done for us; and without this care and attention, we shall certainly deceive ourselves, and rush into the jaws of inevitable ruin.

To ascend to heaven, in heart and mind, implies the having of our conversation there; or, that fixed and determined resolution of setting our affections on things above, as weans us entirely from things on the earth. The apostles, who saw their Lord and Saviour quit this world, and all its troubles, and enter the regions of celestial glory, have left us an example of faith and practice, which we ought earnestly and zealously to follow. They received his *last* admonitions and instructions; and they witnessed his departure from them with a steady eye, and unshaken veneration, whilst “two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” The subsequent conduct of these good and pious

men, will afford us ample room for the exercise of every moral and religious virtue, that can possibly adorn the human heart.

In this arduous task, for it surely can be no easy one, to perfect holiness, in the fear of the Lord, we are to persevere unto the end, that we may be saved. The Apostles, as good and faithful stewards of their departed master, improved the talents committed to their care with unwearied diligence and industry. They exerted their utmost abilities to root out the seeds of vice from the hearts of those who were admitted within the pale of the Christian Church; that there might be no envy, malice, or slander among such as hoped for salvation through the merits and death of Christ. They never ceased to exhort all those who embraced the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, to walk worthy of their vocation. And they assured them that the resurrection of Christ, and his glorious exaltation at the right hand of God, would leave them in a most deplorable state, unless they themselves rose from the death of sin, to a life of righteousness. And St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians, urging on them the absolute necessity of a uniform and good moral conduct, in order to make the sacrifice, and consequent

triumph of Christ, essentially serviceable to them, writes "for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." But to secure the Colossians from falling into an opinion that Christ's death was of itself sufficiently meritorious, he adds, "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. In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them."

To the Ephesians, speaking of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which were conferred on the early converts to Christianity, St. Paul thus mentions the ascension, "wherefore he saith, when he ascended up, on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," considering Christ the Messiah in his ascension into heaven, after the conquest of sin, Satan, and death, to an earthly monarch in triumph after a victory, scattering gifts, and largesses among his people. And that the Ephesians might be fully sensible how far these sacred gifts of the Spirit would conduce to their own comfort and



benefit, and how much depended on themselves to render them effectually available to salvation, he tells them, they must “ put off concerning the “ former conversation, the old man, which is “ corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and “ be renewed in the spirit of their mind; and “ that they must put on the new man, which “ after God, is created in righteousness, and “ true holiness. Let all bitterness (says the “ Apostle) and wrath, and anger, and clamour, “ and evil speaking, be put away from you, “ with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, “ even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven “ you.”

On this plan of conduct, blending faith with practice, and really being what they appeared to be; the early friends and advocates of Christianity always exerted themselves. Benevolence and affection, taking their rise from the fountain of all goodness, the universal mercy and love of God, influenced every word, and every action. That harmony and charity, which the pure and sincere faith in Christ must ever produce, cemented them so closely in one social and general interest, that they had “ all things in common, “ and sold their possessions and goods, and “ parted them to all men, as every man had

“ need. And they continuing daily with one  
“ accord in the temple, and breaking bread  
“ from house to house, did eat their meat with  
“ gladness and singleness of heart; praising  
“ God, and having favour with all the people.”  
An example of virtue and piety so amiable, and  
so pure, lost not its effect on those who observed  
it: for the Lord added “ to the Church daily  
“ such as should be saved.” At this period of  
our history of the Church of Christ, the strong  
power of faith on a considerate and reflecting  
mind, is very visible. And the true spirit of  
our religion, did not evaporate in useless profes-  
sions, and needless ceremonies; but the fair and  
unblemished form of Christianity, presented itself  
in the spotless garb of righteousness, and true  
holiness. Yet, amidst this sanctity of manners,  
and purity of conduct, it is melancholy to relate,  
that the *adversaries* of Christianity directed the  
envenomed shafts of ridicule and abuse, at cha-  
racters the most upright, the most honest!  
Indeed, we are told by an inspired writer, that  
all who would lead a godly life, must suffer per-  
secution. The thought is painful, but the thing  
itself was too true, when the good and virtuous  
very often were devoted victims to the slander,  
rage, and malevolence of the wicked in power.  
In these storms and tempests of displeasure and

malignity, the sure and certain hope of an ascension to future glory and happiness, after death, kept the steady and true believer from sinking under his miseries; and all concern for his earthly tabernacle, was lost in the contemplation and prospect of that glorious building, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Such are the effects of true religion on a good heart.

To conclude.—Nothing is able to give us solid comfort and satisfaction, whilst we continue in this world, abounding as it does, with falsehood and wrong, but the certainty of a better, and a more enduring state. And those among us, who endeavour to discharge their several duties conscientiously, need not fear what man can do unto them; whilst they have God the inspector of their most secret and honest actions, who seeth not as man seeth, and judgeth not as man judgeth; for man's judgment is erroneous, but the Lord judgeth righteous judgment.

Let us then ever keep alive in our memory, that our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, is ascended into heaven, having paid the immense price of our redemption. And never let us forget that he is now at the right hand of God, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us. And let us humbly and piously beseech the Almighty, that in his good time, we may be exalted unto

the same place, whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and power, both now and for evermore.

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## SERMON XXIII.

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The 68th PSALM.—Verse 19.

*Praised be the Lord daily ; even the God who helpeth us, and poureth his benefits upon us.*

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**WHEN** the uncertainty of all human happiness, and the short and transient pleasures of this life, are fairly and fully reflected on, we shall discover that the sagacity and wisdom of man, is not equal at all times to the government of himself and of others. The passions under a proper regulation, are capable of being instruments of much good ; but the difficulty is how to confine them within their due bounds, and not suffer them to pass those limits which reason and religion prescribe. Were our tempers and dispositions calm and composed ; and were we anxious to discover and to practise what is right, and just, and honourable, the affairs of this world

would glide on in a smooth and even current, undisturbed by any violent gusts of envy, malice, or revenge. Such a state of things would largely contribute to our solid and lasting comfort ; and without some portion of this rational mode of conduct, all attempts to promote social harmony must prove useless and vain. Whoever peruses attentively the page of history, sacred or profane, will discover that the most powerful states and empires have risen or fallen according to the greater or less degree of stability, which they have derived from counsels the most mature, and from actions the most just. And, observing the unsettled and discordant sentiments of mankind on political subjects, the wise, and the good, have acknowledged a power superior to human, in the settlement and administration of public affairs. For we are not to be surprised that wars, and rumours of wars, should sometimes disturb the tranquillity and peace of the world ; but our astonishment should be excited when we observe any tolerable degree of order and submission kept up, where such clashing interests, and such various dispositions, are irregularly and confusedly blended, in one common society. Nor admitting this, do we at all infringe on man's free agency ; or in any sense whatever treat him as a machine acted upon ;



but never acting from himself. We only take into our consideration and firm belief, that, in the whole conduct of human affairs, a general, as well as a particular Providence, is too visible to be denied. Hence the royal Psalmist most gratefully embraces every opportunity that offers of celebrating the mercies of his God, in the numerous victories which he so gloriously obtained over his temporal, as well as spiritual, enemies. Conscious of his own weakness, and sensible that the arm of flesh, on many and important occasions, has been known to fail; the triumphant David imputes not the success of his exertions to human skill and ingenuity alone, but to that Almighty Protector who scattered "his enemies, and made them who hated him, flee before him." With these religious sentiments deeply rooted in his heart, and calmly and seriously tracing the source of all earthly blessings, he most devoutly exclaims, "Praised be the Lord *daily*; even the God who helpeth us, and poureth his benefits upon us." No *transient* burst of praise and thanksgiving satisfied the favoured and highly distinguished monarch. No *particular* day of triumph and of joy appears to him sufficient to demonstrate his inexhaustible gratitude for repeated and extraordinary deliverances; but in the warmth of true and

undissembled piety, he breaks out into this rapturous exhortation, " Praised be the Lord *daily* ;" let not our thanks and our praise to the God of our health be spent in *one* general shout of transport and applause ; but let every day of our future existence be devoted to the Lord, " even " the God who helpeth us, and poureth his bene- " fits upon us." Most assuredly, the checkered scene of David's life, without descending to *minute* particulars, exhibits a series of deliverances the most singular and astonishing ; whether we view him as persecuted by Saul, and yet mounting the throne ; or driven into banishment by his rebellious subjects, and again restored to his kingdom. Whether we see him in the gloomy regions of adversity, or in the brightest sunshine of prosperity. And what sight can possibly be more instructive to a sober and reflecting mind, than a great man struggling in the storms of adverse fortune, with pious resignation to the will of heaven : and how does the prospect brighten before us, when we view the same distinguished personage encircled by his repenting subjects, in his former dignity and splendor ; and together with them joining in this animated declaration, " We will rejoice in thy salvation, " and triumph in the name of the Lord our God. " Now know I, that the Lord helpeth his an-

“nointed, and will hear him from his holy  
“heaven; even with the wholesome strength of  
“his right hand. Some put their trust in  
“chariots, and some in horses, but we will  
“remember the name of the Lord our God.  
“They are brought down and fallen; but we  
“are risen, and stand upright.” The mind  
properly informed, and religiously disposed, feels  
naturally for the sufferings of the distressed and  
afflicted; and with the sincerest sympathy weeps  
with those that weep, and rejoiceth with those  
that rejoice. And hence, from our own obser-  
vation on the mutability of all sublunary things,  
we learn to build our confidence, and our secu-  
rity, not on the wisdom of man *only*, but on the  
superintending power, and never ceasing pro-  
tection of a good and most gracious Creator.—  
And if this idea were allowed its full force on  
the mind, the general happiness of life would  
be seldom interrupted or disturbed. Or if, in  
the *casual* events of the world, any disturbance,  
or interruption took place, our fervent prayers  
to the throne of grace for help to assist in time  
of need, would make all things work together  
for good to those who uniformly and conscien-  
tiously discharge their respective duties.

Having pointed out, though but slightly, the  
deliverance of David from the numerous enemies

which rose up against him ; and having shewn his grateful disposition, and strong desire to acknowledge the hand of God, in all he suffered, and in all he accomplished ; we are naturally led on the *present solemnity*, to be thankful for the comforts and blessings we ourselves possess and enjoy. And if the dreadful miseries of anarchy and confusion, with all their attendant and deplorable horrors, were placed before us, we should wonder how a scene so hostile to the peace and existence of society, could have continued so long. Our religion by law established, and which descends to us pure and unsullied from the holy apostles of our blessed Redeemer, was despised, and rejected by those who, under the garb of saints, committed every species of iniquity. The army which under proper regulation, ought always to be the guardian and protector of the state, was rendered by those, who had usurped authority, the political instrument of the most savage vengeance. The sacred voice of the law was but feebly heard, when restitution, or recompence, was demanded (if any were bold enough to demand either) at the tribunal of justice. Faction of the most obstinate and stubborn nature ; enmity the most severe ; and hypocrisy the most gloomy, universally prevailed among those who turned religion

into rebellion; and under the pretence of reformation, contrived, and nearly effected, the utter destruction of this Church and kingdom. In such a situation of public and private affairs, one dark cloud of despair seemed to overshadow the whole nation. To hope for relief, where the enemy was so powerful, appeared almost impossible; for who could venture to stem the torrent of oppression which raged in a manner so violent and so tumultuous, and bore down all before it? Who could expect that resistance could be sufficiently organized, to overthrow a dominion, apparently so firmly compacted; or who could ever think of restoring that order and decorum again, which had been so brutally trampled on and destroyed. Happy was it for this country, that when the laws and ordinances of the realm, were sinking into one general mass of ruin, the still small voice of reason was heard and attended to by those who in private watched over the expiring embers of the nation. *True* and *genuine* patriotism, could not effectually be extinguished by all the malicious arts and baneful contrivances of avowed enemies, or pretended friends; and the asserters of rational liberty, and of just and equal laws, waited only for a favorable moment to start forth the defenders and restorers of both. That happy and pros-

perous moment, it pleased our Heavenly Father to grant this nation, at a season the most favourable to our constitution, in Church and state. The gracious power above us, “ who can turn “ the hearts of a whole nation, as the heart of “ one man,” inspired our exiled sovereign, with a disposition mild and compassionate towards his deluded people ; wishing to return to their duty and allegiance. And, at the same time, raised up for him such sincere friends, and wise statesmen, as enabled him to return to the throne of his unfortunate father, amidst the triumphant shouts of the whole nation. Let us then, in our acts of praise and thanksgiving, imitate the example of holy David, and whilst we feel the comforts of a well regulated government, never forget the fountain from which such streams of health and happiness must ever flow.

To taste the blessings of life in their true and proper state, we must sometimes feel the want of them ; and the comparison, if justly made, will enable us to estimate fairly and truly their real and essential difference. In like manner, order, law, and religion, being again restored to a people, who, for a time, were deprived of their salutary and beneficial effects, they are capable of discerning, without any extraordinary mental exertions, that happiness is never the



companion of disorder and confusion; and that when vice is triumphant over virtue, no security nor peace is to be expected. They may learn also a lesson very often inculcated, but not always duly attended to, that obedience and submission to constituted authority is the vital principle of relative and social harmony. The restoration therefore of the royal family to the throne of this realm, was an æra so productive of good to the British nation, that we are bound by every means in our power to express our most fervent gratitude for the same. And we cannot better show forth how sensible we are of all the benefits which such an event produced, than by uniting in heart and mind to exhibit in our actions the most pure respect, and reverence for the government established among us. And as we are all members of the same body politic, and feel alike the advantages arising from an impartial distribution of justice; from a regular and uniform protection in our property; and from every degree of liberty which is not hostile to the welfare and security of civil society; let us study to *cement* in the strongest manner that indissoluble union of loyalty and affection to our beloved king and country, which no earthly power may be able to undermine and destroy.

To conclude.—To hope for a *continuance* of those extraordinary blessings, with which it has often pleased the Almighty to visit this favoured island, is not more than we may humbly and devoutly presume, if we connect our temporal concerns with our spiritual. If in our civil relations we blend our duty to our king with our duty to our God ; and if we suffer no occasion to escape us of putting to “ *silence* the ignorance “ of foolish men,” with respect to the concerns of the government, or the duties of our religion. “ Praised then be the Lord *daily* ; even the “ God who helpeth us, and poureth his benefits “ upon us.”

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power, and might, now and for evermore.

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## SERMON XXIV.

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ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.—Chap. 1st.—Part of  
14th Verse.

*The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*

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**T**HE wisdom and the goodness of the Almighty, in his dealings towards the children of men, excite our highest reverence and astonishment. To a serious and thinking mind, the incarnation of our blessed Saviour is replete with wonder; and we cannot contemplate the sublime, the awful subject, without exclaiming with holy rapture, “Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou so visitest him!”

Our first parents, surrounded with happiness, and blessed with innocence, were placed in Paradise, a scene of the most exquisite, the

most refined pleasures. There they might have enjoyed uninterrupted harmony and peace. There they might have tasted all the sweets of existence, and after a life of purity and virtue, been translated to a state of heavenly bliss and immortality. But it was absolutely necessary for the trial of virtue, and the proof of integrity, that the choice of good or evil, should be left to themselves ; that as free agents, they might shew their wisdom in adhering to the former, or their folly, in embracing the latter. And where indeed would be the boasted excellence or virtue, if it was not in our power to commit sin ? Where would be the merit in acting right, if we had never any temptation to act wrong ? Thus situated, they tasted the forbidden fruit, fell from their allegiance to their king, their guardian, their protector ; and by one rash act entailed misery and death on all their posterity. At this critical period, what a melancholy, what a dreary prospect opened before them ! Overwhelmed with shame and confusion, they saw their error, but, when it was too late to correct it. They discovered their weakness, but had not sufficient strength left to regain their former innocence and peace. All before them was wretchedness and woe ; and the future promised nothing but a continuance of that distress into

which they had plunged themselves and the whole world.

From this melancholy scene, we may turn our thoughts to the amazing tenderness, and love of God, "whose mercies are over all his works," and who supported our first parents under the agonizing tortures of guilt and despair, with this comfortable assurance: "The seed of the woman, shall bruise the serpent's head," *i. e.* one born of a woman shall triumph over the malicious designs, and infernal mischief of the devil. By this gracious declaration, whatever glory or native innocence might have been tarnished or obscured by the *fall*, will be again restored, and shine with redoubled splendour by the *redemption* of man. By this declaration, "though in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive." Though by the disobedience of one, "sin came into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed on all men, as all have sinned," by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous, rising to newness of life, and commencing sons of God, and heirs of immortality. How must these expectations have soothed the troubled spirits and wounded hearts of the first offenders! How must their minds have been comforted, on reflecting that though by their imprudence, they have polluted

and defiled the sacred streams of health and innocence; the healing waters of repentance would purge away the filth and corruption, and the merits of a future Saviour restore them to their original purity! It is probable, the Almighty revealed to Adam the scheme of man's redemption, when he instituted sacrifice as a type of the immaculate Lamb of God, which was to be offered up for the sins of the whole world. Hence the prevailing opinion that without some atonement there could be no remission of sin. Hence the general idea, that sacrifice was absolutely necessary to appease the offended majesty of heaven, and conciliate his pardon and peace.

The hope and expectation of the promised seed, was cherished and kept alive in the different ages that succeeded the fall; and the rising of the sun of righteousness was particularly pointed out, both as to time and place. The holy patriarchs, transported at the future birth of a child, who was "to be a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of the people of Israel," saw with the strong eye of faith the dawning of that glorious, that marvellous light, which should dispel the grossest darkness of ignorance and superstition, and open the way of righteousness and truth. The prophets, in-



spired from above, with a foresight of that extraordinary person, who was to reform and save the world; who was to restore lost man, and open the kingdom of heaven to all true believers; described, in the most glowing colours, his birth, power, humility, patience, sufferings, death, and exaltation.

Before his arrival, the character and office of the baptist, who was to be the herald of his approach, and the messenger of the most joyful tidings that ever charmed a mortal ear, are mentioned by the prophet in the most animated language: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight. Every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the crooked straight, and the rough places plain, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Wrapt into future times the same inspired writer thus speaks of his wonderful, his miraculous birth: "A virgin shall conceive, a virgin bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us." All the prophets, at sundry times, predict the advent of the Messiah, who was to be the delight of the nations, the Saviour of the world.

At last the great, the important period arrived.

The several prophecies were fully and exactly completed. And to favor a design so very beneficial to the temporal and spiritual interest of mankind, a general peace prevailed over the whole world. The Roman State was arrived at the summit of its glory; and philosophy had so far extended her dominion under the auspices of Augustus, that there was every advantage that could be wished for to satisfy the curious and inquisitive, and to confirm the well disposed and the humble.

Then it was, that "the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Then it was, that the divine person, the eternal word, took the human into his divine nature, and conversed among us.

And what a happy period was this for mankind! The simple shepherds are invited by a company of angels to celebrate the nativity of that great shepherd who was to feed them with the bread of heaven, and lead them to the waters of real comfort. A bright star in the East conducted the wise men to pay their adorations, and make their offerings to that infant prince, who, though placed in a manger, was to reign the Lord God omnipotent, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. The heathen oracles were dumb, and the empire of Satan shook from its lowest foundation, as if conscious, that by the

manifestation of the Son of God, his power was at an end, his dominion overthrown.

When we reflect on this extraordinary and glorious event, which the present season calls on us in a particular manner to celebrate, there are two duties which it is incumbent on us to regard, that we may render the celebration suitable to the cause and character of a Christian. The first is a lively and implicit faith; the other, a uniform and regular obedience. The former will teach us to adore the mercy and manifold goodness of God; and to trust in him with that humble confidence, that well grounded hope, which his blessed revelation demands, and our own eternal interest, loudly calls for at our hands. Whilst the deist with that degree of insolence and arrogance, peculiar to the cause of infidelity, introduces nature and reason as of themselves sufficient to inform and purify the mind; whilst he daringly arraigns the wisdom of God, and boldly asserts that there was no need of a teacher sent from heaven, and explodes every idea of revelation; our faith should prompt us to hold fast the hope of our salvation, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. It is strange that the wisdom of man should raise itself in opposition to the power of the Almighty! It is strange, that when a voice speaks to us from heaven, any

should be so hardened as to stop their ears, and endeavour to deprive the children of men of those saving truths which are their greatest comforts in this world, and the rocks, on which they build all their expectations of a better. But, as the wisdom of this life, is weakness with God, we are apt to wonder that the salvation wrought for us by Christ, should be a stumbling block to the Jews, or foolishness to the Greeks.

To an implicit and lively faith in a Saviour, we must always join a uniform and regular obedience to the doctrines he taught. As he dwelt among us, it was his gracious design to teach us, how we ought to dwell with each other. We must therefore imitate (though perhaps at a considerable distance,) those amiable virtues which shone forth in him with all their native lustre and brilliancy. We must copy that tenderness and meekness which rendered him the father of the fatherless, and friend of the miserable. We must ever remember that Christianity is a practicable thing; and that as God "so loved the world, as to send his Son to redeem it, so ought we to love one another." Whatever strength your faith may boast, it is not the faith of a Christian, unless united with good works. Depend on it, "without charity there is no Christianity." Let us not then deceive ourselves,

and turn to our utter confusion the things that should make for our eternal peace. Let us be as extensive in our benevolence, and as unbounded in our charity, as the religion we profess requires, and our own circumstances will admit of. Let us in all things approve ourselves worthy of the favour and protection of heaven, by a faith unfeigned, and love without dissimulation; such as leads us to the constant practice of those actions which are conducive to the general welfare of mankind.

If this spirit be in us, a spirit to think and act agreeably to the amiable precepts of the gospel, we shall then celebrate the nativity of Christ with becoming zeal and sincerity. We shall then with pure hearts and minds, rejoice at the remembrance of that stupendous instance of Almighty love, which vouchsafed to redeem us from sin and misery, by no less a ransom than his only son.

To conclude.—To render our thanks and our praise effectual, let us blend our gratitude towards God, with our love towards men. They best worship him, who do all the good in their power to the sons and daughters of affliction and poverty. Nothing is more insisted on in the gospel, nothing is oftener urged as a test of religious goodness, than our love and benevolence

towards our fellow creatures. The reason is very obvious, because nothing is more conducive to universal happiness, than universal love; and they who *promote* these sacred duties, will best deserve the approbation and reward of their Maker.

May the Almighty infuse into the minds of us all, a portion of his divine grace, to guide our feet into the paths of peace. May his unbounded love towards *us* inspire the professors of his religion with a sincere love towards each other. May our faith in Christ always animate us to a life of active piety and virtue. And may we never indulge any hasty and violent prejudices against our neighbour; always remembering that true Christian charity (without which our religion is but mockery) is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil. Then, the present scene of uncertainty, will lose half its miseries, and we shall be happy in this world, and blessed to all eternity in the next.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and glory, and power, both now and for evermore.



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## SERMON XXV.

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1 CORINTHIANS.—Chap. 15.—Verse 22.

*As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

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**AMIDST** the variety of troubles and distresses which on all sides surround us in this world, there cannot be a greater pleasure or comfort than what results from the well-grounded expectation of happiness in a future state. If (as the apostle justly observes) “in this life only, we have hope;” if all our views were confined to this poor, frail, and imperfect state, we should be really and truly miserable. So very different are the conditions of people here below, that by far the greater part eat the bread of carefulness, and drink the waters of affliction, through the whole course of their lives. The pride of the

great, the malice of the powerful, and the contempt of the haughty, would be too much for the meek and lowly in heart to bear up against, were it not for the soft and gentle whispers of conscience, which in a feeling and most forcible manner, assures them of an hereafter. Possessed of this great and important truth, the afflictions of the world lose all their terror. The sting of malice is blunted; the venom of *pride* drops its acrimony; and the ill nature, and calumny of the censorious, may strike, but cannot materially hurt us. Convinced in our own minds, that this our earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved, and that we shall be admitted (if deserving) into the heavenly Jerusalem; we may now pass through the rugged paths of life, with patience, composure, and resignation. We may exclaim with pious confidence, and holy rapture, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;" *i. e.* as the sin of our first parents entailed death on all their posterity, so the sacrifice of Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to all true believers. Though the grave display its dark and gloomy cavern to receive us; though worms devour these our mortal bodies; yet in our flesh shall we see God.

This comfortable assurance was given to the world immediately after the Fall, when the

Almighty graciously declared that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." With the eye of faith, the promised Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, was traced through the different periods and ages of the world. Sacrifices and oblations were appointed as the means of procuring pardon for sin; and as a type of that immaculate Lamb of God, which was once to be offered up on the cross, for the sins of the whole world. I may here observe that the idea universally prevailed, that without sacrifice there could be no remission of sin. And whence can you suppose could originate the thought? Why should the innocent suffer for the guilty? Why should the world at large imagine that the blood of a slaughtered victim was conducive to their pardon or peace? The source from which these mysterious sentiments flowed must be the fountain of everlasting light. From thence darted that ray of divine information, which served to keep up the general expectation of a Messiah.

But still, however prevalent the notion, that the wrath of the Deity was to be appeased by sacrifice and repentance; yet, the hopes of glory and immortality, were in some respects, clouded with darkness and obscurity. Here expectation seemed lost in uncertainty and doubt,

Here hope quitted all her power over the mind, and left a wide and horrid blank. It is true, some few of the wisest amongst the heathens, had clear and distinct conceptions of a future state. By the strong and amazing powers of improved reason and reflection, they saw the connection between this world and another. They perceived that the present state and disposition of things did not sufficiently prove the justice and goodness of God, and therefore they very justly concluded, that there would be a future state, when all things would be adjusted, with the utmost wisdom, mercy, and equity. But though these noble and truly Christian sentiments were entertained by some of the heathens, the bulk of mankind was bewildered in the thickest darkness. Errors of various kinds and complexions drew them from the right path, and they wandered about, like sheep without a shepherd. They were desirous of truth, but received it with such a strange mixture of falsehood, as exposed them to the commission of a variety of sins. What with the fictions of poets, and the doubts and subtile reasoning of philosophers, people were confused and perplexed.

What an unhappy state was this! How deserving our pity and commiseration! To be

left to the sole guidance of natural religion, amidst the united attacks of contending passions! To be left to steer their course through the waves of life, under the influence of ignorance and prejudice, without one friend to point out to them the harbour of health and safety! Such, alas! was the situation of thousands in the world, when philosophy and poetry were in the meridian of their glory.

If you view this dreary prospect with wonder and astonishment; if you feel for those who walked in gross darkness, and in the shadow of death, how ought you to exult with the utmost joy and transport on receiving the glorious benefits of the gospel! How ought your hearts to be affected with the admiration and love for that blessed revelation, which has laid open to you the wonderful goodness of the Almighty, in the redemption of mankind! Every thing relating to our present and future happiness is now placed before you. All that it is proper for you to know is revealed; and sufficient remains hidden from your eyes, to exercise and employ a well grounded faith. From the pages of the sacred history which contain your hopes of salvation through the merits of Christ, you discover an infant Saviour, a virgin mother, a crucified Redeemer, and a triumphant God. All the

great outlines of Christianity meet in him, and convince you, that though “in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Since then we now enjoy the full light of divine truth. Since all our fears, and all our doubts are removed by the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ, let us improve these benefits to the best and most noble purposes.

As sin was the cause of God's displeasure against us, which nothing but the sacred blood of his dear and only son could expiate, look on it with the utmost dread and abhorrence. View the ghastly monster with all the caution and circumspection in your power. Observe the various arts and cunning tricks which he uses to deceive the simple, and ensnare the unwary. It is impossible for you to be too much on your guard against the false allurements of vice, which, like an armed enemy, is ever prepared to attack those who oppose its power and influence. Without this integrity of conduct, you can expect to reap no advantage from the death of Christ. Without the utmost purity of heart and mind, you will render ineffectual all that has been done for you by an expiring Saviour. They who still continue in their sins (after the amazing ransom that has been paid), must expect no future mercy, no future pardon. As St. Paul



emphatically expresses himself, " they crucify " the Son of God afresh, and put him to an " open shame."

Shall the Son of the Almighty quit the glorious kingdom of his Father, and suffer the most cruel, the most ignominious death to rescue man from the punishment due to sin, and yet those very sins be the objects of our love and regard?

Shall the Lamb of God bleed to purge our iniquities, and yet our hearts continue impure, corrupt, and defiled?

Forbid it gratitude, and forbid it justice. As he died to save our immortal souls from eternal punishments; let us die from sin, which caused all his sufferings, and live unto righteousness, agreeably to the doctrines of his holy gospel. Thus acting, you will secure to yourselves the favour of Heaven, and be meet partakers of an inheritance with the Saints in Light. Thus wisely treading the path of piety and virtue here, you will most assuredly enjoy eternal happiness hereafter.

As Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept, we have now no reason to fear death, or the grave. The one has lost his sting, and the other is deprived of his victory. Nature, who had long paused at the serious and awful moment of dissolution, now

raises her drooping head, and looks beyond the grave into the blessed regions of eternal joy and everlasting peace.

This important article of our faith, built on the Rock of Ages, animates us to pursue the cause of virtue through every difficulty that surrounds us. This grand subject excites our highest reverence and most profound admiration. To know for certain, that after we have finished our pilgrimage in this vale of sorrow and care, we shall visit that destined country where pain and sickness never enter; to be assured that death is the gate of life, and that the moment we cease to be miserable in this world, we shall be completely happy in a better; is sufficient to raise us above the malice of the world, and all those bitter troubles which men call ill fortune.

This consideration should have its due and proper influence on your minds in the melancholy hours of affliction and distress. When the pale form of sickness, or the sullen brow of care is turned towards you; when the pleasures of life begin to decay, and you are returning to your original dust, then apply to your hearts the most comfortable doctrine of the resurrection of Christ. Then sink into the grave as into a bed of holy rest, from which you will awake

refreshed and renewed, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; when faith shall be swallowed up in vision, and the patience, charity, and benevolence which you have exercised in the world, will be amply repaid by that comfortable, that exhilarating reception, "well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." When all the pleasures of sense shall be no more, and the boundless prospect of eternal joy, and eternal rest, shall break in upon your enraptured soul, with a torrent of bliss. To a mind well disposed, how transporting is this idea. To a heart well regulated, and purified from the dross and corruption of earthly pollution, how enlivening is the thought!

To conclude.—At all times remember, that the happiness I am faintly describing is to be attained only by the virtuous and good. The immoral, prophane, and irreligious, have no claim to present, or future peace. They are ever like "the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters throw up mire and dirt."

It is the true and zealous Christian alone who practises the precepts of the gospel, that can expect to reap the advantages of a crucified and triumphant Saviour. They who, notwithstanding all that Christ has done for them, continue

obstinately in their sins, will rise indeed again, but to judgment and endless misery. The worm that never dieth, and the fire that is not quenched will be their fatal and dreadful portion.

Let us all, then, make it our first, our principal concern so to live, and so to act, that after we have finished our journey in the flesh, we may rise to the life immortal (in full assurance of eternal happiness) through the merits of him who died and rose again for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, with the Father, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and power, now and for evermore. Amen.

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## SERMON XXVI.

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ST. PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.—Chap. 15.—Verses 21 and 22.

*For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ, shall all be made alive.*

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**WHEN** it pleased the Almighty of his infinite goodness and loving kindness to create man, he created him after his own image, completely perfect. On his pure and untainted mind he impressed in strong and legible characters, the sense of right and wrong; the difference between virtue and vice. But, though such wonderful care was taken of the human race, when it first came from the hand of its Maker, man was not intended to be a mere piece of mechan-

ism, without any powers of action, originating and depending on himself. To have made him thus, would have left him incapable of those noble exertions, which derive all their merit from the will and intention, not from compulsion or necessity. He was formed therefore free and independent, as to his moral conduct. He had a law given him to regulate his actions, and a most severe punishment annexed to the violation of his duty and obedience. He was placed in Paradiſe, the ſeat of innocence and happineſs, and amidſt all the pleaſures that ſurrounded him, either to charm the ſight, or gratify the ſenſe, he was commanded not to eat “ of the tree of the “ knowledge of good and evil ;” and he was told “ in the day that thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt “ ſurely die.”

Can you ſuppoſe any ſituation more replete with all the comforts of exiſtence than this?— Can you figure to yourſelves a ſtate of more refined or ſubſtantial bliſs? He enjoyed the con- verſe of his Maker, whoſe favors were continually poured upon him. He taſted in their higheſt perfection the ſweets of domeſtic ſociety; and the injunction laid on him to abſtain from one tree only in the garden, ſo far from being thought an hardship, ſhould have been looked on as an opportunity of ſhewing his ſubmiſſion to divine



authority ; an occasion of calling forth all that love, respect, and veneration which were due to his creator and preserver. Man, however, influenced by her who ought to have acted more wisely, tasted the forbidden fruit, and provoked the highest displeasure of his Maker, who thus pronounced on him the awful punishment of disobedience : “ Cursed is the ground for thy  
“ sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it, all the  
“ days of thy life. Thorns also, and thistles  
“ shall it bring forth to thee ; and thou shalt eat  
“ the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face,  
“ shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the  
“ ground ; for out of it wast thou taken, for dust  
“ thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

What an awful and alarming change, did this action of our first parents produce ! How altered was the face of nature, and of grace ! Transgression introduced sin, and sin introduced death, and thus, in the language of Saint Paul, “ by man  
“ came death, and in Adam all die !”

But such was the mercy of God towards his fallen creatures, that the love and goodness, which influenced him in the creation of man, operated with wonderful power and energy in his redemption. For after the fatal event, the Almighty, speaking to the serpent, said, “ I will  
“ put enmity between thee and the woman, and

“ between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise  
“ thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

This prophetic declaration of a triumph over the great enemy of mankind, was completed in the person of Jesus Christ. Amidst the darkness and gloom, which the commission of sin had thrown over the face of the whole earth, the promise of a Redeemer, darted a ray of holy comfort to support the feeble and tottering steps of the first offenders when they were driven out of Paradise ; when “ cherubims were placed at  
“ the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming  
“ sword, which turned every way, to keep the  
“ way of the tree of life.”

This future Saviour was by degrees made known to all those who looked for redemption in Israel. His race, his family, and his tribe, were particularly pointed out. He was to be of the seed of Abraham, of the family of David, and of the tribe of Judah. His birth was to be miraculous ; for the prophet Isaiah in holy rapture had exclaimed, “ behold a virgin shall conceive  
“ and bear a son, and shall call his name Imma-  
“ nuel,” which being interpreted, is God with us, God incarnate, living amongst us, and by his holy life and conversation, purifying both our souls and bodies. And after a life of the most perfect virtue this immaculate Lamb of God,

who took our nature upon him, was to suffer the death of the cross, as an all-sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, and to yield "his life a ransom for all." That effectual and meritorious sacrifice, he made of himself when in his last agonies, he cried out "it is finished," and gave up the ghost.

But it was not possible that the Lord of life and death should be held a prisoner in the grave. It was not possible that he, who had often freed others from the bondage of corruption, should himself be taken captive by it. Our blessed Saviour during his ministry, had given frequent intimations of his resurrection from the dead; as when he said, destroy this temple (meaning his body), and in three days will raise it up again. And when they demanded of him a sign, he told them, that "no sign should be given them, but "the sign of the prophet Jonas; for, as Jonas "was three days and three nights, in the whale's "belly, so should the son of man be three days "and three nights in the heart of the earth." Holy David in the 16th Psalm, speaking in the person of Christ, after his sufferings, thus expresseth himself, "I foresaw the Lord always "before my face, for he is on my right hand, "that I should not be moved, therefore did my "heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad: more-

“over also my flesh shall rest in hope. Because  
“thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt  
“thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.”  
It is evident in this passage, the prophet speaks  
of the resurrection of Christ, “that *his* soul  
“was not left in hell, neither did *his* flesh see  
“corruption.”

The Jews, whose obstinate prejudices led them to persecute the humble and meek Jesus; and whose rage and fury prompted them to force Pilate to condemn one whom he knew to be innocent; did not rest satisfied with his death. They were well acquainted with the promise of his resurrection, that kept alive the hopes of his followers, and they were resolved to frustrate, if possible, the completion of an event, which must have proved their own confusion, and the triumph of his disciples. For this purpose they guard the sepulchre with the strictest care and attention, “sealing the stone, and setting a “watch,” lest, (as they foolishly imagined,) his “disciples should come by night, and steal him “and say unto the people, he is risen from the “dead.”

But the Almighty laughed them to scorn, and he that dwelleth in the heavens had them in derision, for “behold there was a great earthquake, “for the angel of the Lord descended from

“ heaven, and came and rolled back the stone  
“ from the door, and sat upon it. His counte-  
“ nance was like lightning, and his raiment  
“ white as snow. And for fear of him the keep-  
“ ers did shake, and became as dead men. And  
“ the angel said to the women (who came early  
“ to the sepulchre), fear ye not, for I know that  
“ ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not  
“ here, for he is risen, as he said; come, see the  
“ place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and  
“ tell his disciples, that he is risen from the  
“ dead.” As they departed with hearts full of  
amazement and joy “ to tell his disciples, Jesus  
“ met them, saying, all hail; and they came and  
“ held him by the feet, and worshiped him.”  
After this “ he was seen of Cephas, then of the  
“ twelve. After that he was seen of above five  
“ hundred brethren at once.” And hence,  
“ since by man came death, by man came also  
“ the resurrection of the dead. For, as in Adam  
“ all die, even so in Christ shall all be made  
“ alive.”

The resurrection of Christ being proved, our own resurrection naturally follows; as Christ was “ the first fruits of them that slept.” This important and most awful truth, which administers so much comfort and satisfaction to us, who live under the gospel dispensation, was

enveloped in a considerable degree of mystery, before "the word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The good and the wise hoped for a future state of existence after death, but their hopes were often clouded with doubt and uncertainty. How ought we then to rejoice, in having our fears composed, and the gates of everlasting life thrown open for our admission into the mansions of eternal bliss! With what humility and piety ought we to adore the goodness and the mercy of God, who permitted his only begotten son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification! The present solemnity should imprint on our hearts the horrid and detestable nature of sin, which nothing could expiate, but the blood of the immaculate Lamb of God. The grave, which to the eye of unassisted reason, sometimes appeared the period of human thought and reflection, is only our passage to a better world. And we all have it in our power to make that passage calm and serene, or turbulent and stormy. The sentence which is to pass on us at the day of judgment, depends wholly on ourselves. As free agents, we are masters of our actions; and whilst the prize of our high calling in Christ, is in full view; whilst the rewards and glories of heaven are offered us, we are left at liberty, either to em-



brace or reject them. For the " Son of God  
" was manifested, to destroy the works of the  
" Devil ; and to purify to himself a peculiar  
" people, zealous of good works." They who  
*continue* in sin, buoyed up with the vain and  
flattering hopes of pardon, through the merits  
and satisfaction of an all gracious Saviour, will  
find themselves lost in the most fatal error. For,  
if we are risen with Christ, we must seek those  
things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the  
right hand of God. We must set our affections  
on things above, and not on things on the earth,  
*i. e.* we must endeavour to lead a life conform-  
able to those duties which we owe to God and  
man. And however necessary to our present  
comfort and happiness some attachment to the  
affairs and concerns of this world may appear,  
they are never so far to gain on our affection  
and esteem, as to exclude the uniform and most  
serious thoughts of futurity. To effect this  
most beneficial purpose, and to render the cha-  
racter of those who profess Christianity complete,  
St. Paul thus exhorts his Corinthian converts—  
" Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, there-  
" fore let us keep the feast. Not with the old  
" leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wic-  
" kedness, but with the unleavened bread of  
" sincerity and truth." And to enforce the

necessity of a virtuous life on all those who would receive benefit from the resurrection of Christ, he tells his Roman converts, "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him. For, in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." All these passages strongly inculcate the victory which Christ hath gained over death and the grave, by his crucifixion and resurrection, and at the same time demonstrate the death unto sin, which on our part is absolutely necessary, to render what our Saviour hath done and suffered for us, available to our salvation.

To conclude.—Let us then cherish the most sincere and lively faith in our blessed Redeemer, placing all our hopes of pardon and forgiveness in his merits, after our earnest, though imperfect actions have been exerted, to acquire that holiness, without which, no man shall see the Lord. Let us use our utmost endeavours to lay our frail bodies in the dust, free from the pollution of those enormous sins, which lead to everlasting destruction. A sincere and hearty repentance, which effectually corrects all that is vicious in us; and a resolution to perfect holiness in the

fear of the Lord, will give us hope and confidence, in those moments of danger and distress, when faith in Christ will be our sure comfort and support. Thus disposed, and thus influenced by motives of true and undissembled integrity, we may lay ourselves down in peace, and take our rest. We may bid adieu to the concerns of this life, with firmness, and with resolution, being satisfied, that when this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption, all the good and the faithful will be received into the society of just men made perfect, there to dwell and to reign with Christ, for ever and ever.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and glory, and power, both now and for evermore.

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## SERMON XXVII.

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ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE to the HEBREWS.—  
Chap. 9.—Verse 26.

*But now, once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself.*

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**T**HE apostle in this chapter, draws a parallel between the sacrifices of the law, and the sacrifice of Christ ; and shows that those were only types and representations of this : He also clearly proves, that the sacrifice of Christ did far exceed in dignity and perfection, the sacrifices of the law, both in its nature and design. In its nature, because the blood of Christ was of more precious value than the blood of the beasts.— In its design, because the blood of bulls, and of goats, removed only legal uncleanness ; but the blood of Christ, “ who through the eternal spirit, offered himself without spot to God,

“ purged the conscience from the dead works, “ to serve the living God.” He then proceeds to shew the resemblance between our blessed Saviour, and the high priest, in that, they both, not only offered sacrifice, but with the blood of that sacrifice entered into the holy of holies ; the high priest, into the holy places, made with hands which are the figures of the true ; but Christ, into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for all miserable sinners. But then, (says the apostle,) there was this difference betwixt Christ and the high priest. Our blessed Saviour, was not to offer himself often, as the high priest entered into the holy place, once every year with the 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.”

Our Saviour's appearance in the end of the world, as expressed in my text, is at the concluding, and shutting up of the Jewish state. According to the manner of speech in custom among the Jews, there was a double age ; the present, which was that of the Jewish state ; and the age to come, which was called the age of the Messiah ; and is the state of Christianity : So that our Saviour's appearing in the end of

the world, imports his coming on earth at the finishing of the Jewish state.

This was foretold by the antient prophets. Jacob positively asserted that the sceptre should not depart from Judah until Shiloh, that is the Messiah, came. Daniel, in his famous prophecy of the 70 weeks, tells us, that the sacrifice and oblations were not to cease, nor the desolation to be determined; *i. e.* the Levitical rites and ceremonies, with the whole Jewish state, were not to be destroyed till Messiah, the prince, had appeared, and was cut off for the sins of the people.

Accordingly, a little before Jerusalem was sacked and destroyed by the army of Vespasian, and the Jewish common-wealth was utterly overthrown and dissolved by the victorious power of the Romans; the Messiah really made his appearance in the world, and performed the important embassy he was employed about.

The prophecies which concerned the Messiah, did, some of them, so evidently point at those times, that the hopes of the Jews were greatly raised with the expectation of him: And though they were mistaken concerning the manner of his coming, which they conceived, would be with outward pomp and splendor; yet, that he was to come, they all looked for with a stedfast



assurance. When our blessed Saviour appeared in the world, though not attended with the glorious circumstances the Jews expected; it was in such a manner as the scriptures foretold he should appear; and was both answerable to the predictions of the prophets, as well as suitable to the purposes of Christianity, and the great design he was to accomplish.

Mankind, having fallen from their primitive innocence and virtue, and transgressed the divine laws, had forfeited the favour and protection of heaven, and by a just decree were bound over to endure the penalty of an everlasting curse. "By one man (*i. e.* Adam) sin entered "into the world, and death by sin, and so death "passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Now, it pleased the wisdom of God, to contrive a gracious method, how to frustrate and make void this dreadful power, and malignity of sin. Upon this great errand his eternal son was sent from heaven, who performed it by making sufficient expiation and atonement for sin.

Sin, being the transgression of a law, to the breach whereof an eternal punishment was annexed; the justice of God obliged him either to execute the punishment upon the offender, or in mercy, to accept in lieu of it, such an expia-

tion as should be sufficient to atone and pacify his just indignation.

Such a satisfactory atonement of the divine wrath, which the sins of the world had deservedly provoked, our blessed Saviour made; whereby he allayed the divine displeasure, and reconciled us all to his heavenly father.

To confirm this salutary doctrine, many texts of scripture may be produced. The beloved apostle St. John says, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." And again he commends and extolls the love of God to sinners, on this very account. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins."

That God's indignation was pacified, and his wrath appeased, by the propitiation our Saviour made, is evident from hence, since he reconciled us to his father; which the apostle expressly affirms. "He hath reconciled both, *i. e.* Jews and Gentiles, unto God, in one body, by the cross." And again, "It pleased the father, that in him, *i. e.* Christ, should all fullness dwell: and having made peace through the blood of his cross by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.'

The reason why God would not pardon sinners without some change for the punishment that was due from them to his justice, was, that he might preserve and maintain the authority of his laws and government. Had he exacted the penalty from us, he must have destroyed the whole race of mankind; had he pardoned sinners without any punishment at all, he must have exposed his authority to the contempt of every bold and insolent offender.

To avoid therefore the dangerous extremity of severity on the one side, and impunity on the other, his infinite wisdom found out this expedient.

To substitute the person of Christ in our stead, to suffer, and be punished for us; that so neither we may be destroyed, nor our sins unpunished.

It was the dignity of Christ's person that gave the value to his sufferings, and enhanced his death, to a full equivalent of those miseries, which we by our sins, had justly deserved. Since God's accepting the sacrifice of Christ, was mere grace and favour, he might accept it upon what terms and conditions he pleased. The terms upon which alone he will accept it, he has declared to be our sincere repentance and amendment of life. Unless therefore we faithfully perform this condition, the blood of Christ

will avail us nothing ; but we shall still remain as much obliged to undergo the punishment, as if Christ had never died for us at all.

If, after we have considered our Saviour in his agony, deprecating with fruitless tears, that fearful cup which we had deserved ; If, after we have considered him hanging on the cross, covered with wounds and blood, and in the bitter anguish of his soul, crying out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ! If, after we have considered that God, to whom he was infinitely dear and precious, turning a deaf ear to his mournful cries, and refusing to abate him one degree, or circumstance of a most ignominious and tormenting death, in consideration of our pardon. If, after all this, we have heart and courage to sin on, we must be void of feeling and sensibility. The man who can lay these sacred truths to heart, and still wallow in the mire of corruption and folly, must be totally lost to every sense of shame and virtue.

The proper influence of the love of this exalted pattern of mercy and goodness, is to bind us forever to God and our Saviour in the bands of a reciprocal affection. To melt down our stubbornness and enmity against them, and draw us to our duty by the cords of an invincible endearment.

Is it possible that our sins can be as dear to us as the Son of God was to his own Father? Yet the Father left him out of love to us, and shall not we then leave our sins out of love to him. When the Son of God, of his infinite mercy and goodness laid down his life for us, would it not be the greatest mark of ingratitude, to doat on those very sins which he hated, more than all the shame and torment which he endured on their account? Those sins, that were the cause of all his sufferings; the thorns that gored his sacred temples; the nails that pierced his hands and feet. If we awake to all that is tender and apprehensive in human nature, this affecting scene of the expiring Jesus, must kindle anew our religious zeal, and animate us with courage and resolution to fight the good fight of faith, and finish our Christian course.

Ever remember that the death of Christ, as a sacrifice for sin, contributes only as a concurrent cause, with our own endeavours. It does not work upon us, as if we were mere machines, that have no vital principle of action, nor as necessary agents, that have no free-will, or self-determination. It draws us indeed, but it is with the cords of a man, *i. e.* with a powerful grace and persuasion; but it does not drive us with any violent, or irresistible agency and impulse.

After all the powerful influence of Christ's death to reform and amend us, we are still in our own disposal, and may resist and baffle the efficacy of his death, and in despite of it, continue in our sins, if we please.

But if we do, it is at our eternal peril, and we must one day expect to answer, not only for the blood of our own souls, which we have wilfully ruined and destroyed, but also for the blood of Christ, which we have defeated and trampled on. If, then, we are to be judged for both, it had been far better for us not only never to have been born; but that Christ himself had never existed; since, all that he has done to save us, will be brought in judgment against us to aggravate our guilt, and inflame the reckoning of our punishment. Those vocal wounds of our Saviour, which were made to plead for us, will condemn us. That eloquent blood, which in its native language speaks better things for us than the blood of Abel, will, like the souls under the altar, raise a cry of vengeance against us, as high as the tribunal of God.

As we would not chuse to have this blessed sacrifice, which was designed for our city of refuge, converted into an avenger of blood, let us all, with the utmost diligence, work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Let us, like



the true disciples of the crucified Jesus, mortify all our corrupt affections, and seek after that primitive purity of heart, and mind, which can alone recommend us to the favour of God. Let us consider that as the tree is known by its fruits, so are men by their actions; that faith without works is of no avail to salvation; but a perfect union of both comprehends the true spirit of Christianity, and will ever produce that peace of God which passeth all understanding.

In a word.—Let us by a life of piety and virtue cultivate each precept of the gospel; and, keeping in view the death and passion of our blessed Saviour, let us hope humbly by his all sufficient sacrifice, and our sincere and hearty repentance, to be admitted into the mansions of eternal happiness, there to reign with him and our gracious Lord God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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## SERMON XXVIII.

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11th Chap. of ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL, 10th  
Verse.

*Behold, I send my messenger before thy face ;  
which shall prepare thy way before thee.*

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**WHEN** we consider the state of mankind, in this lower world, and the nature and the design of our own existence in the flesh, we are led by the most easy and rational reflections, to the knowledge of one first and supreme cause of all things, the creator and preserver of the universe.

Looking around us, we discover such clear and evident proofs of skill, in the formation of gross and inactive matter; and such a wonderful arrangement of parts, to produce a whole, that we hesitate not a moment, to exclaim, " thou, " O Lord, hast created all things, and by thy

“ power they are and were created.” But this fair fabric of creation was not designed merely as a proof of the wisdom and contrivance of the great architect, but to be the residence of creatures, formed after the image of their divine Maker. How perfect man was, when the Almighty infused into him the breath of life; and how capable he was of preserving that perfection under the immediate care and influence of a kind and good providence; our Bible informs us, in language too plain to require the least comment, or illustration. In that sacred page of history, we trace the *origin* of the fall, and its most fatal consequences. But, amidst the gloom of darkness and misery, which the baneful effects of sin threw over the world, we see the “ Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in his wings.” We discover the amazing love and mercy of God, towards all his creatures, who had fallen from their duty, and were desirous and willing to return to it again. The deplorable state of offending man, in the eye of natural religion, appeared past all recovery whatever. The prospect was dark and dismal; and he possessed no power in himself sufficiently strong, or to be depended on, which could lead him to hope for a release from his manifold and great difficulties. He saw the Deity incensed at his repeated

offences, and knew not in what manner to appease his wrath, or atone for his misconduct.— He felt the misery of his folly, and was sincerely disposed to be sorry for it; but how far that sorrow might avail towards the procuring of pardon and forgiveness, he could not tell. To resolve on a complete reformation of conduct, is most assuredly a proof of caution, and of wisdom; but how far such a resolution would set aside the penalty due to the commission of past sin, was above his comprehension.

To unravel this mysterious part in the system of religious truth, was the sole province and prerogative of revelation. There we find every thing made clear and intelligible, to the pious and the faithful. There we see plainly each doubt and scruple removed concerning the situation and circumstances of those who repent of their sins, and walk in newness of life. And there we behold God manifested in the flesh, for the salvation of mankind, and the kingdom of heaven opened to all true believers.

Preparatory to the disclosure of these great and wonderful events, a train of prophecies discovered to the world, by strong and infallible marks, the long expected Messiah, who was to snatch us from the jaws of eternal death, and the messenger who was to precede his arrival.—

And when the Baptist appeared, and began his ministry, agreeably to the character that had been given of him; our blessed Saviour himself bore testimony to his sacred commission; and informed all those, whom curiosity, or a love of wisdom, had led into the wilderness to see, or to hear him, “this is he of whom it is written, “behold I send my messenger before thy face, “which shall prepare thy way before thee.” The prophet to whom our Saviour alludes in these words was Malachi, who, inspired from heaven with a knowledge of future events, predicted in animated and forcible strains, not only the particular conduct of John the Baptist, but also the advent of our glorious Redeemer: “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he “shall prepare the way before me: and the “Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to “his temple; even the messenger of the cove- “nant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall “come, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

It will be no unprofitable employment of our time; being assured of the divine mission of the Baptist; and knowing the sentiments of Christ respecting him, to consider the doctrines he delivered, and the exhortations he gave.

When this extraordinary and important messenger opened his commission, the world was

far gone in error and in sin. That pure and undisguised morality, which can alone form the truly virtuous character, was lost in the most wild and extravagant notions of the divine favor. Many were disposed to think that a *descent* from the good and pious patriarchs, was, of itself, so very meritorious and powerful, as to entitle the person who could legally claim so distinguished an honor, to acceptance with God. They placed to their own account those virtues and perfections which shed so brilliant a lustre around their worthy and most deserving ancestors. One is almost inclined to think, that human nature could never deviate so far from the confines of reason, as to entertain a notion so very ridiculous and extravagant. But there is nothing too absurd for fallible and imperfect man to do, or to believe, when his passions get the better of his understanding. This we see practised every day; whilst the sacred and solemn voice of religion is drowned in the loud and senseless clamours of supposed interest and lawless gratifications. To stem the tide of such violent and fatal corruptions; and to teach mankind the true road that leads to real and permanent happiness, the baptist's first exhortation to the deluded votaries of ignorance and vice, was, "repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at



“hand.” The kingdom of heaven meant the dispensation of the gospel, the last revelation of his will to a guilty world, which the Almighty was shortly about to make by his beloved son. A revelation, which would effectually sap the foundations of idolatry; and expose all the absurdities of image worship; and introduce a *spiritual* worship, and a reasonable service. A revelation, that would unfold to the wondering world, the death of Christ, as the only sacrifice that could take away the punishment due to sin; whilst all other rites and ceremonies were to give place, when the Messiah, to whom they pointed, was cut off for the offences of mankind.

But the benefits which flowed in such copious streams from the merciful goodness of God, in providing such a ransom for sin, were not to be applied indiscriminately to all. The favors of heaven fall not unasked on the careless and indifferent. No one is to expect salvation, unless he strive with unceasing diligence and perseverance to deserve it. As a mean of rendering ourselves worthy of that grace and mercy, the baptist calls on us to repent. And that we may fully comprehend the nature and essence of repentance, it will be proper to dwell a little on that disposition, and frame of mind, which are absolutely necessary in the composi-

tion of it. Without this attention, our ideas will carry us beyond those strict and close bounds which confine it, and give it all its real value and merit. Repentance, then, I mean Christian repentance, consists, in examining with the most severe and critical eye, our whole conduct; and tracing those intricate labyrinths of the mind, where our thoughts take up their residence, before we suffer them to burst forth into action. And in this impartial scrutiny, our vices are to be laid open before us, in all their deformity and baseness; the mask is to be thrown aside which gave them the semblance of virtue; and we are to lament and bewail our ungrateful conduct with a resolution never to pursue it again. The Jews, to whom the baptist addressed himself, were to be fully sensible of their misconduct, in claiming favor from the righteousness of others, when they were void of it themselves. And the heathens, who had lived in a state of continued irregularity and baseness, were to break from the chain of those sins, by which they had been so long bound; and then both were encouraged to look up for the blessings of the kingdom of heaven.

That this is the true nature of the repentance, which the baptist earnestly inculcated and taught, and that it implied, not only a sincere

sorrow for *past* sin, but a subsequent behaviour productive of good works, is very apparent, from his telling his hearers, "Now also the ax is laid to the root of the tree; therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire." The *barren* and *unfruitful* tree being cut down and burnt, points out to us, in a manner too clearly to be misunderstood, not only the necessity of a good conduct, and exemplary manners, when we profess to repent; but also, the certain punishment that will await us, if our repentance should be cold, languid, and unproductive. Our most gracious Redeemer, speaking of mankind in general, says, "by their *fruits* ye shall know them:" and at another time, addressing himself to those who were more inclined to adhere to a loose system of morals, than to the severe laws of Christian virtue, he adds "bring forth therefore *fruits* meet for repentance." It is therefore beyond all doubt whatever, that without *proper fruits*, *i. e.* without an honest and good conduct in future, there can be no correct or true repentance.

St. John, wishing to remove from his own person that kind of homage and respect which his extraordinary and virtuous character seemed likely to draw after it; and anxious to fix the

public attention and notice on the *substance*, and not on the *shadow*, exclaims, " I indeed baptize you with water, unto repentance ; but, he that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." In this declaration of the messenger, we learn the great difference between the two persons, and discover the superiority of our Saviour's baptism, which was so miraculously verified on the day of Pentecost, when, at the descent of the Holy Ghost, there appeared cloven tongues as of fire, and it sat upon the head of each of them. But this is not all that we collect from the baptist's words, as he proceeds to inform us, " that his fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner ; but, he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." These figurative sentences are of the same nature and force with those which I have already quoted ; and as strongly assure us, that the good and the wicked are not more opposite to each other than wheat and chaff ; and that, as the careful and diligent husbandman lays one up in store for future benefit and advantage ; but burns the other as perfectly useless ; so the judge of all the earth, will, at the last and great

day of accounts, reward those with everlasting happiness and glory, in his heavenly kingdom, who have done their duty ; but consign over to misery and torment every impenitent sinner, who wilfully shuts his eyes against the truth, and makes no provision for a better and more enduring state of existence.

Were the candidates for another world, of which we must all be inhabitants, to weigh in a proper balance, the sacred doctrines which we have been considering, it could not possibly happen, that so many should go astray. Our duty, as the disciples of Christ, is too manifestly displayed for any mistake to arise concerning either the *necessity* or the *manner* of discharging it. It is not any difficulty in the duty itself, that operates darkly on our minds, and prevents our seeing clearly the nature and extent of it ; but our own indolence and inactivity throw obstacles in our way, and keep us the perpetual slaves of appetite and pleasure. As long as this is the case, we shall ever remain unprofitable servants in the Lord's vineyard, and be ready to make any excuse for our neglect of those serious and solemn duties, for which we feel not so keen a desire as we ought.

But is this acting like rational and responsible creatures, who have so much at stake ? Is this

the proper behaviour of those who know, and, at times, feel that they must give an account of themselves to God, when this fleeting and busy scene of things shall be no more? When the world and all its follies and pleasures shall finally close?

That we may not therefore deceive ourselves, or be the means of deceiving others, by a levity of conduct, or want of due consideration; let us keep constantly and uniformly in view, the office of the Baptist, and the important truths which he delivered with a solemnity and firmness, becoming his sacred character. From the ministry of the Baptist, we shall be naturally led to contemplate in awful admiration and praise, the virtues and the abundant mercies of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If we do this as we ought, with pure hearts fervently, our course through this transitory state will be steady and safe; not subject to the idle and wanton blasts of every inordinate passion and desire; but such as will render us the deserved objects of divine love and favor.

With these doctrines impressed on our minds, and a full conviction of their utility and lasting advantage, we need not fear the activity or the sincerity of our repentance. We shall not then be of the number of those who put on the *dress*



of religion only, and neglect the substantial part of it, sound morality and unshaken faith. We shall not artfully endeavour to pass for what we are not, and strive to catch the applause of an undiscerning multitude, for meritorious actions, which exist only in appearance. But *our* conduct will be widely different from all this; and *our* sorrow for sins committed, will be a godly sorrow, not to be repented of. Nor can sincerity and falsehood be otherwise distinguished, than by examining in this manner, their respective claims, and pretensions to our credit.

As, in the service of our Church, we pray that our Lord Jesus Christ, who at his first coming, did send his messenger to prepare his way before him, would grant, that the ministers and stewards of his mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready his way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient, to the wisdom of the just; that at his *second* coming to judge the world, they may be found an acceptable people in his sight; we are undoubtedly bound to *listen* to the admonitions which the preachers of the gospel may give us; and to cultivate that uniformity of conduct, which is the best proof of our universal benevolence and Christian zeal. To be an acceptable people in the sight of God, is the highest pitch of perfection and honor, to

which our nature can arrive ; and to labour incessantly, that we may *deserve* so inestimable a benefit, through the merits and mediation of our Saviour and Redeemer, is a task which we should spare no industry or exertion to accomplish.

To conclude.—As in many things we offend all ; and none are to be found, who are perfectly innocent ; let us embrace the offer of grace and mercy, through Christ, with thanks and with gratitude. Let us rejoice in the power and opportunity that is given us, to work out our salvation. Unless we are enemies to ourselves, we are all safe in the hands of a kind and gracious Mediator, who will hear those who call on him faithfully ; and pardon the manifold sins of those who repent and return to their neglected and forsaken duty. What comfort, and what happiness awaits us then, if we studiously endeavour to deserve it ? A want of resolution to break from our vices, will enervate all our faculties, and leave us in a most deplorable condition ; but, a sense of our unworthiness will make us humble and penitent ; the proper disposition for all those who would celebrate, as they ought, the nativity of that Saviour, whose birth was the harbinger of eternal salvation to every one that loves and obeys him.

**Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and power, and glory, for evermore. Amen.**

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## SERMON XXIX.

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3d Chap. of the 1st BOOK OF MACCABEES,  
58th and 59th Verses.

*And Judas said, arm yourselves, and be valiant men, that ye may fight with those nations, that are assembled together against us, to destroy us and our sanctuary: For it is better for us to die in battle, than to behold the calamities of our people, and our sanctuary.*

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**I**N these awful and momentous times of war and tumult, when our existence as a great and flourishing nation, depends entirely on our unanimity and courage, it will be a pleasing task to me, to describe, and I trust, not an unpleasing one, to you, to hear, how former nations, in a similar situation, have extricated themselves from the most imminent dangers; and risen superior

to the daring insults and haughty menaces of the most savage invaders. Intoxicated with successful conquest, and proud of those triumphs over desolated countries, which were too weak to make a proper resistance, or too virtuous to suspect treachery, where protection was promised; the tyrant of Syria destroyed by fire and by sword, all the nations around him. The laws and the religion of those who scorned to bow down to those idols which he had erected, were treated with contempt, and destroyed. Egypt, with all her glory and majesty, fell a prey to his insatiable ambition; and, with an immense army he marched against Israel, and Jerusalem. Arrived at this holy city, “ he entered proudly  
“ into the sanctuary, and took away the golden  
“ altar and the candlestick of light and all the  
“ vessels thereof. He took also the silver and  
“ the gold, and the precious vessels, and the  
“ hidden treasures which he found.” But as a thirst for power is never quenched; and plunder and rapine know no bounds, he commanded the afflicted inhabitants “ to leave their children  
“ uncircumcised, and make their souls abomi-  
“ nable, with all manner of uncleanness and  
“ profanation; to the end they might forget the  
“ law, and change all the ordinances. And  
“ whosoever would not do, according to the

“ commandment of the King, he said, he should  
“ die.”

I need not describe to you the misery and distress which prevailed amongst the Israelites at this time. I need not attempt to paint those convulsive pangs of horror and despair, which human nature must ever feel, when its religion and its country are at stake. The picture indeed would be most dark and gloomy, and your own imaginations, assisted by a little reflection on late occurrences, will give the just and proper colouring. My design is not to *sink* your spirits, but to *raise* them. Not to plunge you into the depth of despondency, but to quicken your hopes of deliverance, by a well grounded confidence in heaven, and the justice of our cause.

Amidst the mournful calamities of weeping Israel, the good and virtuous Mattathias, roused with resentment and indignation, at the threats of the tyrant ; and resolved to oppose his insolent commands ; exclaimed with a loud voice, “ though all the nations that are under the King’s  
“ dominion, obey him, and fall away every one  
“ from the religion of their fathers, and give  
“ consent to his commandments ; yet will I, and  
“ my sons, and my brethren, walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should  
“ forsake the law and the ordinances.”



This noble example of Mattathias kindled a flame of unanimity and courage, which all the malice and power of the inveterate enemies of Israel could never quench. To the united exertions of his fellow subjects, he recommended a firm and unshaken trust in God, who stilleth the raging of the sea, and the madness of the people. And when this good and pious man was sinking into his grave, with age and infirmity, he thus addressed his sons, *Judas*, and *Jonathan*, and *Simon*, “ call to remembrance what acts our fathers did in their time ; so shall ye receive great honor, and an everlasting name.” But not satisfied with merely *pointing* to the glorious actions of their ancestors, whose confidence in the Almighty, aiding their own well directed resistance, gave them the greatest comfort and support in the hour of distress and danger ; he mentions the following instances—“ Joseph, in the time of distress kept the commandment, and was made Lord of Egypt. Joshua, for fulfilling the word, was made a Judge in Israel. David, for being merciful, possessed the throne of an everlasting kingdom. Daniel, for his innocency, was delivered from the mouth of the Lions.” Before he breathed his last, he concludes his admonitions, and his *prophetic* sentiments respecting the *event* of the

dreadful war in which they were engaged, in these strong and nervous expressions: “ thus  
“ consider ye throughout all ages, that none that  
“ put their trust in God shall be overcome.  
“ Fear not then the words of a sinful man ; for  
“ his glory shall be dung and worms. To day  
“ he shall be lift up, and to morrow he shall not  
“ be found, because he is returned into his dust,  
“ and his thought is come to nothing. Where-  
“ fore my sons, be ye valiant, and shew your-  
“ selves men in the behalf of the law ; for by it  
“ shall you obtain glory.” Having thus spoken  
Mattathias expired, and his grateful country  
made great lamentations for him.

And as the tyrant of Syria still continued to demand the most servile obedience to all his orders ; the sons of the great patriot, whose conduct we have been tracing, offered themselves as chiefs, to conduct the war to a favourable issue ; and Judas said, “ arm yourselves, and be  
“ valiant men, that ye may fight with those na-  
“ tions that are assembled together against us,  
“ to destroy us and our sanctuary. For it is  
“ better for us to die in battle, than to behold the  
“ calamities of our people, and our sanctuary.”

On this invitation of Judas to arm in defence of every thing that was dear and valuable to them, the hearts of Israel were moved, as the

heart of one man, and they resolved, either to die or triumph, with their country. “ And they “ saw the camp of the Heathen, that it was “ strong and well harnessed, and compassed “ round about with horsemen; and these were “ expert in war.” Then said Judas to the men that were with him, “ fear ye not their *multi-* “ *tude*, neither be ye afraid of their assault.— “ Remember how our fathers were delivered in “ the Red Sea, when Pharaoh pursued them, “ with an army. Now, therefore, let us cry “ unto heaven, if peradventure, the Lord will “ have mercy upon us, and remember the cove- “ nant of our fathers, and destroy this host, “ before our face, this day; that so all the “ Heathen may know that there is one that “ delivereth and saveth Israel.” On this important and awful occasion, the Almighty granted success to the united strength of persecuted Israel. The army of Judas sounded their trumpets, joined battle, and the mighty forces of the Heathen being discomfited, fled into the plain, and were slain with the sword.

Conscious of his own inability, and perfectly satisfied, that so signal and complete a victory could not be imputed to human means only, the triumphant Judas “ returned home, and sung a “ song of thanksgiving, and praised the Lord in

“ heaven, because it is good ; and because his  
“ mercy endureth for ever.”

This union of religion and courage exalts the character of Judas to the highest pitch of admiration and praise. To have acted on principles of the soundest policy with respect to the salvation of his country, and to have been at the same time sensible that, unless his efforts were assisted by that Almighty Power which rules in the kingdoms of the earth, they must ultimately fail of success ; shews a greatness and a goodness of mind, which alone constitute true heroism.

From the scene which I have opened to your view, and from events of the greatest moment and concern to those who were more immediately interested in them, it appears that our present situation is by no means singular in the page of history. Indeed, other instances might have been produced to the same purpose ; but I preferred that on which I have discoursed, as we have offered up our prayers this day to the Almighty, “ that he would vouchsafe his especial blessing and protection to our most gracious Sovereign Lord King George. That he  
“ would go forth with his fleets and armies ; and  
“ let his mighty arm be with his chiefs and captains, as it was of old, with his servants *Judas*,  
“ *Jonathan*, and *Simon*, when they valiantly

“ withstood the wicked tyrants of their times,  
“ the enemies of his truth, and the oppressors  
“ of his people.”

You have seen in what manner, on what principles, and with what exertion, these mighty chiefs, and captains, withstood the torrent of oppression and ruin that was breaking in upon them. They did not tamely stand still, to be devoured by their enemies. They did not give themselves up to indolence and sloth, like those nations who had fallen a safe and easy prey to the lust and ambition of the tyrant. Nor did they expect that the power of heaven would be miraculously exerted in their behalf, without employing, on their own part, mature counsel, animated zeal, and united courage. Their situation was most critical; and so is ours. They had an enemy to contend with, whose thirst for empire the most extensive, no acquisition of power could ever quench; so have we. They were disposed to live in peace with all the world, and to let surrounding nations enjoy the calmness and tranquillity which gives spirit to industry, and life to commerce; we were disposed to be equally pacific. But, when they found that the comforts of life were not to be tasted, without compliances the most servile and ignominious; when their laws and their religion were threatened

to be overturned in one mass of ruin, with all their property, their resentment and indignation were kindled to oppose, with united strength, such wild and savage aggression. Feeling ourselves in a similar situation of danger and difficulty, *our* resentment and indignation blazes forth with a flame, as strong, and I trust as pure.

In all their difficulties and distresses, they never were unmindful of the many and signal deliverances, which they, and their ancestors had experienced from the favor and protection of heaven. Look at the gracious and righteous King on the throne of these realms; and mark that regular and unaffected scheme of devotion, which inspires his conduct, animates his hopes, and conciliates the affections of all his subjects. No opportunity ever escapes him, of declaring his gratitude to the Almighty for blessings received; and no occasion is ever neglected, which by uniting the most correct morality, with the soundest principles of religion, might contribute to make those blessings permanent.

Thus, have I endeavoured to shew in the same point of view, the situation of the persecuted Israelites, and the situation of the subjects of Great Britain; that your attention at this moment may not be distracted with too great a variety of objects; but having one of a similar



nature to dwell on, with cool and serious reflection, may be able, without much exertion, to judge properly of causes and effects. I have designedly omitted saying any thing particular on the savage disposition of our avowed enemy; as the wisdom of Government, by its approbation of the writings of those who wish well to our political interest has taken care that every part of his conduct towards those who have either *bowed* to his authority, or *opposed* it, should be clearly known to the civilized inhabitants of this happy island. And we cannot be too thankful to those who watch over us with that paternal anxiety, which their situation in the State naturally inspires, for laying before us our danger, and suggesting the most likely mode of meeting it with firmness, and resisting it with success.

What we have to do then, is this. To keep our eyes fixed on that noble and majestic edifice, the British Constitution; which for many centuries has been rising to its present state of grandeur and perfection. A Constitution, which is the admiration of the world, as it gives to all its subjects *security*, rational liberty, and a free power to acquire wealth, and to dispose of it when acquired, as they think proper. Here we have no tyrant to enslave us; but a King, who is the dear father of his people. Here we have

no sanguinary laws to be enforced by the arbitrary will of a despot; but justice and mercy go hand in hand, in promoting the welfare and real happiness of this favored realm.

And shall we suffer these inestimable blessings to be wrested from us? Shall we remain insensible of the many advantages we possess, as a commercial nation? A nation, which, in times past, has stood forth, the friend of the injured, the avenger of the oppressed, and the protector of the miserable? It cannot be, that England will ever submit to be governed by any laws, but those which are enacted in her own senate. It cannot be, that true Britons will ever hug the chains of slavery, or fall prostrate at the feet of an usurper.

The voice indeed of the whole nation, in one general chorus of loyalty and courage, declares to the assembled armies on the Continent, that Great Britain will be *free*. That, like the good Mattathias, we will never give up our laws, our religion, and our country, to the savage enemies of either. That, like those brave and great captains and chiefs, *Judas*, and *Jonathan*, and *Simon*, we will send forth commanders of our fleets and armies, to chastise insolence, and punish oppression. That, not willing to injure other nations, or break in upon their peace and safety, we will

not suffer those nations, with impunity, to injure or assault us. These appear to be the present sentiments of the whole kingdom ; sentiments, which do us the highest honor, as loyal subjects, and good and free citizens.

To conclude.—In this important struggle for liberty, and for life ; rational liberty, and honorable life ; it is a great comfort and satisfaction, to reflect that *we* are not the aggressors. *We* have not been the present instruments of war and tumult ; but assume an hostile appearance, with no other view, than to guard our persons and property from the rapacious grasp of unrestrained ambition, and lawless power. We may therefore banish despair, and cherish hope ; that humble and pious hope in the protection of the God of armies, which will give strength to our unanimity, and success to our cause. To expect deliverance from our own counsels, and exertions, without the divine aid, infusing into those counsels and exertions, their proper life and spirit, is to expect what can never happen. Be it our concern, then, to trust in the mercy and goodness of God, who has so often visited this island with his loving kindness. Let us do our best, according to the powers with which he has blessed us ; and inspired with a true sense of his care and providence over us, let us exclaim, in the animated

language of the Psalmist, "Thou art my King,  
" O God, send help unto Jacob. Through thee  
" will we overthrow our enemies; and in thy  
" name will we tread them under that rise up  
" against us."

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be  
ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory,  
and power, both now and for evermore.

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## SERMON XXX.

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ST. LUKE.—Chap. 22.—Latter part of the  
19th Verse.

*This do in remembrance of Me.*

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**W**HERE the flame of religion appears to burn dimly, it is the bounden duty of every minister of the Gospel, to fan it gently, and prevent its being quite extinguished. In this important task, if the zeal of the shepherd be equalled by the attention of his flock, he will most assuredly save himself and them that hear him. But it must not be imagined, that the affairs of religion can be conducted with little care or labour; and that our eternal happiness may be secured without any powerful exertions. Whoever thinks this, thinks absurdly, and involves himself in the most fatal error. A clear head and a good heart are absolutely necessary to prepare the way for

the proper reception of divine truth. Where these prevail, the task, however difficult, may be performed with success: For those sacred duties which our heavenly father commands us to discharge, must be such, as all are able to discharge, or we should be required to do impossibilities. The great danger is, that the voice of revelation may not be attended to; and that many, by long and inveterate habit, may contract an indolence of disposition, which renders them blind to the saving truths of Christianity. To bring all such to a sense of reflection, and to open their eyes to the amazing benefits which they are in danger of losing, by a careless and inconsiderate behaviour, will be an attempt highly becoming the office of a minister of Christ.

As the reason of man was not of itself sufficient to direct him safely in the path of duty, owing to the many and gross errors, which that very reason, when corrupted, led him to adopt, it pleased the Almighty to discover to his creatures, in their state of darkness and ignorance, the manner in which he would be worshipped, and the obedience he expected to receive. In this discovery of himself, nothing was left to doubt and uncertainty; but their hopes were excited by the most animating promises, and their future happiness embraced by the most lively



faith. To convey all that was necessary for man to know on this occasion, the Son of God himself quits the kingdom of heaven, and in a human form lives in this lower world, and by a life of the most exemplary virtue and goodness, taught all true believers, on what condition their salvation was to be secured. The conduct of our Saviour, during his abode in the flesh, was directed in such a manner, as to strike with conviction all those whose minds were free from prejudice. The miracles he wrought, and the variety of inveterate diseases which he instantly cured, not only astonished those who saw, and felt them, but forced from the surrounding multitude, this strong and powerful exclamation, "Never man spake like this man." Indeed, the words of eternal life which dropped from his mouth, gave such strength and comfort to all who laboured under the burthen of their sins, that they followed him with pious hope and expectation of being freed from the infirmities of their souls, as well as bodies. As many as truly and sincerely professed their faith in him, were not only admitted into the number of his disciples, but rescued from the captivity of sin. "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven," raised the drooping spirits of many a poor and miserable offender, whose sense of guilt, and

humble contrition, engaged the notice and the love of Christ. "Thy faith hath made thee whole," was a declaration of mercy to those who saw and acknowledged his divine mission; who, under the disguise of his mean appearance, were sufficiently affected to ask this pertinent question: "When Christ cometh, will he do more works than this man hath done?" And amidst benevolence the most extensive, our blessed Saviour gave us an example to follow, in his own life; which, if we endeavour to imitate, under the influence of his divine assistance, we shall never fall through an evil heart of unbelief; but enduring to the end, shall be saved. He taught us the duty of private and of public prayer. And when he condemned ostentatious and useless ceremonies, he did not condemn *all* ceremonies; but gave his countenance to *such* as served to unite mankind in one religious society, and promote the glory of God, and the general welfare of the world. But our gracious advocate with the father, was not only anxious to shew us the *path* that leads to everlasting life, but to keep us steadily in it. He well knew "what was in man," and their weakness and infirmity were open to his all seeing eye. The variety of dispositions which his religion would have to encounter, and the strong opposition that would be

made to prevent its spreading in the world, appeared clearly and fully to him, with all the consequences. And he did not like to leave the good and sound part of mankind in a state of the least uncertainty. To perpetuate, therefore, a Church, which should last till the consummation of all things, he commanded baptism to be the seal of admission into his holy society, that all who were desirous of receiving the benefits of Christianity, may be partakers thereof in the regular and appointed way.

Thus far we have seen our blessed Redeemer living amongst us, and opening to us the way that leadeth to eternal life. But what an amazing and awful scene will now present itself to our view! To procure pardon for our sins, the Divine Council has decreed, that the Son of God, who took our nature upon him, must suffer the ignominious death of the cross! Such appears to have been the stain of guilt contracted by sin, that nothing but the blood of Christ can wash it out. A chill horror seems to affect us, when we think on the subject. And indeed *our* feelings are not to be wondered at; when the innocent sufferer himself, seeing the cruel and most painful death he was about to undergo, thus uttered his earnest sentiments: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me:

“ and when, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly ; and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground.” Is it possible that we can for a moment reflect on the *necessity* of this sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and not be sensibly touched with a deep contrition for our own unworthiness? That the guilty should be punished for their own sins, appears to us just and proper ; but that the innocent should suffer for the guilty, exceeds our utmost comprehension. And yet exactly in this situation are *we* with respect to Christ ; “ For God commendeth his love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” To attempt to fathom the depth of the divine wisdom, and to ask why this mysterious scheme of redemption was fixed on by the Almighty, were vain and impious. Sufficient for us is this knowledge, “ That Christ came into the world to save sinners. That if we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.” Our duty lies in a sincere obedience to the will of heaven made known to us by revelation, and not in a curious and inquisitive scrutiny into the reason and propriety of it.

Though prejudice might have blinded the

eyes of some, and prevented their seeing the nature and design of Christian faith, yet, others discovered from the sure word of prophecy, the future rising of the Sun of Righteousness, and rejoiced in his light. And our Saviour, in his conversation with his disciples, by gentle degrees, and kind admonitions, opened to them the awful and tremendous scene that was to close his sufferings in the flesh. And when the fatal hour approached, he prepared to eat with them the last passover, which had been instituted, in commemoration of the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, as types and shadows of that great deliverance which he was to accomplish, from the bondage of sin and death, and preparatory to the restoring of them to the liberty and glory of the children of God.

At this solemn feast, when supper was ended, “ Jesus took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, this is my body which is given for you:” this bread, which you now eat, is always to remind you of my passion; and to be a continual remembrance and thankful commemoration of my death, and of my body being broken for you. “ Likewise also after supper, he took the cup, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you;” *i. e.* your drinking this sacra-

mental wine, shall be a commemoration of my blood being shed for the remission of the sins of those who believe and obey the Gospel, and a perpetual confirmation of this new covenant. And to give this request the greatest weight and consequence, he kindly and most affectionately adds, "This do in remembrance of me;" concluding, as was very natural, that they who had seen and known his love, and his goodness towards them; they who were shortly to be deprived of his conversation and presence, would be happy on all solemn occasions, to obey his commands, and perpetuate his loving kindness and his mercy. How far the desire of our blessed Redeemer in this instance was complied with by the Church which he founded, sacred and profane history can best inform us; and both testify that the Christians of succeeding ages were particularly careful in the observation of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. The assurance of pardon and forgiveness at the tribunal of God, on repentance, and faith in the death of Christ, wrought so powerfully and effectually on the minds of real and sincere converts, "that they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer." The solemn duties of religion, and the receiving of the sacrament, were such



acts of piety and holiness, as appeared to them not only necessary, but never to be dispensed with. The Son of God himself, who died for the sins of the penitent, had commanded, that they would do this in remembrance of him, and they thought nothing but the deepest, the blackest ingratitude could ever keep them from the performance of an action which their Saviour had demanded, and their own salvation required. If their sins seemed to rise in judgment against them, they broke from them by repentance and newness of life, and then approached the altar with confidence in *his* merits, who *died* for our sins, and rose again for our justification. And what sight can be more agreeable to God and his angels, than to see his creatures willingly and readily obey the dying orders of his dear and beloved Son? How must the blessed host in heaven rejoice, to view the struggle between reason and passion terminate in favor of Christian virtue? And how completely will our triumph over sin and death be accomplished, when, by pious and good habits, we endeavour to live as becomes the children of light, and apply the holy Sacrament of Christ, as the seal of our sincerity, and our expectations?

If such great and lasting advantages arise from receiving the Sacrament of the Body and

Blood of Christ, to what shall we impute *their* conduct who *never* receive it? Shall we call them the true and sincere disciples of a crucified Saviour, when they refuse to do in remembrance of *him*, what he particularly and earnestly *commanded* them to do? Why are you so anxious to bring your infant children to the sacred font of baptism? From a fear that they might die before they are received into the congregation of Christ's flock. But, did not the same divine person, who commanded his disciples to go and baptize all nations, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, command also the same disciples to do *this* in remembrance of him? To obey the commands of Christ in one instance, and to reject them in another, is certainly acting on the most erroneous and dangerous principles. Is it a fear of incurring his displeasure, that keeps you from his table? Is it a consciousness of guilt, of unrepented sin, that makes you cool and indifferent, in the discharge of a duty so essentially necessary? If these are the obstacles in your way to the altar, you have all-sufficient power to remove them, and make the way smooth and easy. If you *die* in your iniquities, you are lost for ever; since, as the Apostle to the Hebrews reasons, "there is no more offering for sin." The great sacri-

vice has been made, and salvation is to be obtained *only* by faith in the death of Christ ; and that faith includes the strictest obedience to all his commands. Sin, then, of every degree and complexion, is to be truly and earnestly repented of ; *i. e.* it is to be repented of, with a fixed and determined resolution to commit it no more. And though, from our manifold frailties and imperfections, we may be led astray by temptation *after* we have received the Sacrament, yet we are not to despair, or suppose our eternal ruin is completed. Our exertions, and our strongest efforts are to be roused, to subdue those vices which so easily beset us, and to gain that victory over our sins, which our faith in Christ will give us strength to secure. By degrees we shall find our virtue improve by practice, and religion will warm our hearts with true and proper ideas of our duty, every time we fulfil the dying commands of our blessed Saviour, till we at last shall “ *perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.*”

Nor, need we be alarmed, or tremble, at the awful declaration of St. Paul to the Corinthians, “ that he who eateth and drinketh unworthily, “ eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not “ considering the Lord’s body.” Their offence originated from a rude and riotous behaviour at an entertainment, which in the early times of

Christianity, followed the celebration of the communion. An entertainment designed for the comfort of the poor, as well as the rich, and to keep alive that universal love and benevolence which the Saviour of the world so often pronounced to be the distinguishing characteristic of his true disciples. This entertainment the Corinthians grossly violated, and “in eating, every one took before other his own supper, and one was hungry, and another was drunken.” *Their* crime, therefore, cannot be *ours*; and the severe denunciation levelled against them cannot affect *us*; as no such entertainment is celebrated by us in these days, by the violation of which we can rush into a similar grievous offence. This stumbling block, then, (for such it has undoubtedly been to many well disposed persons,) is effectually removed. And what other fears or difficulties remain to check us in our obedience to the will of Christ? I presume we none of us offer up our prayers to God, either in private or in public, but with a pious determination to amend our lives, and a hope of obtaining forgiveness through the merits of our Redeemer. If such be our real intention and expectation, the same disposition which qualifies us to say the Lord’s Prayer, qualifies us also to receive the Lord’s Supper; and he who is unworthy to re-

ceive the one, is unworthy to say the other. Unless we labour diligently to acquire purity of heart; unless we strive with all our strength, to live according to the doctrines of Christ, delivered in his holy Gospel; and unless we earnestly endeavour to work out our salvation; prayer is but mockery, and praise insult.

To conclude.—As the dying request of our *earthly* friends and relations is at all times carefully and studiously complied with, and nothing omitted which we know would be pleasant and agreeable to them; let us not neglect to perform the last request of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the dark season of trouble and affliction, and in the still darker season of agony and of death, a ray of divine light will dart on the soul of the worthy communicant, and give him a foretaste of that heaven to which he is hastening. At this critical and serious moment, when the world and all its follies are receding from our faint and languid sight, and the full blaze of divine glory and happiness is bursting on the sincerely penitent and sincerely faithful, a reflection, that we have in all things endeavoured to obey the commands of Christ, will make our joy and our triumph complete.

Let those then, who have abstained from the holy communion, draw near with faith, and re-

ceive it to their comfort. Let them duly and seriously consider the nature and the necessity of the duty; and resolve to walk in newness of life; trusting in God's mercy, through Christ, that they may be worthy partakers thereof. If you do this, I humbly hope, through the divine blessing, that neither my preaching, nor your hearing, will be in vain.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honor, and power, and glory, both now and for evermore.



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## SERMON XXXI.

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22d Chap. of PROVERBS.—Verse 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go : and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

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**IT** has ever been an established maxim with good and wise governments, to consult the general welfare and interest of the people. And whilst various methods have been provided by which labour and industry may be sure of meeting proper and deserved success, the improvement of the heart has not been neglected. For this purpose, public schools have been erected and endowed in different parts of the kingdom ; that the mind, freed from a state of ignorance, might be freed also from a state of slavery ; since ignorance of virtue, leads to the slavery of vice. Some nations have had so high an opinion of the necessity of education, as to enact, that no parents, however infirm, or however distress, should be

*relieved* by their children, unless they had taken care to cultivate the minds of those children in the early part of life. You may suppose what was the consequence of such a law, and how greatly it contributed to the good morals, and good order of the state. It must at all times have been apparent that the season of instruction is youth; when the temper is not completely formed; and the passions have not acquired strength too violent for resistance. Every day's experience shews us the possibility of bringing under subjection the irrational part of creation, provided we begin with them whilst they are young. However powerful they may be by nature, and disposed to resent submission and spurn authority, yet, proper care and attention will render them quiet, peaceful, and obedient. The trees we plant, appear graceful or deformed, as the hand of the planter gives, or neglects to give, the direction. What makes the vallies stand so thick with corn, that, in the figurative language of the holy psalmist, "they laugh and sing?" Early and due cultivation. Without this, your fields would bring forth nothing but thorns and briars; and the vegetable world would be a waste wilderness of useless weeds. What manure is to land, and management to animals, such is instruction to the human mind, and the

season for all, is the same. These reflections, matured by wisdom and by observation, drew from Solomon the admonition in my text: “Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

The force and the effect of the first principles, and the impressions which they make on the tender and feeling heart, are scarcely to be estimated. Their value is such, that the present and future happiness of thousands depends upon them. Every private family may be justly considered as a little domestic government; and though feuds and animosities will sometimes break out, as in states on a larger scale, yet, the general comfort of the whole will depend on the principles that have been duly inculcated in their youth. Young children, at a very early period, listen with earnest attention to the kind voice of those who endeavour to amuse them. Their little hearts flutter with joy at the *sound* of words, though they are incapable of understanding their meaning. And if care be taken to throw in the seeds of knowledge when the infant soil is ready to receive them, the future harvest will be abundant and plenteous. If the mercies of God, and the merits of a Saviour, be frequently infused into the minds of children, they will, by degrees, catch the pure flame of

religion, and become solidly good, and uniformly virtuous. And whatever conflicts they may occasionally be thrown into, between reason and appetite, their first principles will recover their strength, and never be totally effaced. The holy psalmist, sensible of the great benefits which arise from the early cultivation of religion, in a transport of joy thus expresses his pious sentiments, "Thou O God hast taught me from  
" my *youth* up, until now ; therefore will I tell  
" of thy wondrous works." And when the storm of trouble, and distress, and severe terror, was poured upon him with all its fury, he looked up to the throne of grace with humble and devout confidence, and in these words address his Heavenly Father, "Deliver me, O my God,  
" out of the hand of the ungodly : out of the  
" hand of the unrighteous, and cruel man : For  
" thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long  
" for : thou art my hope, even from my *youth*."

The good and virtuous Obadiah, whom Elijah sent to bring Ahab to him, fearing that in his absence, the Spirit of the Lord might carry the prophet whither he knew not, and that on his return he might even be suspected of a falsehood, wished to excuse himself, by declaring, "I thy  
" servant fear the Lord, from my *youth*." The sense of duty, and the awful power of God,

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which he had been taught to regard, and reverence, in his *youth*, nothing was able to efface. The person in the gospel, who came to our blessed Saviour, and asked him what he should do to inherit eternal life; and to whom our Saviour replied, "Thou knowest the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and mother; answered, and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my *youth*;" intimating that from his early years, he had received religious instruction, and that the impression made, was such as to have kept him steady, and uniform in his duty ever since. The influence of early discipline in the school of religion, was never more visible than in the conduct of Daniel, and his three friends, who refused to defile themselves with a portion of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank, and lived only on pulse and water. And such regard was shewn them by the Almighty, for their perseverance in their religious principles, which they had imbibed in their *youth*, that "at the end of ten days, their countenances appeared fairer, and fatter in flesh, than all the children, which did eat the portion of the king's meat." "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God,"

was the expostulation of Joseph in the moment of temptation, and proved the soundness and integrity of his heart, which had been fortified by his good father, with early principles of virtue and religion. Job, in his lively manner of expressing himself, tells us that compassion was brought up with him from his *youth*, and had been his guide from his mother's womb. And David, having an awful sense of the judgments of God, and of his dealings with the children of men, who rashly incur his displeasure, exclaims "even from my *youth*, thy terrors have I suffered "with a troubled mind." Examples crowd upon us to illustrate the advice of the wise king, and prove that "if we train up a child in the "way he should go, when he is old he will not "depart from it;" but those I have produced, are sufficient to confirm the doctrine, and stimulate our practice.

Were we to reverse the scene, and shew the consequence of inattention to religion in the early cultivation of the youthful mind, a catalogue of vices would present itself, shocking to reflect on, and dreadful to relate. We should see our streets filled with those desperate sinners, who, in the strong language of St. Paul, take delight "in all unrighteousness, backbiters, "haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters,



“ inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents ;  
“ without understanding, covenant breakers,  
“ without natural affection, implacable, unmer-  
“ ciful.” For, where there is no check on the  
inordinate and unruly passions, which can effec-  
tually spring only from the fear of offending  
God, the mind will be a state of confusion, and  
darkness. When the tree is grown up, it is too  
late to attempt an alteration of its form, which  
no human art can ever effect. The seeds of  
vice, once suffered to take root, spread with a  
luxuriancy too powerful to be easily eradicated ;  
and the private assassin, the public robber, and  
the treacherous friend, are the fatal fruits of neg-  
lected education. For want of proper principles  
of religion, in the soft and yielding heart of  
youth, what monsters of iniquity were Jeroboam,  
Baasha, and Ahab ! Their impiety, and infide-  
lity, hurried them into actions, the most outra-  
geous and blasphemous ; and they were the  
scourge and ruin of their country : whilst those  
good kings, Josiah, Jehoshaphat, and Heze-  
kiah, brought up in the nurture and fear of the  
Lord, made their subjects happy, by making  
them better, and established the kingdom of  
God in their dominions.

Such then being the advantages of early  
tuition in religious knowledge, and so dread-

fully fatal the neglect of it, we cannot sufficiently admire the sagacity and prudence of those, who have been the founders of virtuous and religious seminaries. Nor shall we cease to applaud the *wisdom* of those nations who have made the early cultivation of the human mind, an object of particular care and attention. But, as the soft and gentle rivulet contributes, though in a less degree, to fertilize the land through which it flows, as well as the more large and copious stream ; so the efforts of those who studiously promote on a small scale the improvement of the youthful mind, in the solid and true principles of Christianity, merit an equal share of admiration and praise. Weeds are continually springing up in our fields, and would spread with amazing velocity, unless the stout hand of labour and industry pluckt them up. And as ill thoughts are the weeds of the mind, which, if suffered to ripen into action would corrupt the moral principles of the heart, whoever corrects and reforms them, is the general friend to the welfare of mankind.

And here, let us reflect with gratitude, and with thanks, on the great attention which your late minister paid to the lasting interest of this parish. Providence had kindly blessed him with the means of doing good, and with a tender

and benevolent heart, to use those means for the benefit and comfort of all who stood in need of his assistance. He visited the sick, clothed the naked, and fed the hungry. Like the good and pious Job, "the cause he knew not, he searched out." And such was his earnest desire to promote the love of religion amongst his flock, that he feelingly exhorted those to continue in their duty to God, who came to worship in his holy temple; and severely rebuked all who made a practice of being absent from the Church. This line of conduct he uniformly pursued during his residence amongst you; always endeavouring to do good to the utmost of his power.

And from his own extensive and correct knowledge of the use of early instruction in morality and religion, he gladly embraced the opportunity of improving that *generous*, though small benefaction, which a former friend of virtue and religion had bequeathed to this parish, for teaching children the first rudiments of knowledge. A man of his profound abilities, and deep learning, well knew, that a greater or more essential service could not be rendered his own people, or the community at large, than by drawing the rising generation out of the darkness of ignorance, and leading them to the light of divine truth, which is to be found only in the sacred word of God.—

For this purpose he instituted a school, and during his life watched its progress with pious zeal, and anxious care. Often did he feel the conscious pleasure of having done good to the uninformed mind; and when Death chilled the hand of him, who had so frequently opened it in acts of charity; and closed those eyes which had seen the *effects* of that charity; still, his benevolence survived his dissolution, and, aided by the contribution of the parish, and surrounding benefactors, bids fairly to preserve a proper sense of moral and religious duties, in the younger and lower orders of society, which no temptations hereafter may be able to efface.

May we not from this provision hope to reap the most substantial benefits? May we not expect to see early principle take such deep root, as to bring forth the fruits of good living? The duty to God and our neighbour; the merciful intercession, and meritorious sufferings of a Saviour, and salvation through faith in his name alone; universal benevolence, and all the virtues of the gospel, being often and repeatedly inculcated on the young mind, must in the end be productive of general good. The seeds of virtue and religion, thus sown, will undoubtedly bring forth "some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold."

In prosecuting this our charity, and labour of love, we must be particularly cautious and circumspect, with regard to our own conduct. And whilst we infuse into the tender minds of those children who compose our school, the importance of good behaviour and true religion, let us practise both ourselves. For though youth is not the season for deep reflection, and keen observation, yet they are capable, very early in life of noticing the actions of those who live amongst them, and of remarking how far they regard themselves those duties which they desire their children to perform. As they regularly attend the service of the church, so should we, that our example may operate powerfully, and give strength to precept. As they are taught not to take the Lord's name in vain, care must be taken, that they never hear the voice of profane swearing in our streets. And the same may be said of all other relative and social duties; we must let "our lights so shine before them, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father, which is in Heaven." Otherwise we shall deserve the censure which was cast on the Jews, when they condemned the Gentiles for those very practices to which they themselves were addicted; and when St. Paul with honest zeal and pious warmth thus reproved them: "Thou which teachest

“ another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that  
“ preachest a man should not steal, dost thou  
“ steal? Thou that sayest a man should not  
“ commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?  
“ Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through  
“ breaking the law, dishonourest thou God?”

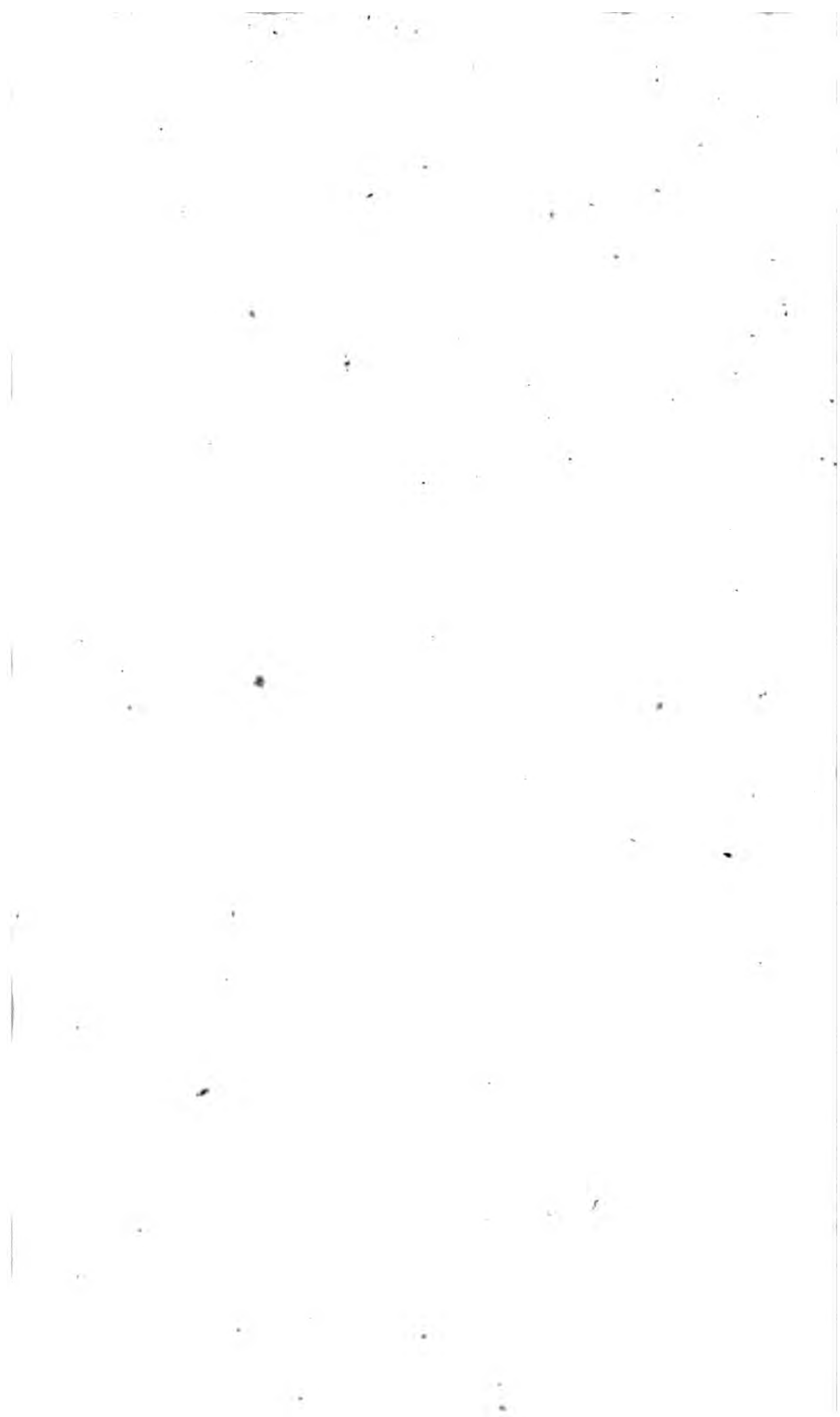
To conclude.—If we thus train up our children in the way they should go; and convince them we are in earnest, by following the advice we give, we may depend on the success of our labours; and that when they are old, they will not depart from it. Acting in this manner, we shall not only contribute to the immediate welfare and prosperity of our own parish, but the good effect of early instruction and proper example, will go abroad with them into the world, and make them the most valuable members of Society.

Now to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and power, for evermore. Amen.

FINIS.









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