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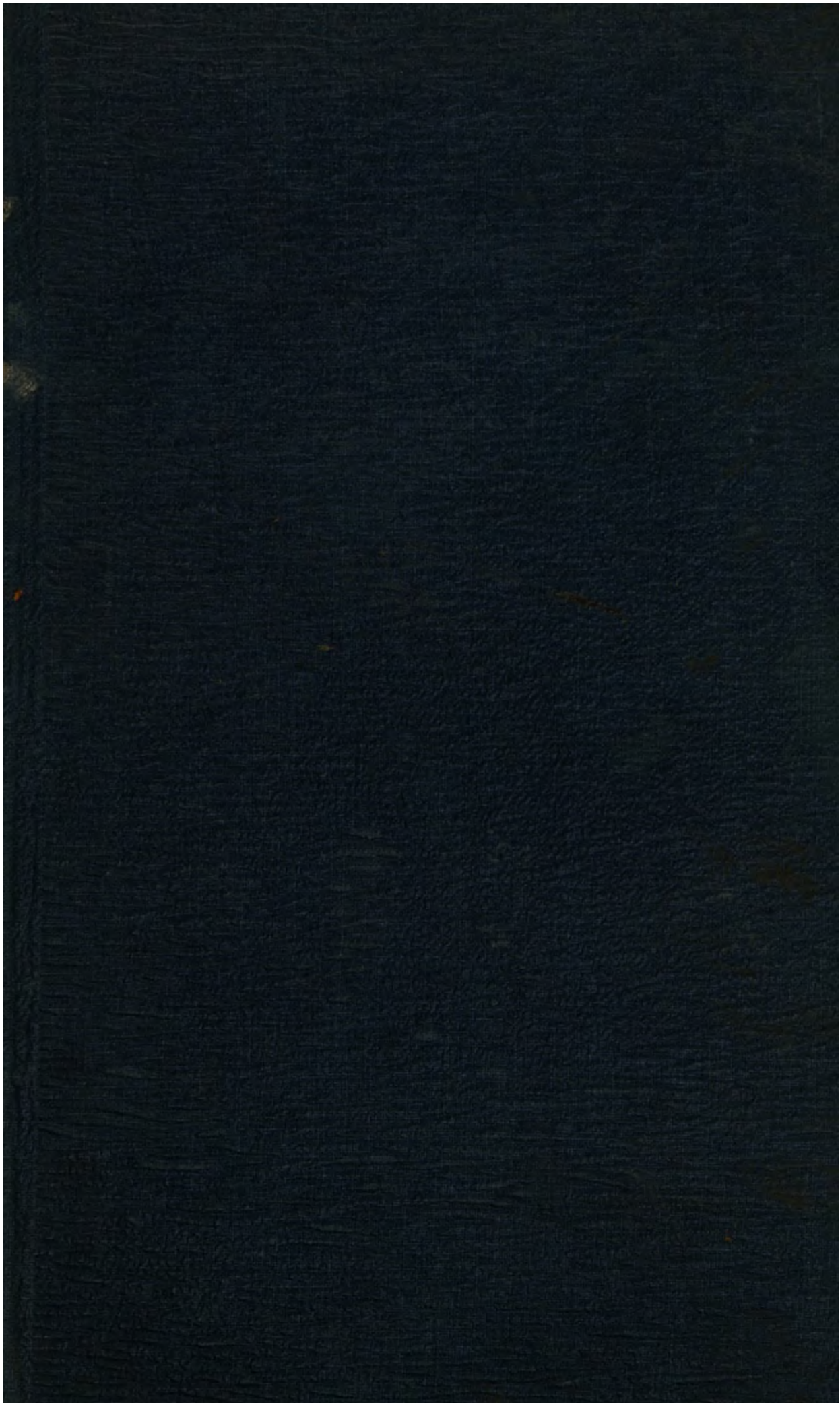
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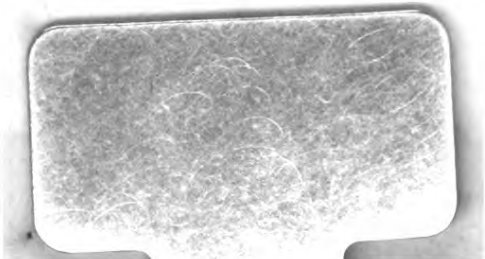
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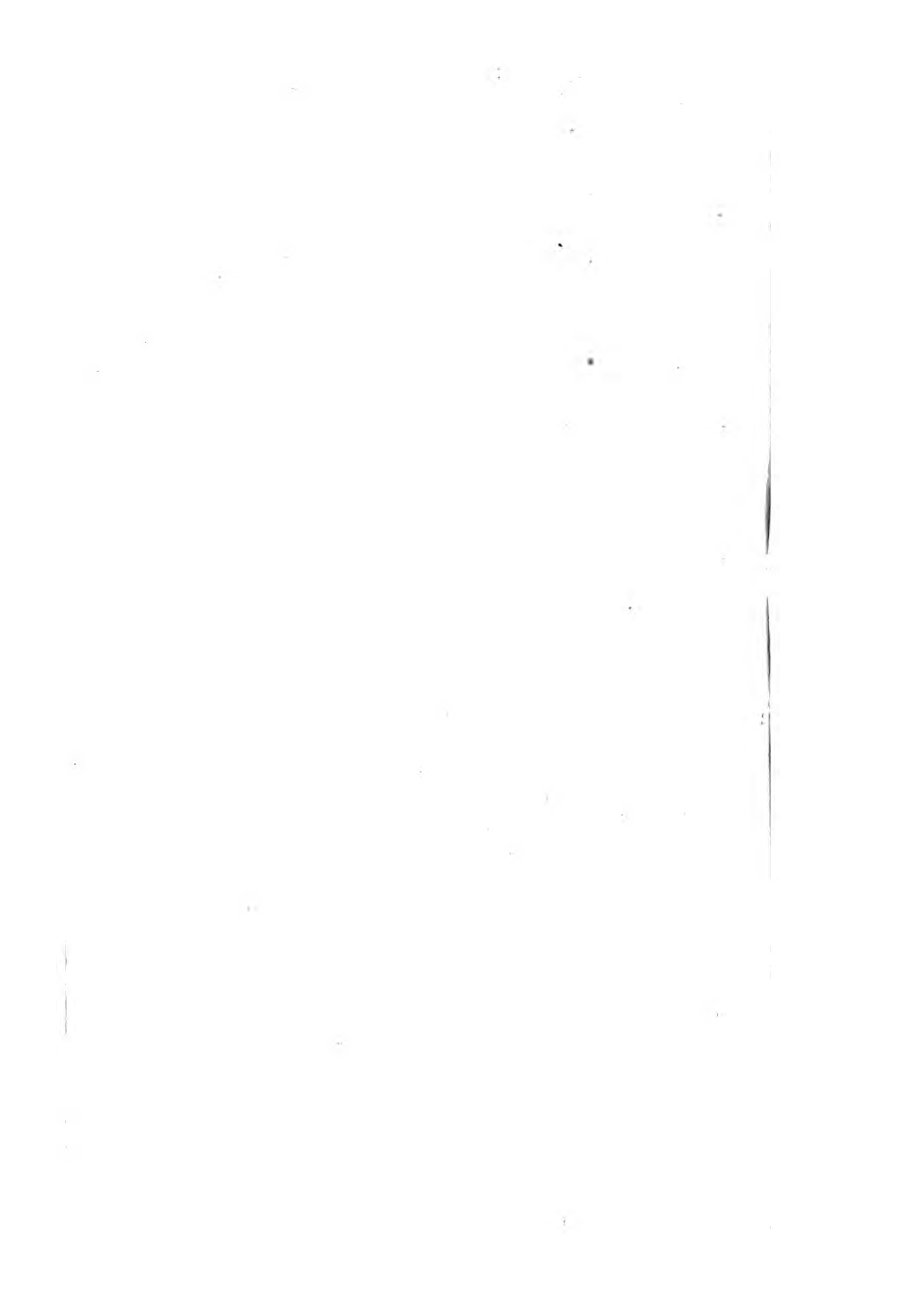
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SERMONS
ON THE
MINISTRY AND ORDINANCES
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.



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SERMONS
ON THE
MINISTRY AND ORDINANCES
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

BY THE
RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD
WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D.D.
LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.



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PREFACE.



THIS great and good Bishop had very early addicted himself to piety, and a religious course of life; and as his piety was early, so it was very eminent and conspicuous in all the parts and stations of his life. As he had formed such good resolutions, he made suitable improvements upon them; and they at length grew up into such settled habits, that all his actions savoured of nothing but piety and religion. His holy example was a very great ornament to our Church, and he honoured his profession and function, by zealously discharging all the duties thereof. How remarkable was his piety towards God! What an awful sense of the Divine Majesty did he always express! How did he delight in his worship and service, and frequent his house of prayer! How great was his charity to men, how earnestly was he concerned for their welfare, as his pathetic addresses to them in his Discourses plainly discover! How did the Christian spirit run through all his actions, and what a wonderful pattern was he of primitive purity, holiness, and devotion!

How his mind was affected at his first entrance into holy Orders, may be seen by the *Thoughts on Religion*, which were about that time drawn up by him, for the settling his principles, and the conduct of his life. And what might not be expected from one who had laid so good a foundation?

And truly he more than answered the great hopes he had given the world sufficient reason to entertain concerning him; he constantly put the good resolutions he had made in practice, and pressed on still towards perfection: he took all imaginable care to fulfil the ministry he had received, and spared no pains to do good to the souls of men: he was *instant in season, and out of season*, and unwearied in his preaching and private exhortations.

From the time he was constituted parish-priest^d, he earnestly desired and endeavoured to render his flock a pattern to others for true piety and holiness. "How happy," said he, upon his entrance upon this good work, "should I think myself, if it would please God to make me, the unworthiest of his servants, an instrument in his almighty hand, towards the effecting of it in this place!" Accordingly he revived the primitive practice among them, of administering the Sacrament to them every Lord's day; and was so diligent and faithful in the discharge of

^d At St. Peter's, Cornhill.

every part of his office, and had his labours crowned with such remarkable success, that as he himself was deservedly styled, *The great reviver and restorer of primitive piety*, so his parish, becoming by this means very exemplary for holiness and a Christian conversation, was justly proposed as the best model and pattern for the rest of its neighbours to follow. I cannot here omit one particular instance of the success of his labours: One of his flock, when he was near his end, expressed a wonderful resignation to the will of God, and very little fear of death; great comfort in reflecting upon the better part of his life, especially his charity to the poor, and much zeal in recommending that duty to those about him; and, above all, a very delightful anticipation of those ecstasies of joy and happiness which he was going to in another world; and an uncommon and enlarged understanding of the great mysteries of religion: and in the midst of these holy raptures, he owned his great obligations to Dr. Beveridge, for those spiritual blessings.

Thus vigilant and faithful was he in the cure of his single parish; and when he was advanced to higher stations in the Church, his care and diligence increased in proportion. He was very faithful in watching over both clergy and laity, imparting to them all necessary instructions for the regular discharge of their respective duties. As soon as ever he was advanced to the episcopal dignity, he, in a

most pathetic and obliging Letter to the Clergy of his diocese, recommended to them “ the “ duty of catechising and instructing the “ people committed to their charge in the “ principles of the Christian religion ; to the “ end they might know what they were to “ believe and do in order to salvation :” and told them, “ he thought it necessary to begin “ with that, without which, whatever else he “ or they should do, would turn to little or no “ account, as to the main end of the ministry.” And to enable them to do this the more effectually, he sent them a plain and easy *Exposition upon the Church Catechism*. In short, he so behaved himself all along in the discharge of this high function, that he approved himself a truly primitive Prelate.

As he was remarkable for his great piety and zeal for religion, so he was highly to be esteemed for his learning, which he wholly applied to promote the interest of his great Master. He was one of extensive and almost universal reading : he was well skilled in the oriental languages, and the Jewish learning, as may appear from many of his Sermons : and indeed he was furnished to a very eminent degree with all useful knowledge.

He was very much to be admired for his readiness in the Scriptures : he had made it his business to acquaint himself thoroughly with those sacred oracles, whereby he was *furnished unto all good works* ; he was able to

produce suitable passages from them on all occasions, and was very happy in explaining them to others.

Thus he improved his time and his abilities in serving God, and doing good, till he arrived at a good old age, when it pleased his great Master to give him rest from his labours, and to assign him a place in those mansions of bliss, where he had always laid up his treasure, and to which his heart had been all along devoted, throughout the whole course of his life and actions. He was so highly esteemed among all learned and good men, that, when he was dying, one of the chief of his order deservedly said of him, There goes one of the greatest and one of the best men that ever England bred.

As his whole life was spent in acts of piety and charity, so he gave remarkable instances of both at his death. He left the main of his estate, at his decease, for the propagation of the Gospel, and promoting of Christian knowledge at home as well as abroad.

To the Curacy of Mount-Sorrel in particular, and Vicarage of Barrow in the county of Leicester, in a thankful remembrance of God's mercies vouchsafed to him thereabouts, he bequeathed a plentiful accession for ever, that prayers might be read morning and evening every day, according to the Liturgy of the Church of England, in the chapel and parish-church aforesaid; with a certain sum to be

divided equally, upon the eve of our blessed Saviour's Nativity, among six poor house-keepers of Barrow, as the ministers and church-wardens should agree; regard being had especially to those who had been most constantly at prayers, and at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the foregoing years. "And if it shall so happen, (which God forbid!) that the Common Prayer cannot be read in the church or chapel aforesaid, my will is, (saith this good Father of our Church,) that what should have been given in either place for that, be in each place allowed to one chosen by the Vicar of Barrow to teach school, and instruct the youth in the principles of the Christian religion, according to the doctrine of the Church of England."

Thus lived this good Prelate, and thus he died.

SERMON I.

CHRIST'S PRESENCE WITH HIS MINISTERS.

Matt. xxviii. 20.

And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

WE are here assembled in the name and in the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord; and not only ours, but the Lord of the whole world, having absolute and supreme dominion over the whole creation; not only as he is God, and the Creator of all things, but likewise as man too: his human nature, by reason of its union to the divine person and its perfect obedience to the divine will, being exalted above, and invested with power over, all other creatures whatsoever. For even as he is the Son of man, *there is given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him*, Dan. vii. 14. And *he having humbled himself, and become obedient to death, even the death upon the cross; therefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*, Phil. ii. 8, 9, 10, 11. Hence we find the holy angels themselves waiting upon him at his birth, in the wilderness, in

his agony, and at his resurrection, when they also acknowledged him to be the Lord, saying, *Come and see the place where the Lord lay*, Matt. xxviii. 6. Yea, all the angels of God worship him, and are commanded so to do, Heb. i. 6. And as for this lower world, he hath *the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession*, Psalm ii. 8. He hath *dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. All kings are bound to fall down before him, and all nations to serve him*, Psalm lxxii. 8, 11.

All creatures therefore, both in heaven and earth, are now subject to our Lord Christ; and he orders, governs, and disposeth of them all, according to his own will and pleasure, and so as shall most conduce to his own glory, and his Church's good. For God, having *raised him from the dead, hath set him at his own right hand, far above principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and made him head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*, Eph. i. 20, 21, 22, 23. He is the head, therefore, not only of the Church, but over all things, to or for the Church: so that nothing is exempted from his dominion: nothing in heaven, in earth, or hell, but what is subject to his power; and, therefore, nothing but what he can do for his own Catholic Church, which he hath purchased with his own blood. He can assist it with his grace, sanctify it by his Spirit, protect it by his power: he can make all things in heaven and earth work together for its present peace and future glory, maugre all the opposition that men or devils can make against it.

Thus much I thought good to premise concerning our Lord's power, in order to the explication of the words which I have now read, because he himself

taught so when he spake them. For being now about to send his Apostles into the world, to preach and propagate the Gospel which he had planted, he first shews them, as it were, his own commission; acquainting them with the power he had to send them, and that in such words as comprehend all that I have said concerning it, yea, as much as words are able to express. *All power, saith he, is given unto me in heaven and in earth: go ye therefore, and teach all nations, &c.* ver. 18, 19. As if he should have said, I have now all power over all things in the world conferred upon me; by virtue whereof I command, empower, and commissionate you to enlarge, settle, and govern the Church that I have founded; to administer the Sacraments that I have instituted; and to persuade mankind to embrace my doctrine, to submit to my discipline, to obey my laws, and to come up to the terms which I have procured for them, and propounded to them, in order to their salvation.

Go ye therefore, says he, and teach all nations; or, as the word μαθητεύσατε properly signifies, make all nations my disciples, bring them over to my religion, that both Jews and Gentiles may become one flock under me, the great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. And this, saith he, I would have you do two ways: *first, by baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and so initiating them into my Church, upon their consenting to the faith which I have published to the world. And, secondly, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; that so they may be my disciples indeed; and not only by an outward profession of the faith, which I have taught them, but likewise by performing sincere and universal obedience to all the commands that I have laid upon them.*

When our Saviour gave this charge to his Apostles,

we may easily imagine that they were strangely surprised at the hearing of it. As when God bade Moses go and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, *Moses said unto him, Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?* Exod. iii. 11. So when our Lord bade his Apostles go and bring all nations out of their idolatries and superstitions, into the profession of his religion, the Apostles certainly could not but wonder at it, and say, at least within themselves, Who are we, a company of poor, weak, and illiterate men, that we should go to all nations, that we should bring them off from the religions of their forefathers, and that we should ever persuade the world to believe in a crucified Christ? This our Lord foresaw; and therefore, as God answered Moses, saying, *Certainly I will be with thee;* so does our Saviour here encourage his Apostles, saying, *And, behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.*

Words of very great importance to us all, to the whole Church of God, especially to the governors of it, and to those that administer the Word and Sacraments in it: forasmuch as all the success that can be expected from the execution of any ecclesiastical function depends upon the performance of this promise, which therefore our Lord has so worded, that there is not a word in it, but what hath its emphasis, and is much to be observed by us; as he himself seems to intimate by prefacing it with *ἰδοὺ*, *behold*, take special notice of what I now say unto you.

Hence, therefore, we shall first very briefly consider the words apart, that so we may come to the better understanding of the whole. First, saith he, *I am with you;* I, the eternal Son of God, and now become the Son of man too; I, who have the angels at my beck, and make the devils tremble with my looks; I, who in your sight have caused

the storms to cease, the blind to see, the lame to walk, the dead to rise, only with a word of my mouth; I, who was delivered for your offences, but am now raised again for your justification; I, who have all power both in heaven and earth committed to me; *I am with you*. Not *I will* be with you, but *I am* with you, in the present tense; minding them thereby of his divine essence and power, to which all things are present. And therefore, as he elsewhere said, *Before Abraham was, I am*, John viii. 58. so here, *I am with you* at all times, to the *end of the world*, as really as at this present.

And then it follows, *I am μεθ' ὑμῶν*, with you my Apostles. For that these words were spoken, and this promise made, only to the Apostles, is plain, from that the eleven only are said to be present at this time, ver. 16. And that besides, this promise is made only to those who now received commission to go and convert all nations to the Christian faith, to baptize and teach mankind the commands of Christ; which commission being granted only to the Apostles, this promise also, annexed to it, must needs belong to them only. But then we must observe likewise, that as it belongs to them only, so it belongs to them all alike. *I am with you*, saith he, not with Peter only, or any one or more of you, but with you all equally, one as well as another. Yea, saith he, *I am with you, πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας*, every day; wheresoever you are, whensoever you do any thing towards the executing the commission which I have now given you, I am with you in the doing of it. And that too, *ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος*, to the very end of the world; that is, so long as I have a Church upon earth, which shall be till my coming again to judge the world: all this while I promise to be with you, and therefore as long as the world shall last.

The words being thus explained apart, that we

may rightly apprehend our Lord's meaning in the whole, there are two things to be considered :

First, In what sense the Apostles were to continue to the end of the world.

Secondly, In what sense our Saviour here promises to be with them all that while.

As for the *first*, it is plain, that our Saviour here supposeth that apostles were to continue upon earth to the end of the world ; for otherwise it would be impossible for him to be with them so long, and by consequence to perform this promise to them. But it is as plain likewise, that the persons to whom our Saviour speaks these words, were not to be here so long, being all long ago dead. And therefore I do not see how we can possibly understand the words in any other sense than this, even that our Lord spake them to his Apostles, not as private persons, as Peter, James, or John, &c. but as apostles, as persons now placed by him in an office, that should always continue in his Church. So that the promise is made not so much to the persons of the Apostles, as to the Office Apostolical ; or at least to their persons only, as vested with that office, and by consequence to all persons to the end of the world, that should ever have that office conferred upon them.

For our better understanding of this, we must consider what it is properly to be an apostle of Christ, or wherein the office purely apostolical consisted. For which we must know, that those whom the Scriptures, and we from them, call *apostles*, had many extraordinary privileges granted to them, which were not essential to their office, nor peculiar to them as apostles, but common to them with other disciples, and therefore were to die with them. As for example, were they called immediately by Christ himself? so were the seventy, who were the ear and eye-witnesses of what Christ taught and did : so were

many others as well as they. Were they divinely inspired to speak all manner of languages? to foretel things to come? to work miracles to confirm their doctrine? so were they which were no apostles, as well as they that were. And therefore such things as these cannot be looked upon as any part of the apostolical office, but only as extraordinary favours and privileges vouchsafed to the persons of the apostles.

But the office, properly apostolical, consisted only in such things as had an immediate reference to the propagating, edifying, and governing of the Church in all ages. Indeed, our Saviour himself gives the Apostles a particular description of their office, in the very commission he here grants them for the execution of it; commanding them to convert all nations to his religion, to administer the Sacraments to them, and to teach them all things that he had commanded them. Under which is contained whatsoever is necessary to the instruction and government of his Church in all ages; as the ordaining persons to do it, censuring those who refuse instruction, comforting and encouraging those who receive it, and the like. This was properly the office apostolical, which therefore was not to die with the persons of the apostles, but was to be transmitted by them to all after-ages, as our Lord himself intimates in the very description of it. For he here bids his Apostles go and make all nations his disciples; which, it is plain, the persons he spake these words to neither did, nor ever could, accomplish, being to continue, as we know they did, but a little while upon earth, wherein it was impossible for them to go over all nations, much more to persuade them all to embrace the Christian faith. And therefore this command itself, as well as the promise, must needs be so understood, as to be given not only to the persons of the Apostles then present, but to all that should succeed them in that office to

the end of the world. So that from this very command, we reasonably conclude, that these words were meant not only of the Apostles themselves, but of their successors in that office all along, until all nations have received the Gospel of Christ: much more if we consider the promise annexed to it, *And, lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world;* which cannot possibly be fulfilled, unless there be apostles, or persons vested with the apostolical office, alway unto the end of the world.

Hence therefore it was, that the Apostles, having received this command and promise from our Lord, and understanding from thence that it was his pleasure that they should transfer their office to all future ages, by ordaining others into it, took care to do it. For besides the eleven, to whom these words were spoken, we find Matthias, Paul, and Barnabas admitted into the same office, and expressly called apostles as well as they. So is Epaphroditus, bishop of Philippi, called by St. Paul himself, Phil. ii. 25. And if we consult the ancient records of the Church, we shall there find, that James bishop of Jerusalem, Mark of Alexandria, Timothy of Ephesus, Titus of Crete, and Clemens of Rome, were all called apostles. And, as Theodoret observes, *τοὺς νῦν καλουμένους Ἐπισκόπους Ἀποστόλους ἠνόμαζον*: those which we now call bishops, the primitive Christians called apostles. And so indeed may all bishops, rightly ordained, be called, as having the same office in the church which the Apostles had. And therefore the office which Matthias was chosen into is called *ἐπισκοπή*, the office of a bishop, Acts i. 20. Hence St. Cyprian sometimes calls bishops by the name of apostles, sometimes apostles by the name of bishops. And the reason is, because bishops, as St. Hierom expresses it, *apostolorum locum tenent*, they supply the place of the Apostles. Hence also not only St. Cyprian, but Irenæus and Tertullian, assert bishops

to be the Apostles' successors, and reckon up the succession of several of them from the Apostles themselves. And St. Hierom himself, having affirmed all bishops, of whatsoever city, great or small, to be *ejusdem meriti, ejusdem et sacerdotii*, he adds, *cæterum omnes Apostolorum successores sunt*, they are all successors to the Apostles.

And therefore whatsoever our Lord said to the Apostles, as such, all succeeding apostles or bishops are obliged by it, as well as they: as St. Cyprian observed long ago, saying, *Christus qui dicit ad apostolos, ac per hoc ad omnes præpositos, qui apostolis vicaria ordinatione succedunt*; for the office is the same now as it was then. So that in the Apostles' days, and in all after-ages, and in all places of the world, as the same Father words it, *episcopatus unus est, cujus a singulis in solidum pars tenetur*: there is but one episcopacy, but one episcopal office, a part whereof is wholly possessed by every bishop. Which, as it quite overthrows the supremacy which the bishop of Rome pretends to over all other bishops, so it sufficiently proves the true sense and meaning of the words in my text. For seeing the office is still one and the same now, which it was in the Apostles' days, and so will continue to the end of the world; seeing also there always will be such apostles in the Church; our Saviour, speaking to the eleven as apostles, might well say, *Lo, I am with you to the end of the world.*

Having thus discovered in what sense the Apostles were to continue in the Church to the end of the world; we are now to consider in what sense our Lord here promises to be always with them. To find out which, we need not have recourse to the wild and extravagant opinion of the Ubiquitarians, asserting the human nature of Christ to be every where present. Neither is it sufficient to observe, that his divine essence is present with them; for so it is with every

creature, no creature being able to subsist without it : whereas our Saviour here promiseth to be with his Apostles in some such peculiar sense, as can belong only to them, and to them only as his Apostles. And that we might not be mistaken in a matter of such consequence as this, he himself hath elsewhere explained himself, and left upon record how these words are to be understood. For, as he here promises his Apostles, that he will be with them to the end of the world ; so he elsewhere tells them, that his Holy Spirit shall be always with them. *And I will pray the Father, saith he, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth,* John xiv. 16. which is the same in effect with his own being always with them. For the Spirit proceeding from the Son, as well as from the Father, and being of the same nature and essence with him, *wheresoever the Spirit is, there is Christ also.* So that, in short, our Saviour here promiseth his Apostles, that he will be always with them to the end of the world, by his Holy Spirit accompanying and assisting of them in the discharge of their apostolical office. In the discharge, I say, of their apostolical office ; for we are still to remember what I observed before, even that these words were spoken to the Apostles and their successors only as such : and therefore Christ's presence with them by his Holy Spirit here promised, cannot be understood only of his illuminating, or sanctifying, or comforting presence, which he vouchsafeth to all believers, as well as unto them ; but it must be understood in such a sense as is proper to the apostles, pastors, and governors of the Church in all ages : which, in brief, amounts to no more nor less than this, even that Christ having constituted such an office in his Church, for the government and edification of it to the end of the world ; he here promiseth that he himself, by his Holy Spirit, will be always present at the execution

of it, so as to make it effectual to the great ends and purposes for which it was designed.

To explain this more fully to you, it will be necessary to instance in the several parts of the apostolical office, and to shew how Christ, according to his promise, is always present by his Spirit at the performance of them. Now the first and principal part of this office is the ordaining others into it, and giving them power to ordain others, and so successively to the end of the world; which is necessarily supposed in the promise itself, as that without which it could never be fulfilled.

The first therefore that were ordained into this office, were ordained by Christ himself. The form and manner of which ordination is set down, John xx. 21, 22. where it is said, that Christ, coming to his Apostles, said to them, *Peace be with you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:* where we may plainly see how our Saviour would be with his Apostles, after his body was removed from them, even by his Holy Spirit, which he therefore breathes from himself into them, by that means consecrating them his apostles and vicegerents upon earth; telling them withal, that as *the Father sent him, so he sent them.* Whereby he certifies them, that whatsoever power he had received from the Father, for the instruction and government of his Church, he now left the same with them, or rather with the Holy Spirit which he breathed into them: and by consequence, that as he sent them, so were they to send others, by conferring the Spirit upon them, and so from one to another all along, that the Spirit which they now received might continue with them and their successors, and so supply his place upon earth, until his coming again.

Hence the Apostles, being thus ordained and instructed by our Lord, took special care to transfer

the same Spirit to others, which they had received from him. But this they could not do after the same manner as Christ had done it to them, even by breathing upon them: for that way was peculiar to Christ, from whom the Spirit proceedeth. Wherefore, they being doubtless directed thereto by the same Spirit, transmitted it to others by laying their hands upon them; which was the old way that had been used in the Church before: for so Moses communicated the spirit of wisdom to Joshua, thereby constituting him his successor in the government of Israel, even by laying his hands upon him, Deut. xxxiv. 9. Thus Paul and Barnabas were ordained by the special appointment of the Holy Ghost himself, Acts xiii. 3. for it is said, that they, having *fasted and prayed, laid their hands upon them*, and so sent them out: who, thereupon, are said in the next verse to be sent by the Holy Ghost; it being now conferred upon them by the imposition of hands. Thus St. Paul communicated, *χάρισμα τοῦ Θεοῦ*, as he calls it, the gift of the Spirit unto Timothy, 2 Tim. i. 6. And wheresoever we read that the Apostles ordained any, they still did it after this manner, even by laying their hands upon them: and that too, whether they ordained them into their whole office, or else into any part of it. For the whole care of the Church being committed unto them, they had power to constitute what officers they thought fit under them. But still they did it by laying their hands upon them, and so communicating of the same Spirit unto them, which they had received from Christ. As when they found it necessary to have Deacons in the Church, to take care of the widows, they ordained them, by laying their hands upon them, Acts vi. 6. thereby transferring so much of the Spirit upon them, as was necessary for that office. And when they afterwards saw it very necessary that there should be other officers in the Church,

which we now call presbyters, that should have power under them to preach the Gospel, and administer the Sacraments, in places where they themselves could not be always present; upon these also they laid their hands, and by that means communicated so much of the Spirit unto them, as was necessary for the due and effectual execution of the said office.

Thus therefore it is, that the apostolical office hath been handed down from one to another ever since the Apostles' days to our time, and so will be to the end of the world, Christ himself being continually present at such imposition of hands; thereby transferring the same Spirit, which he had first breathed into his Apostles, upon others successively after them, as really as he was present with the Apostles themselves, when he first breathed it into them. Insomuch, that they who are thus ordained, are said to be made bishops by the Holy Ghost himself, as well as the Apostles were, Acts xx. 28. By which means the Holy Catholic Church always hath been, and still is, truly apostolical, as it is called in the Nicene Creed. And the several parts of the apostolical office are now as effectually performed by their successors, and others ordained under them, as they were while the Apostles themselves lived. For it was not the persons of the Apostles, but their office, influenced and assisted by the Spirit of God, that made the Sacraments they administered to be valid, and their preaching the Gospel so prevalent upon those that heard it. Though Paul himself planted, and Apollos watered, it was God only that gave the increase.

And so it is to this day: all the efficacy that there is or can be in the administration of any ecclesiastical office, depends altogether upon the Spirit of God going along with the office, and assisting at the execution of it. Without which, the Sacraments

we administer would be but empty signs, and our preaching no more than beating of the air. Whereas, on the other side, Christ, according to his promise, being always present by his Holy Spirit at the administration of the several offices which he has ordained in his Church, they can never fail of their designed effect, if the persons to whom they are administered be but rightly disposed and qualified for it. By this means, they that are duly baptized are *born again, not only of water, but of the Spirit also*, John iii. 5. and so together with the *washing of regeneration, they have the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, Tit. iii. 5. Hence also, in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the worthy receiver does really by faith partake of the mystical body and blood of Christ, and of such influences of the Holy Spirit, as shall enable him to walk as becomes a member of Christ. And whensoever we read, preach, or publish the Gospel as Christ taught it, the Holy Spirit goes along with it, so that it becomes the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. And seeing our Lord thus continually accompanies the Apostles and their successors, so as to vouchsafe his Spirit to those on whom they lay their hands, and to co-operate by the same Spirit with those who are so ordained by them, in their administration of the Word and Sacraments; hence he may well be said to be always with them, according to the promise he makes them in my text.

But besides that imposition of hands, whereby the Apostles transmitted the Spirit they had received, together with their apostolical office, down to succeeding ages, we find them sometimes laying their hands on believers baptized, that thereby the Holy Ghost might come upon them, not with respect to any office, but only to confirm and strengthen them in the Christian faith.

For when the Samaritans had received the word

of God, and were baptized by Philip, who was no apostle, but only a deacon, the apostles at Jerusalem, hearing of it, sent Peter and John unto them, who having laid their hands upon them; they received the Holy Ghost, Acts viii. 17. Philip indeed, having had the Apostles' hands laid upon him, had thereby received power to baptize them with water and the Holy Ghost; but it seems he had no power to lay his hands upon them, and by that means to confer any greater measure of the Spirit upon them. No, that was to be done only by the Apostles themselves; who therefore sent two of their own body, as far as from Jerusalem to Samaria, on purpose to do it: which certainly they would never have done, had this been an useless ceremony, or if Philip, or any one under an apostle, could have done it. So that this instance is of itself sufficient to prove that this was an act peculiar to the apostolical office; and that our Saviour, according to his promise, was really present at the performance of it; seeing the Apostles had no sooner laid their hands upon them, but they immediately received the Holy Ghost. Another instance of the same nature we find, Acts xix. 6. where St. Paul being at Ephesus, and finding some disciples there baptized only with the baptism of John; he laid his hands upon them, and so they received the Holy Ghost.

Hence the Catholic Church, in all ages, hath not only retained this apostolical rite, which we now call *Confirmation*, but hath always esteemed it an essential part of the apostolical office, and therefore to be performed by none but the Apostles themselves and their successors to the end of the world. And therefore it was the ancient and constant custom of the primitive Church, as it is ours, for the bishop of every diocese to go into the lesser cities and villages belonging to him, and there lay his hands upon those who were baptized by priests or deacons, that

they might receive the Holy Ghost, as we learn from St. Hierom himself, whose words are, *non abnuo hanc esse ecclesiarum consuetudinem, ut ad eos qui minoribus urbibus per presbyteros et diaconos baptizati sunt, episcopus ad invocationem Sancti Spiritus manum impositurus excurrat.*

And therefore, how any bishops in our days dare neglect so considerable a part of their office, I know not; but fear they will have no good account to give of it, when they come to stand before our Lord's tribunal. And as for others, who, contrary to the practice of the primitive Christians, either refuse or neglect confirmation, when they may have it administered to them, they have just cause to suspect that they have no good sense of religion, nor regard for the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit: for if they had, they would use all means for the attainment thereof; especially this, which hath been found effectual for that end by the Catholic and Apostolic Church in all ages, where persons have been duly prepared for it: our Lord being, according to his promise in my text, always present at the performance of this, as well as of any other part of the apostolical office.

There is one thing still behind, which we must by no means omit, especially upon this occasion; and that is, the power of governing the Church, which our Lord left with his Apostles and their successors, to the end of the world; but so that he, according to his promise, is always present with them at the execution of it. For this power is granted to them in the very charter to which this promise is annexed: for here our Lord gives them commission not only to baptize, but likewise to teach those who are his disciples, to observe whatsoever he had commanded. Whereby they are empowered both to declare what are those commands of Christ which men ought to observe, and also to

use all means to prevail upon men to observe them: such as are, correcting and punishing those who violate, rewarding and encouraging those who keep them. But our Saviour's kingdom being, as himself saith, not of this world, but purely spiritual, he hath authorized his substitutes in the government of it, to use rewards and punishments of the same nature; even to admonish delinquents in his name to forsake their sins, and if they continue obstinate, and neglect such admonitions, to excommunicate, or cast them out of his Church; and, upon their repentance, to absolve and receive them in again. This power our Saviour first promised to St. Peter, and in him to the rest of the Apostles, Matt. xvi. 19. But it was not actually conferred upon them till after his resurrection, when having breathed, he said unto them, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained,* John xx. 23. As if he should have said, I, the Son of man, having power upon earth also to forgive sins, do now commit the same to you; so that whose sins soever are remitted or retained by you, are so by me also. From whence it is plain, both that the Apostles received power to remit and retain sins, and that Christ himself concurs with them in the exercise of that power; and how he doth it, even by his Holy Spirit now breathed into them.

To explain the full extent and latitude of this power, would require more time than can be allowed upon this day, whereon it is to be exercised: and, therefore, I shall observe only two things concerning it; whereof the first is, that how great soever the power be, which our Lord committed to his Apostles, and their successors, for the government of his Church in all ages, it is but ministerial; they act only under him as his ministers and stewards, and must one day

give an account to him of all their actions. Yea, whatsoever power they have of this nature, it is still his power in their hands; they derive it continually from him, who is always present with them. And therefore, as they themselves need to have a care how they exert this power, or neglect the exerting of it; so others had need to take care too, that they neither resist nor despise it.

The other thing I would observe unto you is, that for the better execution of this power, it hath been the constant custom of the Apostles and their successors, in all ages, to visit the Churches committed to their charge; to enquire into the faith and manners, both of the clergy and laity that are under them; and to use so much of their authority, and give such orders, as they found necessary for the due observation of their Lord's commands. Thus we find the Apostles frequently visiting the Churches they had planted; and St. Paul particularly keeping a solemn visitation at Miletus, where he sent for the elders of Ephesus, and of all Asia, (as Irenæus affirms, and the context itself proves,) and summoned them to appear before him there; where he gave them many apostolical admonitions and directions, how to feed the flock, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, Acts xx. 28. Afterwards we find it recorded in ecclesiastical history, that St. John often visited the Asiatic Churches, as his peculiar province. And I do not question, but where we read of Pinytus bishop of Gnossus, and Dionysius of Alexandria, laying their commands upon their clergy, in the first ages of the Church, it was at such a visitation as this: and we cannot doubt of St. Cyprian's care in this particular, so long as he resided upon his bishopric, seeing that in his very recess, when he was forced to retire, he visited them, as himself saith, by his letters, sending several both to the clergy and

laity, still extant in his works ; wherein he sometimes reproveth, sometimes admonishes, and directs them how to carry and behave themselves in that juncture.

Indeed this is so necessary to the discharging of the episcopal or apostolical office, that it cannot be imagined that ever any conscientious bishop durst neglect it. Insomuch, that in several ages after the Apostles, we have no ecclesiastical law or canon, as I remember, about episcopal visitations ; because there was no need of them till about the sixth or seventh century, when there were several canons made concerning the time and manner of keeping them : as the sixth Council at Arles decreed, that every bishop should go about his diocese once every year. Ivo quotes an ancient canon of the second Council at Sevil, that every bishop shall once a year go about his diocese, and confirm and teach the people. The second Council at Braga in Portugal decreed, that bishops in their visitations should instruct their clergy how to administer the Sacrament. The fourth at Toledo, that they shall then enquire into the fabric of their several churches, and examine what repairs they wanted. Another at Augusta Vindelicorum, or Ausburg, as some think, as others at Ratisbon in Germany, decreed, that when the bishop goes about his diocese to confirm the people, the presbyters shall be always ready to attend him. There are several other canons, enjoining bishops to visit at least once a year, and directing them what to do at their visitations ; but none, that I know of, that they shall visit in general : the Church taking it for granted all along, that no bishop would totally omit so necessary a part of his duty, but would some time, and after some manner or other, visit the diocese that belonged to him : which certainly none can choose but do, who considers either the account he must one day give of his stewardship, or the encouragement our Lord

himself has given him to do it, in that he hath promised to be always with him in the discharge of his office; saying to his Apostles and their successors for ever, *Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.*

Now the promises being duly weighed, even that our Lord himself is always present by his Holy Spirit with his Apostles and their successors in the execution of the apostolical office; many useful inferences might be thence deduced. I shall instance in some few, which I hope will not be altogether unworthy of your consideration at this time.

Hence therefore, in the first place, I observe, how much we are all bound to acknowledge the goodness, to praise, magnify, and adore the name of the most high God, in that we were born and bred, and still live in a Church, wherein the apostolical line hath through all ages been preserved entire, there having been a constant succession of such bishops in it, as were truly and properly successors to the Apostles, by virtue of that apostolical imposition of hands; which being begun by the Apostles, hath been continued from one to another, ever since their time, down to ours. By which means, the same Spirit which was breathed by our Lord into his Apostles, is, together with their office, transmitted to their lawful successors, the pastors and governors of our Church at this time; and acts, moves, and assists at the administration of the several parts of the apostolical office in our days, as much as ever. From whence it follows, that the means of grace, which we now enjoy, are in themselves as powerful and effectual as they were in the Apostles' days: and if they prove not always so successful now as they were then, that cannot be imputed to any want of efficacy in them, but to some defect or other in those who use them. For they who are duly prepared, cannot but always find the same effect from them, because there is

always the same cause, even the Spirit of God moving upon his Word and Sacraments, when administered by our Church, as well as when administered by the Apostles, to whom it was first given.

And here it may not be amiss to observe, what I have often thought of, not without admiration, how strangely the spirit of the Apostles hath run through our Church, all along, ever since the Reformation, diffusing itself from the head, which first received it, into all her real members; as may easily be seen, not only in the discipline of our Church, but likewise in its doctrine, manner of worship, patience under sufferings, universal charity, and particularly in its loyalty and submission to the civil magistrate; which the Apostles, assisted by the Spirit of God, did not only press upon others, but practised themselves. And the same Spirit hath enabled our Church constantly to do the same: insomuch, that malice itself could never fasten any thing of rebellion upon our Church, as now constituted, nor upon any of her members that lived faithfully in her communion. Many of them have suffered imprisonment, sequestration, yea martyrdom itself, as the Apostles did; and yet all have been as free from rebellion and treason as they were: which to me is a great instance of the same Spirit still working in our Church, which wrought so effectually upon them.

And this I verily believe is the great reason, why the devil had such a spite at our Church, still stirring up adversaries of all sorts against it; papists on the one hand, and sectaries on the other, and all, if possible, to destroy it: even because the Spirit, which is ministered in it, is so contrary to his nature, and so destructive of his kingdom, that he can never expect to domineer and tyrannize over the people of the land, so long as such a Church is settled among them, and they continue firm to it. And therefore seeing he cannot, by all his secret plots

and contrivances, totally overthrow it, he still uses the utmost of his skill and power, to draw as many as he can from its communion, and so make them schismatics ; that so being separated from the body, they may not partake of the Spirit that is in it, nor by consequence receive any benefit from this promise of our blessed Saviour to the governors of the Catholic and Apostolic Church in all ages, *Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world.*

The next thing I would observe unto you, from what we have now discoursed of, concerns us of the clergy, who are entrusted with any part of the apostolical office. For being ordained by those who succeeded the Apostles in a direct line, by the imposition of their hands upon us, we received not only power to administer the Word and Sacraments, but likewise the Spirit of Christ to accompany and influence such administrations : by whom therefore Christ himself is always present with us, whensoever we are employed in the work that he hath set us. Which consideration, methinks, should strike an awe and terror into us, and make us dread the thoughts of doing the work of our Lord negligently. And therefore, whether we minister unto him in the public Liturgy of our Church, read or preach his holy Word, or administer his blessed Sacraments, let us all be persuaded to have an especial care that we do it, not after a careless or perfunctory manner, but with all that reverence and godly fear, with that earnestness and devotion, with that seriousness and intention of mind, as becomes those who believe that our Lord himself is always present with us, not only to take notice of what we do, but to bless and sanctify it to the salvation of men's immortal souls.

Hence also it concerns us all, to carry and behave ourselves at all times, to the utmost of our power, as becometh the ministers of Christ ; to whom the

eternal Son of God hath vouchsafed so high an honour, as not only to employ us in his own immediate service, but likewise to reside himself continually with us. And therefore, seeing he is pleased to honour us with his own presence, let us endeavour to honour him too, by walking in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. Especially, let us take all the care we can to avoid whatsoever is offensive to him, or unworthy of that high and heavenly calling in which he hath placed us. It is true, the efficacy of the Word and Sacraments is not impeded by the wickedness or unworthiness of him by whom they are administered, as our Church hath rightly determined; because that depends not upon the person, but the office, and Christ's promise to it. But howsoever, it behoves us, who attend continually upon him, to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless; lest otherwise we bring a scandal upon our profession, and give too much occasion to the enemies of our Lord to blaspheme his most sacred name: especially considering what a sad and dismal thing it would be, if we, who are employed by Christ to persuade others to obey his Gospel, should not obey it ourselves, and so not save ourselves as well as those that hear us; but be instruments in God's hand to bring others to heaven, and yet we ourselves be cast down to hell; which is not only possible, but impossible to be avoided, unless we look very narrowly to ourselves. I am sure St. Paul thought so, and therefore saith, *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway*, 1 Cor. ix. 27. And if so great an apostle was forced to take so much pains with himself, lest when he had preached salvation unto others, he himself should not attain it; what cause have you and I to do so? But our comfort is, that our Lord is always present with us, and

therefore we can never want assistance from him, if we be not first wanting to ourselves.

Hoping therefore that this consideration of Christ's promise to us will have its desired effects upon us of the clergy ; I shall in the next place shew what use others also may and ought to make of it ; and for that end, shall apply myself unto you all. Seeing therefore that our Lord hath promised to be with his Apostles and their successors to the end of the world ; seeing the succession of the Office Apostolical hath without interruption been continued in our Church to this day ; and seeing therefore, that Christ, according to his promise, is alway present by his Holy Spirit at the Word and Sacraments, as administered by our Church, to quicken, actuate, and make them effectual to the salvation of our souls : hence in his name, and for his sake, and your own too, I humbly pray and beseech you all, that you would take all the opportunities you can to meet your Lord and Saviour in the public offices of the Church, to which he hath thus promised his peculiar presence. And think it not enough to be there, but consider all the while in whose presence you are, and deport yourselves accordingly. And while we read or preach the Gospel, call upon you, exhort, and pray you to observe whatsoever Christ hath commanded ; still remember the Apostle's words, that *we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God, 2 Cor. v. 20.* And therefore receive it not as the word of man, but, as it is indeed, the word of God himself.

Above all things, take heed, that you have not men's persons in admiration, so as to think the Word and Sacraments one jot the better or worse, because administered by one person rather than another. For they that do so, it is evident, regard the person more than the office ; and then it is no wonder if

they receive no benefit or advantage from it. For all the hopes and expectations that we have or can have from the exercise of any ecclesiastical office, by whomsoever performed, are grounded only upon Christ's promise to the office itself, to be present with it by his Holy Spirit; without which, all the fine words and phrases in the world can never mortify one lust, nor convert one soul to God and goodness. And therefore ye, whensoever you address yourselves to the public prayers of our Church, to hear God's word read, or preached, or to receive the holy Sacrament, still keep the eye of your faith fixed upon Christ, as there really present according to his promise, ready to dispense his heavenly blessings by his Holy Spirit, working together with the ordinance, to make it accomplish the end of its institution, even your sanctification in this world, and your eternal salvation in the world to come. Do but observe these few rules, in all your solemn devotions, as performed by that part of the Catholic Church, which, by the blessing of Almighty God, is settled amongst you; and then I dare assure you in the name of my Lord and Master Jesus Christ, that you will all experience the truth of what you have now heard, even that Christ is always present with his Apostles in the discharge of their office to the end of the world.

Moreover, from the premises duly weighed, you may all very easily observe, what reason you all have, to continue stedfast in the communion of our Church, wherein the Word and Sacraments are so powerfully and effectually administered, and not to deviate from her, either into popery on the one hand, or schism on the other. For, as to popery, although we do not deny but that the apostolical succession hath been continued in the Church of Rome; yet we cannot but affirm also, that they have made very bad use of it, or rather have most egregiously abused it: having clogged the several

offices with so many superstitious ceremonies, that they quench the Spirit which should inflame and quicken them, or else perform them so imperfectly and irregularly, that they are not the same that were instituted by Christ, and so not capable of having this promise fulfilled to them. I shall instance only in two, the reading of the Scriptures, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

As for the first, the public and solemn reading of the word of God by a minister of Christ, lawfully ordained and appointed thereunto, I look upon it as a thing of much greater consequence, than it is commonly thought to be: yea, I cannot but reckon it amongst the most useful and prevalent means of grace, that we do or can enjoy. For although it be our duty to read the Scriptures in private, which I hope you all do, yet none of you but may find by experience, that a chapter once read in public, as before described, is of greater force, and makes deeper impression upon you, than if you run it ten times over by yourselves. And the reason is, because the same Spirit, which indited the Scriptures, accompanies such solemn reading of them, and sets it home upon the hearts and consciences of them that hear it. So that besides the majesty and authority that appears in the Scriptures themselves, as they are the very word of God, much more than any exposition of them can be; there is likewise at such a time the power and efficacy of the Spirit of Christ then present, to press and enforce it upon the minds of all such as duly attend to the reading of them. But now, in the Church of Rome, all this is lost. For although they read the Scriptures indeed, yet they read them as they do their prayers, in an unknown tongue, at least to the greatest part of the congregation, and commonly to the very reader himself. By which means the people are deprived, not only of the Scriptures themselves, but likewise

of the assistance of God's Spirit, which otherwise would accompany the reading of them. For as they order the matter, the Spirit of God himself cannot make his own word effectual to their salvation without a miracle. He must first give them the gift of tongues, and make them understand a language they never learned, before it is possible for him to make his own word of any use or advantage to them. For he never works upon our minds, but in a way suitable to our natures, as we are rational creatures, so as first to clear up our apprehensions of the good he propounds to us, and so incline our wills to the embracement of it. But where the word of God is propounded in an unknown tongue, it is impossible for the people to have any apprehensions of it at all, for the Spirit of God to work upon, and to clear up so as to influence the will by them. By which means the word of God itself is made of little or no effect to those who live in the communion of that Church.

The same reason holds good also, as to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as administered by the Romish Church. For the whole office belonging to it is wrapped up in a language the people do not understand, and therefore know not what the priest saith, nor whether he consecrates the host or no; only they see him perform a great many ceremonies as unintelligible as the language he speaks, and at length he puts a wafer into their mouths. Now what is there in all this, that the Spirit of God can make use of, to the comfort and edification of the people? especially considering that the priest intends not to minister the Spirit of Christ unto them, but only his real body, as they are bound to believe the wafer to be. But if it was possible, as it neither is, nor can be, to convert the bread into the body of Christ, and give it to the people, what good could that do them, if abstracted from the Spirit? for, as our Lord himself said, *It is the Spirit that quick-*

eneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, John vi. 63. But after all this, I do not see how the promise of the Spirit can belong to the Sacrament, as they manage it. For the promise is made not to any one part of it as distinct from the other, but to the whole, as it was instituted by Christ. And where the institution is not rightly observed, neither can the promise annexed to it be performed. But it is plain, that our Saviour instituted the cup as well as the bread: and it is as plain, that the Church of Rome administers the bread only, and not the cup. And therefore they, by depriving the people of one half of the communion, do thereby deprive them of the comfort and benefit of the whole.

And therefore were there no other, as there are many, arguments to deter sober and considering men from the communion of that Church, this, one would think, is of itself sufficient to do it; even because those great means of grace, the Word and Sacrament itself, are so administered by it, as to be made of no use at all to the people.

And as for schism, they certainly hazard their salvation at a strange rate, who separate themselves from such a Church as ours is, wherein the apostolical succession, the root of all Christian communion, have been so entirely preserved, and the Word and Sacraments are so effectually administered; and all to go into such assemblies and meetings, as can have no pretence to the great promise in my text. For it is manifest, that this promise was made only to the Apostles and their successors to the end of the world. Whereas in the private meetings, where their teachers have no apostolical or episcopal imposition of hands, they have no ground to pretend to succeed the Apostles, nor by consequence any right to the Spirit which our Lord here promiseth; without which, although they preach their hearts out, I do not see what spiritual advantage can accrue to their hearers

by it. And therefore, whatsoever they may think of it, for my own part, I would not be without this promise of our Saviour for all the world, as knowing, that not only myself, but the whole Catholic Church, is highly concerned in it ; it being by virtue of this promise, that the Church is continually acted, guided, and assisted by the Spirit of God, and so the ordinary means of grace are made effectual to salvation, which otherwise would be of no force or efficacy at all. And therefore, to speak modestly, they must needs run a very great hazard, who cut themselves off from ours, and by consequence from the Catholic Church, and so render themselves incapable of receiving any benefit from this promise, or from the means of grace which they do or may enjoy.

Upon these, therefore, and such like considerations, which this text will readily suggest to your serious and more retired thoughts, I humbly advise and beseech you all in the name of Christ your Saviour, and as you do tender your salvation by him, that you would not hearken unto those, who go about to seduce you from our Church, but that you would continue firm and faithful to it. For so long as you do so, I dare undertake for you, that you are in the ready way to heaven. But if you once forsake that, whither you will next go, I know not ; no, nor you neither.

But when I speak of your continuing firm and faithful to our Church, I do not mean that you should only talk high for her, much less inveigh against her adversaries, or damn all those who are not of her communion ; for this is contrary to the divine and apostolical spirit that is in her, which is a spirit of meekness, and soberness, and charity. But my meaning is, that you firmly believe whatsoever she, from the word of God, propounds as an article of faith, and faithfully perform whatsoever

she, from the same word, requires as a necessary duty to God or man; and, by consequence, so live in the communion of our Church, as to live up to the rules and constitutions of it.

And O that all we, who are here present, and all that profess to be of our Church, wheresoever they are, would for the future do so! what an holy, what an happy people should we then be! how pious towards God, how loyal to our sovereign, how just and charitable towards all men! This would be the way to convince our adversaries of their errors and mistakes, when they see how far we excel them in virtue and good works: and this would be the way too, to secure our Church against all the attempts that men or devils can make upon her. For then our Lord himself would delight to dwell amongst us, and be always present with us, not only by his Spirit, but likewise by his power too. And if he be with us, we need not fear what flesh can do against us; so that we may lay it down as a most certain truth, that our Church can never be destroyed but by itself. For if we do not first fail of performing our duty unto him, be sure Christ will never fail of performing his promise unto us. But how proud, how malicious soever our adversaries are, and whatsoever designs they may carry on against us, he that sitteth in the heavens will laugh them to scorn, our Lord will have them in derision: he will abate their pride, assuage their malice, or else confound their devices, so as to make them fall themselves into the same pit that they dig for others. And notwithstanding all their endeavours to the contrary, he will settle our Church upon such foundations, that the gates of hell itself shall never be able to prevail against it. Neither will he only continue his Church to us, but likewise his Spirit to our Church, so as always to perform this promise in my

with his ministers.

37

text, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

O blessed Jesu! thou eternal Son of God, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be everlasting honour, praise, and glory, from this time forth and for evermore.

S E R M O N I I .

THE INSTITUTION OF MINISTERS.

Acts i. 26.

And they gave forth their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven Apostles.

THIS portion of Scripture, appointed for the Epistle this day, suits as well with the work that is to be now done, as it doth with the day for which it is appointed. It is appointed for the feast of St. Matthias, whose memory we this day celebrate; of whom we have read, that he was taken into the number of apostles in the Church of Christ. And there are several persons here present, to be ordained now into the sacred ministry of the same Church, whereof he was ordained an apostle. And therefore I shall not insist upon the words themselves, but I shall take occasion from hence to discourse of Ordination in general, under which, that of St. Matthias in particular will come in of course.

Now by Ordination in general, I mean, the setting apart some certain persons to direct, govern, assist, and influence others in the public worship of Almighty God, and to administer such means unto them as he hath appointed for their eternal salvation. Concerning which, we shall consider two things:

First, The necessity of it. And,

Secondly, The way and manner of performing it.

As to the first, we need not say much, it being a thing that mankind in general seems to be agreed in. For as there is no nation in the world, but where they profess some kind of religion or other; so there is no religion professed in the world, but where they have some persons or other set apart for the celebration of the several rites and ceremonies in it; without which, indeed, it is impossible that any religion should subsist. For if no places were set apart for the worship of God, men would soon worship him no where; if no times, they would never worship him; so if no persons were set apart for it, none would ever do it at all, at least not so as they ought.

And if it be so in natural, how much more in revealed religion, of which this seems to be one of the integral or essential parts; without which, it is not that religion which God hath revealed. For whensoever he, the great Creator and Governor of the world, hath revealed his will and pleasure to his creatures, how he would have them worship and serve him that made them; he hath still at the same time constituted certain officers amongst them, to assist them in it: which officers, being, as it were, his own domestics, or immediate servants or ministers, waiting continually upon himself and his service, he always hath reserved to himself the constitution or ordination of them; not suffering any one that had a mind to it to meddle with any thing belonging to the said offices, without his leave and order first obtained. And if any presume to do it, he doth not only make what they do void, and of no effect, but he punisheth them severely for it: as we find by many instances in Holy Scripture.

Hence the Apostle saith, *No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron*; Heb. v. 4. that is, no man can be really a priest, a minister of God, as Aaron was, but such as are called and constituted by God himself, as he was.

And they that do undertake the said ministry without such a call, whatsoever they may fancy or pretend, they are not God's ministers: and therefore all they do is in vain, and to no purpose, as the Apostle saith elsewhere, *How shall they preach, except they be sent?* Rom. x. 15. They may speak the same words, deliver the same truths, press the same duties, as they do, who are really God's ministers; but this is not preaching, properly so called: they do not publish and proclaim the will of God, with any power or authority over their hearers, for they have received none from God, as not being called and sent by him.

This the Apostles and first disciples of our blessed Saviour were so sensible of, that when they wanted an apostle, although there were doubtless many excellent persons among them, that might think themselves fit for the place, yet none of them would undertake it of their own heads; but they all, with one accord, left it to Almighty God, to determine and declare whom he had chosen and called to it: who having, by his disposal of the lots they cast, accordingly acquainted them, that Matthias was the person he pitched upon, he was presently numbered with the Apostles.

But all this will appear more clearly under the second head, which I design principally to consider; and that is, the way and manner, whereby God hath been pleased to ordain and set apart persons for his own service and ministry. In speaking to which, I shall not trouble you with any conjectures how this was done in the Church before Moses's time, but shall begin there, where we have a certain rule to walk by.

In the day therefore that the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, he sanctified to himself all the first-born among the children of Israel, Numb. iii. 13. But afterwards, instead of them, he

took one whole tribe, even the tribe of Levi, ver. 12, they being about the same number with the first-born of all Israel. For all the males of the tribe of Levi, from a month old and upwards, were numbered 22000; and all the first-born of the males among the children of Israel were 22273. So that all the first-born males of Israel were only 273 more than the Levites; which odd number being redeemed at five shekels apiece by the poll, the whole tribe of Levi was from thenceforward set apart to be employed wholly in the service of God, instead of all the first-born in Israel, Numb. iii. 8. And out of this tribe he chose one family, even that of Aaron, to minister continually to him in the priest's office; to burn incense, to slay and offer sacrifices, to instruct the people in his law, and the like. And out of this family, he chose Aaron himself, and so the first-born of that family all along, to be his high-priest; to whom he appointed not only the oversight of all the rest, but likewise some certain offices, which no other Priests or Levites could meddle with.

So that we here have three distinct orders of men, settled and established by God himself to minister unto him, the High-priest, the Priests, and the Levites. Which last, in Moses's time, were employed wholly about the tabernacle and the vessels belonging to it; but when the temple was built, they were also made treasurers, and judges, and porters, and singers, 1 Chron. xxiii. 45.

Now God having thus constituted these several orders of men for his own service, he gave directions how they should be all consecrated to their several offices. First, Aaron by himself, as the High-priest; then his sons, as the second or ordinary Priests, Levit. viii. and afterwards the Levites, Numb. viii. By which consecration, not only the persons then in being, but their posterity, were all ordained into the same offices that they themselves were. By Aaron's

ordination into the office of High-priest, the first-born, or eldest sons of his family, were ordained so too. By his son's consecration, all their sons, or the younger sons of that family, were ordained priests. And so for the Levites, when they were consecrated, all the males that should ever proceed from them, were consecrated together with them, as being then contained in their loins. So that although there might be some certain ceremonies used at their entering upon the execution of their office, when they came to years of discretion, yet they were not properly ordained or consecrated again; but the office came to them in course, or, if you will, *ex traduce*: the ordination, which their ancestors had from God himself, being, by virtue of this institution and command, propagated and derived down to them. And thus it continued all along, during the Mosaic dispensation, which was about 2000 years, even until the death of our blessed Saviour; which being typified and foreshewn by the sacrifices which these priests offered, the priesthood itself must needs continue in force and virtue till that was accomplished.

And therefore all the while that Christ lived, he made no alteration at all in it; neither did he ever properly abrogate, or repeal the laws that were formerly made about it, but when he died, they expired together with him; both the time, and the end for which they were made, being now accomplished. But from that time forward, though the Jewish nation still continued till the destruction of Jerusalem, which was forty years after, yet they had not really any priesthood among them, the time for which it was ordained being now expired.

When our Lord therefore was upon earth, foreseeing that all the Mosaic orders would cease in course upon his death, and knowing that his Church could never subsist without some such orders of men set apart for the administration of his Word and

Sacraments; before he died, he took care to lay the platform of others, suitable to his own religion. For which purpose, out of the many disciples that followed him, he first chose twelve Apostles; to whom he gave commission to baptize, to preach the Gospel, and to work miracles for the confirmation of it, Matt. x. And afterwards he sent out seventy other disciples, and gave them power also to preach the Gospel, and cast out devils in his name, Luke x. So that he still kept up the same number of orders in his Church whilst himself lived, that was in the Jewish Church: for he himself was truly the High Priest, of whom they, under the Law, were only types. Then there were the twelve Apostles, answerable to the priests of the second order; and the seventy disciples, resembling the great number of Levites.

But all this while we do not read that the Apostles had any solemn consecration to their office, during our Saviour's life. It is said indeed in Mark iii. 14. that he ordained twelve; but the words are ἐποίησε δώδεκα, he made or appointed twelve to be his apostles, or messengers. But we do not find that he ordained them, so as to confer any sacerdotal power upon them. He promised indeed St. Peter, and the rest of the Apostles with him, that he would give them the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. xvi. 19. But they were as yet in the hands of the Levitical priesthood; and he would not take them from thence to give them to his Apostles, so long as that priesthood continued in force. But he was no sooner dead and risen again, but he presently performed his promise. For then the Levitical priesthood being expired, and by consequence the keys, which he had before committed to it by his servant Moses, returning on course into his own hands, he then, according to his promise, gave them to his Apostles.

For upon the same day that he rose again in the

evening, his Apostles being met together, he came to them, and said to them, *Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said so, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained,* John xx. 21, 22, 23. *As my Father sent me, even so I send you; that is, as my Father sent me to preach the Gospel, by anointing me with his Holy Spirit, Isa. lxi. 1. Luke iv. 18. even so, after the self-same manner, I send you: receive ye the Holy Ghost; at the speaking of which words he breathed upon them, and so issued forth the Holy Spirit from himself into them. Which, as it is an undeniable argument of the Spirit's procession from the Son as well as from the Father; so it was the highest and truest consecration of the Apostles that could be, far beyond that of Aaron and his sons. For they were anointed only with material ointment, which was poured upon Aaron's head, Levit. viii. 12. and sprinkled afterwards upon his and his sons' garments, together with the blood of the sacrifice, ver. 30. But this was only a type of that Holy Spirit wherewith the Apostles were anointed by our Lord, when he breathed it immediately from himself into them.*

And now were the keys of the kingdom of heaven, according to the promise before mentioned, given to the Apostles. And therefore our Lord, after he had breathed upon them, saying, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost; presently adds, Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.* Whereby all sacerdotal power was now conferred upon the Apostles, even whatsoever is necessary to the government and edification of the Church, to the world's end. And therefore immediately before his ascension, the eleven Apostles being met together again, in the place that he

appointed them, our Lord goes to them again, and saith, *All power is given to me, both in heaven and earth: go ye therefore, and make all nations my disciples, by 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 commanded you. And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* That is, I by my Holy Spirit, which I have breathed into you, am now with you; and so I am always with you and your successors to the end of the world.

Now the Apostles being thus solemnly ordained and consecrated by Christ himself, and having received so ample a commission from him; soon after his ascension into heaven, they, with some other disciples, met together, and consulted how to fill up their number again: for Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, by betraying his Master, had lost both his office and his life, and another was now to take his bishopric, or apostleship, according to the prophecy in the book of Psalms, which St. Peter put them in mind of. And therefore they all agree to have the number made up again out of these, who had, like the other Apostles, been conversant with our blessed Saviour all along, from first to last. And they found two considerable persons among them, who had been so, Joseph surnamed Justus, and Matthias; both, in their apprehensions, equally qualified for the place: yet nevertheless, they would not undertake to choose either of them. Forasmuch as they themselves, having been chosen by Christ himself, it was not fit to take any into their number, but whom Christ himself had chosen: and therefore they resolved to refer it wholly unto him.

But how could that be done, now that Christ was gone from them into heaven? there was no other way but to cast lots, which should be the person; a way that had been commonly used in such cases. For by

the command of God himself, lots were cast upon the two goats, which should be the Lord's, and which should be the scape-goat, Lev. xvi. 8. The land of Canaan was divided among the twelve tribes by lot, Josh. xviii. 6. Saul was chosen king of Israel by lot, 1 Sam. x. 21. The several ministrations and charges of the priests were divided amongst them by lot, 1 Chron. xxiv. 5. There are many such instances in the Old Testament, of referring doubtful cases to God's decision, by casting lots upon them; for, as the Wise-man saith, *The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord*, Prov. xvi. 33.

This course therefore the Apostles took, to know which of these two persons our Lord would have taken into their number; but before they cast their lots, they first address themselves in a more solemn manner to Christ himself, saying, *Thou, Lord, which knoweth the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.* Where we may observe, they do not pray that our Lord would choose one now, but that he would shew whether of the two he had chosen already; for so the words run, ἐκ τούτων τῶν δύο ἓνα ὃν ἐξελέξω, which one of these two thou hast chosen; as supposing that he had chosen one of them already, though they did not know which. And therefore when they had cast lots, and the lot was fallen upon Matthias, they took it for granted, as they well might, that he was the person whom Christ had before chosen to be one of their number; and therefore, without any more ado, *he was numbered with the eleven apostles*, so as to make up the number of twelve again.

But here it may be asked, how this Matthias

should be an apostle of equal power with the other, seeing he was not present when the other were ordained by our Saviour, and received the same Spirit from him. I answer, that the same doubt may be made concerning St. Thomas, for neither was he present when our Lord breathed his Holy Spirit upon his other apostle; and yet none ever denied, but that he was an apostle of equal authority with those that were then present. And indeed the question concerning both may be clearly answered by a parallel case: for we read, Numb. xi. how that when Moses had, by the appointment of God, chosen seventy of the elders of Israel to be endowed with his Spirit, and had ordered them to go to the tabernacle of the congregation, *the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders; and it came to pass, that when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. But two of the seventy remained in the camp, Eldad and Medad; and though they were not present, the Spirit rested upon them also, and they prophesied as well as the other.* And this remark is put upon them, that *they were of them that were written, but went not to the tabernacle,* Numb. xi. 25, 26. The case is the self-same here: for as Eldad and Medad, being chosen by Moses into the number of the seventy, received the same Spirit which was given to the other sixty-eight, although they were not present at the place, where the Lord came down in a cloud to them; so here, Thomas and Matthias being in the number of the twelve, which were chosen by our Lord to be his Apostles, although they were not present at the place where our Lord gave the Holy Spirit to the other ten, yet they received it as effectually to all intents and purposes as the other did. For wheresoever they were, the Holy Ghost breathed upon the Apostles as

such, rested upon them also, because they also were chosen into the number of Apostles, even Matthias himself, as I observed before.

This formal admission of St. Matthias into the number of the Apostles, was upon one of the ten days between the ascension of our Lord to heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. And then was fulfilled what our Saviour had promised his Apostles, saying, *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth,* John xiv. 16. which therefore is called another Comforter, because he was to supply our Saviour's place and presence upon earth; guide his Apostles into all truth; and direct, assist, and order the affairs of his Church until his coming again. And therefore it was, that now, upon the day of Pentecost, he made, as it were, his public entrance into the Church, appearing visibly to the disciples, and enabling them to speak all manner of languages, in order to the conversion of all nations to the faith of Christ.

Now this Holy Spirit of Christ, having thus taken upon him this office, to shew that he could and would do for the Church whatsoever our Saviour himself either would or could was he still present in person, as well as by this his Spirit: hence, as he had chosen twelve Apostles, his Spirit chooses two other, in as plain and apparent a manner as Christ himself had done it. For there being *certain prophets and teachers in the Church at Antioch, Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul, as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them,* Acts xiii. 1, 2. From whence we may observe, that he had before this called them to the work; and now he expressly commands the prophets and teachers there present to separate, or

set them apart for it. He did not employ the Apostles that were consecrated by our Lord to do it, that their consecration might appear to be wholly from himself; and so the Church might rest fully satisfied, that although our Saviour, the head of it, be gone to heaven, yet he hath still, and always will have, one upon earth, that can exercise his power so effectually, that he himself may be truly said to be always with it, as he said he would. But howsoever, notwithstanding that he himself had called them, yet he would have them publicly ordained by the persons before mentioned, supposed to be the bishops of Syria, to shew that whatsoever call from him any should afterwards pretend to, yet he would never employ them in his work and ministry, until they were publicly ordained, and separated for it, by the governors of the Church empowered by him to do it. And then he would have it done too by the imposition of hands, to shew that this was the way that he had appointed for it. For it is said, that *when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away*, ver. 3. or, as the word ἀπέλυσαν signifies, they dismissed them, or let them depart; for they were not properly sent by them, but by the Holy Ghost, as it is expressly said in the following words. So then they being sent forth, ἐκπεμφθέντες, were sent forth by the Holy Ghost; and as the twelve were sent by Christ, so were these two, Barnabas and Saul, sent by his Holy Spirit, and so were as truly his apostles as the other. And therefore one of them, even Saul, otherwise called Paul, is not only called an apostle of Jesus Christ, but saith expressly, that he was so, *not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father*, Gal. i. 1. because he was thus sent by the Holy Ghost himself, the same God with the Father and the Son.

From whence we may observe, by the way, upon

what good grounds the last revisers of the Common Prayer added two new holy-days in the Calendar, which had been omitted in the former editions, even the Conversion of St. Paul, and St. Barnabas's day ; for these being apostles of the same power and dignity with the other twelve, there was all the reason in the world that we should commemorate and give God thanks for them as well as for the other. But to distinguish them from the others, the eves or vigils of these days are not appointed to be observed, so as those of the others are.

Now the Apostles being all thus ordained and consecrated by Christ's Holy Spirit, they were thereby invested with full power and authority, not only to preach and propagate the Gospel, and to add to the Church daily such as should be saved, and to rule and govern the said Church at present ; but likewise to institute and establish such officers in it, by whom it may be rightly governed according to our Saviour's mind in all future ages. In order whereunto, the twelve first instituted the office of deacons, upon occasion of the Grecians murmuring against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. For, it not being fitting that the Apostles themselves should leave the word to serve tables, they ordered seven men of honest report to be chosen out for that work ; which seven being set before the Apostles, they prayed, and then laid their hands on them, Acts vi. 6. By which imposition of hands, they received power not only to look after the widows and poor, but also to baptize and preach the Gospel. For Stephen, who was one of the seven, was no sooner ordained, but we presently find him preaching so powerfully, that the Jews were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake, Acts vi. 10. And Philip, another of the seven, preached Christ so effectually to the Samaritans, that they received the word

gladly, and were baptized of him, and so was the eunuch too, that was treasurer to Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, Acts viii. 38. And this office of deacons, thus instituted by the Apostles, hath continued in the Church ever since, and so must do to the end of the world.

But these deacons being ordained only to minister in the Church, they could have no share in the government of it; which was the main thing that the Apostles were to take care of: and therefore considering that the Spirit, which they had received, must according to Christ's promise abide with his Church for ever; it was necessary they should find out some way, to transfer it upon others; and so successively from one to another, to the world's end. Now they found by experience, what they were doubtless directed to by the Holy Ghost himself, that upon whomsoever they laid their hands, the Holy Ghost presently fell upon them. Thus when Philip, the aforesaid deacon, had converted and baptized the Samaritans, the Apostles sent Peter and John to them; who having prayed, and laid their hands on them, they received the Holy Ghost, Acts viii. 17. Philip did not so much as offer to lay his hands upon them; and if he had, it would not have done the work, because he was only a deacon, and none of the Apostles, who had so received the Holy Ghost themselves, as to have power to confer it upon others. As we find St. Paul also did, by laying his hands upon the disciples at Ephesus, Acts xix. 6.

Hence it is, that this power always was, and still is, appropriated only to the Apostles themselves, and their successors, the bishops of the Church. And it is that which we now call Confirmation, when a bishop rightly ordained, after the example of the holy Apostles, prays for those that are baptized, and lays his hand upon their heads, that they may receive the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit,

to confirm them in the faith, and in all goodness; which duly performed, is certainly as effectual now as ever, in those who are rightly disposed and qualified for it; as, blessed be God, we find at this very day, to our unspeakable comfort.

The Apostles therefore, finding by experience that the Holy Ghost was given by the laying on of hands, for the confirmation of believers; they could not but conclude this to be a proper way also, for the conferring of it upon those who were to succeed them in the government of the Church. Especially considering, that this was the way whereby Joshua, by the command of God himself, was constituted the successor of Moses; for Moses laid his hands upon him, by which means the Spirit of wisdom came upon him, Numb. xxiii. 23. Deut. xxxiv. 9. From whence this rite was commonly used by the Jewish Church, in the constitution of their governors; and the Holy Ghost himself did not only approve of it, but appointed it to be used in the ordination of Barnabas and Saul. Upon these and the like considerations, the Apostles took this course for the conveying of the Spirit, which they had received, to their successors in all ages. For the way whereby Christ bestowed it upon the twelve, by breathing on them, was proper and peculiar to himself, from whom the Spirit proceedeth. But this was a way, which both they and their successors in all ages would be capable of: for their bodies, as well as souls, being made the temples of the Holy Ghost, at their consecration, whensoever they laid their hands upon any person, so as to touch his body, with a design of transferring the same Spirit upon him, it is easy to imagine, how such a person comes to be endowed with it: especially, seeing the Holy Ghost had instituted and appointed this to be the way of doing it, and therefore it is impossible it should ever fail. Insomuch, that as the same power which was given to Aaron at his

consecration, was propagated and continued in that Church by successive generations from father to son, so long as the Church itself lasted; so is the same Spirit and power, which was given to the Apostles at their consecration, propagated and continued in the Church of Christ, by the successive imposition of hands from one to another, and will be, so long as the world endureth.

This, therefore, being the method that the holy Apostles, by the direction of the Spirit itself, had agreed upon before their dispersions, wheresoever any of them went, so soon as they had converted any considerable number to the faith, enough to make a Church, before they departed from them, they still laid their hands upon one, whom they judged the fittest among them, and so left the same Spirit, which they themselves had, with him, for the government and edification of that Church. For whosoever was thus ordained, did by that means receive the Spirit. And therefore, St. Paul having thus ordained Timothy at Ephesus, in his second Epistle to him, he useth these words, *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands, 2 Tim. i. 6.* And what this gift of God was, he declares in the following words, saying, *for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.* As if he should have said, For that Spirit which God hath given us, even me and thee, is not a spirit of fear, but of power, to instruct and govern the Church; of love, to regulate our passions in the doing it; and of a sound mind, to keep both stedfast in the faith; plainly implying, that by the laying of his hands upon him, God had given the same Spirit to Timothy, that he himself, the Apostle, had.

But elsewhere, the same Apostle tells Timothy, that this gift was given him by prophecy, *with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, 1 Tim. iv. 14.*

From whence it may seem, that some of the elders of the Church joined with St. Paul, in laying their hands upon him ; and yet St. Paul ascribes it wholly to the laying on of *his* hands, and saith, the gift was given him *by* that, and only *with* the other, because he being the only Apostle that laid on his hands, and so the only person that had power by that means to confer the Holy Spirit, although it was given to him, together *with* the laying on of the others' hands upon him, yet it was not given *by* that, but *by* the laying on of St. Paul's *hands*, as he himself saith. As it is in our Church at this time, and so hath been in the Latin for many ages, in the ordination of a priest ; the priests there present join with the bishop in their laying their hands upon him, and yet he is ordained only by the bishop's laying on his hands. For how many priests soever lay their hands upon another's head, they can never make him a real priest, unless there be a bishop with them ; but a bishop, by the imposition of his hands, can make a priest, although there be never another priest with him. Neither doth the law require, that any priests should be present at such ordination, but only that the bishop, with the priests present, (if there happen to be any.) shall lay their hands upon him that is to be ordained ; the imposition of the priests' hands being only to signify their consent, that such a person should be received into their order, and so take off the blame from the bishop, in case he should prove to have been unworthy of it. But still, it is only by the imposition of the bishop's hands, that he is made a priest, as St. Paul saith, that Timothy received the Spirit, by the laying on of *his* hands, notwithstanding the presbytery joined with him in it.

But of this, the Spirit's being given by such imposition of hands, so that it is by *him* principally that the person is ordained, we have a very remarkable instance in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. xx.

where we read how St. Paul having ordained many elders or bishops in Asia, he summoned them to a visitation that he held at Miletus, and in the charge he gave them, among other things, he said, *Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, or bishops, ver. 28.* For from hence it appears, that when they were ordained by the imposition of the Apostles' hands, the Holy Ghost so came upon them, that he constituted them in the office they were ordained to: it was *he* that made them bishops, *the apostle*, and whosoever else might join with him in laying on of hands, were only his instruments, the Holy Ghost was the principal agent; and so questionless he is, and always will be, in all such ordinations. So that all who are regularly ordained, may be truly and properly said to receive their power and commission from the Holy Ghost, that is then conferred upon them, and so from Christ himself.

Having thus considered the course that the Apostles, by Christ's direction, took and instituted in the Church, for the conferring of Holy Orders, so as that they might transfer the same Spirit, which they themselves received, upon those who were admitted into them, and so continue it in the Church for ever; we may further observe, that besides that of deacons before mentioned, they found it necessary to establish two other orders in the Church, to remain through all ages. First, their own, which we now call the order of bishops, who are therefore by the ancients commonly termed the Apostles' successors, because that by a successive imposition of hands, continued all along from the Apostles themselves, they receive the same Spirit and power which the Apostles had, not only for the administration of the Word and Sacraments, but likewise for the government of the Church, and for the conferring of the Holy Spirit by the imposition of their hands, as the Apostles did,

both for the confirmation of believers, and likewise for the ordination of persons into their own and other offices in the Church.

The other order is that of priesthood, which being instituted for the due administration of all the ordinary means of grace, it was necessary that they, who were admitted into this order also, should have the Holy Ghost, the fountain of all grace, conferred upon them, to influence their several administrations, without which it is impossible they should ever attain their end. And hence it is, that, according to the practice of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, though not in that of deacons, yet in the ordination of priests, as you will see presently, the bishop, when he lays his hand severally upon every one that receives that order, saith, *Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee, by the imposition of hands: whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.* Where we may observe, that although some other words are inserted to determine and distinguish the office committed to them, yet all the same words are repeated, which our Lord himself used at the ordination of his Apostles; which the Catholic Church always judged necessary, not only in imitation of our blessed Saviour, but likewise, because that the persons who are ordained priests in his Church, are to preach the same Word, administer the same Sacraments, and exercise the same power in the censures of the Church, as the Apostles themselves did. And therefore it is necessary that they should be endued with the same Spirit, ordained after the same manner, and entrusted with the same power of the keys, as the Apostles themselves were. By which means, the means of grace and salvation administered by priests thus ordained, become as effectual to those that use them aright, as when they were administered by the Apostles

themselves; the Spirit, which they receive by this imposition of hands, being always ready to assist at their several administrations, and to bless and sanctify them to those who are duly prepared and disposed for them.

Now from what we have thus briefly, as the occasion would permit, discoursed upon this subject, I shall draw only two inferences; whereof the first concerns those who are now to be admitted into Holy Orders, either priests or deacons. For from what ye have now heard, ye may easily see the duty as well as dignity of the office you are called to, to be ministers of Christ, and stewards of the manifold mysteries of God. And therefore I hope you have prepared yourselves, according to the directions that have been given you, by prayer and fasting, for so great an undertaking; and so are both duly disposed to receive the power and Spirit that shall be committed to you, and also fully resolved, by the grace of God, to exercise and improve it for your Master's use. For which purpose, as I do not doubt but you have seriously considered what questions will be propounded to you, and what answers ye must give to them; so I must entreat you to keep it always in your minds, how solemnly you this day devoted yourselves to the service of God and his Church, and what vows and promises you have made in his presence, to be diligent in praying, in reading the holy Scriptures, and in framing your lives accordingly; in ministering the doctrine, the sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord commanded, and as this Church and realm hath received the same; to drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines, and to maintain and set forward, as much as in you lies, quietness, love, and peace, among Christian people, and reverently to obey your ordinary, and those to whom is committed the charge and government over you. If ye do these things

according as ye then promise, ye will save both yourselves and them that hear you; but otherwise, after all your preaching unto others, you yourselves will be cast-aways.

The other inference respects all here present: for from the premises duly weighed, you cannot but all infer both the necessity and dignity of those Holy Orders which are now to be conferred; the necessity, in that the means of salvation cannot be administered effectually without them; and the dignity, in that they are effectually administered by them. Upon which account, you cannot but acknowledge there is a real honour and respect due to those who are thus ordained, though not for their own, yet for their office sake; and for his sake, whose officers and ministers they are, in conveying the greatest blessings to you that you are or ever can be capable of.

Wherefore as St. Paul said to Timothy, *let no man despise thy youth*, 1 Tim. iv. 12. so say I to you, do not despise Christ's clergy for their youth, or poverty, or upon any other account whatsoever; but esteem them as ye ought, for his sake, whose clergy they are: and thank God that you have such a clergy among you, as is ordained according to Christ's own institution, and endowed with the same Spirit which he breathed into his holy Apostles, handed down from them to us, by a continued and uninterrupted succession; which is the great glory of our Church, and that which you can never sufficiently thank God for: as considering, that by this means you have the Word and Sacraments so truly and powerfully administered among you, that nothing but the extreme neglect of yourselves can hinder any of you from being happy for ever.

But that you may all be so, you must not think it enough that you have such a clergy ordained among you, nor that the means of grace are so duly and regularly administered to you, but you must exercise

yourselves continually in them, otherwise your having of them will signify nothing, unless it be to sink you lower into the abyss of misery. Neither must you use only some, but all the means that are appointed for the begetting or increasing of true grace and virtue in you. For if you neglect any, you had even as good neglect all; one being as necessary in its kind as another, and all assisting one another, in order to the attainment of the end. And after all, though you use the means, and all the means, you must use them only as means; and therefore not rest in them, nor trust on them, but only upon him who hath appointed them, and hath sent his Holy Spirit to move in them, to make them effectual to the purposes for which they are used.

Do but this, and you will soon find, by your own experience, what infinite cause you have to bless God for your living in a Church where Holy Orders are conferred, and by consequence the means of salvation administered so exactly, according to the institution and appointment of Christ our Saviour: to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON III.

SALVATION IN THE CHURCH ONLY, UNDER SUCH A
MINISTRY.

Acts ii. 47.

*And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should
be saved.*

THE eternal Son of God having taken our nature upon him, and in it, by his *one oblation of himself once offered*, made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; *he is now able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him*, Heb. vii. 25. But forasmuch as *he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*, chap. ii. 16. *the angels, which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, are all still reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day*, Jude, ver. 6. And as for those who partake of that nature, which he assumed, and in which he suffered, and so are capable of pardon and salvation by him, it is much to be feared, that a great, if not the greatest, part of them also, will, notwithstanding what he hath done and suffered for them, perish everlastingly: not by reason of any defect or insufficiency in his merits and power to save them, but by reason of their own obstinacy or negligence, in not performing those easy conditions which he requires

of them, in order to their being actually vested in that salvation which he hath purchased for them. But whosoever, among the sons of men, will come up to his most gracious terms, and submit themselves wholly to be governed and saved by him, he will take care that they shall be certainly saved, and advanced to eternal glory in heaven. And for that purpose he always so orders it in his providence, that all such are first admitted into, and made members of, that Church, which he hath established upon earth; as the Holy Ghost here witnesseth, saying, *And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.*

For the better understanding of which words, we shall briefly consider,

First, What is here meant by the Church.

Secondly, Who, by such as should be saved.

Thirdly, What by the Lord's adding to the Church daily such as should be saved.

As for the first, we must remember, that when our Lord was upon earth, he said he would build himself a Church, and that upon such a rock, *that the gates of hell should not prevail against it*, Matt. xvi. 18. In order whereunto, he first chose twelve persons, called his Apostles, to whom he revealed the design he came into the world about, and the great mysteries of the Gospel; and then sent them out to acquaint others with what he had taught them, and to work miracles for the confirmation of it; and to admit all such as would receive it into their society, by baptizing of them. By which means he soon had a considerable number of disciples; out of which he selected seventy others, to whom he gave power also *to preach the Gospel*, and *to work miracles*, Luke x. 1. And having thus laid the foundation, he soon after purchased to himself an universal Church, with his own most precious blood. And rising again the third day, he presently took care to settle the perpetual

government of it, by granting to his Apostles the like power and commission, which he had received from his Father for that purpose. And then he gave them orders *to go and preach the Gospel to all nations*, and make them his disciples, by *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, and to teach them all things that he had commanded them; assuring them withal, that he himself, by his Holy Spirit, *would be with them*, and their successors, *to the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

Our Lord having thus done all things which were necessary for the establishment of his Church upon earth, he ascended up into heaven, there also to take the supreme care of it. And ten days after, upon the day of Pentecost, he, according to his promise, sent down the Holy Ghost in a miraculous manner upon his Apostles, to assist them in speaking the languages of all nations, in order to their conversion, and to set home what they preached upon the hearts of those who heard it: which wrought so effectually with them, that by one short sermon preached the same day by St. Peter, *about three thousand souls received the word gladly, and were baptized*, Acts ii. 41. And from that day forward, many others did so; who therefore in my text are said to be *added to the Church*, that is, to the society or congregation of the faithful people before described; consisting of the Apostles, as the governors of it, and of such as were joined to them, and held communion with them in the Word and Sacraments, which our Lord had instituted.

And when the said society was dispersed, as it soon was, over the whole world, it was still the same, and retained the same name, being still called the Church. And not only the whole, but wheresoever any part of it was settled in any city, and the territories belonging to it, that also was called the

Church of that city; as the Church of Jerusalem, the Church of Corinth, &c. And wheresoever there were several such cities and Churches in them belonging to any province or country, they are called the Churches of that country; as the Churches of Asia, Macedonia, &c. But as every private Christian is a member of some particular Church, so is every particular Church a member of the catholic or universal, which is always meant, when we read in Scripture of the Church in general, without the addition of place or country. As where it is said, *that Christ also loved the Church*, Eph. v. 25. *and Christ is the head of the Church*, ver. 23. so here, *and the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*, σωζομένων, or such as are saved, as the word may be rendered; but the sense is much the same? for our salvation plainly begins in this life, although it be perfected only in the other. It commenceth from our repentance and conversion; from our being saved from our sins, or *from this untoward generation*, Acts ii. 40. as the Apostle in this chapter words it. And they, and only they, who are thus saved from their sins upon earth, can ever attain to the salvation of their souls in heaven. By such therefore as are or should be saved, we are to understand such as being pricked in their hearts, and convinced of their former errors in opinion and practice, do heartily repent them, and gladly receive the word, and embrace the terms propounded in the Gospel, for the pardon of their sins, and for the assistance of God's grace and Spirit, that they may so serve him here, as to enjoy him for ever. Such as these, which shall certainly be saved, *the Lord daily added to the Church*.

What we are to understand by that phrase, even the Lord's *adding them to the Church*, may be easily and clearly gathered from the context: for these doubtless were added to the Church after the same

manner as the 3000 were upon the day of Pentecost. Now of those it is here said, that *they were baptized*, Acts ii. 41. which was the way that our Lord had instituted for the admission of any into his Church. And then it follows in the next verse, that *they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*, Acts ii. 42. that is, they constantly professed to believe the doctrine delivered by the Apostles; they held constant communion or fellowship with them, as became members of that society, whereof the Apostles and their successors were deputed governors by Christ himself; they frequented the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the public prayers of the Church. By which means they were so added to the Church, as to continue in it, and neglect no duty which was enjoined or performed by it. And thus questionless it was, that *the Lord afterwards also added to the Church daily such as should be saved.*

A thing much to be observed; especially, when the Church of Christ is so slighted and undervalued, as it is in our days: for it is plain from these words, that our Lord did not only thus *add to his Church daily such as should be saved*; but he hath left it upon record, that all generations might know that he did so, and, by consequence, that all which shall be saved, must be added to the Church as they were. Forasmuch as this being the way and method that he hath settled in the world for the saving of souls, or for the applying that salvation to them, which he hath purchased for them; we have no ground to expect that he should ever recede from it, especially considering how strictly he himself hath observed it, even to a miracle; as might easily be shewn from several instances in the holy Scripture. I shall mention only three, which are very remarkable.

The first shall be that of Cornelius the centurion,

whose prayers and alms being gone up for a memorial before God, God was pleased to send down an angel to him. What to do? To reveal the mysteries of the Gospel to him? To tell him what he must believe and do, that he might be saved? No; his commission was only to direct Cornelius to send for Peter the apostle of Christ, who should tell him what he ought to do, Acts x. 6. And at the same time that he sent for him, Peter had a vision from heaven, whereby he was fully assured, that he ought to receive the said Cornelius into the Church; and therefore he accordingly did so. From whence we may observe, what care our Lord took, what supernatural means he used, to bring Cornelius into his Church, in order to his saving of him.

The next instance shall be that of the eunuch, treasurer to Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who having been at Jerusalem to worship God, *the angel of the Lord spake to Philip* to go to such a place, Acts viii. 26. When he came there, he saw the eunuch sitting in a chariot, and the Spirit bad him to go near to that chariot; which when he had done, he heard the eunuch read the prophet Isaiah. From whence Philip took occasion to expound the whole Gospel to him; insomuch that, before they parted, he was baptized, ver. 38. and *so added to the Church*. At the same time that the Lord sent his angel to order Philip to go and meet the eunuch, he could have sent him directly to the eunuch himself. And when the Spirit spake to Philip, to join himself to the chariot where the eunuch was, he could, if he had pleased, have spoken to the eunuch himself, and have caused him to understand the Scriptures without the assistance of any man. But it seems, that our Lord having now established his Church upon earth, as he would not send his angel to do it, so neither would the Spirit himself undertake to direct the eunuch how he might be saved *without the*

Church; but only to bring him *into the Church*, that so he might *be saved*.

But that which is most of all to be observed in this case, is the conversion of St. Paul; to whom our Lord himself was pleased to appear in a miraculous manner, and to converse familiarly with him: and yet he himself would not make known any part of the Gospel to him; no, not so much as that he was the Christ, but only that he was *Jesus whom he persecuted*. Yea, although Saul asked him particularly, what he would have him to do, yet our Lord would not tell him himself, but sends him to the Church to know it; *Arise*, saith he, *go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do*, Acts ix. 6. And then he appeared miraculously to Ananias, one of his disciples in that city, and ordered him to go to Saul, and acquaint him with what he must do. By which means he, being fully instructed in the Gospel, was *baptized*, and so *brought him into the Church*. From all which it is plain and evident, that our Lord is so resolved to *add* those who shall be *saved* to his *Church*, that he would rather work miracles to bring men into it, than save any without it.

Seeing therefore that the Holy Ghost hath so positively affirmed, that the Lord added to the Church such as should be saved, and likewise hath given us such extraordinary instances of it; it is no wonder that the Fathers so frequently assert, that there is no salvation to be had out of Christ's holy catholic Church; but that whosoever would be a member of the Church triumphant in heaven, must first be a member of the Church here militant on earth. *Cyprian. ep. 62. ad Pompon. ep. 73. ad Jubajan. Ambros. in Psal. xl. Augustin. ep. ad Dona. post coll. de symb. ad catech. lib. iv. c. 10.*

Now that which I principally design, in discoursing upon this subject, is, to enquire into the reasons of

it: not that I think it necessary or possible for us fully to understand that infinite reason which our Lord hath for all his actions, and in a particular manner for this. It is sufficient for us that we know, that he is both able and willing to save us, and that this is the way wherein he is pleased to do it. And therefore we, who can never be saved any other way but by him, are obliged by our own interest to submit to it, whether we apprehend any reason for it or no. Howsoever, seeing it is a matter wherein the glory of his name, the honour of his Church, and the welfare of our own souls, is so highly concerned, by his leave and assistance, which I humbly beg his Divine Majesty to vouchsafe unto me, I shall present you with some such considerations, from whence ye may conclude it to be both reasonable and necessary, that they who *shall be saved*, should be *added to the Church*.

For, first, it is acknowledged by all Christians, that in order to our being saved by Christ, it is necessary that we know and believe his Gospel, and the fundamental truths revealed in it. And therefore as God would have all men to be saved, so for that purpose he would have them come to the *knowledge of the truth*, 1 Tim. ii. 4. But it is as plain also, that, as things now stand, we cannot come to the knowledge of the truth, but only by the Church, which is the witness and keeper of holy writ, and so, as the Apostle saith, *the pillar and ground of truth*, 1 Tim. iii. 15. by which the truth is upheld and maintained in the world, the Gospel preserved and propagated. and so true religion, and the way of salvation by Christ, is divulged and made known to mankind. Insomuch, that although I do not doubt, but that whilst the Church was confined to one family, God, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, did manifest in an extraordinary manner, to some that were not of that Church: yet now that

the partition-wall is broken down, and the Church dispersed over the whole world; now, I say, we have no ground to expect any such extraordinary revelations; but they that would *know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, must go to the Church for it; where they may read the Scriptures, and have them truly interpreted to them, and so fully understand what God would have them to believe concerning himself and his Son. For what greater revelations can be expected, than either by an angel, or by the Spirit, or else by our blessed Saviour? Yet, in the instances before mentioned, we see that the angel would not instruct Cornelius, the Spirit would not instruct the eunuch, our Lord himself would not instruct Saul, in the articles of the Christian faith; but they all sent them, every one his man, *to the Church*, to be instructed by her. Wherefore seeing we cannot be saved without the knowledge of the Gospel, or know the Gospel, but by the Church; it is no wonder that *the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*.

Moreover, as we cannot come to the knowledge of God's word but by his Church, so neither can we rightly believe what is there revealed, nor duly perform what is there commanded, without the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, which is given by the ministry of the Church, and shall *abide with it for ever*, as our Lord hath promised. For the promise being made only to Christ's disciples, John xix. 26. and so *to his Church*, none but such as are of that society can receive any benefit by it. And therefore when they who heard St. Peter's sermon were solicitous to know what to do, the Apostle said to them, *Repent, and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*, Acts ii. 38. Plainly implying, that they must first be *baptized*, and so *received into the Church*, before the Holy Ghost would come upon

them. There are many such passages in the New Testament, which clearly shew that they only which are of the Church can partake of the Spirit which is in it; that they only who are members of that body, whereof Christ is head, can be influenced and assisted by that blessed Spirit which flows from him. And this certainly is one great reason why *the Lord added to the Church such as should be saved.*

But that which I intend, by the blessing of God, to insist chiefly upon, is taken from the method and means of salvation, which are used in the Church, and no where else, as they ought to be. I know it is by Christ only that we can attain to salvation, and that it is by the Spirit only that we can be fitted and qualified for it. But howsoever we must not, we cannot expect that he should act upon us immediately from himself, without the use of those means which he himself hath prescribed for that end; for he would never have prescribed them, but that he designed to act by them. I know also that the efficacy of the Word and Sacraments, and all the means of grace which he hath ordained, are not to be ascribed to themselves, but only to his Spirit moving in them, and working together with them. But howsoever, in that he makes use of those means in his working upon us, it is necessary that we also make use of them, if we desire to be wrought upon by him: and by consequence, that we be *added to* and continue *in the Church*, if we would *be saved*; forasmuch as it is there only that we can enjoy those means, which our Saviour hath appointed in order thereunto.

To prove this, we need only consider the means which Christ's holy Catholic Church hath prescribed out of his word, and the excellent course she takes to train up her children for heaven, and fit them to converse with the holy angels, and with Christ himself in the other world: for he that duly considers this,

will soon acknowledge, that the like is no where else to be found, but only *in the Church*.

But how shall we know what the catholic Church hath always done in this case? Must we read over the Councils, consult the Fathers, and search the records of the Church in all ages? No; we need not give ourselves that trouble: for whatsoever means of grace and salvation have been used by the catholic Church in all ages, the same, and none else, are to this day used by our own. In-somuch that if we do but cast our eye upon the Church we live in, we may in that, as in a mirror, behold the constant practice of the universal Church, in all things necessary to men's salvation.

This therefore is that which I shall now do, even briefly survey the constitution of our Church, and consider the excellent method observed in it for the bringing of souls to heaven. In order whereunto, I must first premise one thing in general; which is, that the bishops and pastors of our Church having, by successive imposition of hands, continued all along from the Apostles, received the same Spirit which was breathed into them; and so regularly succeeding the Apostles, and supplying now their places in this part of the world, hence they cannot but have the same power and authority which the Apostles had, to confer, by the laying on of their hands, as they did, both the Spirit which they themselves received, and so their whole office, upon other bishops; and likewise so much of it as is necessary for the right administration of the Word and Sacraments to other inferior officers in the Church, which we call priests and deacons: of which there are so many ordained every year by the imposition of their hands, that our whole Church is sufficiently supplied with them. So that there is no parish, or particular congregation of Christians in the whole kingdom, but hath, or may have, a priest thus ordained, and so rightly qualified

for the effectual administration of the Word and Sacraments, and other means of grace and salvation among them: the Spirit which they have received being always ready, at the execution of their several offices, to bless and sanctify what is done by them, to the sanctification and salvation of those who attend upon it, and prepare themselves for it as they ought.

But, seeing the means of grace, thus administered by them, become effectual to the purposes for which they are used, only by this, viz. the co-operation of Christ's Spirit with them; hence all that desire or expect any real benefit from them, must look higher than the means themselves, trusting upon God for his blessing upon them, and for the assistance of his Spirit in them, according to the promises which he hath made to that purpose; without which, we have no ground to expect they should be performed to us.

This being premised concerning the means of grace in general, we shall now consider them particularly, in the same method wherein the catholic, or, which is all one, our Church appoints them to be used: by which we shall clearly see, what an excellent course she takes to bring up her children in the true faith and fear of God, and so to make them heirs to the crown of glory. For which purpose, it is necessary that we begin at the first admission of them into her communion by baptism. Concerning which we may observe, that the errors and iniquities of the times and place we live in are such, that there are many heathens amongst us, persons of riper years, and yet not baptized: for whose sakes therefore, our Church, to shew her readiness to receive them, upon their repentance and conversion, hath appointed an office for baptizing of them: for which there was no occasion in this nation, for many ages until now. But although there be many such persons now

among us absolutely considered, yet they are but very few, in comparison of those who are baptized in their infancy: and therefore I shall begin with those, and concern myself no further at present with the other.

A child, therefore, being born of Christian parents, and by them offered to the Church to be received into her society, the Church, in obedience to Christ's command, according to the practice of the universal Church, expresseth her willingness to receive it. But withal, considering the frailty and mortality of the parents, she requireth some other persons, called godfathers and godmothers, to be specially present at it, as witnesses, proxies, and sureties. As witnesses, to attest upon occasion, that this child was baptized: as proxies for the child, by whom he may promise (or they in his name) that he will perform the conditions of the covenant which he is now admitted into: and, lastly, as sureties to the Church, that this child shall be brought up in the Christian religion. So great care doth our Church take, that all who are admitted into her society, may believe and live as becometh Christians.

By these, therefore, the child being brought to the Church, it is there presented to the Lord, (as Christ was in the temple,) whose minister finding it there, and understanding that it hath not yet been baptized, puts the people in mind of the necessity of baptism, and exhorts them to pray, that this child may have it administered effectually to him. Upon which, the whole congregation there present join with him in supplicating the most high God, that he would wash and sanctify this child, so that it may be saved. Then the minister reads to them part of the Gospel concerning the children that were brought to Christ, draws some plain and proper inferences from it, and gives God thanks for the same. After that, he addresseth himself to the sureties, and acquaints

them, that as Christ hath promised to hear their prayers for this child, which they have now brought to him; so the child must for his part promise, by them his sureties, that he will renounce the devil and all his works, constantly believe God's holy word, and obediently keep his commandments. Which being accordingly done, by questions propounded by the minister in the name of the Church, and answered by the sureties in the name of the child; the minister prayeth, that the child may have grace to perform what he hath now promised. And then having asked by what name they would have the child called, he poureth water upon it, and, calling it by that name, he saith, *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Which being the very words wherewith our Lord commanded this sacrament should be administered, the child is now fully and perfectly baptized. And to testify her acknowledgment that it is so, the Church immediately receiveth it into her communion, and solemnly declareth it to be now a Christian, not only by words, but also by making a cross upon the child's forehead, the common sign whereby Christians were always distinguished from Jews and Heathens: the minister saying, in the name of the Church, *We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock, and do sign it with the sign of the cross, &c.* After which the minister stirs up the people there present to give God thanks for this favour, and to pray unto him that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning. Which done, he puts the sureties in mind of their duty, now incumbent upon them, to see that the child be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he hath made by them, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health; and then to bring it to the bishop to be confirmed by him.

This is, in short, the substance of that excellent Office, which our Church hath appointed for the public baptism of infants. But in case of extreme necessity, lest the child should die without it, she admitteth of private baptism, and absolutely requireth no more in the administration of it, than what is essential to it, even that the child be baptized with water, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* But if it lives, she requireth that it be afterwards brought to the church, and that whatsoever was before omitted of the public Office, be there performed to it.

Now the Church having thus gotten a new member added to her, and taken security for its education in the faith of Christ; for the better performance of it, she hath drawn up a short Catechism for the child to learn, (when he is able,) consisting of all things necessary for it to know, and nothing else. And that she may be certified, whether the child hath learnt it or no, and likewise contribute what she can towards his understanding all and every thing contained in the said Catechism, she commands that the minister of the parish where he lives do frequently and openly in the church examine and instruct him in it.

By this means, therefore, this new Christian, now come to years of discretion, understanding what his sureties promised in his name when he was baptized, is by them, or some other, brought to the bishop, to be confirmed by him. In order whereunto, he, in the presence of God and of the congregation there assembled, renews the solemn promise and vow which was then made in his name, ratifying and confirming the same in his own person, and acknowledging himself bound to believe and do all those things which his godfathers and godmothers then undertook for him. And that he may be enabled so to do, the bishop, with the whole congregation there present, jointly

pray to God to assist and strengthen him with his grace and Spirit. And then the bishop, after the example of the holy Apostles, lays his hand upon the child's head, and prays to God for him, saying, *Defend, O Lord, this thy child with thy heavenly grace, &c.* After which the whole congregation join again with the bishop in some other prayers to the same purpose. All which being duly performed as it ought, cannot certainly but be very effectual to the great ends and purposes for which it is used ; as Christians in all ages have found by their own experience.

Our Christian being thus confirmed, he is now looked upon in the eye of the Church as no longer a minor, but of full age to receive and enjoy all the blessings and privileges which his heavenly Father in the holy Gospel hath settled upon him. And therefore his spiritual guardians, the godfathers and godmothers, being discharged, he is now to stand upon his own legs: and well he may, having so indulgent, pious, and wise a mother upon earth, as the Church is, to take care of him. For if he be but dutiful and obedient to her, and follow those good directions which she gives him, there is no fear of falling. For she considers what potent enemies he is to fight with; that the flesh, the world, and the devil, which he renounced, will all strive to recover their possession of him; and therefore she, out of God's word, furnisheth him with such spiritual armour, that if he be not failing to himself in the use of it, he may not only withstand, but conquer them all. She considers every distemper he can be subject to, and finding suitable remedies prescribed for it in the holy Scriptures, she directs him how to apply them, so as to prevent or cure it. In short, she considers the great work he has to do, no less than to *work out his salvation with fear and trembling*, that he can never do it without the assistance of God's Spirit, and that he hath no ground to expect any

such assistance, but in the use of those means which God hath appointed for that end: hence she often calls upon him to use those means, instructs him how to do it aright, assists him in it, and so keeps him in continual exercise and employment about the work he hath to do, that he may *be saved*.

For in the first place, considering that in order to the preventing those many sins which are occasioned by the prevailing humours of the body, and also to the preserving his mind in a fit temper, both to perform his duties unto God, and to receive divine illuminations and assistances from him, it is necessary to keep his body always under; and considering likewise, that God himself hath for that very purpose commanded not only temperance at all times, but at sometimes abstinence and fasting; hence the Church hath set apart some certain days every year, whereon her son, we now speak of, should by fasting bring his body into a constant subjection to his soul; lest otherwise, if there were no set times appointed for it, he should be, as most are, too apt to neglect it, and never fast at all, or at most but very seldom, and so to no purpose.

Now the days which she directs him to spend in fasting are the forty days of Lent, according to the custom of the Catholic Church, every year before Easter; and the three Rogation-days immediately preceding Holy-Thursday. Besides which, she appoints three days, viz. Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, in each of the four Ember-weeks, whereon to fast, not only for the purposes aforesaid, but likewise that he may the more effectually implore a blessing both upon the bishops who are to ordain, and upon those who shall be ordained to any holy function the Sunday following: which if he neglect to do, he must blame himself, if any unworthy persons be then admitted into the sacred ministry of the Church. Whereas, if he perform his duty

aright at that time, he may upon good grounds expect a greater blessing from the Word and Sacraments administered by those who are then ordained. Be sure his prayers will, one time or other, return into his own bosom; and therefore I heartily wish, that all the devout and pious souls in the Church would, after the example of Christ and his Apostles, join together in fasting and praying, upon so solemn occasions as those are. What a glorious Church, what an excellent clergy, should we then have! But to return to our Christian: the Lent-fast coming but once a year, and the Ember-weeks but once a quarter, for fear lest his body should in the mean time grow rampant, or his passions headstrong and unruly, the Church orders him to fast one day in every week, viz. Friday, the day whereon our Lord was crucified; as also, the eves or vigils of some certain holy-days, the better to perform the duties, and to praise God for the mercies commemorated the day following. And if he be temperate in all things, and besides that, observes these prescribed by our Church, as really days of fasting and abstinence, it is very much if his body be not kept in due subjection to his soul. But if at any time he finds it is not, he may add some more days as he sees occasion; especially Wednesdays, which were also observed by the primitive Christians, and upon which our Church hath appointed the Litany to be used, as well as upon Fridays. And whatsoever degrees of grace and virtue he shall attain to, he must never think, that so long as he continues in health, he stands in no need of fasting: as considering, that the great Apostle himself was forced to *keep his body under, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when he had preached unto others, he himself should be a cast-away*, 1 Cor. ix. 27.

By this means, therefore, our Christian, keeping his mind continually serene, and free from any an-

noyance or disturbance from the humours of the body, is always in a right disposition to receive such impressions as are necessary to the making him a real and true saint: which that he may be, the Church useth all the means she can, to keep his soul continually possessed with a deep sense of God, and with as high apprehensions of the great mysteries of the Gospel, as it is capable of. For which purpose she so orders it, that every thing relating to the public service, which she requires him to perform to God, as well as the service itself, strikes an awe and reverence of the Divine Majesty into him, as being set apart and appropriated only to that use. Thus she appoints some certain days, wherein to lay aside all other business, and apply himself wholly to this: especially she, out of God's own word, enjoins him to keep holy the first day in every week; which is therefore called the Lord's-day, because devoted to his service. Besides which, to keep the great mysteries of the Gospel always fresh in his mind and memory, she prescribes him some certain days every year, whereon to commemorate the Nativity, Circumcision, and Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, his Presentation in the temple, his Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, and his Mission of the Holy Ghost; the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin; with the lives and deaths of the Apostles and Evangelists, who did not only propagate the Gospel in the world, but sealed it too with their own blood. For the very setting apart of these and the like days for the public worshipping of God, conduceth very much to his remembering and understanding the great things transacted on them; and so to his better apprehending and admiring the power and goodness of God discovered in them.

And for this reason also it is, that she requires him to perform his public devotions to God, in God's own house, a place consecrated wholly to him and his

service. And for his better doing of it there, she appoints one of God's own ministers, a person set apart for that very office, to assist him in it. And she commands this person, at that time, to be in a different habit from what he wears at any other time; and all to take off our Christian's thoughts, as much as may be, from all things else, and to fix them only upon God, and the great work he is now about; the place, the minister, the habit, every one putting him in mind, that he is not now about any common or worldly employment; but in the special presence of Almighty God, worshipping him, and therefore, both in soul and body, should carry himself accordingly with reverence and godly fear.

And then as for the service itself, the Church hath provided him such a Liturgy, wherein all things are done to his edifying. So that he can never come to God's house, but, if it be not his own fault, he may return home again wiser and better than he came; for he can want for nothing, but he there prays for it; he can have nothing, but he there gives God thanks for it; he can be ignorant of nothing that is needful for him to know, but he is there taught it. And, lest he should at any time be seduced into error, or tempted to sin; lest he should grow flat in his devotions, cool in his charity, remiss in any duty to God or man, or careless of his own eternal good; she hath ordered the holy Scriptures to be often expounded, or a Sermon preached to him; and that too, not by any one that will undertake it, (for then the remedy might prove worse than the disease,) but by one who, by fasting and prayer, and the solemn imposition of the bishop's hands, is ordained to that office; by one who hath subscribed to all the Articles of religion; by one who hath publicly declared his unfeigned assent and consent to the use of all things contained and prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer; by one approved of, and li-

censed thereunto, by the bishop of the diocese; who, if he find just cause for it, is empowered and obliged to take away his license again, and to suspend him from the execution of his office. So that if our Christian lives under a minister that doth not act according to the rules, or doth not preach according to the doctrine, of the Gospel, or doth not perform his duty in every thing as he ought; it is, in a great measure, his own fault, in that he doth not acquaint the bishop with it, whose office it is to redress such grievances as these are. So that if he will himself, he may be sure to have the word of God rightly, duly, and constantly administered to him: and not only the Word, but likewise the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which he is required to receive as often as possibly he can, to put him in mind of what his Saviour hath done and suffered for his sins; and so to confirm his faith in him, inflame his love to him, and to dispose and qualify him the better to converse with Christ in heaven; to which nothing contributes more than frequent addresses to him in this holy Sacrament upon earth.

Thus therefore it is, that he who holds constant communion with our Church, is continually employed by her, about some or other of those means, which Christ hath ordained for his salvation, and to which he hath promised the assistance of his own Spirit. By virtue whereof, the Christian we have hitherto discoursed of is enabled *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* But having spent some time in such holy exercises as these are, we must suppose him at length to be seized with some distemper, in order to his departure into the other world: and then the Church, to shew her great care of him to the last, requires the minister of the parish where he lives to go and give him a solemn visit. And that he may be sure to have the best directions that can

be given him at that great juncture, she herself hath drawn up an Order for the visitation of him, and likewise for the administration of the holy Communion to him; which is the best cordial he can take to support his spirits, and carry him through the great work which he hath now to do. And when it hath pleased Almighty God, of his great mercy, to take unto himself the soul of this our dear brother, the minister, by the order and in the name of the Church, commits his body to the ground, *in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Thus we see how our Christian, from his first admission into the Church militant upon earth, is conducted and governed all along by her, until at length he is advanced to the Church triumphant in heaven. From whence it is easy to observe, what an excellent method she proceeds in, and what effectual means she useth, for the attaining so great an end; and, by consequence, how necessary it is for all of us to be *so added to the Church*, as to continue stedfast in her communion, and carefully to follow all her directions, if ever we desire *to be saved*. For although I have instanced only in one single person, we are all equally concerned in what hath been said of him: yea, every one of us should look upon himself as the person spoke of all along. For I hope we are all baptized, and so admitted into the Church, as I supposed him to be: and therefore if we do but observe these rules, which she out of God's holy word hath laid before us, as I supposed him to do, there is no doubt but that we also ere long shall be glorified saints in heaven.

But I am very sensible, that for all the great care that our Church taketh of all her children, many of them are very undutiful and disobedient to her, and so careless of their own salvation, that they do not only neglect, but despise, the means which she administers for the attainment of it. But what then doth she do

with such as these? In short, she in great wisdom and prudence makes use of all the fair means that can be thought of for the reclaiming of them. But if that will not do, she delivers them over to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. But seeing the excellency of our Church appeareth in the exercise of her power, as much as in any thing else, it may not be amiss, if we take a short view of that wise and excellent method which she observeth in it.

First, therefore, our Church being, by the blessing of God, of the same extent with the kingdom in which we live, and as so, subject to the same prince, as its supreme governor upon earth; for the better management of that power which Christ hath left with it, it is divided into two provinces, over each of which there is an archbishop; each province is subdivided into several dioceses, over every one whereof there is a bishop: in every diocese there is one or more archdeacons: every archdeaconry is divided into several deaneries, and every deanery into several parishes. And in every parish, as there is a priest rightly ordained for the administration of the Word and Sacraments, to all the Christians that live there; so there are other officers, called church-wardens, chosen every year, and appointed not only to look to the fabric of the church belonging to the said parish, and to provide all things necessary for the worshipping of God in it, but likewise to inspect the lives and actions of all the Christians that live there; to take notice of all that live in any notorious sin, or neglect the means which God hath ordained for their salvation, and to certify and present their names to such officers as the Church hath appointed to consider what to do in such cases. And although such persons, being Christians, are obliged by their religion to take all the care they can of their neighbours' souls, and therefore to acquaint the Church with their evil

and pernicious courses, that she may interpose her power for the reclaiming of them; yet to bind them more strictly to it, when they are admitted into that office, they take a solemn oath, in the presence of Almighty God, truly and faithfully to execute the same, to the best of their skill and knowledge. And that none of them may be ignorant of what they are to present, they have *Articles of Enquiry* delivered to them, wherein all and every thing and person presentable is plainly and distinctly set down.

And as this is certainly the best and surest way that the Church could ever find out, whereby to understand which of her members either neglect those duties which should further their salvation, or commit such sins as will impede and hinder it; so is the course too that she takes for the correcting and reforming them. For as the church-wardens are obliged to make their presentments twice a year, and may do it oftener if occasion require it; so is the bishop obliged to go about his diocese once every three years, that he may understand the state of the flock committed to him, of which he must one day give a strict account to the great Shepherd of souls. And lest any thing should happen in the mean time, that may require a more speedy examination, he, according to the custom of the primitive and catholic Church, hath one or more archdeacons under him, canonically ordained, authorized, and required, every one to visit so much of the diocese, as is under his jurisdiction, once a year, or oftener, if need be, to receive the foresaid presentments, and to inspect, and, what in him lies, reform all irregularities, either in clergy or laity. And moreover, that the Church may never want an opportunity of being informed of any misdemeanors that she is bound to take cognizance of, she hath other officers both under the bishop and archdeacon, who keep her courts all the year long, as occasion happens, and have power to cite all

delinquents that are presented, and to examine and try all such ecclesiastical causes and matters as are brought before them.

But here we must observe, that as the church-wardens of every parish, who present offenders to any of these courts, are always laymen, so the chancellors, commissaries, officials, and other officers in these courts, who receive and examine such presentments, are ordinarily laymen too: and it is but reasonable, and in some sense necessary, they should be so. For if none but clergymen should search into the faults of the laity, the laity might be apt to suspect they were too severely dealt with: whereas being tried by men of their own rank and brotherhood before sentence is passed upon them, they cannot blame the Church for it, nor imagine that she can have any other design upon them, but only to do them good, and make them better. Besides that the causes which are brought into these courts are many, and take up a great deal of time before they can be brought to an issue; and therefore, if clergymen only should be employed in them, it would take them off too much from the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, which they are obliged by their office continually to attend: especially considering that the causes are not only many, but diverse too, and some very intricate and mixed; so that to search into the bottom of them all, and fully to understand what is just and meet to be done in every one of them, requires great knowledge and skill in the whole body of the ecclesiastical laws, and the temporal too, so far as they any way concern the Church: which no man can attain to, without making it his constant business and study. Which not consisting with the many other duties incumbent upon those who are ordained to any holy function, the Church always found it necessary that her bishops, and all that exercise her jurisdiction under them, should

have some of her members learned in the laws, to direct and assist them in the administration of it, and under them to transact and try all causes relating thereunto. Which doubtless, all things considered, is the best way the Church could ever think of, whereby to secure her governors from being maligned, her laws from being violated, and so her members from being injured through mistake or ignorance.

Neither must we look upon this as any novel invention, but as the sense and practice of the universal Church for many ages: for we find such ecclesiastical officers, as those are, mentioned near 1200 years ago by Justinian the emperor, who, in his Code and Novel, sometimes calls them by their Greek name *Ecdicos Ecclesiæ* or *Ecclesiæcdicos*, l. xlii. *C. de Episcop. et Cler.*; sometimes by the Latin, *Defensores Ecclesiæ*, that is, properly, church-advocates, ecclesiastical lawyers; and sometimes *Episcoporum Ecclesiæcdicos*, the bishop's ecclesiastical advocates, lib. vi. *C. de his qui ad Ecclesiam confug. Novel. 56.* which he reckons amongst lay-officers, and yet supposeth them to be in every Church, and to take care of the affairs of it under the bishop, l. xlii. *C. de Episc. et Cler. §. 9.* l. xxxiv. *C. de Episcop. Audientia, §. 5.* Before this, we meet with them in the Novels of Valentinian the Third, *Valent. Novel. tit. 12.* As also in the Canons of the fourth General Council, held at Chalcedon, A. D. 451, which requires that clergymen and monks, which stay at Constantinople without having any business there, should be expelled thence by the ecdic, or, as we say, the chancellor, of the Church: *Chalced. Can. 23.* And elsewhere the same General Council reckons these ecdics, or advocates, *ibid. Can. 2.* amongst those ecclesiastical officers which are not admitted into Holy Orders, and yet ought not to give any money for their places. From whence it appears, that these lay-officers were at that time re-

ceived and established in all the provinces and dioceses of the universal Church: for otherwise this General Council, consisting of above six hundred bishops, gathered together from all parts of the Christian world, would never have made any laws about them.

How long before this they were brought into the Church, I shall not undertake to determine. Only this we know, that the African bishops assembled in Council, A. D. 407, *Concil. Carthag. Can. 100. edit. Oxon.* made it their request to the emperors Arcadius and Honorius, that they might have liberty to choose and constitute church-advocates out of those who pleaded in the civil courts, who might manage the affairs, and defend the rights and privileges, of the Church there. And that this request was readily granted, is plain from the rescript of the said emperors to that purpose, directed within six months after to the proconsul of Africa, still extant in the Theodosian code, l. xxxviii. *C. T. Episcopis Eccles. et Cler.* From whence it seems, that those advocates were not suffered before this time to plead for the Church in the civil courts of Africa; but it doth not follow but they might be employed before, both there and elsewhere, in the ecclesiastical. And it is very probable that these offices began to be erected, if not before, at least soon after, the empire became Christian, so that the Church had free liberty to exercise her power and authority in it, and was not only allowed to do it, but countenanced and assisted by the secular power. For then there was a necessity for having such officers, not only for the reasons before mentioned, but likewise because the emperors themselves, in favour of the Church, put forth several edicts and laws concerning ecclesiastical persons and matters; which being drawn up in the same form and manner, and intermixed with the civil laws, could never be

duly executed but by persons skilled in the imperial, as well as the ecclesiastical, laws, and in the way and manner of proceeding upon them. And therefore from that time forward it was necessary that such advocates, as had been trained up in the civil law, should be appointed and empowered to order and manage the ecclesiastical courts under the bishop in every diocese, that so both the laws of the empire that had any relation to the Church, and those which were made by the Church itself, might be duly executed in due form and manner, so as not to contradict, but be assistant to, one another.

But at what time, and for what reasons soever, these officers were at first brought into the Church, it is manifest, from the aforesaid Canons of the fourth General Council, that the universal Church had then received them; and that they have been all along continued ever since, can be doubted of by none that are conversant in church-history. Neither can any man yet imagine, that the universal Church for so many ages together should agree in such a thing as this, but upon very good grounds and reasons. Howsoever, the general practice of the Catholic Church is a sufficient obligation as well as warrant to every particular Church, to observe the same as near as it can. And therefore it was, that our Church at the Reformation, looking upon herself as obliged to hold communion with the Catholic, as well as to separate from the Romish, Church, retained this ancient and general form of keeping her courts by advocates learned in the civil and canon law; who are nominated and approved of by the bishop in every diocese, but receive their power and authority not only from him, but from the laws of the Church; yea, and of the State too, there being scarce any custom or usage (upon which the common law of the land is grounded) in the

whole kingdom, that can plead longer prescription than this can.

But seeing these, as all other courts in the world, may be liable to abuses and corruptions, to prevent them as much as may be, the Church in her Canons doth not only require a solemn oath to be taken by every one that shall be admitted into any office there, Can. 127, to deal uprightly and justly in the same, without respect or favour of reward; but hath likewise provided suitable punishments, Can. 134, to be inflicted upon those who shall either neglect their duty, exceed their commission, or do any thing unbeseeming the place they are in. And if, notwithstanding all this, any one shall be unjustly dealt with, or but think himself to be so, he may appeal from the lower to the higher courts, from the archdeacon to the bishop, from the bishop to the archbishop, and from him to the queen: who being in all her dominions supreme governor over all persons, in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as temporal, as it is necessary that she should have these ecclesiastical as well as temporal courts under her, where such cases may be judged; so when they are brought up so high as to herself, they must needs be finally determined, forasmuch as from her no appeal can be to any other court or person upon earth.

Now these courts being thus established in the Church, when any offender is presented into any of them, he is cited to appear there, which if he neglect or refuse to do, he is pronounced contumacious, one that resisteth or contemneth the power that Christ hath given to his Church, which for many reasons was always judged one of the greatest sins that a Christian can be guilty of; and therefore is proceeded against accordingly. But if he appear, his cause is impartially searched into; and if upon due examination he be found innocent, he is presently

discharged: but if he appears to be guilty of any notorious crime, which the Church is bound to take notice of, she useth all means possible to bring him to a just sense of his sin, to a hearty repentance for it, and to make what satisfaction he can for the offence that he hath given to all good Christians by it. But if all other means prove ineffectual, she casts him out of her communion, and so from the society of all good Christians, according to the saying of our Lord, *If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican*, Matt. xviii. 17. But so, that if he shall afterwards repent and submit himself, the Church is always ready to receive him into her bosom again, there to nourish and provide all things for him, that he may be saved.

Thus in that of our own, I have briefly run through the whole constitution of the Catholic Church, and the several means that are used in it, and in it only, for the salvation of men's souls, which whosoever seriously considers, can never wonder that they who shall *be saved*, should be *added to the Church*.

Nothing now remains, but to shew what influence the consideration of these things should have upon our minds and actions, which shall be soon dispatched. For if we recollect what hath been said upon this subject, and lay it so together, that we may take a full view of the whole method observed in the Church, for the making us holy here, and happy for ever, we cannot but easily see, both what necessity there is of our being *added to the Church* in general, and what infinite cause we have to give our most humble and hearty thanks to God, both for his settling and restoring such a Church as this is to us. A Church wherein all the means of grace and salvation are so duly and effectually administered to us, that if we be not failing to ourselves in the use of them, we cannot but be saved. A Church so

exactly conformable to the Catholic in all things, that none can separate from her without making a schism in Christ's mystical body, and consequently endangering the salvation of his own soul. A Church so far exceeding those of Rome and Geneva, that would either papists or sectaries lay aside their prejudices, and impartially consider what our Church is, and compare it with their own, they would need no other arguments to persuade them to return unto her, and to live and die in constant communion with her. A Church, to say no more, as orthodox in its doctrine, as regular in its discipline, as grave and solemn in its worship, as agreeable to Scripture-rules, as well accommodated to the whole design of the Gospel for the bringing of souls to heaven, as any Church in the whole world. And that such a Church as this should be at first planted amongst us, and after it had been destroyed by the malice of the devil and his agents, should be again restored to us by the immediate hand of God, who can think of it without adoring the hand that did it?

But we must remember to shew forth his praise for so great a mercy, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves wholly to his service, according to the rules and orders of the Church, which he hath thus graciously settled amongst us; that as we have the best of Churches, we may be likewise the best of people; and so shame our adversaries on all sides into an hearty compliance with our ecclesiastical constitution, by letting them see how far we exceed them in true piety and devotion, and read the excellency of our Church in the excellency of our lives, who hold communion with her. By this means, as many, by the blessing of God, have been lately *added to our Church*, there will be daily more and more. This also would be a most effectual way, whereby to secure and defend our Church against heresy and schism, against

popery and superstition, against profaneness and debauchery, and against all those diabolical stratagems and devices, those seditious principles and practices, whereby it was destroyed once, and was like to have been so again but very lately. For if we do but live answerably to the means that we enjoy, and serve, and please, and worship, and obey God, as our Church directs us, we need not fear what men or devils can do against us, nor concern ourselves with what may, or what may not, happen hereafter; but still trust in God, who as he hath delivered us, he will yet deliver us. We have no cause to doubt of his kindness and favour to our Church, having had so great, so wonderful, experience of it already.

But for that end, we must be sure to live, as in the true faith and fear of God, so also in humble obedience and stedfast loyalty to the queen; for that is absolutely necessary, not only as a duty in itself to God, but likewise as a means for the supporting our Church, by strengthening the hands of her, whom God is pleased to make the happy instrument of preserving it to us. And therefore I cannot but admire with what confidence we can profess any value or kindness for the Church, and yet talk or act seditiously against the queen: for that is to pretend to uphold the Church with one hand, and to endeavour in good earnest to pluck it down with the other. Be sure, all the real members of our Church are as faithful subjects to the crown; neither can they be otherwise, forasmuch as the spirit which runs through the whole body of the catholic, and by consequence our, Church, as I have shewn, puts them upon universal obedience to all the commands of God; and to these amongst the rest, of honouring the king, and being subject and obedient to the higher powers. And hence it is, that as we never heard of any rebels in the primitive

Church, so neither are there, nor can be, any such amongst those who are really of ours; which is the great glory of our Church, and a clear demonstration of its apostolical constitution, and that which, if duly considered, would make all the Christian princes in the world endeavour to reform the Churches seated in their dominions according to her pattern and example; and to protect them too, when they are so reformed: although it was for nothing else, but to keep their kingdoms quiet, and so make the government easy to themselves; much more, if they respect their own and their people's souls, that they may be saved.

But that we may all be so, we must not think it enough to be admitted into the Church, and made visible members of it. For though all that shall be saved, are added to the Church; yet it doth not follow, that all who are so added to the Church, shall be saved. It is true, all such are in a state of salvation, and in the way to it; but except they continue in that state, and walk in that way, they can never attain to the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.

Wherefore, I humbly pray and advise all that desire in good earnest to be saved, that you would not content yourselves with being members of the Church in general, nor yet with doing only some of those things which she requireth of you; but to use all the means, and observe the whole method, which she out of God's holy word hath prescribed for that end; otherwise you will certainly deprive yourselves of something that would have been very beneficial, if not necessary, for you; as ye may easily see, if ye will but look back upon that short scheme which I have now given you of it. As for example, I suppose ye are all baptized, but are ye confirmed too? If ye be not, ye still want one of those means which the holy Apostles, and

their successors, in all ages, have used, whereby to obtain the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit for those who are baptized. And suppose you are confirmed, do ye also observe the several fasts of the Church? If ye do not, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to keep your bodies in that due frame and temper, as that they may be fit temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. And supposing ye fast, do ye also pray to Almighty God, both publicly and privately? And do ye perform your public devotions to God in that form, after that manner, and at such times, as the Church hath appointed? Do ye hearken to God's holy word, as read and expounded by her? Do ye receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as oft as she is ready to give it you? If ye neglect all, or any of these, and the like means of salvation, which are there administered, you had as good be out of the Church as in it, and have no more ground to expect to be saved, than you have to accomplish any other end without using the means.

Whereas, do ye but truly and constantly observe all and every one of those means which our Church, as I have shewn, administereth to you, and trust and depend, as ye ought, upon the promises of God, for the assistance and co-operation of his Holy Spirit with them; and I dare assure you, in the name and in the presence of my great Lord and Master Jesus Christ, you shall soon find them, by his grace and blessing, effectual to the great ends and purposes for which they are ordained, even to the enlightening of your minds, to the regulating of your passions, to the confirming of your faith, to the mortifying of your lusts, and to the making you real and true saints, sincerely pious towards God, loyal to our sovereign, just and charitable towards all men: by which means ye will be fitted and qualified not only for the pardon of your sins

by the blood of Jesus, but likewise for heaven and eternal glory. So that when ye depart out of this world, ye will be admitted into the blessed society of the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, where you will live with God himself, and laud and magnify his great and glorious name, both for his continuing his Church to you, and for his adding you to his Church, that ye might be saved, by the merits and mediation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON IV.

MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL, CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS.

2 Cor. v. 20.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

WE live in an age and among a people that place a great part, if not the whole, of their religion in hearing sermons; and yet we find but few that are ever the more religious for all they hear, most contenting themselves with coming to church, and continuing, or perhaps sitting down, there all the while that the prayers are read, and a sermon preached, and then going home again, without ever concerning themselves any further about what they have heard, nor so much as thinking of it any more; and then it is no wonder that they are never the wiser nor the better for it. But it may justly seem a greater wonder, how it comes to pass, that the word of God, which of itself *is sharper than a two-edged sword*, should, notwithstanding, make so little impression upon those who hear it: but though they hear it over and over again, they are never *pricked in their hearts*, as St. Peter's hearers were, nor any way touched or affected with it; but still continue just as they were, careless and unconcerned about their future state, and every thing relating to it,

how plainly, how powerfully soever it is pressed upon them.

This may justly seem strange to one that considers, how commonly the word of God is preached among us, both in the city and country: but several reasons may be assigned for it; one of the chief is, that men in hearing the word preached, usually look no further than to him that preacheth it; taking what he saith to them as coming only from him their fellow-creature, a man of like passions with themselves; and therefore regard it no more than what is said by any other man: whereas if they really believed and considered, that the word they hear is the word of God himself; and that he who preacheth it, preacheth not in his own name, but God's, and accordingly received it as the Thessalonians did, *not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe,* 1 Thess. ii. 13. they would soon find it *working effectually* also upon them: it would then come with that power and force upon them, that it would *cut them to the heart*, and make them cry out as St. Peter's hearers did, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Acts ii. 37.

This therefore is that which St. Paul in my text puts the Corinthians in mind of; and the better to prepare them for it, he first acquaints them in the foregoing verses, that God hath reconciled *mankind to himself by Jesus Christ*, and that he hath committed the word and ministry of this reconciliation to us, the Apostles and their successors in all ages; that we, in his name, and by his authority, might publish it to the world, and persuade men to accept of the peace which he now offers to them, so as to be reconciled to him, as he is to them by Jesus Christ. And having said this, the Apostle draws this conclusion from it, *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

This is a truth so necessary for all Christians to know, that it is the first thing that St. Paul put those he wrote to in mind of in all his Epistles, (which he wrote as from himself only, without joining any other with him,) beginning them with saying, *Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ*, or *Paul called to be an apostle*, or the like; that they to whom he wrote might know, that he did not write to them as a private person, but as an *apostle of Jesus Christ*, that is, as the word signifies, a *legate or messenger* of Christ, sent and empowered by him to write: that so they might receive what he was about to write to them not as coming from him, but from Christ himself; an apostle being in effect the same with an ambassador. But foreseeing that this name would in process of time be appropriated only to the twelve, and such as were called immediately by Christ himself, as he and some others were; therefore in my text, speaking not only of these, but of such also as should succeed them in any part of their apostolical office in all ages, he alters the phrase, not saying, we are *apostles*, but we are *ambassadors* for Christ. A word that is commonly known to signify such as are sent by a prince into a foreign country, to treat in his name about matters of state, as particularly about peace and war. And so Christ himself useth the word, where, speaking of a king going to make war with another king, he saith, that *he sits down* first, and *consults whether he be able to meet him* or no: *or else, while the other is a great way off, he sendeth an embassy, and desireth conditions of peace*, Luke xiv. 32. So here, although Almighty God can meet with us when he pleaseth, and we are no way able to withstand him; yet howsoever he is graciously pleased to send some men to treat with others in his name about peace with him, to acquaint them with the easy conditions that he hath made and expects from them, and to assure them, that upon their performance of the said conditions, he will

be reconciled to them, and at peace with them. And therefore all who are thus sent or commissioned by him, to act in his name, are properly called *ambassadors*, and, as the Apostle here saith, *ambassadors for Christ*, or in the place and stead of Christ. As it was he that procured this peace for mankind, so he is the chief manager of all things relating to it; therefore called, *the angel*, or, as we translate it, *the messenger of the covenant*, Mal. iii. 1. Because he was sanctified and sent by the Father, *to publish and declare it to the world*, John vi. 57. viii. 29. and x. 36. and did it so faithfully, that before he went out of the world, he could truly say unto the Father, *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world,—I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me*, John xvii. 6, 8. Where we may likewise observe, that, like a wise and faithful ambassador, he kept strictly to the instructions, and to the very words which the Father had given him; in whose name he professeth that he came, and spake, and acted all along while he was upon earth, John v. 43. viii. 38. and x. 25.

Wherefore Jesus Christ, being the mediator between God and men, and as such having *all power given him in heaven and earth*, for the transacting the great business of reconciliation between them; when he was about to leave the earth, as man, and go up to heaven, to reside there as our advocate with the Father, he delegated some men to supply his place upon earth, and to carry on the great work which he had begun amongst men: these he called his apostles or ambassadors, because they were sent by him, and empowered to act in his name and stead, and according to the instructions that he gave them. Which, that the world in all ages might be fully assured of,

he ordered the commission which he granted them to be recorded, John xx. where it is written, that the same day on which he rose from the dead, in the evening, he came to them where they were assembled, and when he had convinced them that he was the same person that had been crucified three days before, by shewing them his hands and feet that were nailed to the cross, he then said unto them again, *Peace be unto you. As my Father sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained,* ver. 21, 22, 23.

Where we may observe, that he sent them after the very same manner as the Father had sent him. *As my Father,* saith he, *sent me, even so send I you.* And therefore as the Father had sent him, by anointing him *with the Holy Ghost,* for the office he was to perform, Isa. lxi. 1. Luke iv. 18. Acts x. 38. which was signified by the *Spirit descending like a dove, and lighting upon him,* when he was baptized, and so inaugurated into the said office: even so he sent his Apostles; for *he breathed on them,* and saith, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost;* the Holy Ghost proceeding from him, as it doth from the Father. When Christ breathed upon his Apostles, he thereby *anointed them with the Holy Ghost, and with power,* to execute the office which he now committed to them. And that they might know, that this was designed not only for them, but for all that should succeed them in the said office to the end of the world, when he afterwards gave them his instructions for the execution of it, he said to them, *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world,* Matt. xxviii. 20. From whence the Apostles clearly understanding that their office was to continue to the end of the world, they took care to confer it upon others, by laying their

hands upon them, and so transferring to them of the same Spirit which they had received from Christ, the same way that Moses had done it by God's own appointment to Joshua, Numb. xxvii. 18, 23. And therefore such, upon whom they laid their hands, are said to be sent by the Holy Ghost, particularly Paul and Barnabas, Acts xiii. 4. And the same St. Paul tells the elders of Ephesus, upon whom he had laid his hands, that the Holy Ghost had made them bishops or *overseers*, Acts xx. 28. and put Timothy in mind of the gift of God which was in him by the laying on of *his hands*, 2 Tim. i. 6. Thus the Holy Ghost, which the Apostles received immediately from Christ himself, hath been handed down from them to others, and so to others successively to this day, and will be to the end of the world. And all such on whom they, who regularly succeed the Apostles in their whole office, lay their hands with an intention to confer the Holy Ghost, as in the ordination of priests among us; they also receive such a measure of it, whereby they are qualified and commissioned to act in Christ's name and stead, in the administration of the Word and Sacraments, as the Apostles themselves did; and therefore are properly ambassadors for Christ, as they were: and Christ is as really with them, as he was with his first Apostles, in the execution of their office in all ages, according to the promise he made them, of being *with them always, even to the end of the world.*

It was necessary to make this as plain as I could in few words, that ye may understand how we came to be ambassadors for Christ, as the Apostle here speaks, so as to act in his name, and by his commission, without which nothing we do can signify any thing. Any man may read the Scriptures, or make an oration to the people, but it is not that which the Scriptures call *preaching the word of God*, unless he be sent by God to do it. *For how can they preach*

except they be sent? Rom. x. 15. A butcher might kill an ox or a lamb, as well as the high-priest; but it was no sacrifice to God, unless one of his priests did it. *And no man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron,* Heb. v. 4. Any man may treat of public affairs as well as an ambassador; but he cannot do it to any purpose, without a commission from his prince. As suppose a foreign nation should set up one among themselves to make a league with England, what would that signify, when he is not authorized by the king to do it? And yet this is the case of many among us, who, as the Apostle foretold, cannot *endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears,* 2 Tim. iv. 3. But such teachers as men thus heap to themselves, howsoever they may tickle their itching ears, they can never touch their hearts: for that can be done only by the power of God, accompanying and assisting his own institution and commission. Insomuch that if I did not think, or rather was not fully assured, that I had such a commission to be an ambassador for Christ, and to act in his name; I should never think it worth the while to preach or execute any ministerial office. For I am sure, that all I did would be null and void of itself, according to God's ordinary way of working; and we have no ground to expect miracles. But, blessed be God, we in our Church, by a successive imposition of hands, continued all along from the Apostles themselves, receive the same Spirit that was conferred upon them for the administration of the Word and Sacraments ordained by our Lord and Master, and therefore may do it as effectually to the salvation of mankind as they did. For as they were, so are we, *ambassadors for Christ.*

As though God did beseech you by us, or, as the words may be rendered, as if God did call upon you by us; by us, as he did by Christ, whose ambas-

sadors we are, and proxies in things pertaining unto God. So that *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*, Heb. i. 1. He still continues to speak by those whom his Son hath sent to speak in his name. As the Son himself said to his Apostles, and in them to all that should regularly succeed them, *It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you*, Matt. x. 20. Whatsoever we speak according to the instructions which Christ our Master hath given us, *it is in truth the word of God*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. It is God that speaketh by us; according to that of David, *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. For we speaking only what Christ our Lord spake before us, and speaking it only in his name, and by his authority, as what he spake was the word of God, so is that which we speak too: for we speak, or, as it were, repeat it only after him, as his ambassadors, sent by him to speak it in his place and stead.

And therefore it follows in the text, *we pray you in Christ's stead*; as if Christ himself was here present. For he being now, as to his body, in heaven, he sends his ministers or ambassadors to represent him, and supply his place upon earth, and to do in his name what he himself did when he was here, and would still do if he was now present in body, as he is by his Spirit and power; according to the foresaid promise, which he made to his apostles and ambassadors in all ages, *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world*: and according to what he told them upon another occasion, saying, *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me*, Luke x. 16. Whereby he plainly signified what he afterwards told them

in express terms, that as the Father sent him, so he sent them, as his ambassadors, to treat in his name; and that as the persons of ambassadors are always reckoned sacred and inviolable, so what an ambassador doth in the name of his prince, is looked upon as done by the prince himself; and as an affront offered to an ambassador reflects on the prince that sent him, so whatsoever is done to the ministers or ambassadors of Christ as such, is done to Christ himself. They who *hear them, hear him*; and they who *despise them, despise him*; as they who *despise him* whom the Father sent, *despise the Father* who sent him.

From hence, therefore, ye may see, how truly the Apostle here saith, *We pray you in Christ's stead*; and how necessary it is for you to hearken to what we say in his name, lest ye be found in the number of those who despise Christ, together with the doctrine that he teacheth, and the advice that he gives you by us: for it is *in his stead* we pray you. But what do *we pray you in his stead* to do? Nothing but what is really for your good; nothing but what tends to your eternal happiness and welfare; and therefore nothing but what it is your interest to do, whether we prayed you to do it or no. For seeing Christ came into the world for no other end but to make you happy, and hath done and suffered so much as he hath for that only purpose; ye cannot imagine, that he by us, or we from him, should pray you to do any thing but what is indispensably necessary in order to your attainment of true felicity. And although we do not command, but only *pray you in Christ's stead*; yet it being *in his stead we pray*, ye ought to give the same deference to it, as if we commanded you. The request of an earthly prince is taken by his faithful subjects as a command: how much more when the King of kings and Lord of lords is pleased to condescend so far

as to make a request to you? That surely is to be received as the highest sort of commanding, in that it doth not only signify his will, but also lays a fresh obligation upon you to observe it, seeing he is graciously pleased to deal so gently and kindly with you, in such a way as that your obedience to him may be your own voluntary act; not being forced into it only by his peremptory command, but drawn with the bands of love.

Love indeed! the highest that can be shewn you. For, after all, what is it that we thus pray you in Christ's stead? nothing else but to be reconciled to God: *We pray you*, saith the Apostle, *in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*. One would think there was no great need that such a request should be made to you, much less that it should be made in no less a name than his that made and governs the world. For, who would not of his own accord be reconciled to God, if he might? If men would but consult their own real interest, this certainly would be the first thing they would all strive after. And yet God knows there are but few that do it: and therefore, out of his infinite love and mercy, he is pleased to send his ambassadors one after another, *rising up early*, and sending them to call upon men, and to pray them in his name to do it. And he hath sent me this day to make the same request and prayer to you, even that ye would be reconciled to him.

But that ye may fully understand what it is that *I pray you* in Christ's stead to do, and likewise how ye may do it aright, ye must take notice, that *by nature* ye are all *the children of wrath*, one as well as another, Ephes. ii. 3. For he that made you, is angry with you, for not answering his end in making you, which was to *serve* and *glorify him*, in obeying and observing the laws which he for that purpose hath set you. Whereas ye have all broken his said

laws, and so instead of *glorifying*, ye have dishonoured him through the whole course of your lives, and therefore are justly fallen under his displeasure: but he, notwithstanding, hath been graciously pleased to find out, and put you into a way of *being reconciled* to him; not by suffering your sins to go unpunished, but by not imputing them to you, but laying the punishments which were due unto you for them upon another, even upon his only-begotten Son, as the Apostle here acquaints us from him, saying, *For he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, or an offering for our sins*; that is, as the prophet expresseth it, *He hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*, Isa. liii. 6. And his only-begotten Son having thus borne the punishments which his justice required for our sins, he is now ready to extend his mercy to us, and to receive us again into his favour, upon such easy terms and conditions, that it is our own fault, unless we perform them, so as to be reconciled again to God.

For all that is required on your parts is only to *repent and believe the Gospel*, Mark i. 15. This was all that our Lord himself called upon mankind to do, when he first entered upon his ministry, and the substance of all that he taught afterwards, and commanded his Apostles to teach. He himself saith, that *he came to call sinners to repentance*, Luke v. 32. and told his disciples, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations*, Luke xxiv. 47. First *repentance*, and then *remission of sins*, but both in his name; and among all *nations*, that all might believe in him for it. And accordingly when the people desired to know of St. Peter and the rest of the Apostles, what they should do; St. Peter said unto them, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins*, Acts ii. 38. They must not only *repent*, so as to forsake their former superstitions and

vices of all sorts; but they must also *believe* in *Jesus Christ*, so as to be *baptized* in his name, and become his disciples indeed, believing and practising all that he hath taught them, before they could be reconciled to God, so as to have their sins pardoned. This is that which Christ himself also gave in charge to his Apostles, at the same time that he sent them out as his ambassadors into the world: *Go ye, saith he, and teach, or rather make, all nations disciples, 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 commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.* These are the instructions which he gave them and their successors, together with their commission to be his ambassadors to the end of the world. He requires them to go and call upon *all nations* to become *his disciples*, and to make them so by *baptizing them* according to his institution, *in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*: and then *to teach them to observe* not only some, but *all things whatsoever he hath commanded*, whether with his own mouth, or else by his prophets, apostles, or other holy men of God, who *spake as they were moved by his Holy Spirit*.

These, therefore, being the orders and instructions which Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour of mankind, hath given to all whom he sends and employs as his ambassadors upon earth; in his name and in his stead I pray and beseech all here present, to come up to the terms which he hath made for your reconciliation to God: repent, repent of all your former sins; you cannot but all know, every one, the sins that he hath hitherto been guilty of, and is still addicted to. If ye do but look into your own hearts and lives, you cannot but see how little good and how much evil you have done, since ye came into the world. You cannot but be conscious to yourselves,

that you have often transgressed the laws and commandments of Almighty God, who sent you hither, by doing what ye ought not to do, and by not doing what ye ought; and so have broken also that solemn vow and promise which ye made to God, when ye were baptized and made the members and disciples of Jesus, and are still apt to do so one way or other every day.

Now, therefore, I pray you in Christ's stead break off your sins, all your sins, by repentance and amendment of life. *Let not sin reign any longer in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof; but mortify the deeds of the body, and destroy the ill habits ye have contracted by a long continuance in any sort of vice or wickedness: set yourselves in good earnest upon denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* Take heed that your hearts be never overcharged with *surfeiting and drunkenness, or the cares of this life*: be just and righteous in all your dealings, and if ye have wronged any man, be sure to make him restitution. *As ye have opportunity, do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith; and whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them.* *Love the Lord your God with all your hearts, and with all your souls: pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks unto him: sanctify his holy name, and make him your only fear and dread.* Live with a constant dependence upon his word, and submission to his will; acknowledge him in all your ways, honour him with all your substance, *serve and worship him with reverence and godly fear*: let your hearts be always running after him, your spirits rejoicing in him, and your whole souls be reconciled and inclined to him, and to those holy ways that he hath prepared for you to walk in. Study all ye can to promote his glory, in your several places and stations in the world: and

for that purpose, *cease to do evil, learn to do well ; and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus :* believe on him, as your only Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate with the Father, *who ever liveth to make intercession for those who come unto God by him.* And therefore as you thus truly repent of all your sins, and come unto God by him, trust also and depend upon him to make your peace with God ; nothing doubting but that he will intercede so effectually for you, that for his sake, and upon the account of his merits and mediation for you, your sins being all pardoned, God will be reconciled to you, and you shall be reconciled to God, and restored to his love and favour again, as much as if ye had never offended him in all your lives.

Having thus *prayed you* in Christ's stead, and for the most part in his very words, to be *reconciled* to God, it may seem needless to use any arguments to persuade you to it ; for if ye will not hearken to what Christ himself desires of you, much less will you regard any thing that I can say unto you. But in this also I shall not speak in my own name, but his ; and in his *stead pray you* to consider, first, who it is that desires this of you ; not I, your fellow-worm, but Christ himself, Christ the eternal Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, the Lord God Almighty : *Christ, who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal to God ;* and yet for your sakes *made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant :* Christ, *who being thus found in fashion as a man, really and truly man as well as God, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ;* and all to appease the wrath of God, and reconcile him to you : Christ, who is now at the right-hand of the Father, *and is made head over all things for the Church,* that nothing may hinder their reconciliation to God, who apply them-

selves to him, and do what he requires in order to it. This is that Christ, who requires you to do what ye have now heard ; and will ye not do any thing ye can for him, who hath done and suffered so much for you ? For him who loved you so as to lay down his own life for you ? Surely you can never deny him any thing, much less when he desires nothing of you, but only that ye would be reconciled to God. This is the only end of all he did for mankind upon earth, the end of all that he is now doing in heaven, and the end of his sending me at this time to solicit and pray you in his stead to do it : and if ye still stand out, and refuse to come in upon his most gracious advice and request ; what favour can ye ever expect from him ? None, certainly ; he will be so far from shewing you any kindness, so far from saving you from your sins, and from the wrath of God, that he hath told you beforehand what he will say to you ; *Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh,* Prov. i. 24, 25, 26.

And your calamity will most certainly come ere long, whether ye fear it or no : greater calamity than ye are aware of, greater than ye can yet imagine. For consider, in the next place, that until ye are reconciled to God, as you are enemies to him, so he is an enemy to you : he that made you is angry with you, he is incensed against you. And who can imagine the dismal effects and consequence of his displeasure ? *If his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little,* who is able to stand before it ? The thoughts of it are sufficient to make the stoutest heart among us tremble : to have Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, the supreme Governor of the world, to have him angry with us, who can think of it without horror and amazement ? Who then can describe the de-

plorable condition which they are in, that lie under his displeasure? For my part, I am so far from being able to give you a description, that I dread the very thoughts of it; only we know in general, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*; that all that he continues to be angry at, will most certainly do so, and by consequence be as miserable as it is possible for them to be: for so long as he who governs all things in the world is angry with you, there is nothing in it can do you good, nothing but what will contribute some way or other to your ruin and destruction. All things are cursed to you, those also which you think to be blessings: and all the judgments that God hath threatened in his word against sinners, seeing he is angry with you, stand ready every moment to fall upon you. And if he should once open your eyes, to see him frowning upon you, you would not be able to endure yourselves, but would wish with all your souls you could cease to be, or be any thing rather than what you are, *the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction*: but all in vain. All the world cannot help you, unless he that made and governs it be reconciled to you; but ye must be punished *with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe in that day*: 2 Thess. i. 9, 10. When ye will be cast into hell-fire, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*, Mark ix. 44.

If these things were laid to your hearts as they ought to be, they would make you very restless and uneasy, until you have made your peace with God, and done all that ye have heard to be required in order to your reconciliation to him. And how happy would you then be? as happy in the love and favour of God, as the other are miserable under his wrath and fury. For when you are at peace with God, all things

else will be at peace with you ; he that made them, will make them to be so : *you shall be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you*, Job v. 23. Yea, *when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him*, Prov. xvi. 7. And not only they, but all things else shall work together for your good, so long as ye continue in his favour, who governs and disposeth of all things as he pleaseth. For when ye are *reconciled to him*, he will look upon you as his friends, his favourites, his children, and will deal accordingly with you. He will take you into his own particular care and conduct. He will *hide you under his wings*, that *no evil may come near to hurt you*. He will bless and sanctify all occurrences to you. He will provide all things necessary, that as you have nothing that is evil, so ye may want nothing that is good for you. He will cause *the light of his countenance to shine upon you*, and manifest his special love and favour to you, that you may see him smiling upon you, rejoicing over you, and delighting to do you good, in which blessed sight our happiness chiefly consisteth. He will guide you by his counsel, assist you by his grace, protect you by his power, enlighten, quicken, actuate, support, and strengthen you by his Holy Spirit, that you may pass through all *the changes and chances of this mortal life*, so as to come at last to live with him and his holy angels, in the perfect vision and fruition of his eternal Godhead.

But what do I mean, to offer at describing the happiness of those who are reconciled to God ? when to be in his favour is itself the greatest happiness that a creature is capable of, and such as none can apprehend but they who have it. Yet this is that happiness which the eternal Son of God hath purchased for mankind, and sends his ambassadors about to invite them to it. It is in his name I come to

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all that are here present at this time, and *pray you in his stead, be ye all now reconciled unto God*; now, while ye may. Blessed be God, ye all may as yet be reconciled to him, if ye will but take the course for it, which hath been now described to you out of his holy word: otherwise, he would not have sent me to call upon you, nor brought you hither to be called upon to do it; but if ye turn your backs, and refuse or neglect to hearken to him now, ye know not whether he will ever call upon you any more. Wherefore I *pray you again in his stead*, put off this great work no longer, but begin it now. *For why will ye die? Why will ye destroy yourselves, when ye need not? Why will ye continue any longer under the displeasure of Almighty God, when ye may be restored to his favour, if ye will but seek it? but then you must seek it in his own way, in the constant use of the means which he hath appointed, whereby to obtain his grace and assistance to do what is required of you. What they are, ye all know: and therefore I need say no more. But as I have now prayed you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, so in his name I pray God to be reconciled to you, and to open your eyes, that ye may see the things that belong to your everlasting peace, before they be hid from you.*

SERMON V.

A FORM OF SOUND WORDS TO BE USED BY MINISTERS.

2 Tim. i. 13.

Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

ALTHOUGH we are apt to wonder most at such things as seldom happen in the world, yet certainly the most common and obvious things that be, if duly considered, deserve as much, if not much more, to be admired by us. What more common to all mankind, and yet what more strange and wonderful, than that by certain sounds in the air, or by certain characters upon solid bodies, we should be able to discover our thoughts to one another? Thoughts, we know, are the imminent acts of the soul, a spiritual being, and so not capable of any external representations; and yet for all that, we can make such sounds and figures, utter such words, and write such letters, from whence other persons may understand what we think as well as we ourselves. And this indeed is the foundation of all human society and conversation: for by this means we can communicate our hopes and fears, our joys and griefs, our desires and abhorrences, all our senti-

ments and notions to one another; yea, by this means we can converse with the ancients, and know what they thought, that lived above a thousand years ago. Of so great use are words, whether spoken or written, to mankind.

And yet as nothing may be more easily, so nothing hath been more grossly, abused than they; for though we can frame ideas and notions of things in our minds, without any relation unto or dependence upon words, yet having been all along accustomed to express our thoughts by them, we are apt to be more intent upon words, than we are upon things themselves; and so to accommodate and suit our notions to words, rather than words unto our notions. So that whatsoever words we commonly use, whereby to express such or such things, our apprehensions of these things are according to the words whereby we are wont to express them: if they be false, our apprehensions being regulated by them cannot possibly be true; and if they be true, and rightly understood by us, our apprehensions cannot possibly be false, being bound up, as it were, and confined within the sense and meaning of such words. But it being very hard and difficult to find out fit and proper words in any language, whereby fully and distinctly to express the nature of things, and our own ideas of them; most men, to save themselves the labour of a further search, take up with the first they meet with, especially if they be but generally received: which if they happen to be false, as they frequently are, they infallibly lead them into false conceptions and erroneous opinions of the things themselves. And therefore it cannot but highly concern us all to be very cautious and wary in the choice of our words, especially in divinity, where every mistake is dangerous, and many damnable.

This therefore being a matter of so great importance, much greater than it is commonly thought

of, it may justly challenge to be the subject of our present discourse: for which end I have chosen these words of St. Paul to Timothy, *Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*

Where we may observe three things :

First, That some time before the writing of this Epistle, St. Paul had given to Timothy a form of sound words, though not in writing, yet by word of mouth. This is plain, in that he saith, *a form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me.* Timothy was now ordained bishop of Ephesus, the metropolis of all Asia proconsularis, whither the Apostle sent him to preach and propagate the Gospel; and that he might rightly understand the principles of that religion which he was to preach, and cause others to do so too, the Apostle puts words into his mouth, such as would clearly and properly express the great truths, which he was mostly to insist upon; which he therefore calls *ὑγιαίνοντας λόγους*, *sound words*, such as would make his hearers to be *sanæ mentis*, men of sound judgment and right notions in the mysteries of religion. And whosoever doth not consent to those sound and wholesome words, the same Apostle elsewhere saith, *that such a one is a fool, knowing nothing ἀλλὰ νοσῶν*: but he is sick, as the word signifies, or, as our translation hath it, *he doats about questions and strifes of words*, 1 Tim. vi. 4. As if a malignant fever had affected his brain, distracted his mind, and made him delirious, so as to rave and talk nonsense. For so all do, that use any other than right and proper words in the mysteries of our religion; whatsoever they say is nonsense, if not downright blasphemy. Hence it is that the Apostle so often makes mention of *sound doctrine*, in opposition to the extravagant and corrupt opinions which false teachers, even in those days, instilled into the minds of their ignorant and unwary

disciples. And lest Timothy, through any mistake or inadvertency, should fall himself, or lead others, into the same errors, St. Paul, before he sent him to preach the Gospel, furnished him with such a form of *sound words*, which if he did but constantly observe, he could neither be deceived nor deceive.

Secondly, We may observe, that this form of sound words was both in *faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*; that is, both concerning the doctrine and the discipline, what we are to believe, and what to do, in obedience to the Gospel of Christ. For as faith comprehends the one, so doth love the other; and St. Paul had given Timothy a form of *sound words* in both: but first in faith, and then in love, because it is faith that works by love; and he that doth not rightly believe, can never truly obey the Gospel of Christ as he ought to do. But in one as well as the other, St. Paul instructed Timothy how to express himself, and by that means hath admonished us also to be very careful how to speak, what words we use, whether in theoretical or practical divinity, concerning either faith or manners.

Lastly, St. Paul did not think it enough to give Timothy a form of *sound words*, but he charged him to hold it fast, to keep it, to use no other words, but such as exactly agreed with those which he had taught him. The Greek words are ὑποτύπωσιν ἔχει τῶν ὑγιαίνοντων λόγων, where the word ὑποτύπωσις is variously rendered by interpreters. I shall not trouble you with any critical observations about it; but only observe in general, that it is sometimes used for a pattern or example, 1 Tim. i. 16. sometimes for a short description, or delineation, or summary, or compendium. Thus Clemens Alexandrinus wrote a book, which he called Ὑποτύπωσις, which Photius saith was a brief exposition of the Old and New Testament; out of which the Ἐπιτομαὶ ἐκ τῶν Θεοδοίου at the end of his Works, I suppose,

were taken. And in this sense, the word here used intimates as if St. Paul had given Timothy, if not that which we call the Apostles' Creed, yet some such-like form of *sound words*, containing the sum and substance of what he was to believe and preach.

But the Apostle lays no great stress upon that word. For it follows, hold fast the form of *sound words*, ὧν παρ' ἐμοῦ ἤκουσας, ὧν not ἧς, *which words*, not *which form*, thou hast heard of me. So that it is not so much the *form*, as the *words* themselves, which the Apostle would have him to hold fast, to have them continually in his mind, and in his mouth too, whensoever he speaks of those divine truths, which are revealed to us in the Gospel.

What these *sound words* were, which Timothy heard of St. Paul, we know not: but this we know, that it doth as much concern us to use *sound words* in matters of divinity, as it did him. And therefore having not heard them at St. Paul's own mouth, as he did, it may not be amiss, if we consider of the most certain way to find them out, that we may know how to express ourselves in all the articles of our Christian faith by such words as the Apostle here calls *sound* and *wholesome*, such as will give us and those we speak to occasion to frame right notions and conceptions of those things which belong to our everlasting peace.

For this end, therefore, I shall in the first place lay down this as a most certain and undeniable truth, that the Scriptures, as being indited by the Spirit of God, in the languages wherein they were first written, do contain the best and soundest words that possibly could be invented, whereby to express such truths as are necessary for mankind to believe or know. For they being designed on purpose to be the rule both of our faith and manners, and contrived for that end by infinite wisdom and goodness itself; it cannot be imagined, but that every

thing is there expressed, in the most plain and perspicuous, the most fit and proper, the most full and significant words that could be desired of Almighty God, whereby to discover himself and his will to our capacities ; to which of his infinite mercy he is pleased to condescend, in all these books, which are acknowledged by all Christians to be written by men inspired, moved, assisted, and directed in what they wrote, by the Spirit of God himself. By which means the whole Scripture is indeed but as one continued *form of sound words* ; which if we do but *hold fast* and understand aright, we can neither fall either into heresy or schism. And whatsoever words we use in the mysteries of our religion, are either true or false, sound or corrupt, as they do or do not agree with those which are used in that holy writ.

But in the next place, we must consider withal, that notwithstanding the extraordinary clearness and propriety of speech, whereby divine truths are there revealed to us, yet there never was any error, heresy, or schism in the Church, but what was pretended by the authors and abettors of it to be grounded upon Scripture. In this all heretics, Greek and Latin, old and new, agree. They all plead Scripture for what they say ; and each one pretends, that his opinion, be it ever so absurd and ridiculous, is consonant to the words there used : which though it may seem strange at first sight, we shall not much wonder at, if we do but consider three things.

First, that most men, not understanding the original languages, read and consult the Scriptures no otherwise than in some translation, which they notwithstanding look upon as the word of God ; and if there be any word in that translation that favours any erroneous opinion, they presently conclude, that the Scriptures do so too, though they be as much against it, as that translation is for it. As for example ; in the first promulgation of the Gospel to mankind,

Gen. iii. 15. God said to the serpent that beguiled our first parents, *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed* *וְהָיָה יְשׁוּפֶךָ רֵאשׁוֹ*: it, that is, *the seed of the woman*, which is Christ, *shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*; as our translation rightly expounds it. But the vulgar Latin renders it, *Ipsa conteret caput tuum*, as if a woman should do it; which the Papists interpreting of the Virgin Mary, ascribe to her this great victory and triumph over sin and satan; and are taught to say in their addresses to her, *Adoro et benedico sanctissimos pedes tuos, quibus antiqui serpentis caput calcasti*. There are many other absurd opinions as well as practices in that Church, which this one word hath been the occasion of.

Thus, where the Apostle, speaking of marriage, saith, *τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν*, the vulgar Latin again translates it, *sacramentum hoc magnum est*: from whence they conclude matrimony to be a sacrament, such a one as baptism, and the Lord's supper.

Thus also, immediately before his ascension, our blessed Lord said to his Apostles, *Πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτούς*, which the vulgar Latin renders, *Euntes ergo docete omnes gentes, baptizantes eos*; which most of our modern European versions follow. And from hence I verily believe the error of the Anabaptists and Antipædobaptists took its first rise. For, apprehending our Saviour to say, according to this translation, *Go ye and teach all nations, and then baptize them*; they presently inferred, that persons ought first to be taught, and then baptized; and, by consequence, that children not being capable of the former, cannot be so of the latter. But if they had understood and consulted the original, they would have found no such thing; for *μαθητεύω* never signifies to teach, but only to make a disciple. And so the Syriac and other oriental translations constantly render the word.

And therefore it is observable, that in all the eastern Churches this heresy was never heard of, nor any where else, but only in such places where the vulgar Latin prevailed: which plainly shews, that it was grounded at first only upon that false translation of the word μαθητεύσατε by *docete*; though afterwards they endeavoured to prove it from other places of Scripture, either translated, or at least falsely understood, as this is. Many instances of this nature might be produced, to shew how false translations of the Scriptures have given the first occasion to draw such opinions from them, which are directly contrary to what is asserted in them. And when men have once espoused an opinion, whether it be true or false, they look upon themselves as obliged to maintain it.

Secondly, although there be many, especially of late years, who are able to read and understand much of the original text, yet they also are to seek for the true meaning of many places. For besides the ἀπαξ λεγόμενα, many other words and phrases frequently occur, which cannot be fully understood, except we first know the rites and customs of the Jewish Church, consider the context and scope of the places where such words are used, compare one place with another, and observe many other rules requisite to the right interpretation of those holy oracles; which most men, by reason of their ignorance and sloth, are either unable or unwilling to do; and therefore are apt to take up with the first sense that offers itself, without giving themselves the trouble of a farther search.

Thus Clemens Alexandrinus observes of the heretics in his days, that they would quote Scripture indeed, but not in the sense which the context required, but would take here and there a word, and apply it to their own private opinions; not considering what is signified by it, ἀλλ' αὐτῇ ψιλῇ ἀποχρώ-

μενοι τῇ λέξει, but abusing the naked word itself, by putting what sense they please upon it. The same may be observed of many in our days, who getting a Scripture word by the end, away they run with it, and never leave it, till they have forced some erroneous opinion or other from it: which therefore cannot be imputed to any obscurity or uncertainty in the Scriptures themselves, but to the darkness of men's minds, and the perverseness of their wills, that they either cannot or will not take the pains to understand what is clearly revealed in them. And to this head most of the ancient and modern heresies may be referred.

Lastly, although some do understand the words whereby it hath pleased Almighty God to reveal himself and his pleasure to us, yet the things themselves signified by those words are many of them so high, mysterious, and divine, that their finite and corrupt apprehensions are not able to reach them. And therefore, disdainng to believe what they cannot comprehend, they detort those words from their true and proper, to such a sense as will suit with their understandings. Seeing they cannot apprehend so much as the words signify, they will make the words signify no more than they can apprehend.

This St. Peter observed in his days; where, speaking of St. Paul, he saith, *As also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction,* 2 Pet. iii. 16. where he plainly speaks, not of the words, but things themselves; for it is not ἐν αἰς, in which Epistles, but ἐν οἷς, amongst which things in those Epistles, there are δυσνόητα τινα, some things hard to be understood.

Such are those great mysteries of the most blessed Trinity, the divinity and incarnation of the Son of God, and the like; which are as plainly revealed in

Scripture, as things of that nature could be; and yet many have had the impudence to deny them, only upon that account, because their reasons forsooth were not able to comprehend them. These are they who Lucifer-like aspire to be like God himself; *who would measure the water in the hollow of their hands, and mete out the heavens with a span; who would comprehend the dust of the earth in a measure, weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance:* nay, which is worse, they would measure heaven by earth, eternity by time, God by themselves; and believe nothing of his infinite, eternal, incomprehensible essence, but what they can comprehend within the narrow compass of their own reason, although God himself hath been pleased to affirm it: as if the testimony of God was not a stronger ground whereupon to build our most holy faith, than human reason; which certainly hath nothing else to do in such mysteries, but to search into the truth of the divine revelation; which being either supposed or proved, we have all the reason in the world to believe what is so revealed, whether we understand it or no. But these great masters of reason have so little of that which they so much pretend to, as not to believe this: and therefore to make the Scriptures to speak nothing but what they can comprehend, that is, nothing but what themselves please, they rack every word, particle, and sentence, transpose the commas, alter the accents, violate all the rules of true construction; and then it is no wonder if they force the Scriptures to say, not what God, but what themselves, would have them. And by this means it is, that the most pernicious and blasphemous of all heresies were first broached, which whosoever swallow down, are certain to be poisoned and undone for ever.

Hence therefore we may observe, how that although the Scriptures contain none but sound and whole-

some words, such as Timothy heard of St. Paul; yet such is the weakness of men's understandings, such the corruption of their judgments, such the perverseness of their wills, the disorder of their affections, and the pravity of their whole souls, that they extract poison from that which was intended for their food, draw error out of truth, heresy out of the Scriptures themselves, so as to learn to blaspheme God in his own words. But what then shall we do in this case? How can we be ever certain that the words we use in matters of religion be sound, and by consequence our opinions orthodox, and our sentiments of God and those eternal truths which he hath revealed to us, such as he himself would have them? Why surely for this end it is necessary, that we indulge not our own fancies, nor idolize our own private opinions, but *hold fast the form of sound words* delivered to us in the holy Scriptures, in that sense which the catholic Church in all ages hath put upon them.

For the eternal Son of God having with his own blood purchased to himself an universal Church, we cannot doubt but that he takes sure care of it, that, according to his promise, *the gates of hell shall never prevail against it*. For which end, he, the head of this mystical body, doth not only defend and protect it by his almighty power, but he so acts, guides, directs, and governs it by his Holy Spirit, that though errors and heresies may sometimes disease and trouble some parts of it, yet they can never infect the whole; but that is still kept sound and entire, notwithstanding all the power and malice of men or devils against it. So that, if we consider the universal Church, or congregation of faithful people, as in all ages dispersed over the whole world; we may easily conclude, that the greatest part, from which the whole must be denominated, was always in the right; which the ancient Fathers were so fully

persuaded of, that although the word καθολικός properly signifies universal, yet they commonly used it in the same sense as we do the word orthodox, as opposed to an heretic; calling an orthodox man a catholic, that is, a son of the catholic Church: as taking it for granted, that they, and only they, which constantly adhere to the doctrine of the catholic or universal Church, are truly orthodox; which they could not do, unless they had believed the catholic Church to be so. And besides that, it is part of our very creed, that the catholic Church is holy; which she could not be except free from heresy, as directly opposite to true holiness.

He therefore that would be sure not to fall into damnable errors, must be sure also to continue firm and stedfast to the doctrine of the universal Church, as being grounded upon the Scriptures rightly understood: for so every thing is that she hath taught us. For the catholic Church never undertook, as the Romish hath done, to coin any new doctrines of her own head: no, she always took the Scriptures for the only standard of truth; and hath accordingly delivered her sense of them in such words as she judged to agree exactly with those which are there used.

And therefore it is observable, that the Church never undertook publicly to determine any truth, until it was first denied; nor to interpret the Scriptures, until they were first perverted. If no heretics had ever risen up in the Church, the Church had never held any General Councils; and if the Scripture words and phrases had not been first abused, and wrested to a wrong and contrary sense to what they were intended, she had never invented other words to explain them. But when the enemy had sown tares in the Lord's field, the Church could not but endeavour to root them out, or at least to keep them from spreading any further: when wicked men had offered violence to the word of God, his spouse could

do no less than defend it, and declare the true sense and meaning of it to her children.

As for example, that great fundamental article of our Christian faith, upon which not only our religion, but our eternal salvation, depends, the divinity of our blessed Saviour, is so plainly, so fully, so frequently asserted in holy writ, that the Church did for many years together believe, acknowledge, and preach it, only in Scripture words, and needed not as yet any other words whereby to express it. But when it was once denied, and the Scripture words so far abused, as that a quite contrary sense was extorted from them, then it was time for the catholic Church to appear in its behalf; and being accordingly assembled in a General Council at Nice, she there determined, that the Son is *ὁμοούσιος τῷ Πατρὶ*, of the same substance or essence with the Father. Which words she then used only for the clearer explication of the several places in Scripture, where the divinity of Christ is asserted. For Athanasius, who was present at the Council, saith, that the Fathers, gathering the sense of the Scriptures concerning our Saviour, *εἰρήκασιν τὸ ὁμοούσιον*, pronounced him to be *ὁμοούσιος*. And therefore, though the word was not in Scripture, they intended no more by it than what was there expressed in other words.

I know that the Arians complained that the word *οὐσία* was no where to be found in holy writ. But though that Greek word be not, yet certainly there is no word in all the Greek language that more exactly answers to the most proper name of God *יהוה* than *οὐσία* doth; and indeed the word *Κύριος*, which the Apostles use, and whereby the Septuagint translate *יהוה*, is much of the same signification in its original; from the old word *Κύρω*, the same with *εἶμι* and *ὑπάγω*. And besides that, the Council of Nice did not invent this word, but it had been used in the Church all along before: for Athanasius saith, that

some bishops, both of Rome and Alexandria, had used it 250 years before that time; and that Eusebius Cæsariensis himself acknowledged as much, and upon that account afterwards subscribed to the Council. Who those ancient bishops were we know not, their works being now lost: but Tertullian, who lived about 105 years before that time, in his Apology, saith, that the Son is called God, *ex unitate substantiæ*; and in his book against Praxeas, that the three Persons are one God *per substantiæ unitatem*, which perfectly agrees with the Greek word *ὁμοούσιος*: and seeing they that lived so very near to the Apostles used this word, it is more than probable that they also were not the first inventors of it, but that they had received it from the Apostles themselves.

Howsoever, this is certain, that in the writings both of the Apostles and Prophets, we frequently meet with the truth itself, which is signified by this word; which having been confirmed by the Council of Nice, it hath been constantly used by the universal Church, as the true and full interpretation of the holy Scripture, concerning the divinity of our blessed Saviour; and so generally received by all Christians of all ages, that after the Arians were once silenced, it never met with any considerable opponents in the world, but Mahomet and Socinus with their followers, which deserve not the name of Christians.

The same may be observed of the third General Council held at Ephesus: for when Nestorius had affirmed, that in Christ, as there are two natures, so there are two persons likewise; one person, as he was God begotten of the Father; the other as man, born of his mother: and therefore that the blessed Virgin could not properly be called *Θεοτόκος*: the Council, for the determination of this question, did not only consult the several texts in Scripture relating to our blessed Saviour, but considered likewise in

what sense those places had been understood by the catholic Church before that time; for which end they caused the Nicene Creed, and several passages out of St. Cyprian, St. Basil, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen, and many others, to be read in council. And from thence they gathered, and therefore pronounced, that according to the Scriptures, as interpreted by the catholic Church, Christ, though he have two natures, yet he is but one person, and by consequence that the Virgin Mary might properly be called Θεοτόκος, because the same person who was born of her is truly God as well as man: which being once determined by an universal Council to be the true sense and meaning of the Scriptures in this point, hath been acknowledged by the universal Church ever since, till this time.

I might instance in other General Councils, wherein the same way and method of proceeding was religiously observed. For they never took upon them to form new Articles of Faith, but only to explain and establish the old ones: which being delivered in Scripture, were believed all along by the catholic Church before that time. And certainly whatsoever hath been thus approved by General Councils, and received and taught by the universal Church in all ages, we have all the reason in the world to believe it to be the true doctrine of the Gospel, every way corresponding with what is delivered in the Scriptures, though it be not *totidem verbis* contained in them. Be sure no sober man but must acknowledge, it is more possible for himself, yea, and for any particular Church, to err, than it is for the universal Church to do so: and therefore it must needs be the safest way to use Scripture-words in such a sense as the universal Church hath always put upon them, and, by consequence, such words also, whereby the universal Church hath always expressed her sense of God's mind as revealed to us in Scripture; and to look

upon them all as sound words, such as St. Paul here speaks of, such as will convey right and sound notions of the divine mysteries to our understandings.

I have insisted the longer upon this, both because it is so necessary to our being sound in the faith, and also because of the great use that may be made of it in defending our Church against its adversaries on all sides. For our Church, as to its doctrine as well as discipline, is settled upon so firm a basis, so truly catholic, that none can oppose what she teacheth, without denying not only the Scriptures, but the Scriptures as interpreted by the universal Church. So that we may justly challenge all the world to shew us any one point or article of faith, wherein our Church differs from the catholic in all ages, since the Apostles' days: which, I think, is more than can be said of any other national Church in the whole world; there being no other, that I know of, which keeps to the form of sound words delivered in Scripture, as interpreted by the universal Church, so firmly and constantly as ours doth.

Not to trouble you at present with any other, there is the Church of Rome, that pretends herself to be the only catholic Church in the world. Examine but the words that she hath taken up of late, the great words whereby she distinguisheth herself from all other Churches, and you will find that they agree neither with Scripture nor antiquity, much less with both, as all sound words do. What those words are which she insists so much upon, is easy to be found out, for we have a form of them prescribed and published by Pope Pius IV. in the acts of the Council of Trent, and inserted into their canon law; a form of words that every one is bound to swear to, before he can be admitted into any degree in their Universities, into any benefice, dignity, or preferment in their Church, or indeed into any public employment whatsoever; as appears by the

bull of the said Pope to that purpose. But in this whole form of words, except the Nicene Creed, with which it begins, to make the rest go down the better, there is scarce any one word which can properly be called sound, in the sense that I have now explained. There is *transubstantitatio*, *purgatorium*, and several such novel words, which many of the papists themselves have acknowledged can never be proved from Scripture; and if so, I am sure they are not consonant to the doctrine of the universal Church; for she never proposed any thing as necessary to be believed, but what she could prove from Scripture.

It is not worth our labour to run over the whole form; but give me leave to single out one paragraph, because of its relation to the conspiracy which was yesterday prevented, and we praised God for our deliverance from it. The words are these: *Sanctam catholicam et apostolicam Romanam ecclesiam, omnium ecclesiarum matrem et magistram agnosco; Romanoque pontifici, Sancti Petri apostolorum principis successor, ac Jesu Christi vicario veram obedientiam spondeo ac juro.* An excellent form of words truly for a man to swear to, directly contrary both to the Scriptures and the catholic Church! the Church of Rome, as now established, a catholic and apostolic Church! the mother and the mistress of all other Churches! but that is nothing in comparison of what follows: the bishop of Rome, successor to St. Peter, and the vicar of Christ!

And if you would know in what sense he is the vicar of Christ, their authors commonly tell you, that he is so Christ's vicar upon earth, that Christ and he are but one and the same head of the Church; and so every creature is as much bound to be subject to the Pope, as to Christ himself. And therefore Antonius Puccius, in a speech he made in the Lateran Council to Pope Leo X. there present, was neither afraid nor ashamed to use these words to

him : *quasi in te, uno, vero, et legitimo Christi et Dei vicario, propheticum illud debuerit rursus impleri, Adorabunt eum omnes reges terræ, omnes gentes servient ei.* So horribly hath this one word or title given to the pope been abused by them ! it hath indeed been the occasion not only of their pride and ambition, but likewise of all the villanies, persecutions, and assassinations that have been executed or attempted by them. For the constant use of this word having imprinted in their minds a fancy, that the bishop of Rome sits there in Christ's stead, to manage and order the affairs of the whole world, whatsoever he commands, be it ever so wicked and impious, ever so cruel and so barbarous, they look upon it as sacred, and reckon themselves obliged to obey it, as much, yea much more, than what Christ himself hath commanded.

But if, after all, you ask them what right he hath to this name, how he comes to be Christ's vicar upon earth, more than any other bishop ? their answer is, because he is St. Peter's successor. And therefore to make out this title, it is necessary for them to prove two things : first, that St. Peter himself was made Christ's vicar more than any other apostle ; and then, that the bishop of Rome succeeds him in that office.

As for the first, they quote those words of our Lord to Peter, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church*, Matt. xvi. 18. But it is plain that the catholic Church never understood those words in any such sense, as if Peter was by them constituted the vicar of Christ. And besides, it is plain also, that although we should understand the words of St. Peter's person, yet there is nothing at all conferred upon him by them. For our Lord speaks not in the present, but only in the future tense ; and so doth not grant him any thing as yet, but only promiseth to give him something hereafter :

Upon this rock, saith he, I will build my Church, and I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And therefore to understand these words aright, we must consider when and how this promise was fulfilled: and that we shall find to have been after the resurrection of Christ, when he said to his Apostles, *As my Father hath sent me, so send I you.* And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained,* John xx. 21, 22, 23. Now was that promise fulfilled, now were the keys of heaven given to St. Peter; but not to him only, but to the rest of the Apostles with him: so that if St. Peter was then made the vicar of Christ, so were all the other apostles as well as he; and, by consequence, all other bishops as well as he of Rome.

But after all this, suppose St. Peter was the chief of all the Apostles; suppose our Saviour did design him some peculiar honour, by saying, *Upon this rock I will build my Church*; what is all this to the pope of Rome? how comes he to be so much concerned in any thing that was said or done to St. Peter? It is no where recorded in the Gospel, that our Saviour ever so much as mentioned the city of Rome, much less the bishop of that city; which certainly it was very necessary he should have done, had he designed him for his perpetual vicar to the end of the world. He that pretends to so high an honour and dignity as this is, had need have something more to shew for it, than the bishop of Rome hath; who hath so little, that it was a thousand years after Christ, before this title was given to him. For, as I remember, St. Bernard was the first that ever called him *κατ' ἐξοχὴν*, the vicar of Christ; and therefore it is far from being the sense of the catholic Church.

But since this word hath been used, and this title hath been given to the bishop of Rome, what mis-

chief hath it done in the world? For he, conceiting himself to represent Christ's person upon earth, and to be invested with all his power and authority, at length began to look upon himself as something more than a man; at least, far above all mortals upon earth: and therefore hath taken upon him to depose kings, to absolve their subjects from their allegiance, and to persecute, murder, assassinate all sorts of persons that he is pleased to call heretics; and all this under the pretence of religion, and authority derived from Christ himself, as being his vicar upon earth.

O blessed Jesu! that ever thy sacred name should be thus abused by the sons of men! that ever any one should dare to pretend power from thee, to destroy those whom thou camest to save with thine own blood! What shall we say unto thee, O thou Redeemer of men? We blush and are ashamed of ourselves, that ever any of our nature, which thou wast pleased to assume, should be so injurious to thee. How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge thyself on all those who thus continually blaspheme thy great and all-glorious name, and use it to palliate their most atrocious crimes and barbarous enormities! *Abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices,* that thy name may be no longer dishonoured, thy Gospel perverted, nor thy holy catholic Church oppressed by them!

I have taken the boldness to make this short address to our Lord and Master Christ, as being confident, that he, according to his promise, is *present with us*, and will in his good time grant what we have desired of him. In the mean while, we must learn obedience and submission to his divine will; and above all things, take care to keep within the bounds that he hath set us, and to continue sound members of that mystical body, whereof he is head.

For which end, we must be sure to observe this apostolical rule, to *hold fast the form of sound words*: which his Apostle judged so necessary, that he minds Timothy of it, not only here, but likewise in his former Epistle to him, saying, 1 Tim. vi. 20. *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy charge*; that is, the *fides depositum*, as St. Jerome expounds it, *that sound faith which is committed to thee*: and then he adds, *avoiding τὰς βεβήλους κεινοφωνίας*, *profane and vain babblings*, as contrary to the *sound words* before spoken of: or, as the Latin Fathers generally render it, *devitaris profanas vocum novitates*; reading, I suppose, *καινοφωνίας* instead of *κεινοφωνίας*; but the sense is much the same. For all new ways of speaking in divinity, especially in our age, is at the best but vain babbling, and commonly profane, possessing men's minds with such notions and conceptions of things, as will infallibly lead them into error and heresy. Read but the wild extravagant opinions of the first heretics and schismatics, that disturbed the Church; and afterwards take a view of those which after-ages have produced, together with such as have been either revived or invented in our days; and you will find them all made up of new words, strange phrases, and odd expressions, which please the ears, and then debauch the minds of them which hearken to them. We need not go far for instances; every sect amongst us will supply us with too many, in-somuch that they may be all known from one another merely by their words, and new modes of speaking; whereby they would seem to interpret, when indeed they pervert the Scriptures, and *wrest them to their own destruction*.

Hence therefore it will be our interest and wisdom, as it is our duty, to avoid those new words and phrases, which have been lately started in the Church, as well as the opinions which are couched

under them ; and to look upon them at the best but superfluous and unnecessary, upon that very account, because they are new. For nothing certainly can be necessary to be believed or spoken in our days, which hath not been so all along.

Especially it concerns us, who are to instruct others in the way to bliss, to use none but sound words, such as are consonant to the Scriptures, as interpreted by the catholic Church in all ages. I speak not this of myself ; it is the express command of our Church, in the Canons she put forth in the year 1571, where she hath these words ; *Imprimis vero videbunt concionatores, ne quid unquam doceant pro concione, quod a populo religiose teneri et credi velint, nisi quod consentaneum sit doctrinæ Veteris aut Novi Testamenti, quodque ex illa ipsa doctrina catholici patres et veteres episcopi collegerint.* So wisely hath our Church provided against novelties ; insomuch that had this one rule been duly observed as it ought, there would have been no such thing as heresy or schism amongst us ; but we should all have continued firm both to the doctrine and discipline of the universal Church, and so should have *held fast the form of sound words*, according to the Apostle's counsel in my text, in the sense I have now explained it ; which therefore that we may for the future do, I shall conclude my present discourse with this brief exhortation.

Men, brethren, and fathers,

Give me leave to speak freely to you, of the Church you live in: a Church, not only in its doctrine and discipline, but in all things else exactly conformable to the primitive, the apostolical, the catholic Church. For, was that no sooner planted by Christ, but it was watered by the blood of martyrs? So was ours. Did the primitive Christians suffer martyrdom from Rome? So did our first reformers. Hath the catholic Church been all along

pestered with heretics and schismatics? So hath ours. Have they endeavoured in all ages to undermine, and so to overthrow, her? In this also ours is but too much like unto her. And it is no wonder; for the same reason that occasioned all the disturbances and oppositions that the catholic Church ever met with, still holds good as to ours too; even because its doctrine is so pure, its discipline so severe, its worship so solemn, and all its rules and constitutions so holy, perfect, and divine, that mankind, being generally debauched in their principles and practices, have a natural averseness from it, if not an antipathy against it. They would willingly go to heaven, but are loath to be at so much pains for it, as our Church, out of the word of God, prescribes; and therefore would fain persuade themselves, that many of her prescriptions are either sinful or superfluous, because not suiting, forsooth, with their humour, interest, or depraved inclinations. But all their little objections against her are grounded either upon their ignorance of what she prescribes, or else upon their unwillingness to perform it. There are very few, either of the papists or sectaries, that know what our Church is, and therefore all their zeal against it must needs be without knowledge. And they that have some general notions of it, would never set themselves in good earnest upon the observance of what she commands, and therefore cannot know what advantage it would be to them.

Whereas, let any one that hath a due sense of religion, and a real desire of happiness, let such a one make trial of our Church but for one year; let him constantly read the Scriptures, in the method that she prescribes; let him constantly use the Common-Prayer according to her directions; let him constantly observe all her fasts and holy-days; let him receive the Sacrament as often as she is ready to administer it, and perform whatsoever else she hath

been pleased to command; let any man, I say, do this, and then let him be against our Church if he can: I am confident he cannot. But our misery is, that none of those who are out of our Church, and but few of those that are in it, will make the experiment: and that is the reason that those are so violent against her, and these so indifferent for her.

But let others do what they please, and answer for themselves as well as they can another day; as for you who are here at this time, in the especial presence of God, I humbly beseech and exhort you in the *name of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ*, that as he hath been pleased to admit you into so holy and pure a Church, so you would all endeavour to live up to the rules and orders of it, as many here present do. First, keep close to the words she uses in her Articles and common prayers; by this means you will have a right judgment in all things, and *hold fast the form of sound words* indeed. By this means you will be secure from heresy, and entertain no doctrine but what is catholic and orthodox. By this means whatsoever happens, you will still be stedfast in the faith of Christ, and not suffer yourselves to be imposed upon by the adversaries of our Church on either side; for if they cannot fasten new words upon you, it will be impossible for them ever to deceive you.

But then you must remember to conform to the discipline, as well as to the doctrine, of our Church, not hypocritically, indifferently, and partially, but sincerely, constantly, universally, so as to observe and do whatsoever she commands, either in her Liturgy, Canons, or Constitutions. By this means you will live as the primitive Fathers did, and come short of none of the most eminent Christians that ever lived since the Apostles' times. By this you will shame the adversaries of our Church into a

compliance with her, when they see how far you outstrip them in all true grace and virtue: yea, by this means you will be really saints on earth, and glorified saints in heaven. For be but you as pious towards God, as loyal to our queen, as sober in yourselves, as faithful to your friends, as loving to your enemies, as charitable to the poor, as just to all, as our Church enjoins you; in a word, be but you as conformable to her, as she is to the catholic Church in all things, and my life, my eternal life for yours, you cannot but be happy for evermore. Which God of his infinite mercy grant we may all be, in and through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to whom, &c.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, &c.

SERMON VI

STEDFASTNESS TO THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH
RECOMMENDED.

1 Cor. iv. 58.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

AS certain as we are now alive, it is not long but we shall be all dead ; and as certainly as we ever die, we shall one day rise again ; that is, the same bodies out of which our souls depart, howsoever they are dissolved in the mean while, and their parts dispersed and scattered about, shall be put together again, and shall be quickened and informed by the same souls which departed from them ; and so the same individual persons that died before, shall live again, yea, so live as never to die more.

This is that great article of our Christian faith, which the Apostle in this chapter doth not only assert and prove from many undeniable arguments, but likewise discourses at large concerning the cause, the manner, and the effects, or consequences of it, especially with reference to those who die in the true faith of Christ, real and sound members of that body whereof he is head ; concerning whom he assures us, that every one of their bodies, though it be as seed sown and rotten in the ground, it shall afterwards

grow up and flourish more than ever. *It is sown, saith he, in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body, ver. 42, 43, 44.* A spiritual body, it will be a body still, consisting of the same elements it did before, but so rarely tempered, that it will subsist without meat or drink, and be subject neither to heat, nor cold, nor hunger, nor thirst, nor weariness, nor ache, nor pain, nor any disease or distemper whatsoever, but will be always as fresh and lively, as nimble and active, as subservient and obedient to the soul, as if itself was purely spiritual; so that this corruptible body, which the soul is now clothed withal, *will then put on incorruption, this mortal body will put on immortality, ver. 53.* that is, it will always be a fit and proper vehicle for the soul to move in, which therefore shall never any more depart from it, and so it will become incorruptible and immortal, never subject to death or corruption, but be always acted, influenced, and governed by the immortal soul that dwelleth in it; so that death shall then be swallowed up in victory, so perfectly overcome, that it shall cease to be; there shall never be any more separation of the soul and body; but they shall live together like loving mates, in glory, and joy, and bliss for evermore.

These things being thus premised by the Apostle in this chapter, concerning the resurrection of the dead, he concludes it with the words which I have now read, which are only an inference or corollary drawn from the said premises; as if he had said, *Seeing the dead shall all rise again, and seeing they who die in the Lord Jesus shall live with him and be happy for ever; therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, &c.*

Where we may observe by the way, how the Apostle having explained and proved the great doctrine of

the resurrection, and coming now to apply it to the Corinthians, to whom he wrote, and in them to all Christians, the better to prepare and dispose them to receive and observe what he was now to press upon them, he ushers it in with this friendly compellation, *my beloved brethren*; that so calling them not only his brethren, as all are in Christ, but brethren in a particular manner beloved by him, he might thereby give them to understand, that what he was now to put them in mind of, from his apostolical discourse concerning the resurrection, and the application he was about to make of the same doctrine to them, proceeded from that brotherly love and kindness which he had for them, that he had no other end or design in it, but what one true friend hath for another, even to do them good, by putting them in mind of those duties, which necessarily follow from the doctrine he hath now delivered; *therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, &c.* Having therefore thus prepared the way, he acquaints them with three great duties now incumbent upon them, which he earnestly exhorteth them to observe; *be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*; and then he enforceth his exhortation with this urgent reason, drawn from what he had premised concerning the resurrection, *forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*; which reason always holding good, the duties grounded upon it must needs be likewise of perpetual obligation, and by consequence necessary to be observed now as much as ever, and by us as much as by any other; which therefore that they may be, we shall briefly consider and explain the true meaning of each of them as they lie in order.

First, saith he, *be ye stedfast*, that is, well grounded and settled, as the word signifieth, in the Christian religion, as the way to obtain a glorious resurrection; which we cannot fail of, if we continue in the faith

grounded and settled, and be not *moved away from the hope of the Gospel*, as the same Apostle expresseth it in his Epistle to the Colossians, chap. i. 23. To whom therefore he gives this apostolical advice, *As ye have received Christ Jesus, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving*, chap. ii. 6, 7. which is the same in effect with that in my text, *be ye stedfast*.

But what it is in the Christian religion that we ought in a more particular manner to be stedfast in, we may learn from what the Holy Ghost hath left upon record concerning the first converts to it after our Lord's ascension, where he saith, that *they continued stedfast in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*, Acts ii. 42. which are plainly the true marks or notes of a Christian Church, whereby it may be distinguished from all other assemblies or bodies of men, and which by consequence all persons must be stedfast in, who desire to continue real and sound members of that Church which Christ Jesus hath established in the world.

1. They continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine; they did not only hearken to what the Apostles said, and believed what they taught, but they continued constant, firm, and stedfast in it, so as to believe nothing as necessary to salvation, but what the Apostles taught them, but to believe every thing that the Apostles taught them, as necessary to salvation, being confident that the Apostles, being acted and directed in what they taught by the Spirit of God himself, would never teach them any thing either untrue or impertinent; nothing but what was both infallibly certain, and absolutely necessary for them to know and believe in order to their obtaining eternal salvation by Jesus Christ; and therefore they would not hearken to any Jewish fables, nor philoso-

phical speculations, nor yet to their own fancies, nor to the opinions of other men; but kept close to the doctrine of the Gospel, as delivered to them by the Apostles of Christ, the first founder of it, who gave them authority to preach it, and assisted them with his own Spirit in the preaching of it, that so they might be sure to preach nothing but what he would have them, nothing but what was agreeable to those eternal truths, that he himself had before revealed to them: this the first Christians knew, and therefore would never give ear to any other teachers but the Apostles themselves, and such as were sent by them; and this indeed was one of the doctrines which the Apostles taught, that they should not hearken to any other doctrine but what they taught, but keep fast to that; as where St. Paul saith to Timothy, *Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. i. 13. And St. Peter, writing to all Christians, saith, *This second Epistle, beloved, I write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour*, 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2. The prophets and apostles being all acted with the same Spirit, what they commanded to men to believe or to do, that was necessary to be accordingly believed and done, and nothing else; and therefore he adviseth all to continue stedfastly in their doctrine, without minding what others said or taught.

And this certainly is the first and great thing that Christians in all ages ought to be stedfast in, even in the doctrine which Christ and his Apostles taught, for that is the foundation of our whole religion; and therefore unless we be well grounded in that, all our hopes of salvation will soon fall to the ground; it is by this that we believe aright in God, and in Jesus

Christ whom he hath sent ; and it is by this also that we rightly understand our duty both to God and man ; and therefore without this we can neither believe nor live according to the Gospel of Christ, and by consequence can never be saved by him.

Wherefore, as ever ye desire to be saved, ye must be sure to be stedfast in the doctrine, which the Apostles of Christ by his order and commission delivered at first by word of mouth, and afterwards in writing, that all generations might know it, by which means we are now as fully assured of what the Apostles taught, as they could be which heard them speak it. Their doctrine being transmitted to us by the infallible testimony of the Holy Ghost, by which they spake and writ it in that holy book which we call the New Testament ; so that whatsoever we there read, as taught by the Apostles, we are sure was their doctrine, and therefore are bound stedfastly to believe it, and diligently to frame our lives according to it ; but what we do not find there written, we can never be sure that they taught it, and therefore cannot be obliged to believe or observe it.

And hence appears the excellency of our Church, in that it requires nothing to be believed as an article of faith, or as necessary to salvation, but what the Apostles first taught, and what the Church of Christ in all ages hath believed to be consonant to the doctrine contained in their writings ; but whatsoever opinion hath no ground or foundation in the said apostolical writings, that ours together with the catholic Church rejecteth, as either utterly false, or at best not necessary to be believed ; and therefore in order to your continuing stedfast, as the first Christians did, in the Apostles' doctrine, the surest way is to keep close to the doctrine of our Church, which is plainly the same with that of the Apostles in all points, without any addition, diminution, or alteration whatsoever ; which is the great glory of

our Church, and should make us not only to continue firm and dutiful to it, but likewise to thank God that we live in such a Church, wherein we are duly instructed in all the great truths which our Saviour and his Apostles taught, and are not required to believe any thing else, as necessary to our being saved; by which means as our minds may be enlightened, and our hearts purified by that faith which was once delivered to the saints; so we are secure from falling into any damnable heresy, and from being corrupted or perplexed with any of those new and dangerous opinions, which the ignorance and superstition of after-ages have brought into the Church.

What this doctrine of our Church is, you may easily understand; as from the holy Scriptures themselves, so likewise from the Liturgy and Articles of our Church, which are all taken out of the said Scriptures, or grounded upon them; and therefore whatsoever doctrine is contradicted by any thing contained in our Liturgy or Articles, you may be sure it is contrary to something asserted in the holy Scriptures; whatsoever doctrine is no where taught or declared there, you may be as confident that the Apostles never declared or taught it; and by consequence you are so far from being obliged to believe it, that you are rather obliged not to believe it, as a necessary article of our Christian faith, howsoever specious or plausible it may seem to you; but whatsoever doctrine you find to be clearly propounded, asserted, or suggested either in our Articles or Common Prayer Book, you may and ought to rest fully satisfied in your minds, that that is the true doctrine of the Apostles, which you ought to continue firm and stedfast in.

But the first Christians, as they continued *stedfastly* in the Apostles' *doctrine*, so likewise in *fellowship*, or communion with them, as it follows in the text

before mentioned, Acts ii. 42. For the understanding of which, we may observe, that these persons being now baptized according to Christ's institution, they were thereby admitted into the number of his disciples, and so were incorporated into him, and made members of that body whereof he is head, which is a distinct society from the rest of mankind, founded by Christ himself, by the name of his Church, which he promised to be always with, and to assist with his own Spirit, in the use of those means which he had instituted, and appointed to be there administered for our obtaining that salvation which he purchased for us with his own blood; and therefore it is there said, *that the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*, ver. 47. For which purpose he ordained and deputed his Apostles and their successors to instruct and govern the said society, and to take care that all who are admitted into it, might have the said means of grace duly administered to them, that so they might want nothing necessary to their being saved by him.

Now these persons being of this society, *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*, as St. Paul expresseth it, Eph. ii. 19. they always kept company and held communion with them, not only in receiving and believing the doctrine which the Apostles taught them, but likewise observing the rules and orders which they appointed, and using all the means of grace and salvation, as administered by them, so as not to divide themselves into parties and factions, nor separate from that holy society they were now admitted into, under any pretence whatsoever.

And in this also we ought to follow their good example. It is our great happiness that we are of the same apostolic Church as they were, and therefore ought to continue stedfastly in fellowship and communion with it, as they did. It is true, there

were not so many schisms and divisions in the Church then, as there are now ; but the reason was, because the people did not make them, as many do in our days, who notwithstanding that they are admitted into our Church, are so far from continuing stedfast in communion with it, that they never think they can separate themselves far enough from it. But let such persons do what they please, and take what follows : I must advise and beseech you in his name, that laid down his own life to save you, and for the same purpose hath brought you into his Church, that you would hold constant communion with it, as by believing the doctrine, so by loving the members, observing the orders, and submitting to the discipline of it, and exercising yourselves continually in the means of grace, as they are constantly and duly administered in it. For so long as you do so, you are certainly in the ready way to heaven ; whereas, if you leave the Church, and run into corners and separate congregations, you expose yourselves at least to very great uncertainties about your salvation.

While you live constantly in the communion of our Church, you are sure to enjoy all the means which Christ hath appointed for your salvation, faithfully administered in the same way and manner that he appointed ; you are sure to be fully instructed in your whole duty both to God and man ; you are sure to pray together in such a form, as both for the matter and method and manner of it agrees exactly with the word of God : you are sure to have the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper administered unto you, according to Christ's own institution, without any additions to it, or detractions from it ; you are sure to have all this done, by persons rightly ordained and authorized thereunto by Christ himself, and you are sure that what they teach you is sound and orthodox, the very same doctrine which Christ and his Apostles taught ;

for when they are ordained, they solemnly profess and promise in the presence of God, that they will instruct the people committed to their charge out of the holy Scriptures; and that they will teach nothing (as required of necessity to eternal salvation) but what they are persuaded may be concluded and proved by the said Scriptures; neither can they afterwards be admitted to preach, till they have subscribed to the Articles and Liturgy of our Church; in which, as I observed before, the doctrine of the Apostles is fully contained. And besides all this, so long as you continue in the communion of our Church, you are sure to have the Words and Sacraments administered to you, by those who have the charge of your souls committed to them, and who are therefore obliged both in duty and interest to take as much care of you as themselves, their own eternal salvation depending in a great measure upon their faithful discharge of their office towards you. To which also God hath promised the assistance of his own grace and Holy Spirit, to make it effectual to you for the great ends and purposes for which it is ordained. So that all things considered, it is morally impossible that you should be led into error, be ignorant of the truth, or miss of grace and salvation, if you hold constant communion with our Church, and sincerely believe and live accordingly as you are there taught.

But if you leave the communion or fellowship of our Church, or join yourselves to any of the sects which are risen up among us, as you will be certain to want many of the means of grace which you here enjoy, you will be uncertain whether you shall enjoy any of them, so as to attain the end for which they are appointed, even the salvation of your souls; for you will be uncertain whether they who administer them be lawfully called and sent by Christ to do it, as be sure many of them are not. You

will be uncertain whether you can join with them in prayer; for in some places they know not what they say, in other places they themselves know not what they intend to say, until they have said it, and how then can you know it? You will be uncertain whether you shall ever receive any benefit from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; for some never administer it at all, others do it either so imperfectly or irregularly, that the virtue and efficacy of it is very much impaired, if not quite destroyed. You will be uncertain, whether they preach the true doctrine of the Gospel, for they never subscribed to it, nor solemnly promised to preach that and no other; neither are they ever called to account for any thing they say or teach, be it never so false or contrary to what Christ and his Apostles taught; so that they may lead you blindfold whithersoever they please, without control: and, after all, you will be uncertain whether they seek you or yours; for they have no more obligation upon them to take care of your souls, than you have to take care of theirs: and therefore the most favourable and the most charitable construction that can be put upon the separation from our Church is, that it is leaving a certainty for an uncertainty, which no wise man would do in any thing, much less in a matter upon which his eternal happiness and salvation depends; from whence ye may easily observe, that it is your wisdom and interest, as well as duty, to be stedfast as in the doctrine, so likewise in fellowship or communion with the Church, as the first disciples were.

The next thing they continued stedfastly in was breaking of bread, or the celebration of the Lord's Supper; which is so necessary to our holding communion with the Church, that it hath got the name almost wholly appropriated to itself, being commonly called the Communion, because in it we communicate both with Christ the head, and in him with all the

sound members of his mystical body, the Church. In this therefore they continued stedfastly; that is, they never failed to receive the Lord's Supper when it was administered, which was at least every Lord's day, as is plain from Acts xx. 7. where it is said, *and upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.* From whence it appears also, that this was the great and principal end of their meeting together upon that day, even to communicate in Christ's mystical body and blood; which therefore they all did, none offering to go away without partaking of that heavenly food; and if any presumed to do it, without shewing very just cause for it, they were looked upon as heathens and publicans, and therefore cast out of the Church as not worthy to be of that holy society; neither was this severe discipline used only in the Apostles' times, but a good while after, as appears from the Canons of the primitive Church, which are so ancient that they are called Apostolical; and as you desire to be such holy persons as they were, you must be sure to make as much conscience of this holy duty as they did. Blessed be God for it, you have the same opportunity as they had, of receiving the holy Sacrament every Lord's day, and therefore be advised to follow their example, in being constantly at it, or at least as oft as possibly you can; do not let every little trifling worldly business deprive you of the greatest blessing you can have on this side heaven: you cannot but all acknowledge, that the merits of Christ's death, which are there offered to you, are infinitely beyond all the crowns and sceptres upon earth, and therefore let not any thing in this world hinder you from partaking of them: many of you, I dare say, have found by your own experience unspeakable comfort and advantage, by frequent or constant applying yourselves to your blessed Saviour in that holy Sacrament, and you

would all do so, if you would but make trial of it ; which therefore I must again advise and beseech you all to do, especially those whose souls are committed to my care. I know I must give an account of my charge one day to my great Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and therefore dare not but administer this as well as the other means that he hath appointed for your salvation, as oft as he and his Church requires it ; and in his name I beseech and admonish you to be as careful and constant in the use of it, so that I may deliver up my accounts with joy, and not with grief ; which I do not question but I shall do it, if you would but continue stedfastly as in doctrine and fellowship, so in breaking of bread, and in prayers, which is the last thing which the disciples are there said to continue stedfastly in : in prayers, that is, in the public prayers of the Church ; for what they did in private, every one by himself, could not be so well known ; neither was it so material to know that, as how they carried themselves in relation to the Church, that fellowship or communion of saints, into which they were now admitted, with whom they constantly joined in their public devotions, or such prayers as were common to them all, and so both testified their communion with them, and assisted in the worship of the most high God, and imploring his mercy for all in general, as well as every one for himself in particular, and that not only now and then, but every day, or as oft as possibly they could.

And in this also we ought to follow their good and pious example, by being stedfast and constant, not only in our private but public devotions, according to that excellent apostolical form, which our Church hath prescribed on purpose, that all the members of it, not only in this kingdom, but wheresoever they are, might join together in one heart and mind, in hearing God's holy word, in praying to him, and

praising his most glorious name ; and therefore, all that desire to live and act as becometh the real and sound members of ours, as she is the catholic and apostolic Church, should take all opportunities they can get of performing their solemn and public devotions to God, according to the said form. This being the principal means whereby to obtain the illuminations and assistances of God's Holy Spirit, to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and to persevere to the end in so doing.

And, indeed, I know nothing in the world that, by the grace and blessing of God, contributes more to our steadiness in the doctrine and communion of our Church, than frequent receiving of the holy Sacrament, and constant attendance at her public prayers, which whosoever doth heartily and sincerely as he ought, may defy the very gates of hell, for they will never be able to prevail against him ; whereas, they who make no conscience of these great duties, are in continual danger of being caught in the next trap that shall be laid for them.

Thus now you see what are the chief things in which you ought to be stedfast ; you ought to be stedfast in the Apostles' doctrine, stedfast in fellowship or communion, stedfast in breaking of bread, and stedfast in prayers ; and if you be stedfast in these things, you will be so in all things, wherein you need be stedfast, in order to your obtaining eternal bliss, and so perform the first duty enjoined in my text, *be ye stedfast*.

But the foundation of an house may be well laid, and the superstructure so carefully raised, that it may continue strong and stedfast for some time, and yet nevertheless, such storms and tempests may afterwards beat upon it, as may make it shake and move to and fro, and at last, perhaps, fall down to

the ground again ; so it is in religion : a man may be well grounded in the fundamental articles of our Christian faith, and make some considerable progress in the practice of it, so as to continue stedfastly for a while in it, and yet after all may, by the violence of temptations, or some other way, be moved and seduced from it ; and therefore, as the apostle adviseth us, not only to be stedfast, but unmoveable too, as the house which our Lord saith was *built upon a rock, and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was built upon a rock*, Matt. vii. 25. or, as the same apostle elsewhere expresseth it, *that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*, Eph. iv. 14.

This was a necessary caution in those days, and so it is in ours, there being as much sleight and cunning craftiness used now, to pervert and draw men from the Church, if not much more than ever ; and, therefore, all that mind religion in good earnest, so as to obtain the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls, had need to have a care, and not suffer themselves to be tossed to and fro with every new wind of doctrine that is raised among us, but to resolve, by the grace of God, to continue not only firm and stedfast to the Church, but immoveable, as the rock upon which it is built ; for which purpose, therefore, you must not give heed to those seducing spirits, which would draw you off from the Church, under the pretence of greater purity, stricter devotion, or higher perfection, than is commonly practised, or can be obtained in it ; for this is an old artifice, which the devil hath made use of all along, to impose upon well-meaning people : if he should appear in his own colours as the prince of darkness, all men would withstand him, or else run

from him ; and therefore he *transforms himself into an angel of light*, and under that disguise he insinuates himself into ignorant and unwary people, and *carrieth them captive* as he pleaseth ; this we may be sure of, for St. Paul saith it, 2 Cor. xi. 14. And a greater than St. Paul, Christ himself, forewarns us of the same thing, saying, *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*, Matt. vii. 15. whereby he plainly intimates, that there will always be false prophets in the Church, such as the devil sends upon his errands. but that he will always send them in sheep's clothing, like innocent and harmless lambs, whereas, in truth, they are ravening wolves, sent on purpose to devour and destroy the flock ; but our Saviour bids us to beware of them ; and so we had need be, for it was by such that all the errors, heresies, and schisms, that ever infested the Church, were first sown in it.

And, indeed, as Christ and his Apostles foretold it, so there always have been such false prophets and false teachers in the Church, who, under the colour of greater purity in doctrine and worship, hath seduced men into all manner of heresy and sin. *This know*, saith the apostle, *that in the latter days perilous times shall come ; for men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, proud—having a form or shew of godliness, but denying the power thereof ; from which turn away ; for of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts*, 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2, 5, 6. Such were they in the primitive Church, that called themselves *τοὺς καθαρούς*, *the pure*, as pretending to be more pure and holy than others ; such have been in all ages, and such there are in ours, who blame our Reformation as defective, as if the Church were not reformed, not purged enough from the errors it had before contracted ; but if such

would but lay aside all prejudices, and impartially consider the constitution of our Church as it is now reformed, they might clearly see, that as there is nothing defective, so neither is there any thing superstitious in it, but that it exactly answers the pattern of the primitive and apostolical Church itself, as near as it is possible for a national Church to do it; inso-much, that they who truly believe all that she teaches, and practise all that she requireth, may be as pure and holy as any of the first Christians, or the Apostles themselves, were, or can be, so long as they continue in the Church militant here on earth; and therefore, instead of making such frivolous and groundless exceptions against our Church, do but you sincerely believe, and live as you are there taught, and you will be as pure and holy as you need to be upon earth, and as happy as you ever can be in heaven, and will be so far from being moved by such silly arguments to leave our Church, that nothing will be able to move you to it, no, not any seeming miracles themselves, which is the highest sort of arguments that can be used in matters of religion.

For our holy religion having been confirmed by many undoubted miracles, wrought for that purpose by Christ and his Apostles, many have pretended miracles for the confirmation of their private opinions in it, howsoever erroneous and contrary to the nature of that religion which was so established; which therefore cannot possibly be real miracles, such as were at first wrought for the confirmation of our religion in general, but they must be delusions either of men or devils; for God having confirmed the Scripture, which is the standard of our religion, by miracles, nothing can be more absurd than to imagine that he should work miracles, to confirm any opinion that is contrary to the said Scriptures; and therefore the apostle saith, *though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than*

that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed, Gal. i. 8. If an angel should come down from heaven, with all his rays of glory and majesty shining about him, and so appear visible to us at this time, this would certainly be a very great miracle; yet if he should preach any other Gospel than that which we have received, or affirm any thing contrary to what is there contained, we ought not to believe him, but rather defy and curse him, as one that would lead us out of the right way to heaven.

Neither must we wonder if there have been, or really should be, strange things wrought, (which look like miracles, though they are not so,) to confirm some in a false religion, to draw others into it; for this is no more than what Christ himself hath foretold shall come to pass, saying, *There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect,* Matt. xxiv. 24. But then he adds, *Behold I have told you before,* ver. 25. and so forewarns us both to expect and slight them, and not to suffer ourselves to be moved at all by them, but still to keep close to that more sure word of prophecy which he hath delivered to us, notwithstanding all the signs and wonders that ever were, or ever can be, wrought to divert us from it: and it is a great comfort to us, that our Lord himself here plainly intimates, that whatsoever becomes of others, it is not possible for the elect, who truly love and fear God, to be deceived by them.

But the greatest danger that people are in, of being perverted or seduced into error, heresy, schism, or superstition, is from their own lusts and passions, which either corrupt or overpower their judgments, and then carry them headlong into any thing that seems to gratify their prevailing humours, especially the love of this world; the hopes of getting, or the

fear of losing something in it, commonly stifles all the sense that people have of religion, or else puts them upon acting contrary to it. This our Lord himself observes, where he tells us, that *the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and make it become unfruitful*, Matt. xiii. 22. *Demas hath forsaken me*, saith St. Paul, *having loved this present world*, 2 Tim. iv. 10. There have been many such Demas's in all ages, who out of love to this world, and preferring it before the favour of God and their own eternal happiness, have apostatized not only from the true religion to a false one, but from all religion to none at all: and verily it is no wonder; for *the love of money*, as St. Paul saith, *is the root of all evil*, 1 Tim. vi. 10. and therefore must needs be inconsistent with the love of God, the chiefest of all goods, as St. John tells us, 1 John ii. 15. Insomuch, that whosoever really loves the world, may be confident, that he doth not really love God; and he that doth not really love God, will be easily tempted to leave his service, whensoever it comes into competition with that which he prefers before it.

Hence also it comes to pass, that as some are allured from their religion by the hopes of gaining, others are affrighted out of it by the fear of losing, this world, or something in it which they love better; as their estates, their honour, their ease, their liberty, or their life. These are things that are very dear to most men; and therefore, although they be not really in any danger, yet if they do but fear it, many are ready to do any thing to prevent it, even to the parting with their religion itself, if they imagine that will do it. We have had many instances of this in all ages. God grant that we may have none in ours, at least, not among us; for which end, it will be necessary to get our minds possessed with a true fear of God above all things in the world besides,

and then we shall never be moved with the fear of any thing else, according to that remarkable promise that God hath made us, *I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*, Jer. xxxii. 40. Which we see notably exemplified in St. Paul, who, having the fear of God always before his eyes and in his heart, could never be moved from his duty unto God, by all the dangers and troubles he met with in it; *The Holy Ghost*, saith he, *witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God*, Acts xx. 23, 24. *None of these things move me!* O blessed temper of mind! This is to be unmoveable indeed, when nothing is able to move us from our duty to God, but we still continue firm and constant to that, whatsoever it costs us. So that the apostle here teacheth us, by his own example, how to do that which he requires in my text, saying, *Be ye stedfast, unmoveable.*

And then it follows, *always abounding in the work of the Lord*, which may well follow upon the former; for if we be unmoveable, we must needs be always abounding in the work of our Lord; in the work of the Lord, that is, in such works which the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the supreme Governor of the world, hath set us to do, whether they be works of piety to himself, or of justice and charity to our neighbour. But what are those works of piety which Almighty God hath commanded you to do to himself? He hath commanded you to love him with all your hearts and souls, with all your might and mind. He hath commanded you to sanctify his most holy name, and to make him your only fear and dread. He hath commanded you to put

your whole trust and confidence on him, to rejoice continually in him, and to give up yourselves wholly unto him. He hath commanded you to submit yourselves to his divine will, and to make it your constant care and study to please and honour him. He hath commanded you to read and hear his most holy word, to pray without ceasing, and in every thing to give thanks unto him. He hath commanded you frequently to receive the mystical body and blood of his dear Son, in remembrance of that death which he underwent for you. In short, he hath commanded you to worship and glorify him both in your souls and bodies, which are his.

And as to your neighbours; he hath commanded you to bear no malice or hatred against them, but to love them as you love yourselves; to honour and respect your parents, and to be loyal, obedient, and submissive to the king, and to carry yourselves lowly and reverently to all your governors both in Church and State. He hath commanded you to be meek and humble in your own eyes, faithful to your word, just and righteous in all your dealings. He hath commanded you to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to instruct the ignorant, to comfort the disconsolate, to relieve the oppressed, to help the weak, to admonish the wicked, to love your very enemies, and to be true and trusty, and kind, and good, and charitable towards all men; in a word, he hath commanded you, *that whatsoever you would that men should do to you, that you do even so to them*, Matt. vii. 12.

These are, in short, those works of the Lord, which we are here commanded not only to do, but to abound in; not as if we should or could do more than we are commanded, and so perform works of supererogation; for we are bound to do all we can, and therefore can never do more than we are bound, unless we can do more than we can, which is im-

possible; nay, we are so far from being able to do more than we are commanded, that when we have done all that is commanded us, we are still commanded to say, *We are unprofitable servants, we have done what was our duty to do*, Luke xvii. 10.

But in what respect then are we to be always abounding in the work of the Lord, both to ourselves and others? In respect of ourselves, we are to be always abounding, by growing always wiser and better, and doing more and more good if it be possible every day than other, according to that of the apostle to the Thessalonians, *Furthermore we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, so you would abound more and more*, 1 Thess. iv. 1. And therefore you must not content yourselves with the exercise only of some graces, or with the lower degrees of any, but endeavour to be always adding one grace to another, and one degree of the same grace to another, still advancing higher and higher, until you come to the highest pitch of all: this St. Peter adviseth, where he saith, *Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity*, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. But then he adds, *If these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 8. so that it seems these several graces must not only be, but abound, in us, and we must abound in them, by multiplying the acts, and so increasing the habits, of them every day more and more; and unless we thus abound in the work of the Lord, we can never continue stedfast in it; and therefore the same apostle concludes his said Epistle, saying to all Christians, as I now say to you, *Ye therefore,*

beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever, 2 Pet. iii. 17, 18. Which is the same in effect with that in my text; *Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.*

But we must abound, not only in respect of ourselves, but of others too, so as to strive all we can to excel one another in virtue and goodness, to be strong in faith, rich in good works, eminent in meekness, in humility, in patience, in charity, and in every thing that is pleasing and acceptable to God; more constant in our devotions, more frequent at the communion, more reverent in the worship, more fervent in the service, more zealous for the glory of God, more sober in ourselves, more liberal to the poor, more just to all men, than others commonly are; *that our light may so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven,* Matt. v. 16. or, as the apostle words it, *that we may shine as lights in the world,* Phil. ii. 15. That all who are about us may be enlightened, inflamed, and excited by our example to serve the same Master, and to prosecute the same designs that we do in the world; even to glorify him that sent us hither. This is the best way to convince gainsayers of the excellency of our religion, when they shall see us who profess it excel others in piety and virtue. All other arguments can never prevail upon them so much as this one. But this would be of itself sufficient to demonstrate, that our religion is indeed the best religion professed in the world, when they who profess it are the best men in the world, not only *stedfast and unmoveable, but always abounding in the work of our Lord.*

And verily you have all the reason and encourage-

ment imaginable to be so, forasmuch as you know (as the apostle here adds) that *your labour is not in vain in the Lord*, that is, whatsoever pains you are at, whatsoever care you take, whatsoever you do or suffer for the Lord, you may be confident it will be worth your while. It will not be in vain or to no purpose; for the Lord you serve is so good a Master, that he will be sure to reward and recompense you for all the service you ever did him: not as if you could merit or deserve any thing from him, by doing that which he himself enables you to do for him, but because he is graciously pleased to give eternal life to all who sincerely endeavour to serve him, not for their own, but for Christ Jesus' sake. And that is the reason why the apostle saith, that *your labour is not in vain in the Lord*, that is, in the Lord Christ; in whom, and in whom alone, God is pleased both to accept of what you do in this world, and to reward you for it in the next; where you shall live with him, and enjoy his love and favour, and all the good things you can desire for ever; where your minds shall be so perfectly enlightened, that you shall see him face to face, and your wills so perfectly sanctified, that all your inclinations shall rest in him, as their only centre, where you shall always live in perfect peace with him, yourselves, and one another; where you shall never know what care, or fear, or trouble mean, but shall live in perfect ease and quiet, in perfect joy and happiness, and in the highest honour and glory that creatures are capable of; where ye will not only keep company with the holy angels, but be made equal to them, and fellow-commoners with them in the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore: where your bodies also shall be incorruptible and immortal, sound and healthful, quick and nimble, brisk and lively, and every way like to the glorious body of Christ himself. In short, where you shall have infinitely more glory, comfort, and

felicity than you could ever deserve, yea, infinitely more than you can as yet imagine or desire.

And although God will confer all this upon you, only out of his infinite mercy in Jesus Christ, yet the more you now abound in serving him, the more he will then abound in his goodness and mercy to you. And hence it is, that as there are degrees of misery and torment among the damned in hell, so there will be degrees of glory and happiness among the saints in heaven; *for as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also, saith the apostle, is the resurrection of the dead, 1 Cor. xv. 42.* All shall shine as stars, but some shall be of one, others of another, magnitude. All shall have as much joy and bliss as they are capable of, but some shall be capable of more than others, even they who have had more love and zeal for God, and have done and suffered more for him. Their capacities will be more enlarged, and how large soever they are, they will be all filled; all shall be then happy, who are now sincerely holy; but the more holy you now are, the more happy you shall then be; the more care and pains you take here, the more shall be your joy and glory hereafter. For the more you love and honour God upon earth, the more shall you be beloved and honoured by him for evermore in heaven. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, by ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

SERMON VII.

ADMISSION INTO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, BY BAPTISM,
NECESSARY TO SALVATION.

John iii. 5.

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

OF all the sorts of creatures we know upon the face of the earth, there are none but what observe the laws, and answer the end, of their creation, except mankind: but mankind are all fallen from their first estate, they are all gone out of the way they were made to walk in, and act quite contrary to what they were at first designed to do; and therefore might justly have been all reserved, together with the fallen angels, *in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.* But the Almighty Creator of all things, for the manifestation of his infinite mercy and truth, was graciously pleased to find out a way, whereby mankind might be restored to their first estate, and be made as happy again, as if they had never fallen from it: and that was by his only-begotten Son, who, for that purpose, being in the form of God, of one substance with the Father, was pleased to take upon him the

whole nature of man, uniting it to his own divine Person, and then to offer it up as a sacrifice for the sins and offences of all mankind, *by being obedient in it unto death, even the death of the cross*: by which means he became the *Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe*. So that all men are capable of being saved by him, and they who believe shall most certainly be so.

For he, by virtue of what he did and suffered in their nature, and being himself both God and man, is the Mediator between God and them, always appearing in the presence of God, and there making intercession for them; that God would be graciously pleased to accept of his death instead of theirs, and for his sake give them all things necessary both for life and godliness; that they may become such as may be accepted of in him as righteous, and accordingly inherit eternal life. By means of this mediation or intercession, which *his only-begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased*, is continually making in heaven for them, the almighty Creator and Governor of the world is so far reconciled to them, that he looks upon them as his own children, takes them into his own particular care, *works in them both to will and to do* what he would have them, prevents, directs, and assists them by his Holy Spirit in what they do, and makes all things work together for their good; that they may serve him faithfully while they are upon earth, and be duly qualified to live with him and his holy angels in heaven: and then he takes them to himself, that they may enjoy him there, and praise him for ever, for all the blessings and favours which they have received through his Son Jesus Christ; and above all, for him, through whom they have received them.

Now seeing all his hopes of heaven, and of all things relating to our coming thither, are grounded wholly upon what our blessed Saviour is there doing

for us; we who hope to obtain that glorious kingdom, through his merits and mediation for us, must take special care to observe and do whatsoever he requires in order thereunto: and particularly what he saith in the words which I have now read. For here we see, that notwithstanding all that he suffered upon earth, and is now doing in heaven for mankind, yet he positively asserts, *that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* He doth not only say, that such a one shall not, but that he cannot, enter into the kingdom of God; that none may ever expect it, but that all may look upon it as a thing impossible.

But the better to clear the way for our finding out the true sense and meaning of the words, it will be necessary to look back a little, and see how they come in. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, hearing of the miracles which our Saviour did, could not but from thence conclude, that he was *a teacher come from God*; and therefore had a great mind to learn something of him: for which purpose he came to him, but, for fear of offending his brethren the Pharisees, he came by night. And while they were discoursing together, our Saviour took occasion to acquaint him, *that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,* ver. 3. Nicodemus, not rightly understanding his meaning, wondered at the expression, and said, *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?* ver. 4. Our Lord, not regarding the absurdity of such a question, but pitying the man's weakness, expressed his meaning in fuller and plainer terms, saying, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* He useth the same asseveration that he did before, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee*; that Nicodemus might take the more notice of it, and believe

it upon his word, whom he had before acknowledged to be *a teacher come from God*. And although these words were spoken only to Nicodemus, they are left upon record, for the benefit of all mankind; that all who expect the kingdom of God by Jesus Christ, may know from his own mouth, that none can enter into that kingdom, *except they be born of water and of the Spirit*.

That by *the kingdom of God*, or, as it is elsewhere called, *the kingdom of heaven*, in holy Scripture, is commonly meant that high and holy place, where the saints and servants of God enjoy perpetual rest and felicity, none ever doubted; and therefore I need not stand to prove it, but shall only observe, that this expression is used also in a larger sense, not only for the place itself, but likewise for the way that leads to it, that also being wholly under the rule and governance of Almighty God. And seeing he always *added to the Church those who shall be saved*, or inherit eternal life and glory in heaven, Acts ii. 47. therefore the Church militant upon earth, as well as that which is triumphant in heaven, is called also, *the kingdom of God*: and not only that part of it which is invisible, as being governed by the secret influences of God's special grace and Holy Spirit; but also the visible, consisting of all that profess the true faith and fear of God, although many of them do no more than only profess it. And therefore our Saviour himself compares *the kingdom of heaven to a field, wherein tares are sown as well as wheat*, Matt. xiii. 24, 25. and to *a net, that, being cast into the sea, gathereth of every kind of fish, both good and bad*, ver. 47. But howsoever, as once the whole nation of the Jews, both good and bad, were the people of God, and had him in a peculiar manner for their King: so now the whole Church of Christ, or the congregation of faithful people all the world over, is properly the kingdom of God, where, in the

administration of his Word and Sacraments, he exerciseth his power in the hearts of men, enlightening, renewing, and sanctifying them, so as to fit them to live with him in the other world; and then he translates them into his kingdom in heaven, or rather to that part of his kingdom that is there settled: for, properly speaking, it is one and the same kingdom, in different places, and under different circumstances; here it is militant, there triumphant; here it consisteth of sinners as well as saints, there they are all saints; here the saints themselves have many imperfections in them, there they are all perfect. But though many may be admitted into the kingdom of God upon earth, and yet, through their own default, may not get to that which is in heaven; yet none can get to that which is in heaven, but only such as are first admitted into the kingdom of God upon earth.

Now he who purchased this kingdom for mankind, and is himself the head of it, here tells us, *that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into it.* Immediately before he had said, *that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;* to shew the necessity of a man's being regenerated, and made another kind of creature than he was at first born, before he can be capable of seeing or enjoying the privileges and delights of that kingdom. But here, speaking of being *born of water and the Spirit*, he alters the phrase, and saith, without that a man *cannot enter into it;* he cannot so much as be admitted into it, or made a member of that kingdom, so as to have any right or title to the delights and privileges of it. We have the word of Christ himself for it, and therefore may well believe it: for it is he who rules and governs this kingdom; it is his own, he takes in and keeps out whom he pleaseth, and how he pleaseth to do it. And therefore it is not for us to argue the case with him, why he hath made this or that way for our entrance into his king-

dom. We must give him thanks that he hath made any way at all for it, and take care to go in that way which he hath made, as ever we desire to enter in at all; and that is, by being *born of water and of the Spirit*; for he himself here saith, *that except a man be so, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

But what he means by being *born of water and of the Spirit*, is now made a question: I say now; for it was never made so till of late years: for many ages together none ever doubted of it, but the whole Christian world took it for granted, that our Saviour, by these words, meant only, that except a man be baptized according to his institution, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; this being the most plain and obvious sense of the words, forasmuch as there is no other way of being born again of water as well as of the Spirit, but only in the Sacrament of Baptism.

To understand what he means by being born again, we must call to mind what he saith in another place, *My kingdom is not of this world*, John xviii. 36. though it is in this world, it is not of it; it is not a secular or earthly kingdom, but a kingdom purely spiritual and heavenly: *it is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. xiv. 17. And therefore when a man is born into this world, he is not thereby qualified for the kingdom of God, nor hath any right or title to it, no more than as if he had not been born at all; but before he enter into that, he must be born again, he must undergo another kind of birth than he had before: he was before born of the flesh, he must now be born of the Spirit; otherwise he cannot be capable of entering into such a kingdom as is altogether spiritual. Thus our Lord himself explains his own meaning in my text, by adding immediately in the next words, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*, ver. 6. As if he had

said, he that is born, as all men are at first, only of the flesh, such a one is altogether carnal and sensual; and so can be affected with nothing but the sensible objects of this world: but he that is born of the Spirit of God, thereby becomes a spiritual creature, and so is capable of those spiritual things of which the kingdom of God consisteth, *even of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* And he whose mind is changed, and turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, is truly said to be born again, because he is quickened with another kind of life than he had before; and to be born of the Spirit of God, because it is by it that this new and spiritual life is wrought in him. So that he is now born into another world, even into the kingdom of God, where he hath God himself, of whom he is born, for his Father; and the kingdom of God for his portion and inheritance. And therefore it is, that except a man be thus born of the Spirit, it is impossible he should enter into the kingdom of God; seeing he can enter into it no other way, than by being born of the Spirit.

But that we may be thus born of the Spirit, we must be born also of water, which our Saviour here puts in the first place. Not as if there was any such virtue in water, whereby it could regenerate us; but because this is the rite or ordinance appointed by Christ, wherein to regenerate us by his Holy Spirit; our regeneration is wholly the act of the Spirit of Christ. But there must be something done on our parts in order to it; and something that is instituted and ordained by Christ himself, which in the Old Testament was circumcision, in the New, baptism, or washing with water; the easiest that could be invented, and the most proper to signify his cleansing and regenerating us by his Holy Spirit. And seeing this is instituted by Christ himself, as we cannot be born of water without the Spirit, so neither can we,

in an ordinary way, be born of the Spirit without water, used or applied in obedience and conformity to his institution; Christ hath joined them together, and it is not in our power to part them: he that would be born of the Spirit, must be born of water too.

This is that which the apostle also teacheth us, where he saith, that God our Saviour, according to his mercy, saves us by *the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, Tit. iii. 5. By the washing with water, as the sign of our regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, as the thing signified, which is the same in effect with our being born of *water and of the Spirit*, and a clear explication of it.

But how we come to be born of water and of the Spirit together in the Sacrament of Baptism, appears most clearly from the commission which our Lord gave for the administration of it, saying to his Apostles, *Go ye therefore, and make all nations disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, Matt. xxviii. 19. So the words in the original plainly signify, and ought to be translated. I know that our own, and other European translations, render the words, *Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them*, &c. which gave the first occasion to the sect of the Anabaptists: for ignorant people, imagining that our Saviour here commanded that all nations should be first taught, and then baptized, from thence concluded, that none ought to be baptized, till they are first taught the principles of the Christian religion; but the original word *μαθητεύσατε* will bear no such sense; for it never signifies to teach, but only to be, or to make, disciples, as Matt. xxvii. 57. xiii. 52. Acts xiv. 21. And so it is constantly translated in all the oriental versions; and therefore we never heard of any Anabaptists in the Eastern Churches: and there would

have been none among us, if people did but rightly understand the Scriptures, and particularly these words of our Saviour; in which he is so far from requiring it as necessary, that people should be taught before they are baptized, that he requires that to be done afterwards, saying in the words following, *Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*, ver. 20.

But whosoever understands and consults the original words in this text, will plainly see, that our Saviour's meaning is, that not only Jews, but all nations, should be made his disciples, by being *baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*: and, by consequence, that this is the way whereby to be *born of water, and of the Spirit*, as he speaks in my text. For as baptizing necessarily implies the use of water, so our being made thereby disciples of Christ, as necessarily implies our partaking of his Spirit: for all that are baptized, and so made the disciples of Christ, are thereby made the members of his body; and are therefore said to be *baptized into Christ*, Rom. vi. 3. Gal. iii. 27. But they who are in Christ, members of his body, must needs partake of the Spirit that is in him their head. Neither doth the Spirit of Christ only follow upon, but certainly accompanies, the Sacrament of Baptism, when duly administered according to his institution. For, as St. Paul saith, *by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body*, 1 Cor. xii. 13. So that in the very act of baptism, the Spirit unites us unto Christ, and makes us members of his body; and if of his body, then of his church and kingdom, that being all his body. And therefore all who are rightly baptized with water, being at the same time baptized also with the Holy Ghost, and so born both of water and the Spirit, they are, *ipso facto*, admitted into the kingdom of God, established upon earth; and if it be not their

own fault, will as certainly attain to that which is in heaven.

Now from these words of our blessed Saviour, thus briefly explained from what he himself and his Apostles have taught us in other places of the holy Scripture, many inferences may be raised, which are of great use, and much to be observed, especially in our days, wherein ignorant people are seduced by the devil and his agents into so many erroneous and dangerous opinions about the holy Sacrament of Baptism. I shall instance only in those which are most proper to convince such of their error, and confirm others in the truth. From hence, therefore, we may first observe, how necessary baptism is to our entrance into the kingdom of heaven, seeing he, by whom alone it is possible for any man to enter in, hath so positively affirmed, that *none can enter in, except they be baptized, or born of water and the Spirit*: which St. Peter was so sensible of, that when some asked him, and the rest of the Apostles, *what they should do to be saved?* he answered roundly, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*, Acts ii. 38. Whereby he doth not only assure them in the name of God, that upon their being baptized, they should infallibly receive the Holy Ghost to sanctify and regenerate them; but this is the first and great thing which he adviseth every one to, as without which, not any one of them could ever enter into the kingdom of God, and be saved.

And the same apostle, when upon his first preaching unto the Gentiles, the Holy Ghost fell on them, so that they immediately spake with tongues, although some might have thought there had been no need of baptizing them who had already received the Holy Ghost; yet he considering that this gift of the Holy Ghost was only to enable them to speak with

tongues, not to regenerate them, he inferred from thence, that they ought the rather to be baptized: *Can any man, saith he, forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?* Acts x. 47. And therefore *commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord*, ver. 48. Which he would never have done, if it was not necessary for them to be born of water and of the Spirit. And though our Lord himself appeared to Saul, as he was going to Damascus, and called him with his own mouth, yet he also must be baptized, before he could be filled with the Holy Ghost, and so made a disciple, much less an apostle, to him who had called him, Acts ix. 17, 18. xxii. 16.

There are many such places in holy Scripture, which shew the great necessity of baptism, where it may be had; but I shall add only these remarkable words, which our Saviour spake to his Apostles after his resurrection: *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned*, Mark xvi. 16. Where we see, that he, by whom alone it is possible for any man to be saved, makes baptism necessary to salvation as well as faith: he saith indeed, *He that believeth not shall be damned*: but he doth not say, *He that believeth shall be saved*, whether he be baptized or no; *but he that believeth and is baptized*: as all to be sure are, or at least desire to be, who truly believe in him. For all who truly believe in Christ for their salvation, must believe what he hath said to be true, and accordingly do whatsoever he requires in order to it. But he requires all that would be saved by him to be first baptized into him; and as plainly asserts in my text, that *except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*: and therefore it is in vain to expect it.

This I would desire all here present to take special notice of, that you may not be deceived by a sort of

people risen up among us, who being led, as they pretend, by a light within them, are fallen into such horrid darkness, and damnable heresies, that they have quite laid aside the Sacrament of Baptism, and affirm, in flat contradiction to our Saviour's words, that they may be saved without it. I pray God to open their eyes, that they may not go blindfold into eternal damnation. And I advise you all, as you desire not to apostatize from the Christian religion, and as you tender your eternal salvation, take heed that you be never seduced by them, under any pretence whatsoever; but rather, if you be acquainted with any of them, do what you can to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God again; that they may receive forgiveness of their sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith in him, who said, *Except a man be born of water, &c.*

Not only a man, in contradiction to a child, or a woman, but, as it is in the original, Ἐὰν μὴ τις, except any one, any human creature, whatsoever, man, woman, or child, *except he be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* So that our Lord is so far from excluding children from baptism, that he plainly includes them; speaking in such general terms, on purpose that we may know, that no sort of people, old or young, can ever be saved without it. And so he doth too, where he commands, as was observed before, that *all nations should be made disciples, by being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:* for, under all nations, children must needs be comprehended, which make a great, if not the greatest, part of all nations. And although these general expressions be sufficient to demonstrate the necessity of infant baptism, yet foreseeing that ignorant and unlearned people would be apt to wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, he elsewhere commands

children particularly to be brought unto him, saying, *Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God*, Mark x. 14. But if the kingdom of God consist of children, as well as other people, they must of necessity be baptized, or born of water and the Spirit; for otherwise he himself saith, *they cannot enter into the kingdom*.

Hence it is, that we find the Apostles often baptizing whole families, children, if any, as well as others: and the whole catholic Church, in all places and ages ever since, hath constantly admitted the children of believing parents into the Church, by baptizing them according to the institution and command of our Saviour; none ever making any question of it, but all Christians, all the world over, taking it for granted, that it ought to be done, till of late years.

But of late years, there is a sect sprung up among us, who, contrary to Christ's command, forbid little children to be brought unto him by baptism, the only way whereby it is possible for them to come to him; and so make the children of Christian parents in a worse condition than the Jewish were; and the Law more favourable than the Gospel. How they will answer it at the last day, I know not: but I know, that it greatly behoves all that have any care of their own, or their children's good, to take heed of this sort of people, *who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts*, 2 Tim. iii. 7. *And by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple*, Rom. xvi. 18. But they must be very simple indeed, who suffer themselves to be deceived by them, who so directly contradict our Saviour's words, and deny that to children, without which, he himself hath said, *they cannot enter into the kingdom of God*.

It is to be farther observed, that our Lord here saith, *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit:*

of water in general, without specifying how much or how little, or how to be applied, whether by dipping, or washing, or sprinkling; having made it so necessary, he hath made it likewise as easy as possible. He only requires water, the most common thing that is, to be used and applied with such a form of words as he hath prescribed, without determining the quantity, or any other circumstances, which might sometimes make it difficult or dangerous, or perhaps impracticable. And therefore, although in hot countries the persons baptized were usually dipped in water, or washed all over, yet the washing any one part, or sprinkling water upon them, hath the same effect: it is not the quantity of the water, but the institution of Christ, to which the promise of being born again is annexed. One drop of water serves to this purpose as well as a river; and one part of the body, in this case, is as much as the whole: as we may learn from our Lord and Master himself.

For when he, to shew the necessity of our being washed by him, said to St. Peter, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me*; St. Peter said unto him, *Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head*. Jesus said unto him, *He that is washed, needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit*, John xiii. 10. Whereby he hath taught us, that if any one part, as the face, the hands, the feet, have water applied to it, according to his prescription, and so is washed by him, the whole is thereby cleansed: for it is not the water that cleanseth, but the blood of Christ signified by the water, applied according to his institution, which is therefore called *the blood of sprinkling*, Heb. xii. 24. because it is then sprinkled upon us. St. Peter also speaks of *the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. i. 2. which is most plainly signified, by sprinkling the water upon the person baptized, according to the custom that hath prevailed

in all, except in very hot countries. Which seems also to be intimated by God himself, in the prophet Ezekiel, where, speaking of the blessed times under the Gospel, he saith, *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you,* Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. For this is the same, in effect, with our being born of water and the Spirit, as our Saviour here expresseth it.

But after all we must observe, that although our blessed Saviour here saith, that *except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*; yet he doth not say, that every one that is so born, shall inherit eternal life. It is true, all that are baptized, or born of water and the Spirit, are thereby admitted into the church or kingdom of God upon earth; but except they submit to the government, and obey the laws established in it, they forfeit all their right and title to the kingdom of heaven. They are brought into a state of salvation, but unless they continue in it, and live accordingly, they cannot be saved. For, as St. Peter observeth, *baptism now saves us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,* 1 Pet. iii. 21. Baptism puts us into the way to heaven, but unless we walk in that way, we can never come thither. When we were baptized, we were born of water and the Spirit, so as to have the seed of grace sown in our hearts, sufficient to enable us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, to overcome temptations, to believe aright in God our Saviour, and to obey and serve him faithfully all the days of our life. And we then promised to do so: for being asked, whether we would do so or no, we answered, by ourselves or sureties, that we would. And if we afterwards live in good conscience towards God, answerably to the profession and promise that we

then made to him, we shall certainly be saved through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the intercession that he makes at the right hand of God for us. But if we neglect to perform what he then promised, and so do not answer the end of our baptism, by keeping our consciences void of offence towards God and men, we lose all the benefit of it, and shall as certainly perish, as if we had never been baptized.

Wherefore, brethren, we had all need look about us: I hope there are none here present, but who are baptized, and so born of water and the Spirit: if there be any that are not, I must advise them to take care of themselves. Do not mind what ignorant or designing people tell you, but consider what Christ, your only Saviour, hath told you: he hath told you, that *except ye be born of water and of the Spirit, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* And if ye care not whether ye enter into the kingdom of God or not, ye may still continue as ye are, *without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world,* Eph. ii. 12. as mere heathens as any in the Indies, and in a worse condition than they: forasmuch as ye live in a place where ye may be made Christians if ye will; and if ye will not, it will be more tolerable for them, than for you, at the last day. But if ye desire to be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household and kingdom of God, put off your baptism no longer. It was your parents' fault that you were not baptized before; it is your own if ye be not baptized now: and therefore be advised to fit yourselves for it, as soon as possible; lest as ye have hitherto lived, so ye die too without it, and so be damned for ever.

And as for you who are already baptized, and born of water and of the Spirit, remember the promise which ye then made, and perform it. Re-

member how ye then renounced the devil, the world, and the flesh; and let them not therefore have dominion over you: remember the articles of faith which you then professed to believe, and hold fast your profession without wavering: remember the holy commandments which you then promised to keep, and do all you can to walk constantly in all of them: remember also the great privileges which God Almighty then conferred upon you, in case you keep your word with him. You were then made the members of Christ, and so interested in all the merits of his death and passion: you were then taken out of the world, and translated into the Church of Christ, to be instructed, governed, assisted, protected, sanctified, justified, and saved by him: you were then made the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ: and therefore heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life; which you cannot miss of, unless you provoke your heavenly Father to disinherit you, by the neglect of your duty to him, and by the breach of the promise which you made, when you were admitted into this happy state, and by not repenting of it while ye may.

Wherefore, if ye have broke the promise which ye made when ye were baptized, as I fear ye all have, repent immediately, and set yourselves in good earnest for the future, upon keeping it in all respects. Ye were then born of the Spirit, and so have it always ready to assist you. By his assistance, therefore, live now as becomes the children of God, and the heirs of heaven: avoid whatsoever ye know to be offensive to your heavenly Father, and do all ye can to please him. Live above this world, and let your conversation be where your inheritance lies. Strive all ye can to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; that ye

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may shine as lights in the world, and so be *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*; where ye will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of your Father. *Which God grant we may all do, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

SERMON VIII.

THE WORTHY COMMUNICANT.

1 Cor. xi. 29.

Ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων ἀναξίως, κρίμα ἑαυτῷ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει, μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Κυρίου.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

THERE being no name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved, but only the name of Christ; and there being no way to be saved by him neither, without believing on him; hence man was no sooner fallen, but presently Christ was promised, and so made the object of his faith. Which promise being made to Adam, and so to man in general, all mankind were equally obliged and concerned both firmly to believe it, and also to express and exercise this their faith in their promised Saviour, by their frequent sacrificing of beasts to God, as types of that grand sacrifice which he was to offer for them. But, some time after, God having, out of all the kindreds of the earth, pitched upon Abraham for the person, out of whose loins this his Son our Saviour should be born; he for that reason

chose Abraham's posterity to be his own peculiar people, as being more nearly related to him in blood; to whom therefore he renewed and explained the foresaid promise more fully and clearly than to the rest of mankind. And to put them constantly in mind of what his Son was to suffer for them, and so to strengthen and confirm their faith in his blood, he required them to slay and sacrifice some kind of beasts or other every day unto him, as types and representatives of it. And having in a wonderful manner delivered them from the Egyptian bondage, wherein they had been detained many years, and thereby signified to them that eternal redemption which he designed for them, he enjoined them to commemorate the said deliverance once every year, by slaying, roasting, and eating a lamb in every family; which was so ordered, that almost every circumstance in it represented something or other of what Christ was to suffer afterwards, as well as what God had before done for them: yea, the very manner of his death was plainly typified by it; for the Jews themselves acknowledge, that the lamb was always roasted in such a posture, as to represent a person hanging upon a cross.

Now when the fulness of time was come, God, according to his promise, sent his Son into the world; who having for several years together conversed with mankind in their own nature, and taught them whatsoever was necessary for them to believe or do, in order to their obtaining eternal salvation by him; and being now ready to offer up himself as *a propitiation for the sins of the whole world*, the same night wherein he was betrayed in order thereunto, he, according to custom, eat the passover, or lamb before spoken of, with his disciples: and as they were eating, *he took bread, and, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you: this do in*

remembrance of me. As likewise after supper he took the cup, and, when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, *Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

These words our Saviour spake in the Syriac tongue, wherein there is no word that signifies *to signify*; but whensoever they would say, this signifies such a thing, they always used to say, *this is such a thing.* And therefore the Apostles, to whom these words were spoken, could not but understand them according to the common way of speaking then in use among them; and so apprehend our Saviour's meaning to be, as if he should have said, The paschal lamb, which we are now eating, hath hitherto, as ye know, typified the promised Messiah, *the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.* I am that Messiah or Christ, that Lamb of God, who am now ready to offer up myself for the sins of the world: and therefore this and all other sacrifices, being only types of mine, are now to cease in course. But that you, as well as your forefathers, may always have something to put you in mind of me, and of my death, which I am to suffer for you, behold, I now institute this Sacrament in lieu of all other bloody sacrifices whatsoever: so that as this paschal lamb which we are now eating (and so all other bloody sacrifices) hath hitherto represented my death and passion to you; so from this time forward that which I have now done shall do it. For bread thus taken, and blessed, and broken, and distributed, as ye see me do it, is now, and ever hereafter shall be, my body, in the same sense as this paschal lamb hath hitherto been my body. And so also for the cup: wine thus blessed, as you have seen me do it, is my blood, and shall be so to the end of the world, as

really as the blood of the paschal lamb, or other sacrifices, hath been so till this time.

This seems to me so plainly to be the proper and natural meaning of our blessed Saviour in those words, that as I do not question but the Apostles understood them in this sense, so I cannot but wonder how it came into men's minds at first to put any other meaning upon them; especially that the papists should wrest them to such a sense, or rather nonsense, as to ground their absurd doctrine of transubstantiation upon them; a doctrine never heard of, much less believed, in the primitive times.

But not to insist upon that now. It is further to be observed in these words, that although our Lord doth expressly command his disciples to do this in remembrance of him, yet he doth not prescribe them any set times wherein to do it, nor acquaint them how oft he would have it done; only in the institution of the cup he intimates, that he would have them do it often, saying, *Do this, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.* And as the Jews, as oft as they offered any bloody sacrifices, foreshewed the Lord's death until his first coming; so Christians, as the apostle tells us, *as oft as they eat this bread, and drink this cup, they shew forth the Lord's death until his coming again,* 1 Cor. xi. 26. But still there is no precise time or times prescribed for doing it by Christ or his Apostles: neither was it proper or convenient there should be. For if there had, there would have been an indispensable necessity laid upon all Christians to do it at all such times, whereas some Christians may at some times be in such places, and under such circumstances, that it may be morally impossible for them to do it.

But how then shall we know how often we are bound to receive this holy Sacrament? There are two ways to know it: from the practice of the

holy Apostles and primitive Christians; and then from the reason of the thing, and the end of the institution.

First, we find the holy Apostles, who perfectly understood our Lord's mind, administering and receiving this holy Sacrament whensoever they met together upon a religious account; yea, so as that it seems to have been the principal end of their meeting, especially upon the Lord's day: for it is written, that *upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow, Acts xx. 7.* From whence we may observe, that they received this Sacrament at least every first day of the week, which is the Lord's day; and that the main end of their meeting upon that day was not to hear sermons, but to break bread; only the Apostle, being to depart on the morrow, took that occasion of preaching to them. And the same custom obtained, not only in the Apostles' times, but for many ages after; so that the primitive Christians looked upon this Sacrament as the chief part of their public devotions; insomuch that they never held any religious assemblies, without the celebration of it; and if any one went away without receiving it, he was censured by the Church for it. Which plainly shews, that the apostolical and primitive Church understood our Lord's words in the institution of this Sacrament so, as that they looked upon themselves as obliged to do this in remembrance of him, as oft as they met together to worship and serve God.

And verily he that considers the end of the institution, will find reason enough why they did, and we ought to, receive this Sacrament as oft as possibly we can: for, seeing it was ordained in remembrance of Christ, and seeing we cannot possibly remember him too often who laid down his life for us, it must needs be our duty to do it as oft as we can, especially con-

sidering that the oftener we remember him, the better we shall believe in him. For by frequent receiving of his most blessed body and blood, that faith whereby we do it being frequently exercised, is thereby more and more confirmed, and by consequence all other graces and virtues whatsoever being derived by faith from him, are thereby made more strong and vigorous in us. And therefore all that seriously mind the concerns of another life, cannot but look upon it as their interest as well as duty, to take all opportunities they can of receiving this holy Sacrament, and to bless God for them. Be sure he that came into the world on purpose to save us, would never have instituted it, but that he knew how necessary it was, and how much it would conduce to our salvation by him.

From hence, therefore, we may see what great reason our Church had to appoint the Communion-service to be used every Lord's-day and Holy-day in the year, that all her members, who desire it, might at all such times have an opportunity to receive this holy Sacrament. And so they generally did for some time after the Reformation. But now, if people do but receive it thrice a year, and so avoid the penalty of the law, they think they do a great matter: as if we had no other obligations upon us to do it, but only from the laws of the land; which is a sad instance of the great degeneracy of the age we live in, and how far we are fallen from the zeal and piety both of the primitive Christians, and our first reformers.

It is not my design at this time to search into the reasons why this great duty is so commonly neglected among us. But it may not be amiss to observe, that one great argument which the devil and his agents make use of to deter men from it, is taken from these words which I have now read, falsely understood, or at least not rightly considered. For seeing

the apostle here saith, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself,* according to our translation, people have been made to believe, that, if they be not worthy to receive the Sacrament, and yet venture to do it, they are certainly damned. But, that you may see how great and dangerous a mistake this is, I desire you to consider,

First, that this cannot possibly be the meaning of the words. For if so, no man ever did or can receive the Sacrament, but he must be damned; forasmuch as no man ever yet was, or is, or will be, or can be, worthy of so great a blessing. And certainly our Saviour would never command us to do that which we cannot do without being damned.

Moreover, the word which the apostle here useth, *κρίμα*, doth not properly signify damnation, as it is translated in the text, but only judgment, as it is in the margin of your Bibles. And therefore the most that can be deduced from it is, that *they who eat and drink unworthily*, are obnoxious to the judgment of God for so doing, as all they are, who either pray, or hear, or do any other duty otherwise than they ought to do it. And what kind of judgment the apostle here means, he himself plainly declareth in the words following my text, saying, *for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep;* which are all temporal judgments, which God is often pleased to inflict for other sins as well as this; and are so far from eternal damnation, that they often prove the occasion of preventing it.

But that which is most of all to be considered, is what the apostle means by *eating and drinking unworthily*. For which we may observe, first, that he doth not say, he that being unworthy *eateth and drinketh*, but he that doth it unworthily, and so doth not speak much of the qualifications of the person that doth it, as of his manner of doing it. And what

he means by *eating and drinking unworthily*, or after an unworthy manner, we may easily and fully understand both from the context, and the text itself.

For first, as to the context, the apostle is here speaking of the great disorders which he had heard of among the Corinthians in their Christian assemblies; that there were divisions among them, even at those sacred times: and that though they intended to receive the Sacrament, they did not really do it. *When ye come together, therefore, saith he, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper,* ver. 20. where he plainly intimates what I observed before, that their main design of coming together was to eat the Lord's Supper; but as they managed the business, they did not do it. *For, saith he, in eating, every one taketh before the other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken: what, have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not?* ver. 21, 22. From whence it is plain, that the sin which he here reproveth in the Corinthians was, that they ate the Lord's Supper as if it had been common food, without expressing any respect or reverence to Christ's mystical body and blood; and as plain, that this is that which he here calls *eating and drinking unworthily*. They carried themselves at the Lord's table, as if they had been at their own. The great and rich men ate and drank too much; the poor had nothing to eat and drink: whence the apostle saith, *these were hungry, and the other drunk*. And they who eat this bread, and drink this cup, after this unworthy manner, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, as the apostle tells us, ver. 27. that is, they violate and profane Christ's mystical body and blood, and so are guilty, in a manner, of the same sin as the Jews were in deriding and crucifying of him: which also shews what kind of unworthy receiving the apostle here

speaks of, even such whereby they trampled upon the Son of God, and accounted the blood of the covenant an unholy or profane thing, and behaved themselves accordingly in the receiving of it.

That this is the true sense of receiving unworthily, appears yet more plainly from the text itself. For here the apostle saith, *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation, or judgment, to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.* Which last words fully explain the former; for by them the apostle shews wherefore they who eat and drink unworthily, eat and drink damnation to themselves, even because they do not discern the Lord's body; that is, they do not discern or discriminate Christ's body from common food, by taking it (*veneratione singulariter debita*) with that veneration which is in a peculiar manner due to it, as St. Augustine explains the words, *Epist. 118. ad Januar.* Neither indeed can they admit of any other exposition. And therefore to receive unworthily in the apostle's sense, is plainly nothing else but to receive irreverently and profanely, in a manner unbecoming Christ's body and blood, unworthy of so great a mystery as that is. As for people to deport themselves no otherwise at the Lord's Supper, than they do when they dine or sup at home, making no difference or discrimination betwixt that and their ordinary meals; but eating this bread, and drinking this cup, as if it was not Christ's body and blood, but common meat and drink; expressing no more regard or reverence towards it, than they do to bread or wine at their own tables: this, which is but too common among some people, is that which the apostle here calls *eating and drinking unworthily*; and they who do so, instead of Christ's body and blood, which they do not discern, eat and drink the damnation or judgment to themselves.

Having thus discovered what it is to receive the

Sacrament of the Lord's Supper unworthily, we may easily see what is required to the worthy receiving of it. But howsoever, it being a matter of so great importance, I shall endeavour to explain it more fully to you. For which purpose we must know, that although this worthy receiving, as it is opposed to the unworthy before spoken of, consists properly in the carrying and demeaning ourselves, both in our souls and bodies, at the holy Sacrament, in a manner worthy and suitable to that body and blood which we there receive; yet that we may do so, it is necessary that our minds be first rightly disposed and prepared for it. In order whereunto the apostle lays down this general rule, *but let a man examine (or prove) himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*, ver. 28. But he doth not tell us particularly what it is that we must examine ourselves about: and therefore for that, our surest way will be to consult our Church, which in her Catechism acquaints us, that it is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper to examine themselves about three things: "1. Whether they repent them truly of their former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life? 2. Have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death: and, 3. Be in charity with all men." And accordingly in the Exhortation at the Communion she calls upon all the communicants actually to perform these great duties. And verily these three things, *repentance, faith, and charity*, are absolutely necessary to the qualifying us for the worthy receiving of Christ's body and blood, in the sense now explained.

For, first, unless a man be so sensible of, and sorry for, his former sins, that he is now resolved for the future to forsake them, he cannot set that value upon Christ's dying for them, as is necessary to his carrying himself aright at the commemoration of it. For all the esteem and respect we have, or can shew to

Christ, as dying for our sins, is grounded upon a due sense of these sins for which he died ; which no man can in reason pretend to, that is not both truly humbled for them, and as stedfastly resolved against them. And therefore the first thing that we ought to do, in order to the fitting ourselves for the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper, is to look back upon our former lives, and consider seriously with ourselves, what sins in thought, word, or deed we have heretofore committed ; and what duties to God or man we have hitherto neglected, and purpose with ourselves, by God's grace and assistance, that we will for the future do so no more ; and so renew and ratify those vows and promises in this, which we made to God in the other Sacrament, even when we were baptized. He that doth this heartily and sincerely, is so far rightly prepared for the worthy receiving of that body and blood, which he thus repenteth of.

The next thing required, in order thereunto, is *faith*, as it is, according to the apostle's description, *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. whereby we are as fully persuaded, that God will give us the good things he hath promised to us in Christ, as if we had them already ; and are as certain of whatsoever he hath revealed, as if we saw it before our eyes. Without such a faith as this, it is impossible for us to discern the Lord's body, and by consequence to receive it worthily. For all that we see with our eyes is only bread and wine. Neither is it possible for us to look any further, but only by the eye of faith, whereby we behold Christ's body and blood as broken and shed for us ; and so verily and indeed receive, and apply it to ourselves. And therefore, in order to our worthy receiving the holy Sacrament, we must take special care to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith, whether we really believe all the articles of the Christian religion, and have a sure trust and

confidence on God's merciful promises for the pardon of our sins, and the salvation of our souls, by the blood of Christ: for the main stress of our receiving aright lies upon this, as presently we shall see more clearly.

And then as for *charity*, or a sincere and universal love to all men, without that no man is fit to appear before him who died for all men; much less to receive that body and blood which was offered up as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. For he cannot possibly give it that honour and respect which is due to it, by reason of his malice and hatred against some of those persons for whom it was offered. And besides that, he that is not in love and charity with all men, it is plain that he doth not forgive the wrongs and injuries which he hath received from some men, and therefore is not capable to receive the pardon of his own sins from God, and by consequence not worthy to receive that Sacrament wherein it should be sealed to him. Wherefore, as ever we desire to receive it worthily, we must be sure to lay aside all malicious and revengeful thoughts against all persons whatsoever; and come with love as large, and of the same extent with that death which we there commemorate; as freely forgiving all others, as we desire that God, for Christ Jesus' sake, should forgive us.

If we thus repent us truly for our sins past, have a lively and stedfast faith in Christ our Saviour, amend our lives, and be in perfect charity with all men, we shall then be meet partakers of these holy mysteries, as our Church assures us. But for that purpose we must not only have these graces beforehand, but we must likewise act and exercise them all the while that we are at our Lord's table; which that we may do, our Church hath so contrived that incomparable Office which she hath made for the Administration of the Holy Communion, that from the beginning to the end there is continual matter and occasion given for the

acting and exciting these Christian virtues in us, and so for our due and worthy receiving of Christ's most precious body and blood; which that I may demonstrate to you, and therewith shew how we may and ought to eat this bread and drink this cup so duly and worthily, that we may not eat and drink judgment, but health and salvation to ourselves, I shall briefly run through the whole Office, beginning at the Offertory.

Our minds, therefore, being rightly disposed and prepared for so great a work, by an humble confession of our sins, by fervent and solemn prayers to God for the pardon of them, and for the grace to forsake them, by praising and magnifying his all-glorious name, and by hearing some part of his holy word read and expounded to us, we then make bold to address ourselves to our Lord's table, where the first thing we set about is to exercise our charity, and that two ways: first, by a liberal contribution of what God hath given us, to the relief of others' necessities; and then by praying for Christ's whole catholic Church militant here on earth, whereby we do not only profess ourselves to be members of that society, and to live in communion with it, but likewise express our charity to all sorts of persons in it, as our Lord did, by praying for them.

After which the priest, in an Exhortation composed for that purpose, puts the people in mind of the great benefit that will accrue to them, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith they receive that holy Sacrament, and of the greatness of the danger, if they receive the same unworthily; and therefore exhorts them to the exercise of the graces before mentioned, and to give their humble and hearty thanks to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man, who humbled himself to the death of the cross, that he might exalt us to

everlasting life. And that we might always remember his said death, and the benefits of it, instituted this holy Sacrament to our great and endless comfort ; concluding with the great obligation that lies upon us to bless God for this his inestimable love, and to shew forth his praise, not only with our lips, but likewise in our lives, by studying to serve him in true holiness and righteousness all our days.

The Exhortation ended, the minister invites all, who are thus prepared, to the Lord's Supper, saying to them, *Draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort.* He invites them, first, to *draw near*, thereby putting them in mind, that they are now invited into Christ's more especial presence, to sit down with him at his own table; and therefore, as an emblem thereof, should come from the more remote parts of the church, as near to the said table as they can. But then he adviseth them to *draw near with faith*, as without which all their bodily approaches will signify nothing, it being only by faith that they can really draw near to Christ, and take the holy Sacrament to their comfort. But seeing they cannot act their faith aright, until they have first confessed and repented of their sins; therefore he calls upon them *to make their humble confession unto God, meekly kneeling on their knees.*

And now all that are to communicate, being prostrate upon their knees before God, do in a most humble and solemn manner jointly *acknowledge and bewail their manifold sins and wickedness, which they from time to time have committed in thought, word, and deed against his divine Majesty; professing themselves most earnestly to repent of them, humbly beseeching Almighty God to pardon what is past, and to grant them grace for the future to serve and please him in newness of life, for Christ Jesus' sake.* All which is done with such grave, apposite, and pathetic words, that I do not see how it is possible for us to

express our hearty and sincere repentance better than we do at that time.

And while the people continue in this humble posture, begging for mercy and grace at the hands of God, the minister stands up, and in the name of God assures them, that *he of his infinite mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him*: and therefore he applies the said promises unto them, praying, that *Almighty God would accordingly have mercy upon them, pardon and deliver them from all their sins, confirm and strengthen them in all goodness, and bring them to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

And here it is that our faith must begin to work, as it is the substance of things hoped for, so as firmly and constantly to believe, that upon our hearty and sincere repentance we are now absolved from all our former sins, and that from this time forward God will assist us with his grace and holy Spirit, to serve and please him, according to the prayers which we have put up to him, and the promises which he hath made to us for that purpose, in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: for all the benefit of absolution, as pronounced by the minister, depends upon this our believing in the promises and word of God, upon which it is grounded.

Which therefore that we may do, the minister presently reads some choice sentences of Scripture, wherein God hath promised or declared his willingness to pardon and absolve us from our sins in the blood of his Son, that so we may act our faith accordingly upon them. And therefore he calls upon the people to hear, or hearken diligently to them, and take special notice of them.

As first, these comfortable words which our Saviour saith to all that truly turn to him, Matt. xi. 28.

Come unto me, all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

Which words contain so firm and solid a foundation whereupon to build our faith, that if we be but truly penitent, we cannot doubt of God's mercy towards us. For here his only Son with his own divine mouth invites all that are so to come to him, promising, or engaging his word, that he will refresh them, give them peace in their minds, quiet in their consciences, and rest to their whole souls. He will take care that they neither *travail* or be *heavy laden* any longer with the burden of their sins; for he will refresh them with the sense of God's mercy in the pardon of all their faults, and with the assistance of his grace in the mortifying of all their lusts. Sin shall no longer have dominion over them, because they are not now under the *law*, but under his *grace*, Rom. vi. 14.

Now these being the words of Christ himself, we ought to have a sure trust and confidence on them, so as to be fully persuaded, that we being in the number of those whom he calls, and having obeyed his call in coming to him, he, according to his word, will ease us of our sins, and give us rest: especially considering that he himself assures us with his own mouth, that *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16.

Which words containing the substance and design of the whole Gospel, pronounced by Christ himself, are therefore read in the next place, that we might have an occasion to exercise our faith in it all, and that no place might be left for diffidence or doubting; for seeing the great reason that moved God to send his Son, was his infinite love to mankind; and the only end why he did it was, that *all that believe*

in him might not perish, but have everlasting life; what can we desire more to excite and confirm our faith in him? for he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not but with him also freely give us all things? Rom. viii. 32.

But lest the sense of our former sins should be apt to make us despond or despair of mercy, that nothing may be wanting to the completing of our faith at this time, there are two other divine sentences read; the one of St. Paul, saying, *This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,* 1 Tim. i. 15. and the other of St. John, *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins,* 1 John ii. 1. whereby we are given to understand and believe, that Christ came into the world on purpose to save such sinners as we are; and that he was made a propitiation for our sins, having undergone all that shame, and pain, and punishment which was due unto us for them, and is now our Advocate in heaven, always interceding for us, and ready to apply the merits of his death and passion to us. For what an occasion have we here given us to fix and exercise our faith, as St. Paul did, saying, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,* Rom. viii. 33, 34, &c.

Having thus exercised our faith, and so got above this world, we are now ready to go into the other, and join with the glorified saints and angels in praising and adoring that God that hath done so great things for us; which that we may do, the minister calls upon the people to *lift up their hearts.* And their hearts being now by faith wholly inclined to

God, are as ready to do it, as he is to desire it; and therefore immediately answer, *We lift them up unto the Lord.* And now their hearts being all lift up together, and so fitted for celebrating the high praises of God, the minister invites them all to join with him in the doing it, saying, *Let us give thanks unto our Lord God:* which they having consented to, saying, *It is meet and right so to do;* he turns himself to the Lord's table, and acknowledges to his Divine Majesty there specially present, that *it is very meet and right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto him.* And then, he looking upon himself and the rest of the communicants as members of the Church triumphant in heaven; and all apprehending themselves by faith, as in the midst of that blessed society, where they hope ere long to be indeed; they join with them in singing forth the praises of the most high God, saying, *Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name, &c.* And certainly, if ever our souls be in heaven while our bodies are upon earth, it must needs be in the singing of this heavenly anthem; when our spirits, with those of just men made perfect, yea, with the whole company of heaven, in so solemn and seraphic a manner adore and magnify the eternal God, our Maker and Redeemer. Especially when we celebrate the nativity, the resurrection, and ascension of our blessed Lord, his mission of the Holy Ghost, and the most holy Trinity, for which there are proper Prefaces appointed, to raise up our hearts as high as possible, in praising God for such transcendent mysteries and mercies as these are.

And now, if ever, our minds must needs be duly prepared to receive the blessed body and blood of our dear Lord; and therefore the minister, having first acknowledged our unworthiness of so great a

mercy, and prayed to God to assist us with his grace to receive it worthily, he then saith the Prayer of Consecration.

And now there is nothing either said or done, but what puts us in mind of something or other where-upon to employ and exercise our faith.

When we see the bread and wine set apart for consecration, it should mind us of God's eternal purpose, and determinate counsel, to send his Son into the world, and to offer him up as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

The minister's reading the Prayer of Consecration alone, none of the people speaking a word, nor any ways assisting him in it, should put us in mind how the whole work of our salvation was accomplished by Christ alone, no mere creature contributing any thing at all towards it.

When we hear these words, *who in the same night that he was betrayed took bread*; we are by faith to behold our Lord at his last supper, there instituting this Sacrament which we are now to receive, and distributing it to his Apostles with his own blessed hands.

When we see the bread broken, then we should call to mind all that grief and pain, those bitter agonies and passions, which our Lord suffered for our sins, and in our stead. How he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed: how his blessed body was broken, his hands and feet fastened to the cross with nails drove through them, and all for our sins, even for ours.

And so when the minister takes the cup into his hand, then we are by faith to behold how fast the blood trickled down from our Lord's head, when crowned with thorns; from his hands and feet, when nailed to the cross; from his side, when pierced with the spear; and from his whole body, when he was in

his agony ; and all to wash away our sins ; still believing that it was for our sins that all this precious blood was shed ; for such and such sins, which we know every one of ourselves to have been guilty of.

When we hear our Lord's words pronounced, the words of consecration, *this is my body which is given for you ; and this is my blood which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins ;* then are we stedfastly to believe, that although the substance of bread and wine still remain, yet they are not now common bread and wine as to their use, but the body and blood of Christ, in that sense that he spoke the words ; insomuch that " whosoever duly " receives these creatures of bread and wine according " to Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his " death and passion, are partakers of his most precious body and blood : " as it is expressed in the words of consecration.

When we see the minister distributing this sacramental bread and wine to the several communicants, we are then by faith to apprehend our Lord offering his body and blood, and all the benefits of his death and passion, to all that are willing and ready to receive them at his hands.

But when it comes to our turns to receive, then we are to lay aside all thoughts of bread, and wine, and minister, and of every thing else that is or can be seen ; and fix our faith, as it is *the evidence of things not seen*, wholly and solely upon our blessed Saviour, as communicating his own body and blood to us, to preserve both our bodies and souls to everlasting life. Which we are therefore to receive by faith, as it is *the substance of things hoped for ;* stedfastly believing it to be what our Saviour said, *his body and blood, which, as our Church saith, is verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.* By which means, whatsoever it is to others, it will be to us, who receive it with

such a faith, the substance of Christ's body and blood, and so of all the good things we hope for upon his account.

And the better to excite and assist us in the exercise of our faith, after this manner, at our receiving the sacramental bread and wine, the minister, at the distribution of it, first applies the merits of Christ's death in general to each particular person that receives it, saying to every one singly, *The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, and the blood which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life*, that so I may apply it to myself, as the body and blood of him that loved me, and gave himself for me, to *preserve my body and soul to everlasting life*. And then he adds at the distribution of the bread, *take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving*. Whereby I am put in mind to eat it in remembrance that Christ died for me in particular, and then am taught how to feed upon him, even in my heart by faith with thanksgiving. In my heart, because it is not bodily, but spiritual, food; and by faith, as the only means whereby the heart or soul can take its proper nourishment, and receive the substance of things here hoped for, even the body and blood of Christ. And then it must be with thanksgiving too, as the necessary consequent of faith. For as no man can be truly thankful to and for Christ, without actually believing in him; so no man can actually believe in him, but he must needs be truly thankful both to and for him. And therefore in the distribution of the cup, after the words, *drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee*, it is only added, *and be thankful*: because this necessarily supposeth and requireth our feeding upon him in our heart by faith, as without which it is impossible for us to be truly thankful.

And hence also it is, that the Church requires us to receive the holy Sacrament kneeling, not out of any respect to the creatures of bread and wine in themselves, but to put us in mind, that Almighty God our Creator and Redeemer, the only object of all religious worship, is there specially present with us, offering his own body and blood to us, that so we may act our faith in him, and express our sense of his goodness to us, and of our own unworthiness of it, in the most humble posture that we can. And indeed, could our Church be sure that all her members would receive as they ought with faith, she needed not have commanded them to receive it kneeling, for they could not do it any otherwise. For how can I pray in faith to Almighty God to preserve both my body and soul to everlasting life, and not make my body, as well as my soul, bow down before him? how can I by a quick and lively faith behold my Saviour as coming to me, and offering me his own body and blood, and not fall down and worship him? how can I by faith lay hold upon the pardon of all my sins, as there sealed and delivered to me, and receive it any otherwise than upon my knees? I dare not, I cannot do it. And they that can, have too much cause to suspect that they do not discern the Lord's body, and therefore cannot receive it worthily. Be sure our receiving the blessed body and blood of Christ, as the catholic Church always did, in an humble and adoring posture, is both an argument and excitement of our faith in him: by it we demonstrate to the world and our own consciences, that we discern the Lord's body, and believe him to be really present with us: and by it we excite and stir up both ourselves and others to act and exercise our faith more stedfastly upon him, in that by our adoring of him we actually acknowledge him to be God as well as man; and therefore an all-sufficient Saviour, who is able to save to the utmost all that come unto

God by him; and by consequence one whom we have all the reason in the world to believe and trust on.

And then, lastly, when we have thus spiritually eaten the flesh of Christ, and drunk his blood, then we are firmly to believe, and rest fully satisfied in our minds, that, according to his own words, Christ now dwelleth in us, and we in him; that Christ is one with us, and we with him. And therefore that God hath now sealed to us the pardon of all our sins, and will enable us for the future, by his own Spirit, to walk in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life; which faith we are still to exercise all the while that others are receiving; adoring that infinite goodness that is so free and ready to communicate itself to such unworthy creatures as we are.

And when all have received, with the same humble confidence we address ourselves to our heavenly Father, as now reconciled to us in his own Son, in that divine form of prayer, which he himself, whose body and blood we have now received, was pleased to compose, and require us to use upon all occasions. After which, having added another prayer proper for this great and solemn occasion, we join together in saying or singing that incomparable hymn, *Glory be to God on high*, &c. the first part whereof was sung by the choir of heaven at our Lord's nativity, and the rest added by the primitive, if not by the apostolical, Church, it being the most ancient hymn that we know was ever used both by the Greek and Latin Churches all along. And if ever we be fit to praise God in so seraphic a manner, it must needs be at this time, now that Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith, and so assists us in the doing of it. But for the performing it aright, it is necessary to keep our minds all the while intent and fixed upon the great God, and our blessed Saviour, to whom we speak in a peculiar manner, and with the eye of faith

to look upon him as there present with us, and observing how earnestly we beseech him, the *Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world, to have mercy upon us*; and how heartily we adore and magnify his sanctity, his authority over all things, and his, together with his holy Spirit's, infinite height in the glory of God the Father.

After all which duly performed, having prayed for God's acceptance of what we have done, and for his blessing upon us, we are accordingly dismissed as well as may be with the *peace of God which passeth all understanding*: and with *the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, which will certainly be and remain with those who thus receive the holy Sacrament always.

Thus we now see how we may and ought to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper worthily. Blessed and thrice happy are they that do it, and that do it often: for the oftener we do it, the more expert we shall be at it, and the more benefit and comfort we shall receive from it. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for them who do it only now and then, ever to do it as they ought. And therefore it is no wonder they are never the better for it; it is rather a wonder if they be not much the worse. It is by frequent acts that habits are produced: it is by often eating and drinking of this spiritual food, that we learn to do it so as to digest and convert it into proper nourishment for our souls, that they may grow thereby; which the primitive Christians and the Apostles themselves were so sensible of, that they made this a necessary and essential part of all their public devotions; at least, they never reckoned that they kept the Lord's day aright in remembrance of his resurrection, unless they had been at his table, to do this in remembrance of his death and passion. And could this primitive, this apostolical practice be once revived amongst us, our Church would soon put

on a new face, and appear as excellent in its members as it is in its constitution. For by this means we should soon arrive at that degree of grace and virtue, as to be, and live, as becometh Christians indeed ; that is, the most holy, most righteous, and most excellent persons upon earth ; such as the primitive Christians were, and such as we must be, if ever we desire to go to heaven.

What, therefore, if the laws of the land do not absolutely require all men to communicate oftener than thrice a year ? the only reason why they require it at all is, that all people may thereby manifest themselves to profess the Christian religion established in the nation : for no human laws can look any further ; and yet even for that it is judged necessary, and therefore commanded, that all persons should communicate at least thrice a year ; and all priests and deacons in cathedral and collegiate churches every Sunday at least ; which if they neglect to do, they are looked upon as no Christians, and therefore are cast out of the Church. But if so much be necessary to the very outward profession of our most holy religion, what shall we think of the practice of it ? certainly nothing less is required to that, by the laws of Christ and his Church, than to communicate as often as we can possibly find an opportunity : and to make one where we find none, by requesting, and if need be by requiring, the minister of the parish where we live to administer it to us, who neither in law nor conscience can refuse it, when requested by a sufficient number of communicants.

I shall say no more, but that I never expect to see our Church settled upon the lasting foundations of peace and piety, till the holy Communion is oftener celebrated and received, than for some years past it hath been used to be ; and am sure, that if people were but sensible of the advantage it would be to

them, they would need no other arguments to persuade them to the frequent receiving of it. For we should soon find, as many have done already, by experience, that this is the great means appointed by our blessed Saviour, whereby to communicate himself, and all the merits of his death and passion, to us. Insomuch that by a due and frequent receiving of this holy Sacrament, our souls would be as much strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by bread and wine. And we should receive such constant supplies of grace and virtue from him, whereby we should be enabled not only to avoid the sins and follies of this lower world, but always to live above it, and to have our conversation in heaven. In short, by our frequent conversing with our blessed Lord at his table here below, we shall be always fit and ready to go to him, and converse with him in his kingdom above, where we shall have no more need of Sacraments, but shall see him face to face, and praise and adore him for evermore.

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. Amen.

SERMON IX.

UNIVERSAL OBEDIENCE REQUISITE TO SALVATION.

Luke i. 6.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

WHAT these ordinances were, which Zacharias and Elizabeth walked in, we have shewn already; and from thence may easily gather what those are which we must walk in, if we would be righteous; for the ordinances which they observed were those of the Levitical law, which were all positive precepts, ordained by God to make up the defects of their obedience to the moral law by the exercise of their repentance and faith in Christ, the great propitiation for the sins of the world. For these being the terms upon which the merits of Christ's death are applied to any person for the pardon of his sins, and for the acceptance of his sincere instead of perfect righteousness, it was as necessary for them as it is for us to have some means of God's own ordaining, whereby to obtain and act them. And such, in the old law, were the sacrifices which they were bound to offer for the sins they had committed: and, therefore, he

that brought this sin or trespass-offering, was first to confess his sin, and to testify his repentance for it. *And it shall be, saith the Law, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing, Lev. v. 5. Numb. v. 7.* And the Jews have a tradition, that this confession was made upon the head of the sacrifice which the person brought: for laying his hands between the horns of the sacrifice, he was to say, "O Lord, I have sinned, I have done wickedly, I have dealt falsely before thee. Behold, I repent, I am ashamed of my deeds, I will never do that thing any more;" which was as high and solemn an expression of their repentance as could be well devised. And the Jews themselves acknowledge also, that the sacrifices were of no efficacy nor advantage at all, nor expiated any sin, without repentance and confession. And therefore the prophets all along make repentance necessary unto pardon, notwithstanding all their sacrifices; as, *Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin, Ezek. xviii. 30.* and so frequently elsewhere. Indeed, this was one great end of all the bloody sacrifices, to put the people in mind of the heinousness of their sins, which could not be expiated without the shedding of blood, and so to put them upon an hearty and sincere repentance for them.

And as for faith, they had continual occasion given them for the exercise of that, in all the sacrifices which were offered for the expiation of sin: faith in God, in that they were offered to him; and faith in the promised Messiah or Christ, in that they were offered for the expiation of sin. For they could not imagine that there was any such virtue in the blood of beasts, as to satisfy God, the almighty Creator of the world, for the sins which they had committed against him, and so could have no ground to expect or hope, that he would pardon them for the sake of a company of

slain beasts; but all their hopes of pardon were grounded upon God's promise annexed to such sacrifices, as that was upon the death of Christ, typified and represented by them. For *it is only through his blood that we can have forgiveness of sins*, Col. i. 14. He is that true *Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world*, John i. 29. that *Lamb without spot and blemish, by whose precious blood we are redeemed*, 1 Pet. i. 19. *who gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour*, Eph. v. 2. *whose soul was made an offering for sin, or a sin-offering*, as the prophet himself speaks, Isaiah liii. 10. All other sin-offerings were only types and shadows of his: that which he offered, by offering up himself, was the substance, the true and real sacrifice which expiated the sins of the world. This they knew before as well, though not so clearly, as we do since it happened; as appears not only from the prophet before quoted, but from many other places of the Old Testament. And therefore they believed in Christ as well as we. *Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day; he saw it, and was glad*, John viii. 56. *Moses esteemed the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*, Heb. xi. 26. *for the Gospel was preached to them as well as unto us*, Heb. iv. 2. And, indeed, the chief end of their sacrifices was to put them in mind of that which Christ was to offer for them; and so to give them occasion to exercise their faith, and put their confidence in him for pardon and salvation. And therefore these ordinances were indeed their means of grace, whereby they obtained the mercy and assistance of God for the pardon of their sins, and the acceptance of their sincere instead of perfect righteousness, through the blood of Christ, and his merits and intercession for them.

Now these ordinances having respect to Christ as to come afterwards, and so being fitted only for that time, before his coming in the flesh, they must

needs cease in course when he was once come, and had actually offered up himself for the sins of the world: and it was then necessary there should be other ordinances instituted in their place, as the ordinary means whereby mankind might obtain grace, and the favour of God, through Christ, to the end of the world. And these we are now as much obliged to walk in, as they were in theirs, if we desire to be righteous before God; that is, to come up to the terms of the Gospel, by repenting of our sins, and believing in Christ, so as that we may be justified before God, by his merits and mediation for us.

Of this sort is, first, the solemn hearing of God's holy word read, expounded, or preached publicly by a minister of his own, commissioned to do it in his name. They had something, I confess, of this before. *For Moses of old time had in every city them that preached him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day*, Acts xv. 21. And so this might in some sense be one of those ordinances which they also walked in: but the Scriptures, especially such as related to our Saviour, were so obscure then, and wrapped up in such types and figures, that the reading of them could not be so effectual to the working in them true repentance, and faith in Christ, as it is now; when we have all the mysteries of our salvation by him so clearly and fully revealed to us by himself and his Apostles; whereby the hearing of God's holy word is now become quite another thing, and so great a means of grace and salvation, that many have been converted by the hearing of one chapter read, or one sermon preached as it ought to be: as St. Peter's preaching that one short sermon upon the day of Pentecost, about *three thousand souls were pricked in their hearts, and so repented and turned to Christ*, Acts ii. 37, 41. And after the same apostle had preached another sermon in the temple, it is said, *Many that heard the word believed*;

and the number of the men was about five thousand, Acts iv. 4. And while the same apostle was preaching to Cornelius and his friends, *the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word,* Acts x. 44. Many such examples we have in the Acts, of those who were turned from darkness to light, from the power of satan unto God, by the preaching of the Gospel, which St. Paul therefore calls, *the power of God,* 1 Cor. i. 18. And so it appeared to be, in that the greatest part of the known world was by this means converted to the Christian faith. And to this day it hath the same power and efficacy as it ever had, as many have found by their own experience; and if it ever fail of having the same effect, it is not for want of power in the word preached, but by reason of some indisposition in them that hear it; the ground is bad, and then it is no wonder that the seed sown never comes to perfection.

And besides, as by this means men are brought to a due sense of their sins, and to a sincere repentance for them, so likewise to true faith in Christ. For, as the apostle saith, *faith comes by hearing,* Rom. x. 27. By this we are instructed in what we ought to believe, and by this we are enabled to believe what we are so instructed in: by this our faith is begun, and by this we are confirmed and strengthened in it: by this our understandings are enlightened, our judgments informed, and our hearts opened, as Lydia's was, to receive the word in love of it: by this, God is pleased to manifest himself to us, and to incline our minds to him, his own Holy Spirit usually working together with his word, to make it effectual to those great ends and purposes for which he hath ordained it. And therefore this is an ordinance which we must always walk in, as ever we desire to come to the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.

Another ordinance is that of praying and praising

God together, which in the Jewish Church was joined with their sacrifices and incense; for every day throughout the year, they were bound to offer two lambs, the one in the morning, the other in the evening, for a burnt-offering: and upon the sabbath, and other extraordinary days, they were to offer more; at which times the people were bound to be there, and they who made conscience of their duty seldom failed. Now when the burnt-offering began, the singers sang, the trumpeters sounded, and all the congregation fell upon their faces, and worshipped and prayed, as we read in Hezekiah's time, 2 Chron. xxix. 28. So also, Eccles. i. 17, 18, 19. And this continued till the burnt-offering was finished: after that the priest went to the altar of incense before the veil, which the people without in the outward court having notice of, they all fell to their prayers, every one praying to himself, without speaking a word; and this continued all the while the incense was burning, which was usually about half an hour, their prayers ascending up to heaven, as they supposed, together with the incense. And therefore none of them offered to go away or leave off their prayers till, the incense being all burnt, the priest came out to pronounce the blessing, Numb. vi. 24. This David alludes to, where he saith, *Let my prayer come before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.* Psal. cxli. 2. This being indeed their constant way of praying, they commonly reckoning no prayers acceptable to God, except they were joined with burnt-offerings or incense. But such offerings were themselves looked upon as praying, and called by that name, 1 Sam. xiii. 12.

These things I mention here, that you may understand their way of praying under the old law, and some passages also in this history of Zacharias: for it is here said, that whilst he was gone into the temple or tabernacle to burn incense, *the whole multitude of*

the people were praying without at the time of incense, Luke i. 10. And afterwards it is said, that the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple, ver. 21. And when he came out, he could not speak to them, ver. 22. They had been at their devotions longer than the incense used to be burning, and therefore could not but wonder what should be the reason he stayed so long: howsoever they durst not go away till he came to give them the blessing; but when he came out, he could not speak, he could not pronounce the blessing, but only beckoned to them, by which they perceived that he had seen a vision; as he really had, and was struck dumb with it too, to shew that the forerunner of Christ, being now to be born, and by consequence Christ himself to follow soon after, the Levitical priesthood was now to cease; that those kind of priests were not much longer to bless the people, but that this whole ordinance or way of worship and praying by typical sacrifices and incense was to be abolished, and another introduced in its room.

And so verily there was; for praying under the Gospel is quite another thing from what it was then: for our prayers are now directed to God in the name and by the mediation of him whom all their legal sacrifices and incense only typified; which theirs were not: for we seldom find them mentioning the Messiah in their prayers, nor to have had any respect to him, but as he was represented by their sacrifices; whereas it is certain, that it is only in and through him, that any prayers that men make can be heard, or his praises accepted before God. This himself takes notice of, saying to his disciples brought up in the Jewish religion, *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name, John xvi. 24.* But then he saith withal, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you, ver. 23.* And again, *At that day ye shall ask in my name:*

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and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God, ver. 26, 27. As if he had said, I need not tell you, or I say not only to you, that I will pray for you, that your prayers may be heard, but that my Father loves you for my sake, and for my sake therefore ye may be sure that he will hear your prayers. And elsewhere he saith, *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son,* John xiv. 13, 14. From whence we may observe, that Christ being now in heaven, and there appearing as our Advocate before the presence of God for us, he takes notice of all the prayers which are put up in his name, and takes care they be all answered, so far as what we ask is really good for us.

And that we may the better understand how he doth this, it was clearly described in a vision to St. John, when he saw an angel come and stand at the altar, *having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand,* Rev. viii. 3, 4. Where the angel is Christ, the golden censer his body or human nature, the incense his merits, with which he offers up the prayers of all saints, and so makes them effectual. Of all which, the incense that was used together with their prayers in the Mosaic law, was only a type or figure: this of Christ's merits is that real and substantial incense that perfumes our prayers, and renders them acceptable to God.

And not only our prayers, but our praises too, which always are or should be joined with them; for they also, by reason of Christ's merits and mediation for us, are accepted of as real sacrifices offered up to

God by him. *By him therefore, saith the apostle, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name, Heb. xiii. 15.* And thus it is, that instead of the typical and material sacrifices of the old law, we now offer up real and *spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 5.*

Hence therefore we may see, how great an ordinance this of public prayer is, and how effectual a means of grace and salvation, especially as it is managed in our Church, wherein all our prayers to God are directed to him only in the name of his only-begotten Son, all concluding with these words, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*, or others to the same effect. Neither do we put them up only once or twice a week; but as the Jews had their daily sacrifices, so we have our daily prayers, every morning and evening; and every time we meet together to offer up these our spiritual sacrifices, we praise God for every good thing we have, and we pray unto him for every thing we want, that can be good for us. And all this being done only in the name of our great High Priest, who is always interceding for us, and presenting our prayers to his Father with the incense of his own all-sufficient merits, if we be not failing to ourselves in acting our faith upon him, we can never fail of a gracious acceptance with Almighty God, nor, by consequence, of the manifold blessings that follow upon it. So that by this means we may obtain grace to repent of all the errors of our life past: by this means we may obtain a quick and lively faith in Christ our Saviour: by this means we may obtain the pardon of all the sins we ever committed: by this means we may obtain the Holy Spirit of God, to mortify our lusts, and to quicken us with newness of life; to keep us from heresy and vice, and lead us into all truth and virtue; to open our eyes, enlighten our minds, purify our hearts, and sanctify

us wholly in soul, body, and spirit : in short, by this means we may be defended from all our enemies, protected from all manner of evil, directed in all our affairs, and endowed with all things necessary both for life and godliness, to make us holy here, and happy both now and for ever.

But for this purpose, there is another ordinance to be often joined with this of prayer, and that is, the ordinance of fasting, which though it be of no great power and virtue without prayer, yet if duly performed, it adds great power and virtue to it; as our Saviour himself plainly intimates, where he saith, *there are some kinds of devils, that go not out but by prayer and fasting together*, Matt. xvii. 21. and therefore they who would be righteous, must often walk in this, as well as any other, ordinance. This being the great means whereby to keep our bodies under, and our passions in order; to clear up our apprehensions of spiritual things, and incline our affections to them; to take off our minds from the earth, and raise them up to heaven; to fix our thoughts in prayer, and to make our desires more intense and fervent. In a word, this is the great means whereby to cleanse our hearts from vicious and corrupt humours, and so to make them fit temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in.

There are still two evangelical ordinances behind, without which, where they may be had, the other will not do our business, and they are the two Sacraments, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper; whereof the first was brought into the Church in the place of Circumcision, which was no part of the Levitical law, but an ordinance instituted long before Moses, when God was pleased to establish his covenant with Abraham, and to ordain this to be the sign of it, saying, *This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; Every male child among you shall be circumcised*, Gen. xvii. 10.

And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you, ver. 11. And from that time forward, this was the constant way appointed by God himself, for admitting any into the covenant with him, which covenant being established in the blood of Christ, in token thereof none were then admitted into it without blood, which was always shed in circumcision. But instead of that troublesome and painful ordinance, Christ hath commanded that persons be initiated into his Church, and made his disciples, by being baptized in the *name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, Matt. xxviii. 19. Which is as plain and easy a way as could be found out; and is not therefore to be slighted or neglected, but rather the more highly esteemed, and the more diligently observed.

As when Elisha bade Naaman the Syrian only go and wash himself seven times in Jordan, and he shall be cured of his leprosy. Naaman at first was angry that the prophet required so little a thing of him, and therefore would not do it; until his servants, being wiser than their lord, said to him, *My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?* 2 Kings v. 13. So here, Christ only bids us wash, and we shall be clean; and tells us withal, that *except a man be thus born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, John iii. 5. But that *whosoever believeth and is baptized, shall be saved*, Matt. xvi. 16. And therefore they who despise or neglect to do so easy a thing as this, at his command, have no more ground to expect to be saved by him, than Naaman had to be cured of his leprosy if he had not washed himself in Jordan as the prophet bade him.

But this is an ordinance which we cannot so properly be said to walk in, because it is to be done

only once in a man's life. But howsoever, as Zacharias and Elizabeth took care to have their son circumcised according to God's command, so are all parents as much obliged to have their children baptized according to Christ's institution, otherwise they are not like those two, righteous before God, as not walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, as they did.

The other Sacrament is that of the Lord's Supper, which our Lord himself ordained immediately before he was betrayed and apprehended, in order to his being offered up as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; for all legal sacrifices being only types of his, and therefore to have an end, and expire together with him, our Lord was pleased to institute this, not for a propitiatory sacrifice, as the papists absurdly imagine, but as a commemorative sacrifice, to put his Church always in mind of that which he then offered, by that one oblation of himself for the sins of mankind. *Do this*, saith he, *in remembrance of me*, Luke xxii. 19. By which means this Sacrament supplies the defect of all the Levitical sacrifices, the paschal lamb, the sin-offerings, the trespass-offerings, the peace-offerings, the thank-offerings, the whole burnt-offerings, they are all now laid aside, and this one substituted in their place, of more power and efficacy to the ends for which they were ordained, than all they put together; for they only foreshewed Christ's death until it happened, this shews it forth to the end of the world: for, as the apostle saith, *as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death until he come*, 1 Cor. xi. 26. And that nothing might be wanting in this Sacrament which was of any use in the Levitical law, wheresoever it is administered, we offer up something of what God hath bestowed upon us, as a free-will offering, in acknowledgment, as of all the other blessings we have received from him, and hold

continually of him, so especially of this, the fountain and foundation of them all, even the death which his only Son was pleased to undergo for us.

This therefore being that holy Sacrament, which our Saviour himself substituted into the room of all legal sacrifices, and ordained in memory of himself, we must needs be obliged to receive it as oft as possibly we can. It is true, he hath prescribed no set times for it, as he did for the sacrifices under the law; yet however, seeing it comes into their place, it ought to bear some proportion with them in this respect, at least so far, that as they, besides their daily, had their weekly sacrifices more than ordinary upon the sabbath-day; so we should celebrate this holy Sacrament once a week upon the Lord's-day, as we find the Apostles did. And seeing Christ has limited no time for it, we ought not to limit, but extend it as far as we can, so as to lay hold of all opportunities that are put into our hands, of celebrating the memory of the best friend that we ever had, and the greatest act of love that ever was or ever can be done for us.

Especially considering the mighty benefits and advantages that accrue to us by a due and worthy receiving of this holy Sacrament. Hereby we are put in mind of the sinfulness of sin, and the dreadful punishments which are due unto it, seeing nothing less than the blood of the Son of God could expiate it. Hereby our minds are set against it, and our whole souls are taught to abhor and loath it. Hereby we exercise our faith in Christ, for the pardon of all our faults, and have them accordingly pardoned to us: hereby we wash ourselves over again, as it were, in the blood of the Lamb of God, which cleanseth us from all sin: hereby we derive power and virtue from Christ, to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind: hereby

we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us: hereby our repentance is renewed, our faith confirmed, our sins weakened, our graces strengthened, our hearts comforted, and our souls fitted to live with Christ in the other world: for as our bodies are nourished by bread and wine, so by the body and blood of Christ here mystically received, our souls are nourished and preserved to everlasting life: as, I hope, many of us shall now find by experience.

These are, in short, those ordinances which we must all walk in, if we desire to be, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, righteous before God. Neither must we content ourselves with any one or more of them, but as we must walk in all the commandments, so we must walk in all the ordinances too: for they also are all commanded by the same Lord; and therefore all the same reasons that oblige us to observe any of the commandments, oblige us also to observe them; and the omission or neglect of any of them is as great a sin, and makes us liable to as great punishments, as the transgression of any other commandment can do.

And besides, these are not only commanded themselves, but they are appointed to be ordinances and means whereby we may be enabled to keep all the other commandments: and therefore they who do not keep these, may be confident that they keep none at all, there being no way to attain the end, without using the means; all the means that are necessarily required in order to it, as be sure all these are; for otherwise they would not be required at all; for it cannot be imagined, that he who came into the world for no other purpose but to save us, should require any thing of us but what is necessary to our salvation. And therefore he having commanded us to be baptized, to read, and hear God's holy word; to fast and pray, and praise his sacred name, and to receive

his blessed Sacrament, we cannot possibly refuse or neglect any of these ordinances, without manifest prejudice to ourselves, and apparent hazard of our eternal salvation by him.

Neither must ye think, that the walking in any one of these ordinances will serve your turn without the other. He that walketh only part of his way, will never come to his journey's end. These ordinances are indeed the effectual means of grace, not singly, but conjunctly: not one by one, but altogether: they are all the way that leads to heaven, and he that goes not quite through them, had as good stand still, and never step into them; for they all depend upon, and influence, assist, and forward one another. By hearing God's holy word, we are made sensible of our sins; by fasting, we humble ourselves for them; by prayer, we obtain the pardon of them; and by the holy Sacrament we obtain that pardon sealed to us in the blood of Christ. By hearing, our faith is begun; by fasting, it is quickened; by praying, it is increased; and by the Sacrament, it is confirmed and strengthened: again, by hearing, we come to know our duty; by fasting, we are disposed for it; by praying, we are inclined to it; and by the Sacrament, we are enabled to perform it: or, in short, take it thus: hearing makes us wise; fasting, humble; praying, devout; and the receiving of the Lord's Supper makes us *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, assuring us, that *our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*.

What therefore will it avail you to observe any one of these ordinances without the other? Will that make you righteous before God? No surely. If it would, he would never have ordained the rest; but in that he hath ordained them all, one as well as another, it is plain, they are all, in their several respects, as necessary to be observed, in order to your being righteous, as it is for a patient to go through

the whole course of physic, which his able physician prescribes, if he desires to be cured of his malady.

Hence, therefore, I cannot forbear to advise and beseech you all, especially those of this parish, who are committed to my charge, that you would use all the care and diligence you can, constantly to walk in all and every one of these ordinances which Christ your Saviour hath ordained, in order to your obtaining salvation by him. I am very sensible, that I must ere long give up an account of my stewardship to my great Lord and Master, and therefore dare not but administer these means of grace to you, as often as the Church or your necessities require it. You have the word of God read constantly every day in the week, and expounded or preached every Lord's day, and that too in so plain and familiar a way, that, I hope, the meanest capacity in the congregation may understand it. You have the public prayers and praises of our Church read to you every day throughout the year, according to the best form that was ever composed by any Church; you are put in mind of keeping your bodies under by fasting and abstinence, as often as the Church requires it, or the common experience of all Christians hath found it necessary. You have the Sacrament of Baptism administered upon all occasions in your sight and hearing, to put you in mind of the solemn vow and promise which you made when you yourselves were baptized. You have the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper administered every Lord's day in the year, and are as constantly invited to it, and exhorted to partake of it; and if there be any thing else that can conduce any thing towards the building you up in your most holy faith, and so to your eternal salvation, I shall be as ready to administer it, as you can be to desire it. And what defects Almighty God sees (as I am conscious to myself he sees a great many) in the discharge of my duty towards you, I hope,

for his Son's sake, he will pardon them all to me, and make them up some other way to you. And therefore, if it be not your own faults, none of you but may attain eternal life and happiness through Christ, in the use of these means, which he for that very purpose hath ordained, and caused to be so constantly administered to you, according to the order and direction of that most excellent Church you live in.

But if you, after all, slight, despise, or neglect these ordinances, or any of them, I shall lose the pleasure of giving up my accounts with joy, but it is you that will feel the smart of it. And then you will wish with all your hearts, that you had neglected your carnal pleasures and profits, rather than prayers and sacraments. But, alas! then it will be too late; wishing will do no good; you once had these opportunities put into your hands, but you would not make use of them. You might have heard the word of God solemnly and publicly read every day, but you would not. You might have joined together every day in praying and praising God, but you would not; you might have received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper every week, but you would not; except perhaps when you had nothing else to do. How will the remembrance of this grate upon your consciences? How will it fret and torment your souls? What an aggravation will this be of your misery then, as it is of your sin now? So great an aggravation, that the consideration of it would almost tempt me, if I durst, to lay aside some part of these opportunities, so as not to administer the Word and Sacraments so often as you now enjoy them. But, alas! I dare not; it is my duty to administer them as I do, and therefore must continue it, and leave the event to God and you, as knowing that these are the means which God hath appointed for your salvation: and hoping, that although some, by the instigation of

the devil, neglect them, to their greater shame and confusion, yet others, by the blessing of God, will improve them to their greater glory and happiness in the other world.

All that I can do more is to admonish and exhort you to walk with Zacharias and Elizabeth, as in all the commandments, so likewise in all the ordinances, of the Lord blameless. Do not take up with some without the other, not with any without all, nor yet with all, without walking blameless in them. Catch at all opportunities you can get of presenting yourselves before your heavenly Father in our daily prayers, and before your blessed Redeemer in the holy Sacrament: and come with that presence of mind, with that simplicity of heart, with that humility, reverence, and faith, as becomes such sacred ordinances: and I dare assure you, your time will not be lost, but the best spent of any part of your whole life. For by this means your hearts by degrees will be emptied of all carnal and worldly thoughts, and filled with such a sense of God and religion, as by his grace and assistance will keep you firm and stedfast in his faith and fear all your life long, and so make you righteous before God himself.

How this comes to pass, even how by this means you will become righteous before God, is the last thing I promised to shew, and may easily do it: for although I do not deny, but that after all your endeavours to walk in all the commandments, you will offend in some; and after all your endeavours to walk in all the ordinances of the Lord, you will not be altogether blameless in any, as not performing them with that perfect exactness as ye ought; yet so great are the mercies of God, and so all-sufficient are the merits of your Saviour, that God for his sake will accept of what you thus do sincerely, as well as if it was done perfectly; and so, notwithstanding your daily infirmities and manifold imperfections, he

will look upon you in his Son as righteous, and by consequence you will be righteous before him, or, as the word signifies, in his sight. He will overlook your infirmities, and take notice only of your sincerity, and that shall be *well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ*, Heb. xiii. 21.

This is that great mystery that is revealed to us in the Gospel, wherein as we are assured, *that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified*, or accepted of as righteous in the sight of God, Rom. iii. 20. so we are assured withal, that we *are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*, Rom. iii. 24. that our *spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. that he *hath made us accepted in his beloved Son*, Eph. i. 6. that he who *knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. who is therefore said *to be made righteousness to us, or, for us*, 1 Cor. i. 30. and called *the Lord our righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. 6. The meaning of all which is, that although we be not perfectly righteous in ourselves, nor can be, so long as we are in the body, yet the only-begotten Son of God, in whom he is well pleased, having in our nature been obedient to death for us, God in him is well pleased with us too, and with what we do, if we do but sincerely endeavour to do what we can to obey him, and believe in his said Son, for his assistance of us in the doing it, and for God's acceptance of it when it is done; for then God looks upon us, not as in ourselves, but as members of that body whereof his Son is head, and so as partakers of all the merits both of his life and death; whereby our sins are not only pardoned, but all the defects and imperfections of our obedience are supplied and made up: that most perfect obedience and righteousness which he performed to God for us being made over to us, and reckoned ours. In which therefore, although we be not perfectly so in our-

selves, yet we appear as righteous before God, and he is pleased to accept of us as much as if we were perfectly so in ourselves, or rather more; the righteousness which we have in Christ being far greater than it was possible for us to have performed in our most perfect state.

Thus it was that these two persons in my text became righteous in the sight of God before Christ's coming; and therefore we cannot doubt but that we who live after it may be so too, if we do but follow their steps, *walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*

And who would not be so, if he can? If he can, did I say? Who cannot be so, if he will? if he will, I say, but set himself in good earnest about it. Blessed be God, you are all as yet not only capable of being righteous, but you have all the means that can be desired in order to it. And if you will not use them, whose fault is it? Whom can you blame but yourselves? You must even take what follows, and thank yourselves for it: whereas if you be but willing and obedient, so as to seek the righteousness of God before all things else, and walk in all the ways that lead to it, you cannot miss of it, but may as certainly have this testimony as ever Zacharias and Elizabeth had it, that you are righteous before God.

And one would think, that you should not need many arguments, or much entreaty, to endeavour all you can after it; it being your own interest and concern, and that the greatest that you have or can have in the world; which that I may convince you of, I desire you to consider only one thing, and that is, that righteous persons are the only happy persons in the world, both in this world and the next.

In this world there are many, I know, esteemed very happy: they that have crowns upon their heads, sceptres in their hands, and whole kingdoms at their feet: they that have stately houses, large estates,

great possessions at command: they that are beloved and honoured by their neighbours, and have many servants waiting continually upon them: they that, like Dives, are *clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare deliciously every day*: they that feed upon dainties, drink the choicest wines, lie upon beds of down, and have their fill of all earthly enjoyments: these are reckoned the happy people of the world, in comparison of whom the rest of mankind are a company of miserable and contemptible wretches. But, alas! what is there in all this to make men happy? Nothing certainly, unless men were like brutes, capable of no other happiness but what consisteth in pleasing their senses, gratifying their appetites, or tickling their disturbed imaginations. But true happiness is quite of another nature, and so far above the reach of such low and little things, that a man may be as happy without them as with them, and as miserable with them as without them. And therefore to find out those who are really the most happy people upon earth, we must search for such as have their portion not in this world, but the other; for such whose bellies are not filled with hidden treasure, but whose souls are filled with the treasures of true wisdom and righteousness: for such as are *righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*. These we shall find to be the only happy people in the world, in comparison of whom all the rest of mankind, howsoever they may think of themselves, or appear in the eyes of their fellow-mortals, are really poor and miserable creatures. As I do not question but you will all acknowledge, if you do but consider the great privileges that are conferred upon the righteous above all other men.

The righteous, and they only, are in favour with God, the supreme Governor of the world; and in so great esteem with him, that he calls them his especial,

his peculiar people, his treasure, his jewels. They have the honour of waiting continually upon him, and of enjoying his presence, and the light of his countenance. They are nearly related to all and every person in the most sacred Trinity. They have God the Father to be their God and their Father, to take care of them, and to provide all things necessary for them. They have God the Son to be their God and their Saviour, to save them from their sins, and to appear continually in heaven for them, and to prepare them a place there, against they go out of this world. They have God the Holy Ghost to be their God, their Sanctifier, and their Comforter, to prevent their falling into sin, to assist them in their duty, and to support and comfort them in all conditions. They have the holy angels to minister unto them, and to keep them in all their ways. They have all the saints in heaven and earth for their brethren, their companions and fellow-citizens: they have the infinite wisdom of God to guide and direct them in all their affairs, and to shew them the way they ought to walk in: they have the almighty power of God to defend them from all their enemies, and to protect them from all danger and mischief: they have all things in the world working together for their good, and concurring to make them happy: they have God's blessing upon every thing they do, and upon every thing they have, to make it the best that it can be in its kind for them: they have all things that are good, and nothing that is evil or unprofitable for them: they have all occurrences, all circumstances, all conditions of life sanctified to them: so that if they fall into poverty, that is made better for them than riches; and so is sickness and disgrace, than health and honour: they live under the immediate care and conduct of God himself, whose eyes are continually upon them, and his ears open to their prayers: they have free access unto him upon all

occasions, and are sure to obtain whatsoever they ask that is really good for themselves or others. *For the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much,* James v. 16. They are the salt of the earth, that keep the rest of mankind from being consumed; as we see in Sodom, if there had been but ten righteous persons in it, God would have spared it for their sakes, and would not destroy it till righteous Lot was gone out.

Thus the almighty Governor of the world hath a particular kindness for the righteous, guiding them by his counsel all the while they are upon earth, and afterwards receiving them into glory: for *the wicked must go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal,* Matt. xxi. 46. So that after they have lived a few years upon earth, they are all translated to heaven, where they behold the glory, and enjoy the presence, of the chiefest good; where they live with Christ their dear and blessed Saviour, and solace themselves continually in the embraces of his love and favour; where all tears are wiped from their eyes, all cares and fears are banished from their hearts, and all manner of sin and imperfections perfectly rooted out from their souls; where their spirits are made absolutely perfect, and their bodies fashioned like to Christ's glorious body: where they have the sweet and blessed society of their fellow glorified saints, and of the holy angels, being made altogether equal to them: where they have all things they can possibly desire, and so are fully satisfied with what they have; where they are as blessed as God himself can make them, and have all the honour and glory that he can confer upon them: where *they shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father,* Matt. xiii. 43. where, in short, they live as cheerfully, as pleasantly, as honourably, as gloriously, every way as happily, as it is possible for

creatures to live, and that too, not only for some time, but for evermore.

Consider these things, and tell me, whether ye do not really think that the righteous are the happiest persons in the world? and whether it be not your interest as well as duty, to endeavour all ye can to get into the number of them? I am confident you cannot but all acknowledge it; and therefore hope that you will for the future act accordingly. Blessed be God, you are all as yet in a capacity of attaining to it; yea, more than that, you are invited, you are exhorted, you are commanded by Almighty God, to *walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless*, and so to be righteous before him. Neither do you want any of the means that can contribute any way towards it. These God hath been pleased to afford to you, and to all that live in the communion of our Church, in a more than ordinary manner. Let me therefore beseech you in his name to use these means so duly, so constantly, so sincerely, so earnestly, that you may at length attain the end of them, that it may be said of every man and wife among you, as it is here of these two, that they are both righteous before God; and that the same may be truly asserted of all single persons, that you are not only hearers but doers of God's word, *walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*. What an happy society, what a blessed congregation of people, would you then be? shining as lights in the world, as all Christians ought to do.

For which purpose, therefore, let me beg of you to imprint what you have now heard so upon your minds, that you may never forget it; but always remember, that as you can never be happy unless you be *righteous before God*; so you can never be *righteous before God*, except you *walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*.

But if you do that as heartily and sincerely as you ought, and as near as possibly you can, you will soon find it worth all the care and pains you take about it: for I dare assure you, in the name of God, that he for his Son's sake will not only pardon what you have hitherto done amiss, but likewise accept of you as righteous before him, and by consequence receive you into his protection here, and hereafter into his own kingdom and glory, through the same our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to whom, &c.

SERMON X.

THE ADVANTAGES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

Psalm cxxii. 1.

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.

THUS saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? Isa. lxvi. 1. Whereby it hath pleased his divine goodness to signify to us, that he lives and reigns on high, infinitely above all that we can think, and that the earth is at his foot, to do what he will with it, and with every thing that is in it, or upon it. So that the whole earth is full of his glory, and the heaven of heavens is not able to contain it. Where then shall we build an house? Where shall we find a place for him to dwell in? No where certainly, so as that he should be included in it. Yet nevertheless, as he is said to dwell in heaven, because he there unveils himself, and shines forth in all his glory, before those pure and holy creatures that dwell there, and are capable of beholding it: so he is said to dwell in such places upon earth too, where he is graciously pleased to manifest himself, and discover any of his divine perfections in a more peculiar manner than he doth elsewhere: as he is often said to

dwell between the cherubims over the mercy-seat, or covering of the ark, from whence he was pleased to manifest his glory, and make known his will unto his people. And wheresoever the ark was, there he was said to dwell. So long as it was in the tabernacle, which Moses by his appointment made for it, that was called his house or dwelling-place, because he there met with his people, and acquainted them with his pleasure. And when the ark was put into the temple which Solomon built for it upon mount Sion, that was called his house, not only in the Old Testament, but in the New, by Christ himself, John ii. 16.

This therefore is that which the Psalmist here calls, *the house of the Lord*, even the place where the ark then was, and where the Lord had therefore promised to be, in a special manner. Thither all the men in Israel were bound to go, at least three times every year, though many of them lived about an hundred miles off. And some have thought that this Psalm was composed for that occasion, that the people might better express the joy and pleasure they had in that holy journey, saying or singing to one another as they went, *I was glad, or rejoiced, when they said unto me, We will, or Let us, go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself, for thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord, to testify unto Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord, &c.*

But it might serve as well for those who, living near it, went every day to the house of the Lord, to perform their devotions to him, and to receive his blessing; as all that were truly pious did. They took all opportunities they could get, of going thither at the hours of prayer, and were glad when any put them in mind of it, and called upon them to go, saying, *Let us go into the house of the Lord.* And so

doubtless are all such at this day. All that truly love, and fear, and honour God, are as glad to go into his house now, as they were then.

It is true, we have no such outward signs of his special presence in our churches, as they had of old in the tabernacle and temple: but howsoever, we cannot doubt but that he is as specially present with us in such places, as he was with them. For we have his own word for it; saying, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, Matt. xviii. 20. Whereby we are fully assured, that he doth not now presentiate himself only in one place, as he did under the law, but that wheresoever his faithful people meet together in his name, to serve and worship him, he is there with them, to assist them in what they do, and to bless and sanctify it to them. And therefore every such place dedicated to his service, may as properly be called the house of the Lord, as the temple was. And every pious and devout soul delights as much in going thither, as David did; and can as truly say, *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.*

This, therefore, is that which I shall now demonstrate to you; and for that purpose shall consider, first, the persons who are always glad to go into the house of the Lord; and then, the reasons why they are so.

First, As to the persons; we must not think that all sorts of people delight in going to church, the house of God. For we see the contrary by daily experience: even that many, yea, most of these too who profess the faith of Christ, choose rather to go any where else than thither. Some had rather go to an ale-house, or tavern, or play-house, where they may please their flesh or their fancy. Others are for a shop, a warehouse, or the exchange, where they may buy, or sell, and get gain: like those in the prophet, who

said, *When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, falsifying the balances by deceit?* Amos viii. 5. that is, in plain terms, they had rather be cheating their neighbours, than serving God. Nay, there are many, too many, who choose to sit still at home, and do nothing, rather than go to church and do the work that is there required of them. Such as these are not glad, but sorry and troubled, when any say unto them, *Let us go into the house of the Lord*; and will look upon them as their enemies, for offering to make such an impertinent and troublesome motion to them.

And it is no wonder. For such people know not what to do at church, nor can take any pleasure in what is there done: they care not for praying or praising God; neither doth *the word preached any way profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it*, Heb. iv. 2. The church is no more to them than an ordinary house; and the whole service that is there performed seems to them an insipid business, which they can no way relish or delight in. And the reason is, because their minds being taken up with the affairs of this life, they are altogether incapable of all things belonging to their everlasting peace; for, as the apostle observes, *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Hence it is, that such men, when they are at church, they are restless and uneasy all the while, and long to be out again, that they may follow the business, or enjoy the pleasures, their hearts are set on: as for what is done there, they know not what to make of it; and therefore it is no wonder that they care not how seldom they come thither; and if they ever do, it is not a pleasure, but a grief and a trouble to them; which notwithstanding they are forced sometimes to

bear with, to keep up their credit and reputation in the world; lest their neighbours should think them to be what they are, mere natural and carnal men, that have no sense at all of religion, but live as without God in the world.

But although these be not, there are other persons that are, glad, as David was, to *go into the house of the Lord*. But they are such as David was, of whom it is said, that *he was a man after God's own heart*, 1 Sam. xiii. 14. that is, he was a truly good and virtuous man, one that loved God with all his heart, and lived constantly in his true faith and fear, making it his chief care and business to obey, and serve, and please, and honour him. His heart was wholly inclined to God, and set to obey his commandments, and to glorify his holy name, and so was such a one as God would have him to be, a man after his own heart: who therefore took great delight in every thing that tended to the glory of God: particularly, what vast preparations did he make for the building and adorning the house of God, where he might be served and worshipped? and all because he had set his affection upon it, as he himself said, 1 Chron. xxix. 3. What a mighty love and zeal had he for it? *Lord*, said he, *I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thy honour dwelleth*, Psal. xxvi. 8. *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*, Psal. lxix. 9. How earnestly did he desire to go thither? Psal. xlii. 1, 2. lxxxiv. 1, 2. How was he grieved when any thing hindered him from going to the house of God? envying the very *sparrows* and *swallows* that could get thither, when he could not, Psal. lxxxiv. 3. How much did he prefer the time he spent there, before all the rest of his life? and the lowest place in the house of God, before the highest in all the earth besides? *A day in thy courts*, saith he, *is better than a thousand*. *I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wicked-*

ness, ver. 10. And therefore he might well say, *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.*

And so may all good men as well as he; for they are all of the same temper, all acted by the same spirit, as he was. And therefore cannot but delight as much in going to the house of God as he did; and that upon several accounts. First, because of the great comfort they find in doing their duty to God, in worshipping and serving him that made them, and so answering his end in the making of them: for being conscious to themselves of the duty they owe to God, they can never be at rest in their own minds, without paying it, as far as they can, to him. But when they are doing that, their consciences are quiet, and their minds satisfied, and pleased with the thoughts of their doing what God would have them, and that he is therefore well pleased with them. And whatsoever some may think, this is certainly the greatest comfort that any man can have on this side heaven; in comparison of which, all the seeming pleasures of this world are nothing but fancy and delusion. *Our rejoicing, saith the apostle, is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world, 2 Cor. i. 12.* This is the rejoicing of every good man, when he goes into the house of God; that his conscience bears witness with him, that he is going about the works of God, the works that he was made for, even to serve and glorify his Maker: hence it is, that they whom God hath sometimes stirred up to go to church, if they afterwards leave it off again, or neglect it upon any slight occasion, their consciences usually fly in their faces, and torment them for it: whereas they who, like Anna the prophetess, never depart from the house of God, but serve him there with fastings and prayer day and night, Luke ii. 37. that is, never, or very rarely, omit either morning or evening sacri-

fice, their consciences have nothing to say against them for that, but bear witness for them that they do their duty, and please God, and so always live under his favour and protection; and how great a pleasure that is, none can tell but they who feel it: but they find and feel it to be the greatest pleasure of their lives, the only true joy and comfort of their hearts, and therefore must needs rejoice and be glad at all opportunities they can get of going into the house of the Lord.

And so they are too, because of the good company they meet with there: for there they do not only meet with their fellow-christians, ready to join with them in the work they go about, but there they meet also with the best friend they have in the world, with Almighty God himself; not as he is their Creator only, but as he is their Saviour also and Redeemer. For as such, he said, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, Matt. xviii. 20. But whensoever we go to perform our devotions in the house of God, we always do it in his name. And therefore whatsoever company we may chance to meet with there, we are sure of his. He is certainly among them, in the midst of them; for we have his own word for it, which is infinitely more than as if we saw him there with our eyes, or heard him speaking to us, as Moses sometimes did in the tabernacle; for our eyes and our ears might deceive us, but God cannot; *he cannot lie*, Tit. i. 2. And therefore he having said that he is in the midst of us, when we meet together in his name, he cannot but be there. And we may and ought to be as confident of it, as we are or can be of any thing in the world besides; so as never to doubt, but that as it is his house where we meet, so we always meet with him there.

But may we meet with our Lord and Saviour Christ, whensoever we go into the house of God?

Is he always there in the midst of us? Who then would not go thither as oft as he can? Men generally delight in nothing so much as in the company of one they love. But all good men, all true Christians, love Christ Jesus above all the things and persons upon earth. And therefore cannot but long to be where he is, and enjoy his company, *whom having not seen, they love; in whom though now they see him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. though they see him not with their bodily eyes, yet by faith, which is the *evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. they are fully assured that he is there, and therefore cannot but delight and rejoice in being there, more than in any other place or company upon earth besides. And they that do not, have too much cause to suspect that they have not that love and value for their Saviour which a Christian ought to have, and without which no man can truly be called a Christian: if they had, they could never think much of spending an hour or two in a day in his presence, but would look upon the time they are with him, as the best spent of any part of the day; would joyfully embrace all opportunities of meeting with him, and would be glad when any put them in mind of it, saying, *Let us go into the house of the Lord.*

Especially considering, in the next place, that he is in the midst of them, not only as a spectator, auditor, and observer of what they do, and speak, and think together; but he is there as their Saviour and Redeemer, to assist them in what they do; to sanctify it to them, and to bestow his manifold favours and blessings upon them, according to their several necessities and occasions. Hear what he himself saith, *In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee*, Exod. xx. 24. But wheresoever we meet together in his name, there his name is recorded or remembered; and therefore he

doth not only come thither, but he comes on purpose to bless us. But what blessings doth he bestow on those who meet together in his name? In general, all sorts of blessings which they are capable of and want: they were all purchased by him, with the price of his blood; and therefore are wholly at his disposal. And he usually distributes them in his own house, to those who meet there in his name, and so come thither for them; for when they are there, he, according to his word, comes to them, and blesseth them; he blesseth them with spiritual blessings in heavenly places; he gives them a true sight of their sins, with an hearty sorrow and repentance for them; he fills their souls with a sense of God's mercy in the pardon and forgiveness of them; he opens their eyes, and turns them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God; he enlightens their minds, that they may see the wonderful things which are written in the Law and Gospel; he directs them how to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, and to make their calling and election sure; he grants whatsoever they ask in his name, so far as he sees it to be good for them; he perfumes their hymns and praises with the incense of his own merits, that God may smell a sweet savour from them: he strengtheneth and refresheth their souls with his own body and blood, *that they may run with patience the race that is set before them*; he poureth down such a measure of his grace and Spirit upon them, whereby they are enabled to walk in holiness and righteousness before him all their days, and so makes them *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*.

These are some of those many and great blessings, which God our Saviour usually distributes in his own house, while his people are there praying, and praising God, hearing his Word, and receiving the Sacrament of his last supper; which are therefore

called the means of grace, because they are the ordinary means that Christ hath appointed, wherein to give us his grace and blessing, which all wise and good men desire above all things else, and therefore cannot but join with David in saying, *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.*

But hath he no temporal blessings to bestow as well as spiritual? Yes, surely, they also are all at his disposal, and he gives them to his servants, so far as they are blessings; that is, so far as they are good and necessary for them; for otherwise they are not blessings, but curses. But he gives them ordinarily with the other, or rather upon their seeking the other before them, and coming unto him for them, according to his word and promise, saying, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things, that is, all things that are needful for you, shall be added to you,* Matt. xvi. 33. Whereby his faithful servants have as great a security as can be given them, that they shall never want any thing that is good for them; for they have the infallible word of God himself for it, from whom *comes every good and perfect gift, and with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,* James i. 17. And therefore it is impossible that they who seek and serve him before all things, should want any thing that is really good for them, so far as it is so: as impossible as it is for God to lie.

So that all who sincerely devote themselves to his service, need never fear losing any thing by leaving their shops or houses, for a while, to go to church, the house of God. But they should rather be confident, and rest fully satisfied in their minds, that as they go thither to wait upon him, and to do the work that he hath set them; so he, according to his word, will come unto them, and will bless them. He will bless them in their going out, and in their coming

in: he will bless them in their basket and in their store: he will bless them in their callings, that they may be sure to get what is needful for them; and he will bless what they have so gotten, both to themselves and families. This they may truly promise themselves, for God himself hath promised it. And therefore they may well rejoice and be glad at all opportunities they can get of going into the house of the Lord.

This will appear further, if we consider also the great pleasure that good men take in what is done while they are in the house of God; howsoever irksome and tedious it may seem to other people; they who truly love and fear God above all things, find more true joy and comfort in his house, than they can do any where else; they are there in their proper elements, about the business they are most inclined to, and therefore must needs be most delighted in, as being suitable to their renewed nature, and agreeable to their spiritual temper and disposition. So that the whole work of the place in itself affords them great joy and pleasure, which is very much augmented also by the Holy Spirit of God co-operating with them in it; whereby the hearts of those who are rightly disposed for it, are usually filled with all the joy and comfort which as yet they are capable of; according to the promise that God himself hath made to that purpose, where, speaking of those who faithfully serve him, and love his name, he saith, *Them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer*, Isa. lvi. 7. *In my house of prayer*; that is, the place where he usually cheereth and refresheth his people's spirits, more than in any other place upon earth: as I do not doubt but many here present have often found by their own experience, who coming sometimes dull, and heavy, and disconsolate, into the house of God, have there had such discoveries of his greatness and

glory, and such intimations of his love and mercy to them, whereby their hearts have been raised up to the highest pitch of joy and cheerfulness, such as none could give them, but he that promised to make them joyful in his house of prayer; and who never fails to perform his promise to them who come thither duly prepared, and keep their minds intent upon him, and upon the duties which are there performed to him, according to the orders and directions of our Church.

I say, according to the orders and directions of our Church; for I speak not of what is done in those private assemblies, where the people have nothing to do but to hearken to what is done by another; and besides a sermon, have nothing but an extempore prayer, which they know not what it will be until they hear it, and so cannot heartily join in it: but I speak only of the offices and duties which are constantly performed in the house of God, according to the appointment of our Church. All which, by God's blessing upon them, and by his grace working together with them, both jointly and severally conduce very much towards the making his people joyful, and therefore glad to go into the house of the Lord.

Which that I may demonstrate to you, I shall instance more particularly in some of them, and shew how they do not only edify, but recreate and cheer the spirits of all that are truly pious and devout, all the while that they are duly exercised in them: for which purpose I may first observe, that they having at their first entrance into his house confessed their sins to God, and being thereby possessed with a deep sense of the insupportable and eternal torments which they have deserved by them, the minister, in the name of God, and by his authority, solemnly declares, that *he pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel.* Which to them who are sensible of, and truly peni-

tent for, their sins, as all good people are, is certainly the greatest comfort in the world: in that they are hereby assured, that notwithstanding their manifold provocations of him, Almighty God, upon their repentance and faith in Christ, is now reconciled to them, and receives them into his grace and favour, as much as if they had never offended him. They who are not comforted and rejoiced at this, have too much cause to suspect that they do not feel the weight of their sins, nor regard the love of God; for if they did, they would receive his absolution with the highest expressions of joy and thankfulness; and would not only be glad to go into the house of the Lord, but would be sure always to go soon enough to receive it.

His faithful people now looking upon themselves as absolved from their sins, and restored to the favour of God, according to the promise he hath made in Jesus Christ our Lord, they immediately address themselves to him, as their gracious and most merciful Father, saying, *Our Father, which art in heaven.* And so they go on in the several parts of the service to present their petitions to him, coming boldly, as the apostle speaks, *to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,* Heb. iv. 16. not doubting but that he, being now reconciled to them through Christ, will grant them whatsoever they ask in his name, according to his own word, saying, *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you,* John xvi. 23. In confidence of which promise they accordingly ask whatsoever they stand in need of, either as to this world or the next; still keeping their eye and their faith fixed upon the almighty Creator of the world, as their most loving Father; and upon his Son, as their most powerful Advocate with him, continually making intercession for them, that their services may be accepted, and their petitions granted by him, so

far as he in his infinite wisdom knows them to be expedient for them. Thus, all the while they are upon their knees, they are conversing with Almighty God, and exercising their faith in Christ, and so have *fellowship both with the Father and the Son*, 1 John 3. Now what a mighty pleasure and comfort this is to all the true saints and servants of God, I need not tell them: though nobody else doth, they know it, they feel it to be the greatest, the only true joy and comfort of their hearts. For hereby they enjoy communion with God, the chiefest, the only good, and rest fully satisfied in their minds, that they shall want nothing that is good for them, nothing that can either do them or make them good; seeing they have him who is all good in himself, and his word for whatsoever they ask that is so to them: whereby they, according to their capacities in this mortal state, in some measure enjoy all the good things that God hath made, and him too that made them. Which is so great an happiness, that they who have once tasted of it, cannot but always desire it, and therefore must needs be glad to go into the house of the Lord to partake of it.

Besides that, they never go into the house of the Lord, but they have some part of his own word solemnly read, if not expounded also to them, and so they always there hear their heavenly Father speaking and making known himself and his holy will unto them, what he would have them believe and do, that they may continue in his love and favour, which all his dutiful and obedient children prize and desire above all things in this world. *The judgments of the Lord, saith David, are true and righteous altogether: more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb, Psalm xix. 9, 10. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than*

thousands of gold and silver, Psalm cxix. 72. How sweet are thy words unto my lips! sweeter than honey to my mouth, ver. 103.

And verily it is no wonder that the children of God thus highly value and delight in his holy word; for as it is by his word that they are begotten or born again of God, and so made his children at first, Jam. i. 18. so the same word is afterwards the proper nourishment of their souls, whereby their new and spiritual life is sustained and increased in them, so as to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. iii. 18.* And therefore, as *new-born babes, they cannot but desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby, 1 Pet. ii. 2.* But this is communicated to them by their heavenly Father most effectually in his own house; for although they may read the word of God over and over again at home, or in any other place, yet they find by experience that it never comes with so much power and efficacy upon them, as when it is administered to them in his own house, in his name, by an officer of his own appointment, while his people are met together to serve and worship him, and so have his Holy Spirit assisting and co-operating with his word, that it may work effectually in them that believe, 1 Thess. ii. 13. Who therefore finding the word of God to be quite another thing when publicly read or explained in God's house, than it is at their own, they cannot but be exceeding glad of all opportunities of going thither to hear it.

Especially seeing when they come there they do not only pray and hear God's holy word, but they join together also in praising and magnifying his holy name; not only a little by the by, as occasion serves in the prayers and lessons, but in a set and solemn manner: so that this makes a great, if not the greatest, part of our daily service; which we have no sooner began, but we presently call upon one another,

saying, in the words of the Holy Ghost, *O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation: let us come into his presence with thanksgiving, and shew ourselves glad in him with psalms.* And then we accordingly go on to praise him with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs: we commonly repeat several psalms together, and, after every one of them, we constantly give glory to God, saying, *Glory be to the Father, &c.* After the first Lesson, we repeat the *Te Deum, We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord;* or else the *Benedicite, O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord; praise him, and magnify him for ever.* After the second Lesson, we say the *Benedictus, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people;* or else the hundredth psalm, called the *Jubilate, O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands; serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song.* And so in the afternoon we sing the *Magnificat*, or the ninety-eighth psalm, after the first Lesson; and after the second, the *Nunc dimittis*, or the sixty-seventh psalm: besides all which, we constantly repeat the *Creed*, or confession of our faith, wherein we acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and recount the wonderful things which the Son of God hath done for us; how “ he
“ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the
“ Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was
“ crucified, dead, and buried; descended into hell,
“ rose again the third day, ascended up into heaven,
“ and there sitteth at the right hand of God, in the
“ glory of the Father.” By all which we set forth the praises of the most high God, in the best manner we can do it upon earth.

Thus whensoever we come into the house of the Lord, we join together in praising him, our almighty Creator, and most merciful Redeemer, and so do the great work for which he created and redeemed us;

which therefore must needs be very pleasant and delightful to those who believe themselves to be not only created, but likewise redeemed by him for that end and purpose. As David found by experience, when he said, *My soul shall be satisfied even as it were with marrow and fatness, when my mouth praiseth thee with joyful lips*, Psal. lxiii. 6. Where we may likewise observe, that joyfulness doth so necessarily accompany our praising God, that we can never do it aright without it; for we must always praise him with joyful lips, *we must sing merrily to God our strength, and make a cheerful noise to the God of Jacob*, Psal. lxxxix. 1. *and rejoice in giving praise for the operations of his hands*, Psal. xcii. 4. Which we cannot choose but do, if we duly consider those infinite perfections we acknowledge in him, and the glorious works we praise him for; for the very agnizing and celebrating of them, fills our souls with unspeakable joy and pleasure, the highest that we are capable of. This is that which makes heaven itself to be so pleasant a place to those who dwell there, because they are always praising God. There *the cherubin and seraphin continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory. There the glorious company of the apostles praise him. There the goodly fellowship of the prophets praise him. There the noble army of martyrs praise him. There all the spirits of just men made perfect praise him continually. And if we shall ever be so happy as to be admitted into their blessed society, we shall join with them in praising him that brought us thither: this will be our work, and this will be our pleasure for evermore: and as ever we desire to do it there, we must delight in doing it here first; otherwise our hearts will not be set right for it, and so we shall not be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: but that is the thing which all that are*

truly wise and pious, most earnestly desire above all things else, and therefore cannot but always rejoice and be glad to go into the house of God, that they may there praise him, and so begin that work in time, which they hope to continue to all eternity.

But that which above all makes the saints and servants of the most high God so joyful in his house of prayer, and therefore so glad to go thither, is the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, usually performed there, ordained by our Lord, the Almighty God, our Saviour himself, on purpose to put us in mind of him, and so to confirm our faith in him, to inflame our love to him, to excite our desires and longing after him, to fill our hearts with joy and thankfulness for him, that our souls may be strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are with bread and wine. Here we receive the pardon of all our sins, sealed to us in the blood of the Son of God. Here we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ by faith, so as that he dwelleth in us, and we in him; he is one with us, and we with him.

Hereby we are assured of God's love and favour to us, and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of his Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people, and also are heirs, through hope, of his everlasting kingdom, by the merits of the most precious death and passion of his dear Son. Where shall we find matter of so great joy and comfort on this side heaven? No where certainly but in God's own house, where he is pleased to give it us at his holy table, when the Sacrament of his most blessed body and blood is there administered, as it is every Lord's day in this, and some other, and ought to be so in all the houses of God in the land: that his people may never want that spiritual food which he hath provided for them, wherewith to nourish and preserve both their souls and bodies to

everlasting life, which his dutiful and obedient children, always hungering and thirsting after, cannot but be overjoyed at all occasions of having it administered unto them. And therefore as they always rejoice and are glad when any say unto them, *Let us go into the house of the Lord*, so especially when they say, *Let us go unto the table of the Lord*; and are always ready to say with David, Psal. lxxv. 4.

These things I thought good to put you in mind of at this time, not only to shew what cause we have to thank God that his house is refitted, and that we are got again into it; but likewise that you may see that it is your interest, as well as duty, to frequent it as much as possibly you can. I am very sensible, that all that I have now said, and all that can be said upon this subject, will have but little effect upon the greatest part of them which hear it: for we live in an age that is only for hearing, not for doing any thing they hear; much less, that which ye have now heard; which, as I observed before, none can receive in the love of it, but only such as are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and so are wholly devoted to the service of God. All others will think what you have now heard to be a mere paradox. They can never get it into their heads that there is any profit or pleasure to be had at church, because they could never find it there: but the reason is, not because it is not to be had, but because their minds being set upon other things, they are not qualified or disposed for those pure and spiritual joys which God vouchsafeth to his people in his own house, and to none but them. All others are altogether unacquainted with them; which being the many, or rather the most, hence it comes to pass, that daily prayers are so much slighted and neglected among us, far more, to our shame be it spoken, than among any other sort of people in the world. The Papists will rise up in judgment with this generation, for they every

day observe their canonical hours for praying, at least, for that which they believe to be so. The Jews will rise up in judgment with this generation, for they never omitted to offer their daily sacrifices, so long as they had an house of God wherein to offer them. The Turks shall rise up in judgment with this generation; for when their priests call the people to prayer, as they do several times every day, they immediately run to their mosques or temples; and if any offer to stay at home, he is shunned by all, as a wicked, atheistical wretch. The Heathens will rise up in judgment with this generation, for if they had such opportunities as we have, of praying and praising their almighty Creator every day, I doubt not but they would do it far more constantly, than it is done by most of us. What then can we expect but that some severe judgment or other will, ere long, be inflicted on us? when people generally live as without God in the world, notwithstanding the clear discoveries that he hath made of himself unto them, and notwithstanding the means of grace which are so constantly administered to them, but they will not use them.

But let others continue, if they please, in this wicked course, and take what follows. You have now heard what a joyful and pleasant thing it is to go into the house of God, to serve and worship him there; be now advised to do it, and to do it as oft as possibly you can. I dare assure you ye will then experience the truth of all that I have now said of it, and far more than I am able to express. But for that purpose, whensoever ye go into the house of the Lord, you must lay aside all other business, and apply yourselves wholly to the duties of that holy place; ye must keep your minds intent all the while upon him before whom ye are, and upon the work which he hath there set you. You must confess your sins heartily, you must receive his absolution

faithfully, you must hear his word attentively, you must pray sincerely, you must praise him lustily, and with a good courage; and when ye receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, ye must do it with that true repentance, that strong faith, that heavenly joy and thankfulness that is due to so great a mystery. Thus exercising your souls continually in these holy and spiritual duties, that are performed in God's lower houses upon earth, ye will be every day more and more prepared and fitted to live with him in heaven, there to enjoy and praise him for ever.

SERMON XI.

THE USEFULNESS OF FASTING.

1 Cor. xi. 27.

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.

FROM your presence here at this time, I cannot but in charity infer three things ; first, that you all believe a future state ; and that as really as you are now in this, it is not long but you will all be in another world, either in a world of happiness, or else in a world of misery ; for if you do not believe this, it is to no purpose for you to come hither ; this place and work having a peculiar reference to the other world, and not to this where we now are. Secondly, hence I infer likewise, that you are fully persuaded that your condition in the other world will be according to your behaviour in this ; that if you continue in your sins here, you will there be miserable ; but if you repent and turn to God, you will be happy for ever ; for certainly you would not come hither to learn what to do in order to your future happiness, unless you were fully persuaded beforehand, that you must do something in order to it. Hence therefore, in the third place, I conclude also, that you all desire, when you leave this, to go to a better world,

even to heaven, the only place of real and eternal happiness; for what need you to come hither to know how to get to heaven, if you do not care whether you ever come there or no?

Taking it therefore for granted, that your minds are possessed with a firm belief of another world, with a full persuasion that you shall live there in happiness or misery, according as you live here in holiness or sin, and with hearty desires to carry yourselves so while you live, that when you die you may go to heaven; this, I say, being taken for granted, it cannot but be very seasonable and suitable to your design in coming hither, to explain these words of the apostle, which I have now read unto you; wherein you have the great end which the apostle did, and you I suppose do, aim at in all your actions, even how to get to heaven; and then, secondly, one of the means whereby he did, and you, by the blessing of God, may, attain that end, even by keeping the body under, and bringing it into subjection; *I keep under my body, saith he, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached unto others, I myself should be a cast-away.*

As for the first, it is plain from these words, that one of the great ends St. Paul aimed at, the great designs he carried on in all he did, was to save himself as well as those that heard him. He was conscious to himself, that the efficacy of the Word and Sacraments which he administered did not depend upon his own personal holiness, but upon his apostolical office, and the promise of the Spirit annexed to it; and therefore that it was very possible for him to be an instrument in God's hand to save others, and yet he himself be damned; that he might shew others the way to heaven, and yet he himself not walk in it. Hence he took special care all along, lest that by any means when he had

preached to others, and taught them how to obtain the crown of glory, he himself should lose it, by being ἀδόκιμος a cast-away, a reprobate, one not approved of as fit to have it set upon his head.

And if St. Paul himself used so much care and diligence, lest, after all the pains he had taken for the salvation of others, he himself should miss of it ; what cause have we to do so, who are now entrusted with the administration of the Word and Sacraments ? Certainly we had need to look about us, lest after all our preaching unto others, we ourselves should perish everlastingly ; especially considering that we cannot but be all sensible, that it is far easier to preach the Gospel, than to practise it ; to tell others what to do, than to do it ourselves ; and therefore whatsoever pains we take in the one, we had need to take as much, if not much more, to do the other too : for what a sad thing will it be, to see many converted by our ministry shining in heaven's glory, and we ourselves lie scorching in eternal flame ? To see them with Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, solacing themselves in those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore, and ourselves in the mean while with Dives in hell torments, without so much as a drop of water to cool our inflamed tongues ? And yet St. Paul foresaw this would be the consequence of his preaching the Gospel to others, unless he himself lived up unto it ; and therefore we may be confident it will be so unto us too ; but I would not have you think that this concerns us of the clergy only ; the same argument holds good as to all others. For if so holy a person, as we must all acknowledge St. Paul to have been, after all his preaching salvation unto others, was so solicitous about his own ; what cause then have you to fear, lest after all your reading and hearing the word of God, after all your public and private devotions, after all your receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's

Supper, you at last be cast-aways, and so lose all your pains and labour? And, by consequence, how much doth it concern you all to take as much care, if possible, as St. Paul himself did, of your future happiness? I am sure all that are wise amongst you cannot but look upon this as a matter of the greatest importance that you have or can have in this world; and howsoever any of you may think otherwise at present, it is not long but you will all be of the same mind; which that you may be before it be too late, I pray and beseech you all seriously to consider, that you have another world to live in as well as this, an eternal world, where you must abide either in the height of happiness, or else in the depth of misery, for evermore; so that as really as you now live amongst men, you will there live either with Christ and his holy angels, or else with the devil and his damned fiends, unto all eternity.

Do but seriously consider this, and you will need no other arguments to persuade you to follow the example of this great apostle in this particular, even to make it your daily, your constant, your only care and business in this world, to prepare and fit yourselves for the other; that when you come to die you may then begin to live, to live with God, to live in light, in love, in rest, in peace, in joy, in heaven itself; in heaven, I say, where we shall be freed from all those griefs and troubles, from all those cares and fears, that here distract our minds, and make us restless and uneasy. In heaven, where we shall trample upon this lower world, and ride in triumph over both sin and satan, so as never to be tempted or disturbed more: in heaven, where our souls shall be reduced to their primitive frame and temper, and be made so perfectly happy, as to be perfectly holy: in heaven, where our thoughts shall be always pure, our minds serene, and our hearts transported with love and joy in the chiefest good: where we shall always behold

the glory, admire the perfections, and enjoy the presence of the great Jehovah, so as always to apprehend him as well pleased with us, rejoicing over us, and manifesting his infinite love and goodness to us: which is so great, so exceeding great an happiness, that it may justly strike us into admiration, how it is possible for such silly creatures as we are to enjoy and bear it; yet how great soever it be, there is never a soul here present but as yet is capable of it, and invited to it; and if you be not failing to yourselves, you may all ere long be admitted into the actual possession of it.

But for that end you must still remember, that as heaven is the highest happiness you can attain to, so it is the hardest matter in the world to attain unto it: I speak not this to discourage any of you, but I would not have you fooled by the devil and his emissaries into a groundless conceit, that it is easy to get to heaven; for Christ himself, by whom alone it is possible for any of you to come there, hath told you the contrary, assuring you with his own mouth, *that the gate is strait, and the way narrow, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*, Matt. vii. 14. And you cannot but all acknowledge as much, if you do but consider what is necessary in order to it; for what must you do that you may inherit eternal life? or rather, what must you not do? You must mortify every lust, for one sin will keep you out of heaven as well as twenty; you must exercise every grace, and perform every duty that is required of you both to God and man; you must *walk in all the commandments of God blameless*, to the utmost of your knowledge and power, so as to be sincerely, entirely, and constantly holy in all manner of conversation; for it is the irrevocable decree of heaven, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. And therefore if ever you desire to see the Lord in glory, you must live above the world whilst you are in it, and contemn it while you

use it; you must gather up all your scattered affections from all things here below, and fix them upon God, so that all the inclinations of your souls must meet and rest in him as their only centre, otherwise you will not be *meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light*, nor capable of those pure and spiritual joys, which are there prepared for you.

But if these things be so, you may say to me, as the Apostles said to our Lord, *Who then can be saved? for who is sufficient for these things?* To that I answer, It is true, if we look no further than ourselves, we may justly despair of ever knowing what heaven is; but our comfort is, that our sufficiency is of God, who is always ready to assist us in the use of those means that are appointed by himself; amongst which we are now, in the second place, to consider one of the most effectual, even that which the apostle tells us he himself used, saying, *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.*

In speaking to which, I shall not trouble you with any critical observations about the Greek words *ὑπαπιάζω καὶ δουλαγωγῶ* here used; for our English translation gives you the full sense and meaning of them, as well as any words are able to express it: *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection*; as if he should have said, I being still in the body, and finding by experience that that is very apt to resist and rebel against my soul, to tempt me to vice, and to hinder me in the exercise of virtue, I therefore take care to keep it under, in such a temper as that it may be always subject unto, and ready to observe, the dictates of my reason, and the motions of God's Spirit within me, and so be no hindrance, but rather a furtherance, to me in my progress to heaven.

But for our better understanding of this, we shall consider two things.

I. How the apostle did, and we may keep our bodies under, and bring them into subjection.

II. How much this conduceth to our being so holy here, that we may be happy hereafter, and so not be cast-aways, as the apostle here speaks.

The first will be soon dispatched; for it is plain that the apostle kept his body under, and brought it into subjection, by fasting and abstinence, as the Fathers frequently observe; for as for those corporal chastisements by whipping and scourging of themselves, so commonly and ridiculously used by the papists in their solemn processions, St. Paul never makes any mention of them. He saith indeed, that he *was thrice beaten with rods, and five times received forty stripes, save one*, 2 Cor. xi. 24. but he received them not from himself or his confessor, as the papists do, but from his implacable enemies the Jews. But when he afterwards saith, that *he was in hunger and thirst often, in fastings often*, ver. 27. by the former the Fathers generally understand the hunger and thirst which he was forced to undergo in his travels and imprisonments; by the latter, those voluntary fastings which he undertook himself, whereby to *keep his body under, and to bring it into subjection*, this being indeed the most, if not the only, effectual means to do it; forasmuch as indulging the appetite, and constant feeding to the full, though without excess, swells the veins, and breeds those petulant and noxious humours in the body, which make it rampant and ungovernable; whereas, on the other side, fasting and frequent abstinence withdraws the fuel which foment those combustions and tumults, those wars and rebellions, which the body raiseth against the soul, the inferior against the superior powers; and therefore as it was by fasting that St. Paul did it, so it is by fasting that we must keep our bodies under, if we ever desire to do it effectually.

And so I come to the other thing to be considered, even how much this keeping the body under, by fast-

ing and abstinence, conduceth to our being holy here, and by consequence happy hereafter ; which being a thing so seldom thought of in our age, and yet of greater importance than can easily be imagined, for the better explication of it I shall lay down these propositions.

First, therefore, true holiness, we must know, is seated only in the soul, and is indeed nothing else, but the right disposition of the several faculties of the soul, and their acting conformably to the law and nature of God ; and therefore though the soul can perform many acts of holiness without the body, the body can perform none without the soul ; and although to some acts, both parts are required to put forth themselves in their several capacities, yet they are no further acts of holiness, than as they proceed from the soul. Hence the soul may be perfectly holy, and perfectly happy too, without the body, as in the state of separation, when the body is capable of neither.

2. Although the soul be a distinct substance from the body, and so is capable of acting separately from it, even whilst it is in it ; yet so long as it is tied to the body, and actually informs it, so as to be but one part of that composition, which we call man, it ordinarily makes use of the organs of the body, especially of the animal spirits, in all its actions, and those only are properly called human actions, which are thus performed even by the whole man, which therefore cannot but depend very much upon the temper of the body that concurs to the performance of them ; as we find by daily experience they do ; for if our bodies be out of tune, so are our minds too. If any thing affects our heads, disturbs our brains, and so disorders the animal spirits which the soul makes use of in its operations, they are likewise disorderly and irregular : as in music, though the artist be never so skilful, yet if his instrument be out of tune, there

can be no harmony or melody in what he plays upon it. Yea none of us but may easily observe, that whatsoever humour prevails most in the body, as phlegm, choler, melancholy, or the like, our actions are usually tainted with it, insomuch that by them we may discover what that humour is which is most predominant: from whence it plainly appears, that so long as the soul is in the body, although it was designed to rule and govern it, yet it is apt to be governed by it, and to humour it so far as to follow not its own reason and judgment, but the more impetuous inclinations of the sensitive part, although it be to its ruin and destruction.

3. Seeing therefore that the soul is the proper seat of holiness, and yet so long as it is in the body, it makes more or less use of it in all human actions, and is very apt to be swayed by it; hence it necessarily follows in the third place, that the keeping the body under by fasting, and so bringing it into subjection to the soul, cannot but conduce very much to the exercise of all true holiness; for by this means the soul being kept always in its throne, with full power and authority over its subjects, the inferior faculties being under no restraint, its reasonings would be clear, its judgments sound, its counsels deliberate; it would act like itself, a rational and spiritual substance, and so would be as free from all sensual vices as when separate from the body, which inclines it to them; and then it will begin to relish spiritual objects as suitable to its own nature; for it will look upon virtue and vice, not as they are falsely represented by the imagination, corrupted with the humours of the body, but as they are in themselves, and so discern how lovely and amiable the former is, how odious and detestable the latter, and by consequence exerts all its power to follow the one, and avoid the other.

To explain this more fully to ordinary capacities,

I might descend down to particulars, and shew how keeping the body under, by fasting and abstinence, does of itself conduce to the mortifying of most lusts, and to the quickening the contrary graces in us ; for which end I need not instance in gluttony and drunkenness, for these being directly contrary, yea contradictory, to true fasting ; where this is rightly observed, those vices must needs cease of their own accord, and the contrary virtues of temperance and sobriety take their place : the same may be said of luxury and uncleanness, for that proceeding only from too great a plenitude and luxuriancy of humours in the body, if your bodies be kept under as they ought to be, you will be as much averse from such sins, as ever you were inclined to them.

But I shall chiefly consider some other vices, which at first sight may seem more remote to our present purpose, as not depending so much upon the temper of the body ; as for example, are you apt to be angry and peevish, to fret and to be disturbed at every little thing that happens, as many are ? This commonly proceeds from immoderate diet, or constant feeding to the full, which breeds abundance of choler, and over-heats the animal spirits, whereby they are apt to take fire, and be inflamed at every thing that occurs contrary to our present desires ; but by constant abstinence the choler would be abated, the spirit cooled, and so the mind reduced into a sedate, meek, and gentle temper.

Are you addicted to pride ? although there be a spiritual pride, which degenerate souls are subject to, as well as fallen angels, yet that which mostly puffs up mankind with vain and foolish conceits of themselves, usually springs from the corruption of the fancy, caused by those malign vapours, which by reason of overmuch eating are exhaled from the stomach into the head, and there disturb the imagination ; but fasting prevents the very engendering of

such fumes, and by consequence the corruption of the fancy by them, by which means the mind is able to judge of things as they are, and to see clearly that we neither have nor can have any thing in the world to be proud of, but many things to be humbled for; and therefore the keeping the body under, is certainly the best way in the world to keep the mind humble and lowly.

Are you inclined to covetousness? To dote upon the toys and trifles of this lower world? This also must be ascribed very much to the depraved imagination, representing these little things as in a magnifying glass, and so making them seem to be what really they are not, great and amiable; and therefore as fasting frees the imagination from such exhalations as corrupt it, so it must needs help to the mind's looking upon things as it were with its naked eye, and so passing a right judgment upon them, by which means it is soon brought to contemn and despise the world, as much as ever it admired or loved it.

Are you dull and heavy at your devotions; not able to pray, to hear, to meditate, or serve the Lord without distractions? Whence comes that dulness? Whence these distractions, but from that hurry of gross vapours in the brain, which obstruct its passages, and crowd about it so disorderly, that the soul cannot without much time and pains rally them together, and reduce them to such an order, as to make any tolerable use of them? And therefore as these distractions are caused by overmuch eating, so they may be cured by fasting: hence it is that none of you but may find by experience that you can never perform any spiritual exercise with that life and vigour, that cheerfulness and alacrity, that constant presence and composure of mind, as when your bodies are empty, and so kept under as to be in a due subjection to the soul.

I might instance in many other particulars, from whence to shew how fasting doth of itself conduce much to the extirpation of most vices, and to the planting and growth of true virtue and goodness in us; but most others depend upon, or at least may be referred to, these already mentioned, therefore there is the same reason for them, as there is for those; so that we may justly conclude this, with a remarkable passage of St. Hierome, in his Epistle to Celantio, where, speaking of the very words of my text, he saith, “that fasting and abstinence, *Non castitati tantummodo, sed omnibus omnino virtutibus opitulatur*, helps not only to chastity, but to all manner of “virtues whatsoever.”

But the great and principal reason of all why it doth so is still behind, and that is, because that fasting is so pleasing and acceptable to Almighty God, that he hath promised a blessing, a reward to it, whensoever it is rightly performed, and that too not by the mouth of a prophet, an apostle, or an angel, but by his own divine mouth when he was here upon earth; for our Lord himself saith, *When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but to thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly*, Matt. vi. 17, 18. From whence it is plain, that if a man fast not out of vain ostentation to be seen of men, and thought holy, but out of a sincere design to keep his body under, and so fit himself the better for the service of God, that man shall certainly be rewarded for it: but what reward shall we have? Why, God will bless and sanctify it to the great ends and purposes for which it is designed. Fasting, as I have shewn, doth conduce much to our being holy, but it cannot make us so; that is only in the power of God, the only fountain of all true grace and holiness; but he being well pleased with fasting, where it is duly observed,

doth by his own grace and Spirit make it effectual for the subduing our lusts, and for our performance of all holy and good works.

For our better understanding of this, we must consider, that although God can work with means; or without means, or by contrary means, as he himself sees good, yet he ordinarily makes use of the most fit and proper means that can be used for the effecting whatsoever he designs; and it is presumption in us to expect he should do otherwise. But fasting, as we have shewn already, is a very fit and proper means, as of itself conducing much to an holy and virtuous life; and therefore they who give themselves to fasting and abstinence as they ought to do, are always in God's way, using the proper means for the obtaining of true grace and virtue, and so need not doubt but he will bestow it upon them; whereas they who refuse or neglect such means, have no more ground to expect his blessing and assistance, than they have to expect he should work miracles for them.

And besides that, although the most high God, the chiefest, the only good, be always ready and free to communicate of himself, and distribute the graces of his Holy Spirit, it is to those who are rightly disposed for the receipt of them, whose bodies are fitted and prepared for the inhabitation of the Spirit, or, as the apostle words it, *to be the temple of the Holy Ghost*. But certainly no bodies are so fit and proper for so divine, so pure a guest, as those which by fasting and abstinence are kept in continual subjection to the soul; for it being the soul that is primarily inspired and sanctified by the Spirit, unless the body be subject to the soul, it will not be subject to the Spirit that is in it, *but the flesh will lust against the Spirit*, Gal. v. 17. Whereas if the body be kept clean and pure, at the beck of the soul, always ready and willing to observe its commands,

then the Spirit that enlightens, actuates, and quickens the soul, will with great facility diffuse its influences over the whole man, so as to sanctify it throughout; for then the body being subject to the soul, and the soul to the Spirit; as the Spirit is, so will both soul and body be in their capacities, pure and holy.

Hence it is that the greatest discoveries that God hath made of himself to men, and the most powerful effects of the Spirit upon them, have usually been when they were fasting, and so in a right disposition for them. Thus Moses was fasting forty days and forty nights, even all the while that he conversed with God upon mount Sinai, and received the law from him, Exod. xxxiv. Elias had fasted forty days and forty nights, when God discoursed so familiarly with him upon mount Horeb, 1 Kings xix. Our Lord himself also, though he had no need of it, his body being always perfectly subject to his soul without it, yet he also for our example and imitation fasted forty days and forty nights, even all the while that he was overcoming the devil, and had the angels to minister unto him in the wilderness, Matt. iv. Daniel was fasting when the angel Gabriel was sent unto him, to acquaint him with the precise time of the Messiah's coming, Dan. ix. The disciples at Antioch were fasting when the Holy Ghost in a miraculous manner spake unto them, saying, *Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work to which I have called them*, Acts xiii. To name no more, Cornelius, by whose conversion the door of salvation was opened to the Gentiles, was also fasting when the angel was sent to instruct him how to get to heaven, Acts x. 30. By all which it appears, that when men are fasting, and so their bodies are subject to their souls, then God takes the opportunity of manifesting himself and his will and pleasure to them, and also of directing and assisting them in the way to bliss; and by

consequence, that fasting is of greater moment to our being holy, than it is commonly thought to be.

Nay, after all, it is very observable, that it is so necessary to our being holy, that we can never be perfectly holy, until we fast perpetually, I mean in heaven, where our *bodies shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body*, and reduced to such an excellent temper, as neither to want nor desire food; then, and not till then, will our bodies be brought into perfect subjection to our souls, and our souls to God; so that instead of eating and drinking, we shall be always loving, always rejoicing, always praising, always honouring and obeying him; and seeing that we can never arrive at the perfection of holiness, until we come to fasting altogether, we cannot surely but from thence conclude, that fasting must needs contribute much, not only to our being, as near as we can, like to the saints in heaven, but likewise to our coming to them; and so, that the Fathers did not more commonly than truly observe, that as it was by eating that we were cast out of Paradise, so it is by fasting that we are restored to it.

Thus I have briefly touched upon some of those many arguments which might be produced to demonstrate the excellency and usefulness of fasting. I am very sensible that this will seem strange doctrine to many in our age, like those St. Chrysostom speaks of, who *προσχήματι τελειότητος*, under a pretence of greater light and perfection, look upon themselves as far above so low a dispensation as this is, and therefore indulge their appetites, and laugh at such pitiful mean Christians as are forced to give themselves to fasting; and I fear many of you that hear me at this time are of the same mind, and therefore think that fasting perhaps may be very good and needful for others, but not at all for themselves.

But what? Are you not commanded to fast as well as pray? And how come you to be disobliged

from one duty more than from the other? Did not Christ himself say, Luke v. 34, 35. *that when he, the bridegroom, was taken from them, then his disciples should fast?* And are not you in the number of his disciples? Hath not he, your Master, taught you how to fast, as well as how to pray, and to give your alms? And do you think that he would teach you any thing, but what you are bound to do? Nay, are you not therefore bound to do it, because he hath taught you it? Did not he himself do it? Have not all the saints both in the Old and New Testament, and in all ages ever since, given themselves to fasting? Did not St. Paul himself do so? And do you think yourselves more pure, more holy, more perfect, than St. Paul was?

Men and brethren, I heartily wish that every soul here present was so, even that you were all greater saints, more eminent Christians, than that great, that eminent apostle himself was; that you were all so free from vice, so full of grace, so sure of heaven, that you had not that occasion as he had to keep your bodies under, lest after all you be cast-aways! That you had all got that perfect conquest over yourselves, and lusts, as never more to be inclined or tempted to sin or vanity; then I must confess you would not have so much need of fasting as St. Paul had, and therefore might be better excused from it than he was.

But I beseech you not to flatter yourselves with such groundless conceits as these are, as if you were more holy and spiritual than St. Paul was. Do but deal faithfully with yourselves, and you cannot but believe that you come far short of him in every point, in your love to God, in your faith in Christ, in your zeal for the Gospel, in every true Christian grace and virtue whatsoever; and therefore you must needs acknowledge, that if he, one of the strongest, most pious, and famous Christians that ever lived upon

the face of the earth ; if he, I say, was forced to keep his body under, and to bring it into subjection by fasting, lest after all he should be a cast-away ; certainly you have all the reason in the world to fear, that you should be cast-aways indeed, unless you do so.

Do but consider these things seriously, and I am confident you will not blame, but thank our Church for putting you in mind of this great duty : you will admire her prudence, and commend her care of those that live in her communion, in that she, in conformity to the primitive and universal Church, hath appointed several days every year for the performance of this duty, which otherwise you would be too apt to forget ; and although some may think them too many, yet the greatest part of Christians in the world would rather judge them to be too few ; especially those that live in the East, for they observe many more ; but our Church in this, as in all other things, keeps still in the mean ; and therefore besides the nights or eves before some holy-days, she hath appointed for days of fasting or abstinence only one day every week, to wit Friday, which hath always been observed in the Church. One week in every quarter, viz. Ember week, in imitation of the Apostles, who always fasted before they ordained any to the ministry : and lastly, the three Rogation days, and this great fast of Lent once every year, which was observed, if not by the Apostles themselves, yet at least by apostolical men, or those that lived in the very next ages to the Apostles, and so hath been continued as a time of fasting by all Churches in all ages and places ever since ; which questionless would not have been, had not Christians all along found extraordinary benefit and advantage by it ; and I do not doubt in the least, but that if all you that hear me at this time would be persuaded to observe all these feasts as

you ought to do, you would find yourselves other-guess Christians at the year's end, than you are now; for supposing you to be always temperate, without which you deserve not to be called Christians, and besides that, to observe these several fasts as they recur; as your constant temperance would keep your bodies always in health, so your frequent abstinence would keep them always under, and bring them into subjection to your souls: by which means you would be every day more averse from your former lust, more inclined to God and goodness, more capable of his divine illuminations and assistances, more ready and able to serve God here, and more fit to go to heaven and enjoy him for ever.

Now these things being duly weighed, you cannot surely but look upon yourselves as concerned in interest as well as duty to fast; and therefore cannot but be very solicitous to know how you may do it aright, even so as to make it effectual to the purposes aforesaid; which therefore I shall endeavour to resolve you in as briefly as I can: for which end we must first know in general, that there can be no certain rules laid down as necessary to be observed by all men in this case; for some require more fasting, some less, some none at all, even such as are weak and sickly, for to them their sickness supplies the use of fasting, in keeping their bodies under: hence it is that we commonly see sickly people have a deeper sense of God and religion than others, because their bodies, by reason of their often infirmities, are constantly kept in subjection to their souls; and they also who are of strong and healthful constitutions, are not bound to abstain for any long time from any manner of food, but only from such both for quantity and quality, as is apt to pamper the body, and to make it rebel against the soul; and if we do but attain the end of fasting, even to

keep our bodies under, and bring them into subjection to the soul, we need not, we ought not to be too scrupulous about other things.

This being premised in general, I think it is not amiss to mind you of some particular rules which I think necessary to be observed, in order to the attaining our ends in fasting.

First, make no distinction at such times betwixt flesh and fish, as the papists do, who if they do but abstain from flesh, and what proceeds from it, think they fast sufficiently, how much soever they eat or drink of other things; but neither the Scriptures nor the primitive Church ever observed any such distinction, neither doth it consist with the nature and end of fasting; but the old catholic way was, that when they fasted they abstained from all manner of food until the evening, and still observed Daniel's rule, who when he fasted *eat no pleasant or desirable food, neither did flesh nor wine come into his mouth*, Dan. x. 3. This the primitive Christians observed very strictly, that when they fasted they ate neither more nor better food than, as we use to say, to keep soul and body together; and as for wine, they would not so much as touch it; which, I think, is still necessary to be observed by all that would fast to any purpose.

2. Have a care of those superstitious ends which the papists propound to themselves in fasting, who think they worship God by it, and that they thereby make him satisfaction for their former sins, and merit his grace and favour for the future; but you, when you fast, do it only for that end which the apostle here mentions in my text, *even to keep your bodies under, and to bring them into subjection to your souls, that so you may not at the last be cast-aways.*

3. Have a care of falling into the other extreme, even of fasting too much, as well as too little; for, as St. Chrysostom observes from my text, the apo-

stle kept his body under, but he did not kill it ; he brought it into subjection, but not to destruction ; he used it as a servant, not as an enemy, and therefore would not starve it, for then he could expect no further service from it. Yea, it is St. Basil's observation upon these words, that they who fast too much, and so weaken and distemper their bodies, violate the apostle's rule ; for he by fasting brought his body into subjection to his soul ; they fast so as to bring their souls into subjection to their bodies, forcing them to spend their time in looking after their bodies, and serving them instead of being served by them. Hence the same apostle elsewhere commands us, not simply to *make no provision for the flesh*, but not so, as *to fulfil the lusts thereof*, Rom. xiii. 14. I suppose there are not many that need this caution, but there are some, and therefore I durst not omit it.

4. To your fasting always join prayer ; these two frequently go together in Scripture, and ought not to be separated by us, for they strongly excite and quicken one another, insomuch, that our Lord himself tells us, *there are some kind of devils that cannot be cast out but by prayer and fasting*, Matt. xvii. 21. Some may be cast out by one, some by the other, some by neither alone ; but there is no devil so powerful but he may be expelled, no sin so strong but it may be subdued, by both together ; and therefore when you fast, spend more time than ordinary in your private devotions, at least as much as you use to spend upon other days in eating, by which means you will lose no time from your particular, but gain much for your general, calling.

5. To fasting and prayer add alms also, for these three Christ joined together in his preaching, Matt. vi. And Cornelius in his practice, Acts x. And so must we too. Insomuch that the ancients scarce ever

speaking of fasting, but they prescribe this as necessary to the due performance of it; and the general rule they lay down for it is this, that what you save by fasting yourselves, you must give away to the relief of others; by which means, without either the loss of time, or the impairing your estates, you may perform the three great duties of the Gospel, fast, and pray, and give alms; which even severally are very acceptable to Almighty God, much more when they go together.

Lastly, when you have performed this duty as exactly as you can, have a care lest you place any confidence in it, but trust on Christ and him alone, to bless and sanctify it to the great ends for which you use it; for Christ himself hath told you, that *without him you can do nothing*, John xv. 5. But by him there is nothing but you may do, as St. Paul long ago experienced; saying, *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me*, Phil. vi. 13. And therefore whensoever you fast, as you must pray to God, so you must trust in Christ for his assistance of you, and then you need not fear but it shall most effectually conduce to *the keeping your bodies under, and the bringing them into subjection, so that you shall not be cast-aways, but happy for ever*. These are the rules which I judge necessary to be observed in fasting: and therefore whensoever I speak of fasting, I desire to be understood of fasting according to those rules, and no otherwise.

Thus now I have done my duty, in acquainting you with yours. What effect a sermon of this nature will have upon you, I know not, but fear it will meet with the same fate that sermons now-a-days use to do; some will like one thing, some another, some nothing at all in it, but dislike and censure the whole; and such will be so far from resolving to practise what they have heard, that they are resolved already not to practise it; and such may now go out

of the church, for I have no more to say unto them, but only this, that this sermon will one day rise up in judgment against them, and then they will wish they had observed it better, when it is too late: but as for such amongst you, as seriously mind the concerns of another life, I have a few more words to speak to you, which I desire you to hear with patience and attention.

Beloved in the Lord, you cannot but all ascribe it to the infinite goodness and mercy of the most high God, that you are still alive, and not in hell, but in a capacity as yet of getting to heaven, whither, I suppose, you all desire to go when you die: but heaven, you know, is a place where but few come, nor indeed any but real and true saints; and therefore as ever you desire to go thither when you die, you must while you live be sanctified wholly, you must mortify all your lusts, and subdue your passions, you must love and fear God above all things, you must serve, honour, and obey him with a perfect heart and a willing mind, and do all such good works as he hath prepared for you to walk in, which being no easy matter to do, you must lose no time, spare no costs, neglect no means that may be any way helpful to you in it; especially you must be sure to take St. Paul's course, you must *keep your bodies under, and bring them into subjection, otherwise you can expect no other but to be cast-aways, and undone for ever.*

Hence therefore, I beseech you as your friend, I advise and exhort you as a minister of Christ, as you tender your eternal salvation by him, that you would now set upon this work, this great work, so long neglected by you, even upon fasting, not after a careless, customary, or hypocritical manner, but in good earnest, so as that it may be effectual to the keeping of your bodies in continual subjection to your souls; for which end, I suppose, the strict

observation of the days prescribed by our Church may be sufficient for most people; but if any of you find that that will not do your business, fast oftener, but still observing the rules laid down before, and never leave off till you have brought your bodies to such a temper, as no way to obstruct your passage to heaven, till you have mortified all your members that are upon the earth; till you find no sin reigning in your mortal bodies, so as to fulfil the lusts thereof; for till then you may be sure you have not fasted enough, or at least not aright; for God is so ready to assist the constant and conscientious performance of this duty according to the aforesaid rules, that no sin, no devil, is able to withstand it.

And do not say or think within yourselves, that this is an hard work, who can bear it? for if you cannot deny yourselves a meal's meat, or a little wine now and then, for Christ's sake, how is it possible for you to deny yourselves any thing at all for him? And then with what face can you call yourselves his disciples, when you have not so much as learnt the first part of the first lesson that he hath taught all those that come to him, even self-denial? And besides, how hard soever this duty may seem at first, by custom it will soon grow easy; when you have been once used to it for a while, you will find that comfort and satisfaction in it, and reap that spiritual benefit and advantage from it, that not only itself, but all other duties will be both easy and pleasant to you.

How happy therefore should I think myself, would it please Almighty God to make me an instrument in his hand, to persuade all you that hear me at this time to the diligent performance of this duty? For how happy then should we all be? Then our minds, being no way disturbed by our bodies, would be always kept in so fine, so delicate a temper, that we should think ourselves in another world; then we

should despise the pleasures of this world, and leave them for brute beasts, and such men as live as if they were all body and no soul; then we should not be affrighted at the reproach of any evil, as knowing that all things shall work together for our good; nay, death itself would then be no terror to us, for we should not fear, but *desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.*

And when that blessed time shall once come, being freed from these lumps of clay, which now put us to all this trouble, we shall be made like to the glorious angels themselves, and then we shall never be troubled with eating or drinking more, but yet shall feast continually upon glory, goodness, all-sufficiency, pleasure itself; always enjoying, praising, adoring, and magnifying the eternal God, and our dear and ever-blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath purchased this grace and glory for us: to whom therefore, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, three Persons, one glorious and eternal God, be all honour, praise, and glory, from this time forth and for evermore. Amen.

THE END.

