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8^o B.S. X. 97. 103.

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DISCOURSES

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL,

PARTLY OCCASIONAL, CHIEFLY COMMON,

DELIVERED IN DIFFERENT COUNTRY CHURCHES.

BY THE

REV. JOHN MORLEY,

RECTOR OF BRADFIELD COMBUST,

AND

CURATE OF ST. CLEMENT'S WITH ST. HELEN'S, IPSWICH,

SUFFOLK.

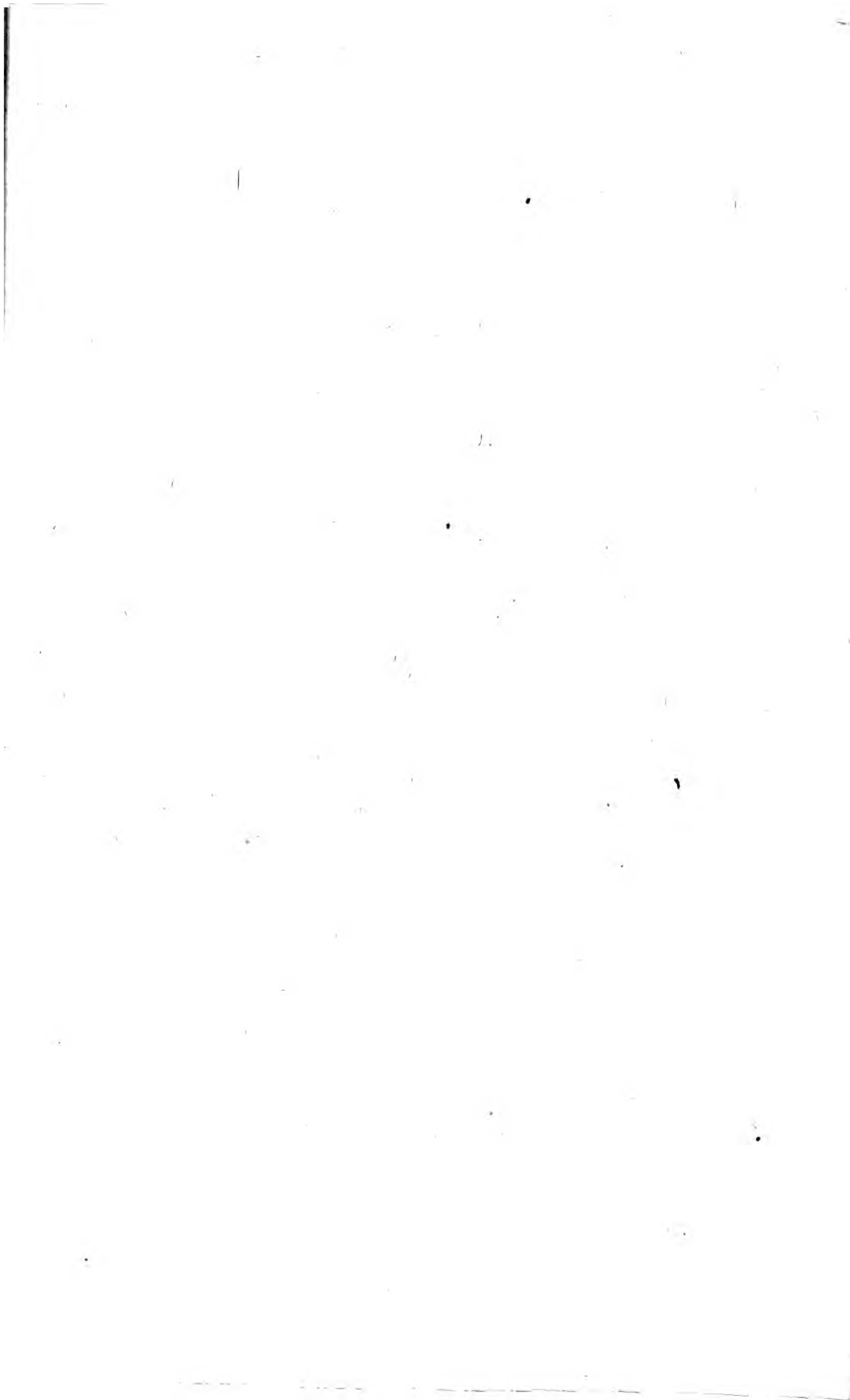


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1815.



To
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF BRISTOL.

My Lord,

I humbly dedicate this Volume to your Lordship, not from vanity, but gratitude; and I do it avowedly without permission, not presumptuously, but cautiously, lest you should be suspected of approving what you never saw and what many will perhaps condemn. Though I am unconscious of aught that in these pages may deserve censure or provoke contempt, I may nevertheless have unwittingly incurred both; and though I thus present myself before the tribunal of the public without guilt, I claim no indulgence for errors however involuntary, or for absurdities however casual; because in the detection of them I am as ready to acquiesce as if they were not my own.

Whensoever I reflect on the singular coincidences that brought me within your

Lordship's notice, I am lost in admiration of the exalted benevolence of man under the influence of Christ's religion, and in amazement at the infinite goodness of God towards the meanest of his creatures. The feelings of my heart prompt me to dilate upon this subject; but your Lordship is not one of those benefactors who

“ Delight in parasites that praise for hire,”

And for myself I must confess that

“ Fulness of gratitude would oft give thanks,

“ And knows no way to do it but by tears.”

Your Lordship's munificence has not only restored me to comfort, but to some share of usefulness in society; and that, so long as I live to enjoy the former, I may neither be wanting in the latter nor forgetful of the unsought Patronage to which I owe my all, shall be the constant prayer of, my Lord,

Your Lordship's ever most obliged

and most obedient humble Servant

JOHN MORLEY.

IPSWICH, 25 July, 1815.

P R E F A C E.

THESSE Discourses being printed by Subscription, an apology for their appearance may seem to be unnecessary; but when I consider that the literary world is already overstocked with productions of this kind; that many Divines of great talents, erudition, and piety have studiously withholden their manuscripts from the press; and that the name of an obscure country Clergyman is perhaps the reverse of a recommendation to public favour, I cannot refrain from a few prefatory observations.

The excellent Discourses of that which has not improperly been denominated the old school, from Joseph Mede to Tillotson, would alone suffice to constitute a complete body of divinity; but most of them have long been scarce and those which have been lately reprinted are necessarily dear; from the learned and copious argumentation with which they abound they are intelligible only to scholars; from their length they are unacceptable to readers in general; and from their obsolete dic-

tion they are spurned by the fastidiousness of the present age. Since the time of Tillotson the writers of sermons have studied beauty and ornament of style, and with such success that some of them, particularly Blair, have perhaps attained the perfection of pulpit eloquence. But the gospel must be preached to the poor as well as to the rich, to the illiterate as well as to the accomplished, and the language of a preacher should be adapted as carefully as possible to the capacity of his hearers ; as usefully almost may he deliver the Addresses of Bourdaloue or the Homilies of St. Chrysostom in the original, as an English discourse written after the manner of Burke or of Johnson to a country congregation. To avoid this, some have fallen into the opposite extreme and, labouring to be plain and familiar, have become mean and vulgar. So difficult is it to observe a due medium in popular instruction, that I know not one collection except Gilpin's in which it is to be found. I supposed, when I committed this Volume to the press, that I had given it some claim to that humble species of merit, but I have since discovered to my sorrow that I have not succeeded.

Many eminent persons in every department of literature have modestly abstained from obtruding themselves on the notice of the public ; and I could mention some discourses that are destined to the

flames, for the perusal of which such as these are not worthy of lighting a candle. Be it observed therefore that I arrogate nothing to myself; that I had ample patronage as well a materials for more than one volume; that I have not selected the best written but the most useful of what I had to produce; and that after all, if I appear not to deserve I wish not to receive encouragement.

If I were high in ecclesiastical station, it would contribute nought to the value of these discourses; and as I am not—which is neither my fault nor probably my misfortune—I may be allowed to hope that they will excite no scorn *on that account*. The two first and the five last are occasional: not one of them was written with a view to its being published, because they were all to be delivered under circumstances that admitted of no such desire; but I have given them a place in this volume, because they convey my sentiments, such as they are, on very important subjects, though, for reasons of delicacy only, I have not pointed out, except in a few instances, the time when, the place where, or the occasion whereon they were severally preached. No intelligent and candid reader will, however, condemn me for the omission, or be at any loss to supply it as far as may be necessary.

For what I am about to add I now crave a little indulgence.

On the general fast in February 1812 I delivered a sermon, which immediately afterward I took the liberty of publishing. It was evidently written more from the heart than from the head, and printed for the sole purpose of being useful. From the notice taken of it in the *British Critic* * I here extract the following passage :

“ The preacher seems to live in a neighbourhood, many of the individuals of which habitually absent themselves from church on Ash Wednesday from their dislike of the commination ordained to be read on that day. We have not heard of such a prejudice prevailing elsewhere.”

How it could seem that I alluded to any particular neighbourhood I cannot divine, for my words were these : “ *In whatsoever church the service of that day is performed a congregation is seldom found.*” I expressed myself *thus generally* throughout the whole context. If this reviewer had “ heard of no such prejudice,” what was that to me or to others who were well acquainted with it ? I have probably had as much experience in these matters as he ; for I have laboured nearly thirty years in the ministry, resided at different intervals in three dioceses very remote from each other, and found the same prejudice equally strong in every one of them. My testimony in support of the fact is at

* For April, 1812.

least as respectable as any peremptory denial of it without a name; moreover the fact is too notorious to admit of the smallest doubt.

The Monthly Review * speaking of the same sermon concludes the article thus :

“Cursing even of atrocious sinners is no part of public worship ; and we think that the preacher is unfounded in his inference that adultery is general, because good christian people are not partial to the practice of saying amen to a string of curses delivered as a part of devotion. The denunciation of the curse belongeth to the supreme judge.—A wide difference subsists between the *response* to the seventh commandment and the amen required to the above stated curse, though Mr. M. cannot or will not see it.”

If in this country the people are generally averse from hearing the commination ; if in this country the crime of adultery is held to be so venial that it passes under the gentle name of gallantry ; if in this country the newspapers abound with actions for crim. con. in high life and the open sale of men's wives in low ; why then my inference was not unfounded. But what if it had been ? Would the national character have been clear of the imputation ? And yet this gentleman has expressed himself as if he had lived in total ignorance of any such prevalent delinquency, and could

* For February, 1813.

not in charity believe it without the strictest logical proof. It is well known that, from an erroneous opinion of the commination, thousands absent themselves from divine service on Ash Wednesday, and in this erroneous opinion the reviewer participated when he rashly imputed voluntary or involuntary error to me. The curses *are* the curses of God, not our curses. *As such* they are pronounced by the minister; and the *Amen* that follows each of them is a simple term of *assent* that the curse of God is due to the offence; but not of *prayer* that it may be inflicted on any offender. I repeat therefore that no actual difference subsists between the seventh commandment with its responsive prayer and the denunciation of the curse with its responsive assent; for why do we implore God that he would incline our hearts to keep his laws? Because we know and acknowledge that, without repentance, whosoever violates them is * cursed. The former is an *implied* and the latter a *declared* assent to the very same truth.

If the present opportunity had not occurred, I should have passed over this subject in silence; for though I might have written a small pamphlet on the occasion, I could not afford the expense of printing it, and I durst not think of appropriating to my own use the pages of a magazine.

* The affirmative *is*, and not the optative *be he* is used in the curses read on Ash Wednesday.

IPSWICH, 27 July, 1815.

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The Author has thought it right to notice the following typographical errors, though few of them are of any importance; and he feels it his duty to apologize for others that may have escaped his observation, because he has had every opportunity that he could reasonably desire of correcting the press.

ERRATA.

- Page 9 line 4 from bot. for *impression* read impressions.
16 line 1 at top, for *drugery* read drudgery.
41 line 9 from top, for *invective* read incentive.
55 line 13 from top, dele quotation commas.
63 line 2 from bot. for *be* read is.
80 line 5 from top, for *betaught* read be taught.
91 line 10 from top, for *naught* read nought.
92 line 12 from bot. for *practice* read practise.
108 line 8 from bot. for *practice* read practise.
114 line 9 from bot. a period to the word subject.
151 line 7 from top, dele *be*.
213 line 10 from bot for *phrenzy* read phrensy.
218 line 7 from top, a comma to the word stone.
219 line 8 from top, for *practiced* read practised.
237 line 11 from bot. a comma to the word *thus* and dele that to *sin* in the following line.
267 line 3 from top, a capital at the first word.
275 line last for *promote* read obstruct.
312 line 4 from bot. for *serves* read serve.
385 line 8 from top, for *undesersedly* read undeservedly.
391 line 9 from bot, after *unchangeable* a period instead of a comma.
394 line 1 at top, for *but* read and.

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SERMON I.

ACTS, CHAP. VII. VER. 20, 21, 22.

In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his Father's house three months: and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's Daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own Son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

THESE words are part of the eloquent defence of the first martyr St. Stephen, in which he reproaches the Jews with the obstinacy of their forefathers, the dark distrust and causeless jealousy which they evinced by their tardy submission, and reluctant obedience to that extraordinary personage, whom God appointed for their leader and their lawgiver. The short but comprehensive account of Moses' divine mission, and the striking manner in which it is contrasted with the different periods of his history, irresistibly impels the mind to serious and devout reflection upon the unsearchable ways of

Providence. The infant exposed to perish by the narrow policy of a relentless tyrant, the stranger in the land of Midian, who fled from death with which he had been threatened, for having rescued one of his brethren out of the hand of the oppressor, this Moses whom they refused, saying, "who made thee a Ruler, and a Judge?" "the same did God send to be a Ruler, and a Deliverer, by the hands of the Angel, which appeared to him in the bush."

The Text which I have recited will serve,

1st To vindicate the right of the lower classes of mankind to the early protection and careful instruction of the public.

2ndly. To shew the beneficial effects which are likely to proceed from it to all the orders of society, and

3rdly. To excite my christian hearers to imitate the noble example of disinterested benevolence and fervent charity, which is here given them by a heathen Princess.

1st. I propose to consider the right of the lower classes of mankind to the public encouragement and instruction of their children.

Few, I believe, will now maintain that, in any case, even where indolence or vice presents itself in its utmost deformity, man should ever be left to perish by the extremity of want, so long as the rest

of the world indulge in excess, or boast of superfluity. The laws of our own country have, with no less wisdom than humanity, guarded against an outrage so disgusting to philanthropy; for the indolent may be roused to activity, and the vicious may be reclaimed to virtue; while many of the most indolent and the most vicious are protected, by wealth or station, from the miseries which overwhelm the poor and the unfriended. If providence has assigned to man, variety of riches, rank, and power, it is that charity may never want employment, that poverty may never go without relief, or imbecility without protection. How often, my christian brethren, have your bosoms throbbled with the contrary emotions of delight and abhorrence, when, in this sacred place, you have listened to the impressive parable of the Good Samaritan! Yet, oh! how far more transcendent is the virtue, exalted the piety, and amiable the benevolence, which is employed in dispelling the darkness of the human mind, and delivering it from the galling slavery of sin! As far as the soul of man is more precious than his body, and his hopes of future bliss are more delightful to him than his brightest prospects of worldly advantage; so far more righteous must be our exertions, and so far more imperiously are we called upon, by the voice of reason and religion, to snatch the unhappy

sufferer from guilt and infamy, than to save him from pain and penury. May it never be the wretched fate of one of us here present to reflect, when visited by misfortune, or terrified at the approach of death, that he ever looked on the hapless victim of error or of vice, and passed by on the other side!

We are born into this world, and we depart out of it, without any discriminating marks of partiality from our omniscient Creator. The same weaknesses and the same wants begin with our first breath, and return upon us at the close of life; and though, at the first dawn of reason, great inequality may appear in the understanding and disposition of different children, that inequality is still as perceptible between those of the same rank and habits, as between them, who are at the remotest distance from wealth or high station. It is true that all are not alike entitled to the same extent of literary cultivation, or to the same expence of time in obtaining it; for providence has not allotted to all the same means of procuring that cultivation, or of employing that time in such pursuits. But all are, nevertheless, capable of arriving at the most useful attainments, and of learning to work out their own salvation. Cruel, therefore, and most unjustifiable must it be, if the mind, which God has endowed with such powers, and destined to immortal life, should be left to explore its way through the mists

of ignorance, exposed to the dangers of temptation, and goaded on by the fury of passions, so long as the rich, the gay, and the voluptuous can yield to those that want it that learning which they themselves reject, and that religion which they themselves know not how to appreciate.

My text informs us that the infant Moses was "exceeding fair." His extraordinary beauty is likewise highly extolled by the great Jewish Historian. Often must you have seen, among cottage children, some of the most striking specimens of personal beauty, and the strongest indications of intellectual vigour. Many of those wretched beings, who now languish in obscurity, depressed by want, or enfeebled by disease; who now, destitute, afflicted, tormented, wander from house to house in beggary, or roam the streets of this and other large commercial towns, committing all uncleanness with greediness, and ripe for that punishment which must speedily overtake them; many of those unhappy objects of our present disdain were formerly, in the days of their innocence, the admiration of every beholder, and the joy of their humble home: they, like Moses, were "exceeding fair," but when *they* were cast out to endure the chilling blasts of contempt, and the pitiless storm of oppression, there was no Pharaoh's Daughter nigh, to take one of *them* up, and "nourish *him* for her own son."

Yet, among their wealthier neighbours, there doubtless were some, who saw them adorned with all their loveliness, who listened to their engaging prattle, who predicted their future elevation to riches or honour; but who instead of promoting their welfare, and removing the impediments which retarded their progress, amidst the uproar of the tavern, the madness of the gaming table, or the follies of the chace, straightway forgot that such worthier objects ever presented themselves to their notice. “ Yet, “ they were not ashamed, neither could they blush : “ therefore shall they fall among them that fall, in “ the time of their visitation, they shall be cast “ down, saith the Lord. ”

The philosopher and the christian have been sometimes consoled, and the mass of mankind have been surprised and benefited by the sudden emersion of genius from the clouds that obscured it, and by the triumph of industry over every obstacle that opposed it. Thus arose our country's proudest boast, the immortal Shakespeare,—thus flourished the illustrious author of the Rambler—both of them born in this neighbourhood—born to delight, to adorn, and to instruct mankind. Such has been the remarkable destiny of the champion—would to God I could say the deliverer—of a nation not far distant! Such is the interesting account given of himself by the best translator of Juvenal. * But

* Gifford.

let it not be urged from hence that talents will *always* emancipate themselves, or that virtue will *always* meet with her reward. These indeed are pleasing instances of the efficacy of perseverance, or of the native force of intellect. But, alas ! they are only splendid exceptions to the ordinary course of human events ; for justly has it been lamented by the enlightened and humane, that, where one has found his own way to eminence, thousands have perished unknown to the world, rudely spurned in their approach to honour by the foot of scorn, who might have evinced as much ability to serve mankind, and as much zeal in the exercise of it, as the most shining characters that now deck the page of history, and swell the catalogue of heroes, statesmen, and legislators. Otway is supposed to have died of hunger ; and the melancholy end of that sun-born genius, the author of Rowley's Poems, clearly proves that the germ of talents, if unfolded in the shade, will, without the enlivening influence of encouragement, and the warm shelter of protection, droop before the frosts of the morning, and wither at the dews of night. How cruelly, disdainfully, and despitefully have the claims of genius been rejected, and how loudly does justice call upon us to atone for the undeserved neglect and wanton injuries which it has sustained !

If genius will sometimes force itself into public notice, unguided by friendly direction, or unaided by patriotic incitement, it shews how little expence or trouble may be necessary to invigorate and to mature it. In proportion to the means which we possess of discharging any part of our duty, the obligation to be mindful of it increases ; and where but little is required to produce great effects, that little should never be withheld. It is sometimes a difficult, though always a glorious act, to convert a sinner from the error of his ways ; but easy, pleasant and profitable is the task to strew with flowers the path of innocence, and point the way to present usefulness and future reward. The mind which is yet unrelaxed by sloth, and undebauched by bad example, is sometimes impelled, by slight but well seasoned admonition to the noblest discoveries of the judgment, and the loftiest flights of imagination. Like that mechanical power, which raises the heaviest weights by the smallest application of bodily strength, it astonishes the unreflecting spectator, stimulates him to enquire into its properties, and invites him to the immediate use of so powerful an agent.

In spite of all that is murmured by the discontented, bewailed by the disappointed, and deplored by the hypocritical, large is the sum of man's benevolence, and his habits of social kind-

ness are rapidly improving. But mere benevolence, unaccompanied by discretion, often fails of its proper effects. Utility should be promoted, industry should be excited, and gratitude should be produced by it. Hospitals, for those who suffer from disease, or have been disabled by accident, or bend under the weight of years, are every where erected, or are now erecting; while institutions to cultivate the minds of the poor are begun with less activity, and supported with less emulation. Not that such institutions are few, not that they are neglected, not that they are abused; but they are hardly conducted with the same spirit, or multiplied with the same zeal, as other subordinate establishments. By the latter utility is always promoted, but they cannot always excite industry, and they do not often enough produce gratitude. Yet benevolence and gratitude should reciprocally act upon each other. Now what can more strongly tend to produce gratitude, than plans skilfully contrived, and liberally prosecuted for the maintenance and education of indigent children? Their best feelings are awakened early. Their unsophisticated reason approves the sensations of their hearts, and the first impression they receive are those of esteem and veneration for their benefactors, and love for the whole human race. Every ragged child they meet reminds them of the misery from which they have been pre-

served ; prompts them to indulge the wish of becoming benefactors in their turn ; disposes them to humanity, piety, and contentment.

It is not my wish to intrude myself on your notice by affected novelty of remark, or unexampled boldness of assertion. But I will affirm that every man is born to some inheritance. Many are born to great estate, and many to superior rank, but many more are born to labour and trouble. But they who have labour and trouble for their only patrimony, inherit the most indisputable claim upon the regard, encouragement, and assistance of all those whose happier lot is already fixed ; for that patrimony so wretched, so despised, and so trampled under foot, would soon, without your vigilant attention, and careful amelioration, be forsaken for the more lucrative stratagems of fraud, and the less toilsome exercise of knavery. We see thousands indeed among the labouring poor, whom, even when left to themselves, and to their own scanty resources, no weariness could ever tempt to indolence, and no poverty could ever prompt to dishonesty. But thousands also have perished in their guilt, consigned to present infamy, and perhaps doomed to future punishment, who might have been preserved, by the timely interposition of humanity, from disgrace and ruin, and made partakers of everlasting glory. What might have been

done with so much benefit to the community, so much advantage to the individual, and so much honour to the doers of it, ought never to have been left undone; and we who now live to profit by the experience of so many ages as have gone before us, are still more fully obliged to discharge that duty to the public, which is now more distinctly understood, and those services which an increased population has rendered more necessary.

Mankind are so closely connected by an indissoluble chain of dependencies, that a state of absolute independence is no where to be found. The monarch derives his grandeur, his wealth, and his power from the exertions of his subjects: the different classes of those subjects, in a variety of ways, receive support from each other: and without the sweat of the labourers brow, and the ready skill of the artizan, no nation could long subsist. Individually, indeed, man wants but little, and the solitary hermit may, as long as his health and strength remain, content himself with the frugal repast which his own industry supplies, or with the spontaneous productions of nature. But no man will again, I trust, assume a right to withdraw that aid from society, which, whether by corporeal or mental exertion, it is in his power to impart. Wherever those exertions are honestly directed, they should never go unrewarded. Small indeed

is the recompence which is commonly bestowed on the most industrious. Yet if we must leave them to be satisfied with that recompence, it is at least our duty to provide their helpless, and almost hopeless offspring with the means of increasing their knowledge, and thereby of improving, I do not say of changing their condition. There is no danger of their rising too high in the world. Their general habits must still remain unfavourable to the attainment of that degree of respect which creates power, or to that degree of accumulation which produces affluence. Their bodies must still be too actively employed to afford leisure for remote speculation ; and their minds must consequently remain too enfeebled for any contrivance to exalt themselves above their ordinary level. Our utmost efforts for their happiness, and our best invented plans for their instruction will still leave them in those habits which arise out of their several occupations, and in that subjection to order which forms a material part of their habits.

It may justly be expected that, in this part of my discourse, I should take some notice of what has been advanced, in a late pamphlet, by the sagacious and enlightened author of "Political Justice," concerning the barbarous custom of exposing infants. I confess that I could never find in his "Reply" any expression that led to the en-

couragement, or justification of so scandalous a breach of moral duty, and so horrid an outrage against nature. Still however that writer has indulged himself in the use of such language as it is hard to reconcile with his own benevolent disposition, and correct manner of thinking, and such as has induced some of his readers to believe that he holds that abominable practice in no very great abhorrence. When he says that he “does not regard a new born child with any superstitious reverence,” he is unusually and most unnecessarily sarcastic. Few ever did regard a new born child with any kind of reverence ; but all are wont to behold it with emotions of the purest compassion, and the most reverential awe of its Almighty Creator : those who hear its plaintive cries are wont to feel an earnest solicitude for its preservation, and to delight in seeing it carefully nursed and affectionately treated. “I would,” with him, “rather that such a child should perish in the first hour of its existence, than that as a man it should spend seventy years of life in a state of misery and vice.” But before I dare to adopt so dreadful an expedient, I must first be assured that providence *has doomed* the child to spend its future life in such a state. It is true that “the globe of earth affords room for only a certain number of human beings to be trained to any degree of perfection ;” but

we can never ascertain the individuals who shall one day compose that number. By the exposure of children we may sometimes happen to cast out those, who might have become the greatest ornaments of society. Had it been the fate of the writer of whom I am speaking to have been so hardly dealt with, the community had lost one of its most entertaining and instructive members. It has always been acknowledged, and it forms one of the first principles of civil law, that those beings, whom we have been instrumental in calling into existence, should be protected and comforted in their early possession of it. "God," says an eminent civilian, * "hath established that man should receive
 " life from his parents, in the bosom of a mother ;
 " that he should be long incapable of preserving
 " this life into which he enters ; that he should
 " continue in it a long time in a state of weakness,
 " and stand in need of the help of his parents, in
 " order to his subsisting and being educated in it.
 " And as it is by this birth that God forms the mu-
 " tual love which unites so strictly him, who, by
 " transmitting his own likeness, gives him life, with
 " him who receives it ; so he gives to the love of
 " parents a character suited to the condition of
 " children in their birth, and to all the wants which
 " are the consequences of this life which they have

* Domat.

“ given them, that he may engage them, by the
 “ said love, to the duties of education, instruction,
 “ and all the other paternal duties. ”

Having thus considered the right of the lower classes of mankind to public encouragement and assistance in the instruction of their children, I shall proceed,

Secondly, to point out the beneficial consequences which are likely to proceed from that instruction to all the orders of society.

This may appear to my benevolent hearers to be a needless task. But it has been contended, and that by men too respectable for learning, and too exalted in rank, not to make some impression, that great evils may arise from benevolence so directed. This is not the time nor the place for controversy, but both the time and the place will justify me in attempting to repel the force of one of their arguments upon this head.

It has been urged that, if all be taught to read and write, they will gradually be led to despise their lowly station, and to aspire after more lucrative and easy employments; so that the labour of the field and the business of the loom would soon be neglected; all would be eagerly pressing forward, with less variety of occupation, to the same point of honour or emolument which few could ever attain; till, at length, all productive labour would cease,

no man would ever condescend to the drugery of servitude, and Equality, that imposing sorceress who so lately drank the blood of our deluded neighbours, would hurry us on, in our turn, to scenes odious to nature and baneful to religion.

On the contrary, I have always observed that men, for the most part, discharge the duties of their several stations well, in proportion to their knowledge of the reasonableness and necessity of that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them. When ignorance was held to be the mother of devotion, enthusiasm or hypocrisy had almost obliterated every religious principle. It has in our times been insinuated that ignorance may become the mother of loyalty. But what statesman would ever trust it? what christian would respect it? what patriot would not stifle such a monster at its birth? When the labourer shall know the vast importance of his toil to the mass of mankind; when the artizan shall know to what distant parts of the habitable globe the proofs of his skill shall be conveyed, and the new conveniences which they will there afford; when the servant shall know what comfort and happiness arise from his assiduities to the family which protects him, and the value of that protection; all will lie down to their repose, soothed with the approbation of conscience, and go forth again to their labour with increasing lightness of heart.

As subjects, the lower ranks, by understanding better the nature of government, may be led to distinguish between those imperfections which are inseparable from it, and those abuses which state craft or tyranny will ever be contriving to introduce into it ; and they will accordingly submit with patience to evils which cannot be removed, and oppose with reluctance all unjustifiable encroachment of power. Where they cannot judge with precision, they will learn to act with caution, and trust more implicitly in the advice and opinions of the experienced and the wise. I know that the objections which I would now refute were made against the late institution of Sunday schools ; but if the children of the poor be grudged the scanty morsels of learning, with which they are there slowly supplied, the larger portions which are here more liberally and more frequently distributed, may be suspected to contain more of that poison which is mixed for the destruction of the public welfare. If, however, no deleterious drug be mixed ; if the most salutary viands be prepared for them ; the community has every thing to hope from the exercise of our ingenuity, and the fervor of our zeal to diffuse the benefit of their intellectual sustenance. Exceptions may now and then be found to the truth of these observations ; but shall that time ever arrive, when ignorance shall *constantly*

yield to instruction, when indolence shall *easily* be roused to industry, when vice shall *always* bend to the admonitions of virtue, and every exertion of man be crowned with invariable success? when the wisest shall be no longer liable to error, and the most virtuous no longer in danger from temptation? Nevertheless, in proportion as we advance nearer to the haven of wisdom, we shall in general recede farther from those shoals and quicksands, which lie concealed to make shipwreck of our virtue. The parents of the children who are admitted into this establishment are previously required to sign a formal resignation of them to the sole management of the subscribers, under a certain penalty. By this wise precaution the innocent are timely removed beyond the influence of bad example; all mischievous interference is prevented; and their time is wholly employed in an uninterrupted approach towards utility. Their destination is chiefly that of menial servitude, or that of manual labour. Of the good to be expected from children so brought up, and so disposed of, I shall now speak more particularly.

On the skill, the industry, the good temper, the sobriety, the veracity, and the honesty of servants, must we depend for much of our domestic happiness and worldly prosperity. A young person, who has been regularly trained to any occupation,

will commonly prove more ready in the application of his talents to the duties of his station than one who is self-taught or imperfectly instructed. Few young persons can discover their own natural bias. Those parents, whose poverty compels them to incessant toil, have no time to scrutinize with nicety the minds of their children, very little discernment for such investigations, and but a faint prospect of benefit from it, if now and then genius should happen to discover itself. Fostered by such institutions as this, confined to the unceasing vigilance of their master or mistress, and exposed to the frequent observation of the subscribers, no remarkable talents can long lie unnoticed, or remain, I trust, long neglected. Thus the chances will be increased of rewarding merit, additional encouragement will be given to the promoters of virtue, and new objects will be sought for the exercise of philanthropy. But the corner stone of general usefulness is here laid in obedience. Without that extensive and amiable principle, the ill-tempered soon become malicious, and the skilful untractable. By the habits thus formed they are not only taught with ease at school, but their minds are fitted to receive such further information as their future change of situation may occasionally offer.

Accustomed to an early use of their mental faculties, children will soon perceive the immense

advantages of regular employment, by comparing them with the danger and disgrace which so perpetually overtake the slothful and the vicious. The intervals when they are disengaged from work they will love to employ in keeping up that degree of learning which they still retain, or in reviving that which they have lost; while those whom no reflection has awakened, whose devotion to idleness or to pleasure no chastisement has ever extinguished, will fly for relaxation to the haunts of profligacy and intemperance. They know not in what better way to fill up their vacant hours. Books may be laid before them, and good advice may be given them; but alas! the former they cannot read, and the latter, for want of the early habit of attention and reflection, they will suspect to be dictated by selfishness or ill-nature. Thus their industry is gradually undermined by sullen resentment or impetuous anger; whereas the servant who from infancy has been bowed to submission, and taught the value and necessity of reproof and instruction, will always know how to profit materially by both; will learn to controul the frantic emotions of rage, and feel the approbation of conscience in yielding, where it would be disgraceful and destructive to contend.

Great is the importance to servants of the management of the temper. Those who are so un-

fortunate as to have derived no early aid from moral instruction, cannot justly be expected to have attained much power over their passions, and least of all any great command over the phrenzied legions of anger. In no state of life is that perturbed passion so necessary to be controuled as in servitude, for in no other state of life is it so frequently excited. In the best regulated families, occasions will frequently arise for the exercise of patience, that salutary balm for a wounded spirit. Accidents may happen, mistakes will arise, difficulties must occur, that require great management of the temper. What degree of equanimity can be expected from those undisciplined, but unfortunate beings, whose earliest impressions were received amidst scenes of violence, discord, and brutality? Oh! my brethren! seize the unsuspecting victim before it be immolated to the Moloch of phrenzy, and present it a living sacrifice, innocent and a peace offering to the God of heaven. Great shall be your reward hereafter; and even here, though your country should again be doomed to the miseries of war, and "the indignation of the Lord be upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies," you shall still enjoy repose at home, cheered by the alacrity of those who serve you, whose souls you have delivered from destruction, and restored to "quietness, and assurance for ever."

It is a common remark among the lower classes, that those who spend their regular hours in laborious and useful occupation have the greatest right to the full enjoyment of their little leisure ; and this remark is just, provided that enjoyment be neither unlawful nor unreasonable. But this is the usual apology of the idler or the drunkard, which they who are early accustomed to be satisfied with a frugal meal, and to delight in their employment, will disdain to offer.

One of the most destructive habits to which servants are addicted is that of prevarication or falsehood ; and perhaps their temptations to it are more frequent and more powerful than to any other. It presents itself in extenuation of their other faults, or in disguising the symptoms of their moral depravity to assuage the just resentment of their employers. They have tried it, and occasionally found it successful. Untaught in their youth to examine into the consequences of moral action, they are unable to distinguish between the natural and accidental effects of their behaviour ; and when a lie has once produced advantage, or removed danger, they are insensibly led to expect that, however evil it may be in itself, the good to be obtained by it will invariably follow. But they who are early furnished with those few but excellent books in which children are here instructed, will readily perceive the extreme peril of doing evil that good may come of it ; they will dis-

cover that causes will, commonly, in spite of every artifice, produce their natural effects, and that lying cannot always escape detection, and they will shudder at the hazard of incurring that guilt which attends unsuspected falsehood, and dread that infamy with which falsehood once exposed is constantly overwhelmed.

To dishonesty it may appear strange that servants should be ever inclined. It is a vice so shocking in itself, and receives such aggravation, when committed by those who are intrusted with the care of our property, the whole charge of whose subsistence we take upon ourselves, and whose persons we protect from injury, that the laws of our country have at length doomed it, in certain cases, to the punishment of death. It is a crime never the first to be committed, but by those who are too young or too ignorant to know any thing of its atrocity, or too strongly impelled by dire necessity to resist it. Scarcely taught the name of that Being, who sent them into the world; cheered by no prospect of reward for well doing; alarmed by no menaces of future punishment for doing evil; but animated by hopes of present advantage, and familiarized to the sight of prosperous villainy, whose compassion have they ever excited? Whose kindness have they ever experienced? To whom are they to be grateful? This brings me to the concluding part of my

discourse, in which I am to exhort my christian hearers to prosecute this labour of love with all the strength of their judgment, and to the widest extent of their beneficence which prudence will allow.

We have, in the interesting story to which my text belongs, a striking proof that providence seldom fails of assigning to virtue, even in this life, its most satisfactory reward—that of crowning its exertions, in behalf of misfortune or oppression, with compleat success. The warmest expectations of the amiable Princess, whose bright example I now lay before you, amounted perhaps at first to nothing more than the immediate preservation of the Infant, whom providence had thrown in her way : and in the prosecution of that design, she ran the hazard of incurring the King her father's inexorable displeasure, by the breach of a command, the strictest obedience to which he seems to have exacted with the utmost rigour. How delightful must have been her sensations ! How glorious the triumph of her humanity ! When, as the Ambassador of the most High, the object of her former solicitude astonished the court of Pharoah by his stupendous miracles, and awful warnings ; and above all when, bearing down every opposition, he at length conducted his persecuted brethren, whose captivity and cruel treatment she must have deplor-

red, beyond the reach of their enemies ! I cannot promise that another Moses shall here arise, “learned “ in all the wisdom” of his country, “ and mighty “ in words and in deeds ;” but one thing is certain, which is of greater consequence than the mere preservation of existence, that many a well framed mind, that might have otherwise drooped in ignorance, or sunk in vice, may easily be roused to the expansion of its faculties, and guided to the attainment of skill and the enjoyment of virtue. Need I say much more than this, to stimulate the female part of my hearers, whose sex are always foremost in evincing every tender feeling of humanity, in seizing every opportunity for useful munificence, and in summoning the aid of their influence to promote the most patriotic institutions, to proceed with ardour in the exercise of their wonted generosity ? Protected as they are, in almost every station, after they have passed the dangers of infancy and the temptations of youth ; they will now look back to those seasons, which were once so perilous, with that exultation of mind, and that thankfulness to divine providence, which must powerfully dispose them to pay the easy tribute of their gratitude, which shall here be received instead of “ eyes “ to the blind,” and “ feet to the lame,” and “ make many a widow’s heart to sing for joy.” Eminently distinguished are my country women,

not only for the choicest endowments of the mind, but for their amiable condescension in employing their ingenuity to facilitate the instruction of children. Few indeed are induced by the same taste, blessed with the same leisure, or aided by the same talents, as a Barbauld, an Edgeworth, or a Hamilton, to pursue the same plans for the advancement of the rising generation. But many have it in their power to concur with a discerning public, in diffusing useful learning over a large proportion of those suppliant innocents, whose habits might otherwise be formed to mischief, their duty to God and man neglected, and all care for themselves renounced. Beneficence so extended must produce the most salutary effects upon the manners and the morals of the lower classes, and tend as much to subdue some of the most loathsome vices, as a late medical discovery * promises to extirpate a malady, which has long been the scourge of this Island. It is not only the expulsion of those vices from themselves which I propose, but your own enjoyment of that domestic happiness which those vices, wherever they dwell, either interrupt or destroy. Would you then promote your own welfare? Succour the children of the poor. Would you consult the good of your country? Augment the stock of their knowledge.

* Vaccination.

Would you advance the glory of your God? Suffer little children to come unto him. Would you indulge the blessed hope of everlasting life? Your charity shall inspire them with irresistible eloquence, when, kneeling before their heavenly Father, they shall pray for their patrons, their friends, and their benefactors.

Nor you, my brethren, whose expectations of the future, are enlivened by happy experience of the past, who are now reaping the precious harvest of your former industry, be ye not weary in well doing, now that the season of your beneficence is come. As God has prospered the kind exertions of those who guided you to the attainment of riches or honour; far be it from you to be unmindful or unthankful! Far be it from you to forget the sweet sensations which you experienced, when first the voice of friendship soothed you, when the light of reason dawned within you, and the sight of virtue first captivated your hearts! Oh! communicate these heavenly sensations to bosoms yet unstained by sin, and now, "as every man hath received the gift, so let him minister."

Ye who are parents of either sex!—who value the intellectual improvement of your own offspring, and anxiously look forward to their future importance in society—can you regard without concern the wretched condition of those who are too depraved

to be interested in the moral welfare of their children, or the hard lot of those more numerous partners in affliction, whose utmost efforts can scarcely supply their families with food and raiment ?

Ye who are patriots !—not in boisterous striving for distinction—not in the idle and dangerous pursuit of novelty—not in stubborn opposition to lawful government, but in examining the various resources of your country, and selecting those which are most beneficial, most extensive, and most permanent, must exult in the prosperity of every such institution as this ; which is planned for the purpose of enlightening the lower orders of society, without perplexing their minds with things that are too high for them ; to teach them their duty to man without enslaving them ; to inure them to obedience without debasement, to ingenuity without mischief, and to religion without hypocrisy.

Finally, my brethren, I exhort you *all* as christians, comprising in that honourable name whatsoever is most useful in practice and sacred in principle, not to forget the “exceeding great love of your Master and only Saviour who died for you ;” so that in performing your reasonable service—particularly whensoever you seek to relieve the miseries of the indigent—you may also bear in

mind that they have hearts to be renewed and souls to be saved. Let your charity be thus exercised, and when the vanities of this life shall have passed away, the glories of heaven shall be revealed, and "Christ himself shall appear," ye shall be hailed with that transporting invitation; "Come ye blessed children of my Father! receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."

PRAYER BEFORE SERMON II.

Let us pray for all estates and conditions of men ; for the young and for the old, for the wise and for the unwise, for the rich and for the poor, for the righteous and for the wicked ; that the old may set a good example to the young, and that the young may follow it ; that the unwise may learn wisdom, and that the wise may shun presumption ; that the rich may never want compassion for the poor, and that the poor may never envy the rich ; and that the righteous may lead the wicked to repentance ; so that all, according to their several capacities, may strive to do their duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call them, and, in whatsoever state they are, therewith may be content. That God may vouchsafe to grant this and all our other humble petitions, let us use that prayer which the Son of God hath taught us : Our Father, &c.

SERMON II.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XVIII, VER. 5.

Whoso shall receive one such little Child in my name, receiveth me.

THE disciples of our blessed Saviour came to ask him "who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." To make his answer as striking as possible, he "called a little child unto him, and setting him in the midst of them," declared that "unless they were converted, and became as little children, they should not enter therein;" and that "whosoever should humble himself as that little child, the same should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven." To show, moreover, his tender regard for little children, and their importance to society, he added the words of my text. To explain what is meant by receiving them the next verse may suffice, which expresses, in the strongest terms, the sinfulness and danger of offending or injuring them, whether by unkind treatment, or by retarding their progress in religion. An oppo-

site kind of conduct towards them is doubtless, therefore, what our Saviour enjoined: that is, whenever necessity requires and opportunity offers, to receive them under our protection.

From the common accidents of life we cannot always guard them; we cannot keep *ourselves* safe from disease, nor from the numerous calamities to which man is born; but the strong can assist the weak, the wise can direct the ignorant, and the wealthy can protect the poor; and all may, by their united efforts, effectually secure the weak from oppression, the ignorant from many errors, and the poor from extreme want; particularly when the objects of their benevolence are in a state of childhood, uninfluenced by vain and violent desires, scarcely even acquainted with the nature and extent of their real wants, and contented with the calm enjoyment of innocence and peace. Any christian who knows the vast importance of every link in the chain of society; whose experience has taught him, for instance, how much the numerous class of his brethren who are doomed to servitude, contribute either to the comfort or to the trouble of the families in which they live, must be well aware of the benefit to be derived from their being early "trained up in the way they should go." Now this may be done most advantageously, I might say most easily, by shielding them from

want, ignorance, and idleness. These are the sorest evils that threaten them ; the baneful effects of which are often so distinctly visible in all estates and conditions of men, as to warn us, like beacons, when lighted on our coasts, that an enemy is at hand. Shall we then, as people of common sense, but particularly as we are christians, suffer those souls to perish which Christ in almost every page of the gospel claims for his own ? Hear what was written before the gospel. “ All souls are mine,” saith God. “ As the soul of the father, so the soul of the son is mine. The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Yet if we know the wants of children without wishing to relieve them ; if we suffer them to remain in ignorance when the means of their instruction are at hand ; if we withhold employment from them when they must otherwise be idle, we are like those disciples who, when little children were brought to their divine Master, “ rebuked those that brought them.”

But of the three evils to which, on the present occasion, I humbly crave your attention, want, although it be perhaps the sorest, is the least common ; for the legislature has from time to time provided against it, nature has erected a strong hold in parental affection to withstand it, and where both prove insufficient, that charity which the gospel so often and so earnestly inculcates, and which so eminent-

ly distinguishes this country—our still happy, still enviable, and still christian country—is never denied to real and unavoidable indigence. In this sacred place I challenge every calumniator of the gospel, whose envy or whose malice may still prompt him to ask what good the religion of Christ has done the world, to try one single experiment in any town, or almost in any village of this island, upon the parable of the Good Samaritan, and see if any native of our land would “pass by on the “other side.” No. It is even notorious that the very Jews who dwell among us, who are yet blind to the effulgence of that divine light which is now rapidly overspreading the whole earth, can at least discern enough of its heavenly radiance to copy their christian countrymen in acts of beneficence and mercy. Were the case far otherwise.—Were the male part of the human race absorbed in worldly-mindedness, and did every *man* “live only to “himself”; the ears of the softer sex would ever still be open to the cry of the needy—*their* hearts would still be accessible to the influence of religion; and to *them* might be left with safety every child of want, as long as they possessed the means to give or the power to persuade. But God forbid that man should ever so forget himself! The time of such a falling off will never come. On the contrary, man will continue to improve in religion as

he profits by experience, and as charity has hitherto abounded in proportion to the progress of religion, so it shall abound more and more till its final consummation in the "kingdom of heaven." Whosoever, therefore, the objects that solicit our compassion are of the weaker sex, where is the man who can steel his heart against the feeblest part of his species in its most feeble state, and forbear or disdain to follow the bright example which that very sex not ostentatiously *presumes*, but naturally and religiously *delights* to set ?

But by the wise and benevolent provision of the legislature, if not by the force of parental solicitude and industry, or when these are defective, by the operation of humanity and christian charity, every poor child will be supplied with food and raiment, and with shelter from the pelting storm. Yet in vain are they fed, clothed, and sheltered, if we suffer them to remain in a state of ignorance, which is even more deplorable than that of slavery. It was in his mind alone that man was made in the image of God ; and there the divine resemblance is only seen in proportion to the religious improvement of it. Here let us devoutly thank heaven that what the wisest and best of our forefathers "desired to see and could not see it," has happened in our times. A plan of easy, cheap, useful and general instruction has at length

been discovered, and all classes of mankind, and christians of all denominations eagerly press forward in support of it. It may not, indeed, be applicable to all cases, or needful to its full extent in small schools; but it is manifest that great advantages may be derived from it in every seminary where it can be introduced. That nothing may be wanting to diffuse those kinds and degrees of knowledge which ought to be common to all, a society also has been recently formed, and seems likely to receive, as it preeminently deserves, national encouragement and support, for the express purpose of supplying the poor with that inestimable treasure of divine truth—the Bible. The wish therefore of our pious, benevolent, but yet afflicted Sovereign, is likely soon to be fulfilled; * and though he should not live to witness its accomplishment, he will find it registered in heaven; and even there his bliss may be enhanced by the presence of those souls, which the bare expression of that single wish shall have contributed, through Christ, to save. Every poor child in his dominions will now not only be able to read his Bible, but he will have his Bible to read. It has, indeed, been pretended by some, and that even in one of our Houses of Parliament, that the general instruction of the poor may be ultimately prejudicial to society

* He hoped to see the day when every poor child in his dominions would be able to read his Bible.

—that many would become too wise for laborious employment, or too learned to be content with their lot. Now, notwithstanding some remarkable instances of the contrary, men will in general be industrious and contented, in proportion to the general diffusion of knowledge. But this is not the precise point in question. I would only ask if every child be not entitled to more or less instruction, according to the station which he is designed hereafter to fill. As to *religious* instruction, every child without exception has an indisputable right to the full benefit of it; because every child has the same God to serve, every child must one day practice the love of his neighbour, and every child must hereafter “appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” You will not, I am confident, my brethren, accuse me of deviating from my subject in this matter; for “we are all members one of another”, and what you observe to be thus generally encouraged and promoted in your country at large, *you* will not fail to encourage and promote within the nearer and narrower sphere of your own parochial influence. Should you meet on the road with any poor child whom you never saw before, who had chanced to miss his way, there is not one of you who would churlishly refuse to set him right. The path to heaven is narrow and difficult to find, Let him then who happily is best ac-

quainted with it, be foremost to inform the little wanderer which is the way to everlasting life—especially if that wanderer belongs to his own neighbourhood, dwells within his own observation, and outwardly worships God in the same sanctuary.

But neither want nor ignorance is half so destructive as idleness. This is universally acknowledged, though not sufficiently considered. The experience of past ages—what we have seen with our own eyes, heard with our own ears, and what our fathers have told us—all has been ineffectual to produce that encouragement to those habits of industry, which both reason and religion concur in recommending. What the apostle says of charity may also, as far as concerns the present life, be said of industry, that it never faileth; for hand in hand with industry go honesty, patience, resignation, and contentment. Knavery can have nothing to do with it. Knavery may be active, but cannot be industrious. On the contrary, the most knavish are always the most idle. The moments of idleness are the devil's time, and he never fails to seize it. Whensoever a man is most idle, the devil is most busy. Who would not then by all the force of his persuasion, all the power of his influence, and all the means which God has given him, endeavour to snatch a fellow creature, particularly a child, and most of all a female child, from the pit

of destruction? There are some dispositions to be found that are wilfully and deliberately mischievous even among children; but there was scarcely ever an instance of it known that might not in some measure be traced to idleness; and where that cause is manifest, who would not do his utmost to reclaim so premature a profligate? What shall be said then when the idle can find nothing to do? If there be a case on earth that loudly calls for commiseration, it is that of a human being who sighs unheard for the honest means of subsistence, or that of those poor parents, who, with the slenderest means of supplying their children with food and raiment, can find no employment for them! Yet such is often the dreadful misfortune of many a poor family as religious, and as mindful of their duty to God and man as the best of us here present. Oh! if there be a case on earth that demands the exercise of christian benevolence, humanity, charity—call it by whatsoever name you may—it is the want of employment in children, especially in *female* children, who may much more readily than boys be supplied with the means of becoming industrious, and who must inevitably be exposed to stronger temptations and greater sufferings than they, if those means be withholden. It is always a blessing to a child, if it be released from the control of wicked or injudicious parents. Too many of the

latter send their children to school! for no other purpose than to be relieved from the trouble of them; but the friend who takes upon himself the care and expence of another person's child, can have no other object than the good of that child in view, and will consequently see that such good be really and actively promoted—that the object of his bounty be carefully trained to all that industry, and all that skill which its future destination in this world may require. A child may die from want, and err through ignorance; but though the body perish with hunger, and the mind involuntarily lose itself in error, the soul may, in God's mercy through Christ, be saved; but if idleness take root in the heart, all the tender affections, and all sense of duty to God and man decay and die, like flowers that blossom in the waste and arid wilderness. The heart is the place to which “the unclean spirit, finding it swept and garnished, taketh other spirits more wicked than itself, and they enter in and dwell there.” Shall such ever be the hapless lot of one poor innocent who now meets you here in the house of God, who implores you in the name of God, and whose grateful prayers may bring the blessing of God upon you, so long as you continue to enjoy the bounty of God and reverence his holy name? That can never happen here. A congregation so uniformly regu-

lar, so unaffectedly devout, and so every way exemplary as that which, not by the charm of novelty, but in the confidence of some experience, * I now address, will be the last to withhold from the poor, the ignorant, and the young—and these the weakest of the young—the most efficacious means of following their good example. In this place it will, on this day, be seen if novelty alone has hitherto been the invective to charity.

To those who are the most deeply interested in the welfare of these children who now look up for aid to their more affluent neighbours, it must be matter of exultation to observe the present attendance of military officers. There is hardly under heaven a brighter or more exalted character than a religious soldier; and in no army throughout the world is that character more real or more frequent than, to the honour of our country, among the British forces. The character is the more valuable and respectable, because it is one of the most difficult to attain. Other christians have manifold temptations to encounter, but then they have also manifold invitations to the discharge of their religious duties; but temptations meet a soldier in every direction; the dissipation of a camp is hard to be restrained within due bounds; no sabbath bells re-

* This Discourse was delivered in a Church of which the writer was then the Assistant Curate.

call the mind to devotion in the wild and tumultuous theatre of war; and the captivating image of heroic glory is too dazzling to the imagination for the milder rays of religious light to enter; but then there is often the recollection of dangers past, and the prospect of dangers yet to come. The former will often prepare the soul for thankfulness to God, and the latter will awaken it to reliance only on his protection; and in the hour of battle, when he shall offer his fervent though hasty mental prayer to heaven, the consciousness of having contributed to the relief of the young and helpless, the fatherless and widow in their affliction, shall nerve his arm and fortify his mind. Should the hour of battle be his last hour, he shall find in the mansions of the just, like the devout Centurion, "that his prayer is heard, and that his alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God."

To every one of us here present, in common with the rest of our countrymen, are the inestimable blessings of quiet and happiness continued, while the whole continent of Europe is convulsed with the agonies of war, and robbed of the comforts of life. Can we be too thankful for these blessings? Let it not be said that while God protects our shores from invasion, and our fields yield their increase, that we grudge relief to the indigent or succour to the helpless! On the contrary, if the

charitable spirit now so extensively prevalent among us, can at all direct us to the favour of God, let us in the name of Christ, cherish the heavenly inmate in our bosoms, and keep it in constant action.

I say *in the name of Christ*; for the encouragement given in my text is not to those who merely receive or protect little children, but to those who, says our blessed Saviour, receive them "*in my name*," or in other words, for my sake. Whatsoever good a christian does, he must do it for the sake of Christ; for his religion has not only abolished that of the Jews, but superseded mere morality. A christian can hardly use the word virtue; for what once was virtue is now ennobled into religion; and the different branches of virtue are now, in the more correct language of scripture, graces—that is, manifestations of the grace of God in the heart of man. This language is by some called cant; but let it be considered that the language of morality is liable to the like derision from the same set of men. In proportion as the practice of religion shall prevail, the language of scripture will prevail also, and christianity will only then abound, when christians shall cease to be ashamed of expressing themselves on religious subjects in the language of the gospel. "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?" said our blessed Lord to St.

Peter. “ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.” We are called upon, by the words of my text, to do a much less thing for Christ’s sake. Be it our care that we also do not deny him ; for whosoever shall turn his back on one of these little suppliants, will by so doing turn his back on his Saviour.

Finally, my brethren, let us look to the consequence of receiving or protecting little children *in the name of Christ*. “ Whoso receiveth one such little child in my name, receiveth me.” Is it a small thing to receive Christ? We are eager to receive the visits of the great, who are neither wiser nor better than we, and we are elated with the honour of such visits, though we derive no other advantage from them. But he that receiveth Christ, receiveth all those rich endowments of the soul, which qualify him for admission into the kingdom of heaven: he receiveth that humility which is above honour, and that charity which, when faith and hope are absorbed in fruition, shall survive “ the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds ;” he receiveth for his guest the Son of God, in whose “ heavenly Father’s house are many mansions” “ not built with hands, eternal in the heavens,” to which he graciously invites us in return, having “ gone before” “ to prepare a place for us.” Let us never then be “ weary in well

“ doing,” for we have his divine promise that “ he
“ will come again and receive us unto himself,”
that “ where he is, there we may be also ;” to
whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be our
love so manifested here, that, when we depart hence,
we may “ appear before his presence with exceeding
“ joy,” and be “ filled with all the fulness of God.”

SERMON III.

LUKE, CHAP. VIII. VER. 18.

Take heed how ye hear.

THESE words spake Jesus to his disciples, after he had explained to them the parable of the sower. He encouraged them with his divine assurance that there was “nothing hidden which should not be made known,” and therefore cautioned them against the danger of indifference and inattention to the important truths which he was sent to teach ; for “to him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have”—that is, to him who shall humbly and piously seek instruction from my discourses shall be imparted a greater degree of discernment ; and from him, who shall profanely and impiously oppose his rational faculties to my doctrine, shall be taken away that portion of discernment which he employs to so vile a purpose.

In all ages of the christian world, it has made part of the paltry triumph of unbelievers, that mankind have not improved in practical religion, in any proportion to the pains which have been taken in christian countries, to disseminate the precepts and recommend the example of Jesus Christ. I cannot altogether admit the fact ; for though much wickedness still prevails wheresoever the gospel continues to be preached, it is manifest from the concurrent testimony of the traveller and the historian, how very deplorable the state of the world must now have been without a revealed religion ; and if we compare the present condition of mankind in those countries where it has been received, with that of those distant regions which have not yet received it, we shall find a decisive proof, not only of its speculative purity, but of its extensive practical utility.

Still it cannot be denied that christians in general are much less careful of their moral conduct, and much less prone to devotion than might have been expected ; one principal cause of which is, beyond all doubt, that inattention to the service of the church, which is so extremely prevalent, that it escapes observation or scorns reproof. Now to enable every christian congregation to hear with effect two things are more especially necessary :

1st, A serious attention to the instruction delivered.

2ly, A disposition to receive religious instruction. It is the common complaint of parents, and of all who are any way concerned in the instruction of youth, that want of attention is the chief obstacle in the course of education ; but this fault is natural and in some degree excusable at that delightful season, when outward objects are new and captivating, though thousands have gone mourning through the remainder of their days in consequence of it, deploring their ignorance of what they ought to have known, and vainly lamenting the loss of that time which never can return. What an emblem is this of the present and future state of mankind ! Here are we, sent into this world for no other possible purpose than to fit us for a better, though thousands are continually passing through it, as if there were no other world, or no other world worth knowing. Inattention like this can never without repentance, receive pardon from him who made us, and who has threatened to “ laugh at our calamity,” and to “ mock when our fear cometh.” This inattention to the duties of religion in general is, however, beyond my present purpose. I shall confine myself to that which is so commonly prevalent in hearing the word of God, and examine into some of the probable causes of it.

It is manifest that many persons frequent the house of prayer only because it is *decent* to do so—as if it were enough not to turn their backs upon it; and indeed it is better to pay even that small degree of respect to religion than to be absent from public worship, for this, if for no other reason, because the moment may come, as it providentially has to some, when, notwithstanding all the pride and self sufficiency which till then had hardened their hearts, some affecting passage of scripture, or some seasonable remark from the pulpit, will leave such an impression upon the mind, as may first lead it to religious meditation, and afterwards to religious practice. But it is my duty to declare—what the scriptures every where inculcate—that if such an effect be not produced by going to church, though the decency of the thing be approved of by the world, it will profit a man nothing at his entrance into the world to come. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your *good works*, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Some are vain and silly enough to attend divine service, chiefly for the purpose of displaying their finery. There is something so very contemptible in this, so very childish, and so disgraceful to any one who is called a christian, that I should be ashamed to mention it in this public manner, if it

were not notorious, and did not very much contribute to lessen the influence of those who set the best example. It is true, for I myself have been answered by many a poor person, on reminding him of his habitual absence from the house of God, that he had not clothes good enough to appear in. It lessens the influence of good example ; for when negligent and thoughtless people discover proofs of such weakness in *many*, they rashly and triumphantly impute it to those who are of a very different character. Can they who so worship, as it were, their own persons, be expected to worship God ? Can they who pay such attention to the vanities of this wicked world, which at their baptism they promised and vowed to renounce, lend an attentive ear when they are told that “ even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of the lilies of the field ” ? There are other times and other places better adapted to the indulgence of such vanities, if they must be indulged ; but if even *that* indulgence be dangerous, as it surely is, to our improvement in religion and our happiness hereafter, it must be not only dangerous but criminal when we appear in the more immediate presence of that Being “ who seeth not as man seeth.” Christians may undoubtedly appear, even in this sacred place, as becomes their several stations ; only let them take especial care lest their attention to

dress deprive them of that humility, which is the brightest ornament of the christian character, and an indispensable qualification for every hearer, who desires to profit by the word of God.

Too fond an attachment to the things of this world is another cause of inattention to the service of the church. Pleasure *may* be innocently enjoyed, and business *must* be diligently pursued, and for these and all other worldly matters there is a season; but on the Lord's day at least, on which we are expressly commanded to "do no manner of work," it is ungrateful and impious not to think of our great and gracious benefactor, "who giveth us all things richly to enjoy," and not to share in those thanksgivings which so many meet to offer up; it is shameful mockery of heaven to appear in the house of prayer, and still suffer our thoughts to dwell on the engagements, the employments, and the dissipations for which we have more than sufficient time in the rest of the week. To those who presumptuously imagine that their own sentiments on religious subjects are more enlarged and liberal than those of their forefathers, and fondly suppose themselves enlightened above the attainment of their contemporaries, I recommend the salutary advice of the Apostle: "not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think"—not to mistake conceit for penetration,

nor to dignify their folly with the name of wisdom. The wisest men of every age since the christian æra have embraced the christian faith, and made it their chief concern to lead a christian life. That upright, venerable, and consummate lawyer, Sir Matthew Hale ; that sagacious and profound philosopher, Sir Isaac Newton ; that wise and learned moralist, Dr. Samuel Johnson—blush ye that feel indifferent about the blessings of religion, and scornfully set yourselves above the divine influence of it, when ye hear such names as these, and a thousand others that might be added to them, of bright and exalted genius, and of deep and distinguished erudition, who devoted most of the time which they could spare from useful and laborious researches, to the candid examination of the evidences, the doctrines, and the duties of Christ's religion, and to the observance of its benevolent precepts ! Let those who show themselves the most pitiful of all cowards, in being ashamed to be seen in the attitude of prayer, lest they should incur the derision of the weak, the idle, the thoughtless, the profligate, and the profane, tremble lest they provoke the just vengeance of heaven, which may visit them at a moment when they are least aware ; which may ignominiously expose them to the stern rebuke of the wise, and which *must* at last overtake them at the dreadful hour of death—dreadful

I say—for how can it be otherwise to those, who have set their affections upon this world, and never cared about another, till the danger of everlasting misery has filled them with dismay, and taught them the true value of religious consolation? Happy will it be for those “who know in this “their day, the things which belong unto their “peace, before they are for ever hidden from their “eyes.”

I shall at present only mention one cause more of that inattention which is the subject of this discourse. It may be thought indelicate in me to point it out; but the minister of God must never shrink from his duty, through so unstable and undefined a principle as that of delicacy. The cause I mean is curiosity—an eagerness to discover and point out the excellencies or defects of a preacher—not out of malignity or ill nature, I grant—probably from no bad motive whatsoever—still it is a practice not very becoming in any christian congregation, who assemble in order to learn their duty, and not to gratify their taste, or to exercise their talents. The church “is none other than the “house of God”—it is not a theatre for the display of eloquence, nor is it the province of a christian teacher to work upon the passions. Eloquence is artifice, and far be artifice from a place so holy! It is the matter, and not the manner in

which a congregation is most interested. If the doctrine which they hear be scriptural, the arguments to prove it plain and convincing, and the application of it practical, there can be but little cause for complaint. Every christian hearer should then look to himself; for if he do not, the consequence will assuredly rest with himself. Let those who expect eloquence from the pulpit examine the divine epistles of St. Paul, and observe the earnestness of persuasion, justness of remark, and strength of argument with which they abound; let them reflect on the good which his writings have already done, and, to the end of time, are destined to do. Yet even that learned, intrepid, and zealous apostle acknowledges in one of his epistles, that some of his hearers thought "his bodily presence mean, and his speech contemptible." When he made "Felix tremble", we do not read that it was his eloquence, but his "*reasoning* of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," that alarmed the fears of his guilty auditor. Attention was not wanting in Felix, the governor, nor in king Agrippa, when the latter was almost persuaded to become a christian, though both had all the force of prejudice to overcome. Had they, on the contrary, been previously disposed in favour of St. Paul's doctrine, they might each have readily become, not almost, but altogether such an one

as himself. Such a disposition will ever be necessary in a christian congregation, and without it, attention alone will not suffice for their improvement. This is the point which I proposed secondly to consider.

Nothing can be more evidently indispensable than a desire to learn, in all who apply themselves to any kind of intellectual attainment; and the subject of religion being, as you will all allow, the most important that can be proposed to the mind of man, a desire to profit by religious instruction must be a necessary qualification for every christian disciple. " Still I do not mean that the same eager curiosity which is meritorious in the study of nature, the arts and sciences, history, and the languages, is at all to be encouraged in matters of religion. Men the most eminent for talents and for learning, have often erred in points of mere doctrine, have widely differed from each other, and have thereby from time to time, brought the purity of the gospel under suspicion, debased the character of the priesthood, and unwarily sown dissension among the followers of Christ. That divine teacher, whose name be ever blessed among men! manifestly intended, by the simplicity of his doctrine, and the plain language in which he delivered it, to reform the lives and engage the practice of his hearers; not to gratify their curio-

sity or to prove the strength of their understandings. This often disappointed and displeased them ; but he knew what was in man—he came down from heaven, not to grant us our vain wishes, but to teach us what we ought most to wish, and—what human talents could never contrive, or human learning ever reach—he taught us how to obtain our reasonable wishes : he exhorted his followers to seek first of all “ the kingdom of God and “ his righteousness,” and directed them how to find it.

Here again I will reply to the question which irreligious and profane disputants sometimes triumphantly ask : how has it happened, if the christian religion be contained in the four short and plain books of the gospel, that it is not yet universally understood and practised ? The books of the gospel are indeed short and plain, and let us thank God that they are so ! The reason of man is weak in proportion to the strength of his passions ; the pleasures of the world in which we live, are more attractive than the promised rewards of a world hereafter ; and the indulgence of vicious propensity is easier than the performance of religious duty. The frailty of human nature must not, therefore, be left wholly to itself, for who then could be saved ? Who would read the scriptures to any practical purpose, if there were no ministers of

the gospel, no fixed time for divine worship, and no consecrated place in which christians might meet together? With all these advantages—and great advantages they certainly are—little yet is done, compared with what is left undone. It did not require much exercise of the understanding or any aid from literature, before the time of Christ, to know the commandments of God ; and yet how often were mankind reprov'd and punished for their deliberate violation of those commandments ! Our blessed Saviour has required of all his followers, not only obedience to that divine part of the Jewish dispensation, but a more exalted and refined practice of it than had ever, before his ministry, been enjoined ; at the same time tempering the apparent severity of his own injunctions with a degree of mercy to penitent offenders, which the law of Moses never promised. Mankind are even now, as they were in our Saviour's time, prone to evil rather than to good, easy to be deluded into error, hard to be persuaded into truth, and alas ! there is now no divine teacher among them. We have, indeed, the experience of past ages, and the New Testament for our rule of life, and yet something more is wanted for the instruction, the reproof, and the consolation of those who call themselves christians. Whosoever reflects soberly and honestly on the duties that he has to discharge,

will find them so numerous, so various, and so very important, that he will humbly confess the want of something more than his own attention, to conduct him through the intricate passage of this mortal life. He will find that he does not always subject his own will to the will of God ; that he does not always endeavour to do so ; that he does not always repent when he has transgressed his duty, or when he has omitted it ; and he will acknowledge that he often stands in need of some friend to advise, to reprove, or to encourage him. How important then must be the public teaching of the gospel, whereby a christian's spiritual wants are supplied, his doubts removed, his errors corrected, his evil propensities checked, and his good resolutions strengthened, without any intruder between himself and his God !

Whosoever, therefore, would cultivate a disposition to receive religious instruction, let him pray for that grace which God has promised through Christ, to all who humbly and sincerely ask it. Of ourselves we find, as we are told, that, in all that appertains to religion, we can do nothing. We pray for the divine direction and favour in our worldly undertakings. Who does not ? Who would not blush to own that he does not ? Are our worldly concerns then, of any importance, compared with the welfare of our immortal souls ?—

immortal indeed, but immortal in glory or in misery. Who would risk the safety of his soul to gain the world? Who would not earnestly and incessantly pray for the guidance of the holy spirit in the way to everlasting life, if he prays for prosperity in his passage through a life, each succeeding moment of which may be his last?

Yet it must be from the neglect of prayer, that so few appear to derive benefit from religious instruction, and that so many attend the service of the church, without seeming to consider the nature and design of their attendance there. I exhort you therefore, my christian brethren, at some regular intervals, to retire from the noise and business of the world—"to commune with your own hearts, and be still." You will then learn the value of your souls, and see the necessity of guarding them with at least as much vigilance as you bestow upon your worldly affairs; you will become sensible of your own weakness, feel the want of divine assistance, and direct the thoughts of your hearts towards heaven; you will no longer regard the impious mockery of sinful men, but rather dread the displeasure of God; you will find that, while "the children of this world" rejoice in their prosperity, and neglect or deride the means of future salvation—"in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment" you will find—what too many will

**lament in vain that they never found before—that
“blessed are they that hear the word of God and
“keep it.”**

**Now unto him that made us, to him that re-
deemed us, and to him that still continueth to
sanctify us—to that holy and merciful Being who
is all in all, be praise, honour, and thanksgiving,
world without end !**

SERMON IV.

ISAIAH, CHAP. LV. VER. 6.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found.

THESSE words, though addressed to the Jews, are of universal import, and well deserving of every christian's attention. They plainly involve three distinct propositions :

1st. That there is a time, when the Lord may be found.

2nd. That there is also a time, when he may not be found.

3rd. That we should seek him before it be too late.

1st. There is a time to find the Lord, as long as a man enjoys his life and reason. There is no period of our mortal existence, in which we are not encouraged to pray, and no sin whatsoever, of which we are not exhorted to repent. The sin against the Holy Ghost, which has alarmed some

conscientious christians, is such an one as we cannot now commit ; and the very same passages of scripture which deny forgiveness to that sin, have promised it to every other. So far then we are safe.

The Lord may be most readily found in the season of youth, before the affections are engaged by pleasure, and before the attention of the mind is devoted to the world ; before evil propensities are formed into habits, and before bad example is become familiar ; before vice has taken root in the heart, and before self-love has corrupted the understanding. Then, in the intervals of reflection, the voice of conscience whispers with some effect ; and happy is the youth that listens to it with a willing ear, for the voice of conscience is the voice of God. A man has not then long come forth from the hand of his Maker, and not yet obliterated the likeness to his divine original. A disposition to good and an inclination to evil alternately prevail, as the accidents of human intercourse seem to determine. Such is the state of the young in every civilized country. They naturally ask " who will show us any good," and in the pursuit of it follow different guides. The guides to evil are far more numerous, more active, and more ready at hand than the guides to good ; therefore, and therefore only, young men less commonly find

God, than from the tenderness of their consciences, the ingenuousness of their minds, and the openness of their hearts, might otherwise be expected.

I cannot here refrain from one incidental remark, which may be useful in correcting some dangerous mistakes. Fanaticism and superstition are becoming more and more prevalent among us, nor is it wonderful that they should spread their influence. It is one symptom, though not in itself very pleasing, yet very convincing, of our improvement in religion ; for as religion is better practised and more respected, so will wicked and designing men assume the outward appearance of it, for worldly purposes : fanaticism will take the name and act under the pretext of zeal, and superstition claim the advantages and privileges of piety. We cannot pretend to judge correctly of each other's sincerity, unless when hypocrisy betrays herself. How cautious, therefore, ought we to be, lest from want of closer acquaintance with them, we mistake zeal for fanaticism and piety for superstition ! I have sometimes observed deliberate and wilful errors of this kind, in men who have reprobated zeal because they themselves never felt it, and suspected the piety of others because they had none of their own. Let hypocrisy be exposed and punished, wheresoever she be discovered, more especially if she flee for refuge to the altar of God ; but let us

first be sure that we have not mistaken the object of our resentment, for it were better to let hypocrisy escape, than for merit or innocence to suffer for her crimes. Young persons are often misled in this manner: they hear their parents and friends indulge in all the violence of invective and reproach, against those whose general admonitions have reminded them of neglected duties, and thus instructed to think scorn of any teacher of religion, they are prepared to think evil of religion itself. Hence, at that very time of life which is most susceptible of good impressions, false impressions are made, and the road is cleared for all the panders of vice, and all the emissaries of infidelity: The Lord is lost most commonly, at the season when he might have been found most readily.

But in manhood—from youth to old age—he is not inaccessible, though he were never sought before: he may be found in our retirement, in our worldly pursuits, and even in our sensual enjoyments.

In those sober moments, when we commune with our own hearts, we can hardly help reflecting on the days that are gone, and the use we have made of them. Conscience again interposes to remind us of the evil we have done, and the good we have omitted to do. Finding little or no satisfaction in looking backward, we turn for consola-

tion to the time we may yet have to come. There we find nothing but uncertainty, and, as we advance in years, that uncertainty increases. We feel the necessity of doing quickly what we have to do, and thus the Lord is to be found; for in considering what we have done amiss, we bring to recollection the good resolutions we have made and broken; we find the lamentable insufficiency of our own strength to fulfil our best intentions. Whither then can we flee for succour but to God? and he is still to be found because he is wanted.

In our worldly pursuits we meet with success or disappointment. If our success be uninterrupted, we perhaps think but little of God; but he still reminds us of himself by the disappointments and losses of our friends and neighbours, which we cannot always help applying to ourselves and contriving how to avoid. In the midst of our schemes for that purpose, God presents himself to us, as we survey the difficulty and uncertainty of prosecuting them.

But in our own disappointments, especially if they chance to be severe, our self-sufficiency is reprov- ed, our pride is humbled, our sensibility is awaken- ed, and God is to be found as we look about for consolation. Man, in the utmost plenitude of power and strength, cannot raise the shipwrecked vessel from the deep, restore the treasure con-

sumed by fire, or supply the deficiencies of a scanty harvest. It is true that, on such occasions, God is not always found, for men have put an end to their own existence in the forlorn hope of putting an end to their sorrows; but God has not been sought; and if he has been "found of them that sought him not," it has only been in extraordinary instances. But in general, as the cases in which men have borne up against misfortune are far more numerous than those in which they have sunk under them, God is to be found in the season of calamity, when he presents himself to the eye of reason, as it rolls around for aid and discovers that "vain is the help of man."

Even in our sensual enjoyments the Lord is to be found; for "in the midst of laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." How is it with us then, when the scene of mirth and festivity is withdrawn, and we find ourselves again alone—when we look back with loathing on our excess, and wonder at ourselves? Nothing more severely or more justly punishes itself than a pampered appetite, when, surrounded by all the means of gratification, it has lost the power of being gratified. Compared with such misery, the extremes of hunger and thirst, or the most abject poverty—in which the mind may still find some repose—may be regarded as a species of felicity.

Having exhausted our capacity for further indulgence, and deriving no satisfaction from reflecting on the vanity of inferior objects, we begin to discover the wants of the soul, and in providing for them God is to be found; but most of all in the violence and danger of those diseases and infirmities which pleasure conceals from our observation, till she has done with us. When she has done with us, God again graciously begins with us, and happy still are they whose lives have been preserved long enough to obtain so inestimable a blessing! For of those who devote themselves to sensual enjoyments how few outlive the middle age of man, or consider that God is not to be found in another world, if he be not sought in this! Observe then

2dly, that there is a time, when the Lord is not to be found.

It is impossible for us to *find him*, when we have *lost ourselves*—when by disease, accident, or old age, the mental faculties are disordered, disturbed by false perceptions, and misdirected by the passions. In that most melancholy and deplorable state, woe to the human being who has never thought of God before! For if in the regular exercise of his reason he find not God, what can he do, or what can be done for him, when he has reason no longer for his guide? His faith is not to be trusted, for he is liable to believe in fallacies;

and his obedience is not to be expected, for his actions are controlled by other men. Even in the milder cases of this rueful malady, religion has proved a dangerous subject to contemplate, and often, when no mischievous disposition is at all discoverable, the most monstrous hallucinations have possessed the mind, and spread themselves among the multitude. One of the most extraordinary cases of this kind is that of the notorious Emanuel Swedenborg, whose followers are not few in this and other countries. In many parts of his voluminous writings he claims familiar converse with angels, relates circumstantially what passed at various interviews which had been granted him with departed souls, and describes their habitations, which, he says, “are like to our houses on earth, only far more beautiful and magnificent, having rooms, chambers, and apartments in great variety, as also spacious courts belonging to them, and gardens with parterres of flowers, and fields &c. where the angels are formed into societies. They dwell in contiguous habitations, disposed after the manner of our cities, in streets, walks, and squares.” * Again he says, “that the garments of the angels not only appear such, but really are what they appear to be, is evident both from their

* Treatise concerning Heaven and Hell. English Translation, sixth edition! § 181.

“sight and feeling; and also they have change of raiment, which they put on and off, and lay by for future use, as occasion may require &c.” * There is not upon record a more awful example of the weakness and instability of human reason. Let no man think himself secure in the possession of it, for persons otherwise respectable for their talents and attainments are to be found among the followers of that unfortunate visionary. It is therefore manifest that, if God be not found while we continue in the enjoyment of a sound understanding, it will be impossible to find him amidst the darkness and confusion of a disordered mind, and doubtful, when that darkness and confusion once come on, if they will ever be removed.

But this is not the only, nor the most hopeless condition of those who have not found God. If he be not found before death, *that* is an event which entirely puts an end to all further search. He will then, indeed, be “found by them that sought him not,” though they “say to the mountains fall on us, or to the hills cover us.” They who still believe in purgatory may persuade themselves that God may yet be found, “to their great and endless comfort,” after a certain degree of suffering in an intermediate state. But the rational examiner of scripture will not easily be satisfied with the

* Treatise concerning Heaven and Hell, § 181.

proofs that are usually brought in support of such a doctrine, because he cannot readily admit the propriety or discover the probability of another state of trial after the present life is past. We were sent into this world to find God, Christ came into this world to aid us in the search, and the gospel of Christ has been sent abroad to "guide our feet into the way of peace." How then can it be supposed that the righteous "Judge of all the earth," after giving such plain and repeated manifestations of himself in his works and his word, that no christian can plead involuntary ignorance of him, should look down without indignation upon our wilful disregard of his laws, and our diligence to acquaint ourselves with every thing but *him*. If we continue to put him from us daily, we daily insult his Majesty, and provoke him to leave us to ourselves. Like that infatuated youth who "for a morsel of meat sold his birthright," we may live to see the day, when we would "fain inherit the blessing" graciously offered us, and be rejected—when we may "find no place of repentance," though we "seek it earnestly with tears." If then there be, as it is plain there is, a time when the Lord may not be found, and also that there is no period of life at which, if we be of sound mind, we are forbidden to seek him, how much does it concern us to "feel after him, and find him," before "the door be shut,

and it be too late to knock!" Let us, therefore, consider how we may best begin and conduct the search, in which we have one only road, and one only guide: that road is repentance, and that guide is faith.

Repentance is that sorrow for past offences, which is accompanied by an utter loathing of sin, and a strong desire to avoid it. But our natural feelings are not, on such occasions, always to be trusted: we may loath sin, not because it is odious in itself, but because it has brought mischief upon ourselves; and we may feel a strong desire to avoid it in particular cases, because it has shewn us some proofs of its intimate connection with worldly trouble. Before we can repent, to any useful and satisfactory purpose, we must contemplate sin in the abstract—as abominable in the sight of God, ruinous to the soul of man, and ungrateful to that generous Benefactor who shed his blood to save us from the consequences of it. We must then repent of having displeased God, of having endangered our souls, and of having crucified our Saviour afresh by preferring "the slavery of sin" to "the liberty wherewith he has made us free." Yet such is the weakness of our nature that, even when we have felt the full effect of sincere repentance, we may again and again incautiously yield to the imposing allurements of sin, and again and again have urgen

reason to repent. A christian's whole life, in which other duties also are to be performed, cannot consist of one and the same continued and unabated indulgence of sorrow. As often as we commit sin, we are called upon to repent, and as often as we repent, we are promised, through Christ, that we shall be forgiven. But can that promise hold out the smallest encouragement to sin? Depraved indeed must be the heart of him who thinks so. Shall a christian presume to take advantage of that promise, when he knows that, in the very interval between sin and repentance, men have been punished for their rashness by what is called the accidental but immediate and decisive stroke of death! The meek and humble minded servant of Christ will be alarmed at every symptom of his own weakness, and seek for succour in that God who is the only strength of his confidence; but without faith for his guide, he may go on "seeking rest and finding none."

Faith in God through Christ is not of difficult or dubious attainment. It is nothing mysterious *in itself*, though some of its objects are too sublime to be fully understood. It differs not in its own nature, from that belief which we yield to the reports of travellers, the demonstrations of science, and the oaths of witnesses in courts of

law. It must begin upon that evidence which determines the authenticity of the sacred writings, and extend to all the doctrines contained therein—the attributes of God, the efficacy of the atonement made by Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. A christian established in such a faith will see and feel the necessity of his own best endeavours in the course of his duty, and omit no opportunity of praying for divine assistance. He will not trust to any secret sensations of his own, without proving them by the effects which they dispose him to produce. He will seek after God, not only in his closet, but on the most trying occasions of human intercourse. He will seek him not only in his holy temple, but in the forsaken dwellings of the poor and “him that hath no helper.” He will seek him early, for he knows not the day of his death; and he will seek him late, for he knows that death must then be near. But seek the Lord when he will, with faith for his guide, he cannot seek in vain; for he is invited, entreated, and encouraged to the task. How do we “labour and bereave ourselves of rest,” in search of treasures which either elude our grasp, or, if found, “perish in the using!” But whether he be rich or poor, a christian’s treasure is the knowledge of God. Be this then every returning

sinner's consolation: "when thou saidst seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord, will I seek." To him, therefore, who "came to seek and to save that which was lost," and to him who is a "rewarder of them that diligently seek him," let us give, as we are most bounden, continual thanks and praise, in communion with the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

SERMON V.

MATT. CHAP. VIII. VER. 13.

As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.

THE chapter immediately preceding that from which these words are taken, chiefly consists of strong persuasions and inducements to the practice of piety. We are therein reminded that “a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit”—in other words, that some qualification is necessary, before we can hope to succeed in the performance of religious duty—the heart must be purified from all evil and corrupt affections, before the behaviour can be acceptable.

In this chapter we find that doctrine plainly illustrated by the manner in which our blessed Lord healed the Centurion's servant. He cleansed the leper with a touch. The mother of Peter's wife was by his touch instantly cured of a fever.

His word subdued the raging of the sea, and restrained the influence of devils. On those occasions he was personally present. But when the Centurion "entreated him to heal his servant" who lay at home "sick of the palsy," and humbly expressed his own unworthiness to receive so divine a guest under his roof, declaring his belief that if Christ would speak the word only it would be sufficient, Jesus first turned to his disciples, and directed their attention to so extraordinary an example of faith, and then dismissed him with the words of my text. The servant, though at a distance, "was healed in the self same hour." There are two ways of interpreting this passage: either *in proportion* to thy belief be the benefit conferred upon thy servant, or *because* thou hast believed thy servant shall be healed. Both these constructions, however, lead to the same conclusion. Belief or faith is the condition of obtaining this blessing; and if the blessing be only in proportion to the faith, when the faith is perfect, so also shall the blessing be.

But what was the Centurion's belief? It could not be, as on other occasions, simply that Christ was "able to do this;" for if that had been all, he would have been content with the promise of Christ to come, and heal his servant. When he had received that promise, he might have thought

the actual presence of Christ necessary to the accomplishment of his purpose; but he immediately disclaimed all doubt of his divine and unlimited power. "I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man go, and he goeth; and to another come, and he cometh; and to my servant do this, and he doeth it." As if he had said, I am convinced by all that I have heard and seen, that as I command the soldiers placed under my authority, so canst thou command those invisible legions of angels that wait upon thy will. Now we read that when Jesus first saw Nathanael, and said, "before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee," and Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel, Jesus answered, because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these." Those greater things the Centurion had heard and seen, and therefore concluded that "this was the very Christ."

I will first take the words before us in their literal sense, and show that, as the Centurion's belief or faith was rewarded by the cure of his servant, so also the faith of every christian will be rewarded by many worldly blessings, and especially by the success of his prayers to heaven.

I will, secondly, take the words in their spiritual sense, and show that faith is necessary to salvation ;

Thirdly and lastly, I shall conclude with such observations as this view of the subject may naturally suggest.

1st, The faith of every christian will be rewarded by many worldly blessings. Let us look to the apostle's definition of faith, which, he says, is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"—that is, the object of it is what we hope for, and which we believe on evidence, though we ourselves do not distinctly see or fully comprehend it.

"No man hath seen or can see" the Almighty maker of the universe, yet every man, whensoever he walks abroad, may find evidence of his existence and his attributes "in the heaven above and in the earth beneath." This evidence is so strong, that to one unbeliever on that subject there are probably many thousand believers. Indeed the senses themselves lead to immediate conviction upon it. But there are other very important points on which faith is also required from the mind alone, without the concurrence of the senses. The divinity of Christ, for instance, is one. *We* cannot have the evidence of *our* senses in favour of it, and yet *we* are peremptorily and repeatedly called upon to be-

lieve it. Not to multiply quotations, one passage only may suffice: "ye believe in God, believe also in me." The demand is just; for though *we* have never heard the voice of Christ nor seen his works, we have the testimony of those who did, and their testimony, notwithstanding the obstinacy of prejudice, the force of ridicule, and the subtilty of malice, after the lapse of nearly eighteen centuries, still remains unshaken. The demand is just, because a compliance with it brings "an inestimable recompense of reward."

Belief in Christ, or the faith of a christian, infallibly leads to humility, justice, and charity—not the dry speculative virtues of mere moral obligation, but the warm and active graces of enlarged benevolence. A christian in the highest state of rank and power will be humble, because a greater than he was humble. Where then will be his pride? that pride which so frequently stands between a man and his neighbour, which torments himself more than any other, and exposes the weak side of his character to the scorn of the wise and the triumph of the unwise. Pride cannot dwell with him who is of an humble spirit; therefore one enemy to his happiness, and the cause of a thousand more will be effectually subdued. He will find delight in many things which only serve to vex, intimidate, and confound the wicked.

The worship of God will be his pleasure, not his punishment ; the fear of God will be his support, not his terror ; and " the deep things of " God " will enlighten his mind, not harass his judgment. He will submit to be taught where he is ignorant, reprov'd where he is faulty, and corrected where he is mistaken. He will be " temperate in all things," for the gratification of any passion to excess would destroy the very essence of his character. Numerous avenues to disease and pain will thus be closed towards him, and his health will remain exposed to no other danger than that of those accidents which alike befall the righteous and the wicked. Among the rest, he may suffer persecution, but generally speaking, not ; for what invites persecution so much as that emulation, that conceit, and that obstinacy, which the humble minded christian has for ever banished from his bosom ? And what can rob him of his patience ? The moderation of his desires will subject him to no disappointments, and the sense of his own unworthiness will reconcile him to those which thwart his reasonable expectations.

Such is true humility, and where was it ever found but in a christian's heart ? He who believes in God, and God alone, may do many things well ; but instead of being humble, he will claim merit for his virtues, and submit to the degrading

impositions of pride. The book of nature is indeed before him, in which he may read of God and his perfections, and discover some part of man's duty towards him, but nothing of his duty to his neighbour, nothing of his duty to himself. Where will he look for justice? In the writings of philosophers? He will see it there beautifully described and strongly recommended; but on turning to profane history he will meet with few examples of it; for as often as men found themselves sufficiently powerful to practice injustice with impunity in this world, they forgot the eloquent descriptions and exhortations of philosophers, and looking to no certain punishment or satisfactory reward in another, they became as blind to the charms of justice, as their painters and sculptors had represented her in weighing the various pretensions of mankind: they were just, while it answered their worldly purposes, and no longer. But Christ has left us a rule for the practice of justice so easy, so general, and yet so applicable to the most important cases, that a christian cannot mistake it, or exempt himself from it, or be at a loss how to apply it: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them." Were every man influenced by this single rule, fraud and violence would no more disturb the world, and human laws would become a dead letter.

But “the end of the commandment is charity” or brotherly love—the peculiar characteristic of a christian country—not indeed in a state even approaching to perfection, but to a degree so far above what is to be found in others as hardly to admit of any comparison. Now what can more conduce to the happiness of a nation, or to that of any inhabitant of it, than to think, speak, and act kindly one towards another? Mere natural religion may teach a man, in certain circumstances, to be benevolent, but would it teach even the poor to be charitable? Whereas a christian may become highly so in cases apparently trivial; and in his prayers the meanest cottager may more befriend a prince, than the most munificent of the sons of men can befriend the meanest cottager.

Great and numerous then are the advantages to be derived from faith in Christ even in *this life*, and especially in the time of trouble, and in the hour of death, when the glorious prospect of *everlasting life* begins to brighten as the vanities of this diminish to the view.

I will now, 2ndly, take the words in their spiritual sense, and show that faith is necessary to salvation —“that there is no other name under heaven “whereby we may be saved, but only the name “of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The best of us have great need of forgiveness

from each other ; yet what are our offences against each other compared with our offences against God ? Every offence against man is, in a still greater degree, an offence against him who has forbidden it, as in the horrible crime of murder, for instance, which, shocking as it is to our nature, revolting to our feelings, and cruel beyond expression to the object of it, *must* still be more abominable in the sight of that Being who gave us those feelings, and that portion of existence in this world which no other being can pretend to enlarge or presume to abridge. Who then, with innumerable sins upon his head, and liable, on many a sudden temptation to increase their number—who then could be saved ? This is a question which the disciples put to our Lord himself. His answer was : “ with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” It is plain that something must *be done* to obtain the favour of God, and to “ save us from the wrath to come.” “ His mercies are over all his works ;” but it never could be supposed that, without repentance at least, we could derive any benefit from those mercies. Yet repentance is not mentioned in any part of the answer to that most important question. Our Lord insisted upon that duty on many other occasions ; but on this he referred his hearers to the power of God—to those only means which God has pro-

vided, to supply the defects and sanctify the repentance of sinful man.

If God then has provided the means of our escape from the danger of future torment, and of our enjoying the felicity of heaven, faith in those means, and in the efficacy of that sacrifice which he has accepted, must be necessary to the proper use of them; for if we wish to receive what he has given, shall we disbelieve what he has made known? And if he has made known one thing more than any other, by the most significant representations, the most express and literal declarations, and the fullest proofs that miracles could furnish, it is that we should have faith in Christ. As *we* have believed, so therefore will it be done unto *us*.

I shall conclude with only a short observation or two.

It behoves us to be as much in earnest for the safety of our own souls, and for those of our neighbours, as the Centurion was for the life of his servant. The latter was saved from a natural death, but we may be saved from death eternal! "Speak the word only, and thy servant shall be healed." That word *is* spoken—spoken whenever we meet in the house of God, and it will be our fault if it be ever spoken in vain. The same power which Christ exercised at one distance

he can exercise at another ; and though he is now in heaven and we on earth, the space between us is less than we imagine ; for God is present every where, and wheresoever God is, there is our Redeemer, and there also is our Sanctifier.

Let us learn from a Jewish Soldier the protection due to those who live under our roof, and especially to those whom providence has appointed to a life of servitude—who administer to our comforts always, and to our luxuries often. Forsake them not, nor neglect them in the time of sickness. Wait a little upon them, as they have waited much upon you. Above all think not their souls beneath your care. Many of us shall hereafter be convinced of their value, when the glass through which we now see darkly, shall be broken, and we ourselves appear in the presence of that master, whose servants we all are, unless we are the servants of sin, which, whether we be high or low, rich or poor, is the hardest and meanest of all servitude—not servitude indeed, but slavery. Follow the Centurion's amiable example. He sent not one of the "soldiers under him" to entreat the aid of the divine physician, but went himself in person and besought him, and pleaded the cause of his servant with as much earnestness, as he could have done if it had been that of his son.

But let us remember that, whether for ourselves

or others, vain will be our prayers, unless we sanctify them by that lively and rational faith which the grace of God only can inspire. That grace is at all times ready at the call of every devout christian, and every heart is open to its influence, that is not hardened by the "deceitfulness of sin." There is our danger. We discern not the real deformity of sin, because in pleasant guise, and under a feigned name, it courts the indulgence of the senses. Could we behold it in no phantastic shape, and stripped of every delusive covering, we should shudder at the very sight of the monster. Be it then our main concern to detect it under every specious appearance which it may assume, and faith in Christ will aid us in the discovery; be this our constant prayer, of which the very best of us have daily need: "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!"

What would not many a man give, if, on a sudden stroke of the palsy, another Christ were near to save him! "Ye fools and blind!"—to use our Lord's own language—rather look to the state of your souls, and consider that not another Christ, but Christ himself is still near. What are all the torments which afflict the body, compared with those which distract a guilty soul? Yet "so gracious is the Lord and merciful," that we are encouraged to "ask that we may obtain;" and we

know that "we have the petitions we desire of him." But we are taught to "ask in faith, nothing wavering." Faith then—that "true and lively faith in God our Saviour;" which produces repentance for neglected duties, and sins committed; accompanied by reliance on him for aid in keeping our resolutions to amend, will procure *us*, as it did the Centurion, the favour of that Being who knoweth our hearts; and if faith be present *there*, the sense of pain, the sight of danger, and the fear of death will yield to the powerful word of God; we shall rejoice in the consciousness of future safety, and "all the diseases of our souls shall be healed."

SERMON VI.

MATT. CHAP. VI. VER. 34.

Sufficient unto the day is the Evil thereof.

SUCH is the imperfection of man, and such the state of the world, in which, for the trial of his obedience, it has pleased God to place him, that excuses for discontent are seldom wanting. Our first parents, surrounded by fewer temptations, accustomed to fewer indulgences, and restricted to one only proof of their forbearance, in search of what they did not need, lost the inestimable blessings which they possessed. Their posterity under the Mosaic dispensation, who, during their bondage in Egypt, and in all their subsequent calamities, "cried unto the Lord in their trouble," yet, in every interval of prosperity, "turned their backs" "and fell away like their forefathers." The history of succeeding ages is full of the like ungrateful behaviour which unfortunately marks the character

of man, and we have daily instances of it before our eyes. We see some men abounding with wealth, others excelling in power, and others exalted in rank: we see ingenuity and industry crowned with success, health and longevity exulting in their strength, but whom do we see contented? The truth is, that our wishes begin, where they ought to end: we are eager in the pursuit of those perishable things, which the world holds up to admiration, and leave the unperishable glories of the world to come, till we have done our best to secure what we call a competency—reversing our blessed Master's injunction to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” and forgetful of his gracious promise that “all the other things shall be added unto us.” Against this self-delusive and dangerous practice, the words of my text are a most awful warning. If to those who set out with seeking the most important object, the blessings of this world are promised, what do we find added to the gains of those who begin with seeking these blessings? Do we find any good whatsoever beyond the mere possession of them? Let us examine into the causes of this deplorable error.

We see people who call themselves christians, pining in poverty, tormented with pain, and exposed to danger, who never call upon God. On

the contrary, we see many in pursuit of dishonest means to mend their condition, many seeking for relief from pain in the most shocking execrations, and many defying different degrees of peril, as if "no evil could happen unto them." Can it then be expected that they who abound with the good things of this world, who enjoy an uninterrupted state of good health, and who are exempt from those dangers to which a large proportion of their fellow creatures are daily subject, should shew any sign of piety? "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven"—that is, the motives which such a man feels to piety, are by no means so powerful, nor so numerous, as those which men less prosperous experience.

In fact, we all of us treat religion—not as we are plainly, urgently, and benevolently taught to treat it—but much in the same manner as we treat all other subjects—that is, as we please. We have recourse to it, as we have to charity to save us from famishing, or to a plank to save us from drowning. So long as the rich man can "clothe himself in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day," he "forgets God his Saviour, who has done so great things for him," and spurns Lazarus at his gate; but when he is "in hell and in torment," he can pray even the former object of

his scorn, to “dip the tip of his finger in water “ and cool his tongue.” Wisely, therefore, do we, in our excellent Litany, pray that God “would “ deliver us in the time of our wealth.” Mark the different gradations of wealth and power, and you will find that, in proportion as they rise, so also does impiety—I mean not crime—for that, alas! is confined to no class of mankind—but that disregard of religion, with which many treat it as a thing of naught, or put it off to “a more convenient season.”

This life we actually know. It is present. Here is the place which we call our home. Here are our enjoyments, of which, perhaps, we have only a moderate supply. We look around us, but with too lofty an aspect to discern those who are beneath us. We feel none of *their* wants; we are subject to few or none of *their* dangers and temptations. How thankful then must we be to God—for we are christians all—for his bounty and blessing? In a certain way, indeed, we are thankful. In public homage to him we perhaps are frequent, and, at times, sincere. We may not even neglect our private devotions; but when business occupies our time and attention, how do we manage it? The man of business, indeed, too often neglects the sabbath, dedicating the day of rest to pleasure rather than to religion. No man has a greater right to occasional recreation, than the man of business,

because he has fairly earned it; and even on the Lord's day there are many recreations that may be innocently enjoyed; but business is still the main object, and the love of money prevails over the fear of God. Many are notoriously addicted to the habit of settling their accounts on that day, and many pay their workmen. But suppose the sabbath to be well kept; is it not the *only* day on which religion is suffered to engage their attention? Are not the means of getting money, or of succeeding in this or that undertaking, pursued with the utmost assiduity, without one prayer to God for success? They discover that such means are theirs, but never think of him who has "given them power to get wealth"—who alone has given them those very means which they value so highly, and practice so earnestly.

Then as to that benevolence—that charity, without which all other things can "profit us nothing"—the most servile adulation is offered to those who can do us any good—as the phrase is—nothing is so mean that we cannot condescend to adopt in courting their favour, while we presumptuously neglect or deride those from whom we expect no advantage, and despise the poor. But if prosperity cease to smile, "how suddenly do we consume, "perish, and come to a fearful end!" If the voice of religion be then disregarded, bankruptcy

and a broken heart betray the neglect of those duties which, when but even imperfectly performed, can never fail, through Christ, to strengthen us in supporting the hardships of adversity. The man, whose want of success in business has taught him the value of religion, has far more cause to rejoice in his tribulation, than he in his prosperity, whose want of religion has made him the slave of wealth.

But suppose we have no business to follow—that we are rich enough to gratify our own inclinations. The want of business is surely, next to the want of religion, the sorest want that man can suffer. The poor have not half the occasion to deplore their want of riches, that the rich have to lament their want of business. But then what time, what opportunities, what extensive means of shewing their love to God and their neighbour do the latter possess ! True. But there is another love that demands all that time, all those opportunities, and all those means—the love of ourselves—a love which, though we all disown it, often admits of no rival either in God or man. Let us call it, if we please, the love of pleasure, of rank, or of power. The rich man feels that he has a right to pleasure, because he can purchase it. There is the delusion. He accordingly indulges in a thousand excesses of which, if he had not the means, he might never

have thought. He forgets the improvement of his mind in the gratification of his senses, and neglects the care of his soul, as if he could also purchase his own salvation whensoever he pleased. But pleasure tires much sooner than we are at first aware. It has not sufficient variety for the range of a voluptuous imagination; and, when we are cloyed with it, and particularly when we have derived disease and infirmity from it, we flee for satisfaction to—religion? No. It is not the time yet. Ambition beckons us to a more alluring object. What? Can aught be more alluring than those rewards “which God hath promised to them that love him?” Oh! yes, distinction: to be called by some honourable title—to take place of our present equals—to wear the badge of some noble order, in confraternity with the statesman and the warrior, whose services have merited it—these are rewards worth seeking, and to obtain *them*, what trouble is not worth taking, what vigilance is not worth enduring, what sacrifice is not worth making? Go, seek them in the service of the state. I want the talents. Seek them in the camp. I want the courage; but I do not want the wealth necessary for that purpose, and that shall stand me in stead. Such is the reasoning, and such sometimes the language of the slaves which mammon makes, and such the fatuity of those whom ambition has estranged from God!

If we ascend still higher, we shall find fewer of those who have worn a crown remarkable for any thing like piety. But here let me pause. Though we are not now met on any public occasion, yet the nature of my subject has brought me, before I was aware, to a duty which I feel myself called upon by justice to discharge—a duty which I can discharge most cheerfully, because I can do it conscientiously, and because you, my brethren, can bear testimony to the truth of what I am going to advance.

Whatever may be the prevailing vices of the present age—however unfashionable piety may be, however neglected the sabbath—very different has been the example of our most religious, though now most afflicted Sovereign. Both in prosperity and in adversity, in sickness and in health, in danger and in security, in peace and in war ; the uniform tenor of his life has been pious without cant, and devout without ostentation. Nor has his piety consisted wholly in prayer and thanksgiving to God. In the relations of husband and father he never has had one subject more affectionate or more attentive than himself, and never was there a steadier patron or a warmer friend. He loved his country ; for whatever difference of opinion may remain among us on the measures pursued by his ministers, the opportunities he has afforded for the trial of oppo-

site political principles, have clearly marked the patriotic end he had in view. As the head of the Church, he has manifested an unwearied vigilance for its prosperity, without that overweening jealousy of Dissenters which might thwart their freedom of public worship; and I am persuaded that our Roman Catholic brethren, whom I cannot name without respect, might long ago have been admitted to as ample privileges as they wish, had they but un-animously submitted to one condition, which it was not only reasonable, but necessary to require. His reign has been long, and, under divine providence, one of his virtues, not very common among his subjects, has contributed to the length of it. I mean temperance—a virtue not very easily attainable by men of his exalted station. From the ma-lady with which it has pleased God to visit him, let us learn that humility, without which wealth is only a snare, rank a misfortune, and power the precursor of perdition; and let that charity which forbids us to impute misfortune to crime, and to confound natural causes with the immediate judgments of heaven, dispose us to pray “the Father of mercies, “and the God of all comfort” to restore him to his family, his subjects, and his friends, or to lighten the burden or shorten the duration of his sufferings. Meanwhile let us acquiesce in the will of God, whatever may be the event, knowing that

it cannot be long ere, through Christ, he shall "inherit a crown of glory."

Cast an eye on the opposite shore, and see another proof of the dangers, which multiply in proportion to the increase of human power. In short, there is not one vice—these is not one crime, from which the rulers of this world have abstained; and all history is full of royal atrocity, from the Pharaohs who governed and oppressed Egypt, and the Cæsars who conquered and enslaved the world, down to those modern ephemeral despots, who at length brought monarchy into contempt, and defiled a neighbouring country with such abominable deeds of vengeance, as surpassed the guilt of those, whose wickedness they intended to retaliate.

We find then that in the possession of wealth and power our greatest danger lies, and that as they encrease our vices encrease in proportion. Let this reflection teach the poor contentment: they need not envy those whose means of present happiness are employed in deserving future misery. Rather let them bless God for saving themselves from the like temptations; and when they see the rich, as in this still favoured land they often may, employ their wealth in the service of mankind, and in the other duties of their station, let them learn to

love and reverence the benefactors of the human race.

Let the rich learn to love and cherish the poor. The meanest beggar may be "rich towards God," and though in this world he may not have "where to lay his head," his soul may be hereafter admitted to everlasting rest "in Abraham's bosom." Let this teach them vigilance and sobriety. They need not despise those whose present lot however humble, and whose present wants however galling, may be supplied even in this world with such contentment, and such reliance on the justice of heaven, as cannot fail to blunt the sense of suffering, and prepare their souls for reception into the mansions of the blessed. Let them never cease to be thankful for that wealth which, if righteously employed, shall not only make them beloved and honoured by their fellow creatures, but procure them peace of conscience in the hour of danger and of death, and enhance their future felicity; for if from "him to whom much is given, much will be required", so to him who, *through faith in Christ*, has done much, shall much also be required.

SERMON VII.

ROMANS, CHAP. XVI. VER. 19.

*I would have you wise unto that which is Good,
and simple concerning Evil.*

WHO would not be wise unto that which is good? Who, if he does not already think himself so, does not believe himself willing to become so? Every man thinks his own favourite pursuit to be that of good, in some sense; but “who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up thy countenance upon us!” The Lord himself *has* shewn us the only good, and *has* lifted up his countenance upon us, by giving us the “light of everlasting life”—by sending his Son into the world to teach mankind, by example as well as by precept, that there is no good in this transitory state, but what relates and leads to that eternal state to which they are all passing—that religion alone is valuable. Let us examine, then, the pro-

• perties of those things on which so many set their affections, and the advantages of the christian religion which so many disregard.

The christian religion is easily understood. This is more than can be said of any art or science, which requires time, talents, and industry. The whole life of many a mortal has been devoted to researches of the latter kind, without the smallest useful discovery, to the irreparable injury of the health, and the total neglect or frequent suspension of the more important duties demanded of him. In learning how to provide for the body, what severities do thousands undergo, and many of them with becoming patience, in the course of a long and laborious apprenticeship, or of hard and sometimes oppressive servitude! "They rise up early, late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness." Look to the soldier and the sailor. In addition to the toils of other men, *they* are exposed to incessant danger, which all the skill of the most consummate experience cannot effectually prevent. How miserably has human invention been racked, in search of what was called the philosopher's stone, or the art of making gold! and in exploring nature for an universal remedy, or a single medicine to cure every disease!

In the study of the christian religion no such pains are necessary, and human invention is en-

tirely out of the question. God has, both in his works and in his word, given us such plain instruction, that few can plead a weakness of understanding so deplorable as not to comprehend it. The flowers of the field, the waters of the ocean, the winds that blow, and the lights that alternately shine in the firmament, teach even the unlettered shepherd, that he is "one of God's people", and one of "the sheep of his pasture;" and he that can but moderately read his native language, finds in the gospel no expression to create doubt, no problem to require solution, in all that belongs to his future salvation. There are difficulties which sometimes occur, but *they* relate to those more sublime truths, which are of very inferior importance, because *they* are not practical, and are not to this hour fully comprehended even by the wisest. But he will find his duty to God, to his neighbour, and to himself, so briefly, so distinctly, and so perfectly made known, that the certainty of heaven and future happiness is not greater than his means of attaining them are easy. Let a man be only half so much in earnest to secure his interest in a better world, as he is to advance his prosperity in this, and he will find no obstacle in the way of his salvation, which, with God's assistance, he may not easily remove.

The christian religion is perfect. Every thing

else with which we have to do is either imperfect like ourselves, or our knowledge of it is so. The works of our hands are all imperfect, for otherwise we should be able to produce something superior to ourselves in that respect. Examine art after art, and science after science, and you will find in every one of them a point beyond which the invention of man could never advance, and which God has most probably determined to be the limit of it in this world. Those languages which have been for ages the delight and the boast of scholars—how scanty is the most profound knowledge of them! No two nations pronounce them alike, and indeed so widely do they differ, that very eminent men, of countries remote from each other, have not, when they have met, been able to converse in either of those languages without mutual embarrassment. Religion itself was long imperfect. The abominable idolatries which, before the time of Moses, had overspread the world, were checked by the law which, by divine appointment, that extraordinary person promulgated; but “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” seemed to justify and even to encourage the deadly principle of revenge, the duty of man to his neighbour was of very limited obligation, his duty to God consisted very much in outward forms and ceremonies, and the rewards promised to obedience seldom if ever

extended to a future state, of which the Jews in general entertained not the smallest expectation.

Since the appearance of our blessed Saviour, these defects have been abundantly and completely supplied. *Every vice* is forbidden, and *every virtue* is enjoined. Whensoever vice has been indulged, the tears of repentance mixed with the blood of a Saviour will wash away the stain, and defective virtue is perfected by the inestimable merits of a sinless Redeemer. The rewards which religion offers are perfect, because they are unperishable and unchangeable ; and because they will be as great as every soul is capable of receiving. In cultivating the liberal arts and sciences men seldom arrive at eminence till they are advanced in years, but, forasmuch as the young die as well as the old, and as God “ would not have that any “ should perish,” the young may be as well qualified as the old for “ the attainment of everlasting “ salvation ;” and, much as we admire the forwardness of youth in human learning or in extraordinary ingenuity, there is something far more worthy of our respect and love in one who has learned an early command over his passions, and formed an early acquaintance with the word of God. St. Paul was brought up “ at the feet “ of Gamaliel,” and had been a distinguished scholar among the Jews before his conversion ; yet how

could he have appeared so truly illustrious, as when he pleaded his own cause before king Agrippa and, even in fetters, “almost persuaded him to be “a christian?”

But to be wise, in the Apostle's sense, is not simply to *understand the doctrines*, but to *practice the duties of religion*—to “let our light so shine “before men, that they may see our good works” —not indeed ostentatiously and presumptuously to display it, but so to conduct ourselves in our several stations, that it may be clearly discernible on examination. Merely to understand the word of God is an insult to his Majesty. We might as well understand the Koran as the Gospel, if that be all; and, indeed, to search inquisitively into the more obscure parts of Scripture, with a view only to comprehend them, is an unprofitable and endless task; for one object of the sacred writings is evidently to exercise our faith, for which there would be left no room if every doctrine therein were alike intelligible. Whosoever enters upon the study of the New Testament, should consider it as divisible into two principal parts—one, which relates to practice, and is open to every capacity, and the other, which concerns faith, and is above all human comprehension. Had this been done in the earlier ages of the church, what a multitude of errors might have been prevented! This

is the very point which prompted the Apostle to give the admonition which I have now chosen for my text. Before he wrote this Epistle to his Roman converts, some of them had indulged in certain vain and dangerous enquiries which called for his reprehension: “now I beseech you, brethren, “mark them who cause divisions and offences, “contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned, “and avoid them.” At the same time, he praises them generally, not for any speculative notions of their own, but for their obedience.—“Your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad “therefore, on your behalf.” The sacred but mysterious doctrine of the Trinity has been officiously and audaciously made a stumbling block to thousands, by needless and fruitless efforts to explain it. The want of success in such vain attempts has furnished libertines and unbelievers with plausible arguments, in addition to their other objections against revealed religion. But let them know at once that, though we believe that doctrine on the sacred authority of the inspired writers, we do not pretend to understand it; not because it is *contrary* to human reason, for then they might refute and explode it; but because it lies above the reach of human reason and cannot be disproved; and because it rests on such authority as no good man will venture to dispute, and no wise man chuse

to reject. Is nothing to be believed if it be not understood? Alas! how little do we understand of the joys of heaven or the torments of hell! The same Apostle tells us that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The like might be said of the torments of hell, for all the expressions of scripture concerning them are merely figurative, and it is enough for us to know that they are dreadful. Why, when such extraordinary pains have been taken to be "wise above that which is written" about the Holy Trinity, have not christians sought to acquaint themselves with the nature of future rewards and punishments? Why, because they are utterly unable to reason satisfactorily upon the subject. It had been well for the christian world if the like prudence had restrained men from meddling with a doctrine which equally defies the force of all human sagacity. The same supreme and omniscient God who revealed to us the one, has revealed to us the other also—*revealed*; I say, *the fact*, though not the nature of it. We know and we acknowledge that our religion is nothing without humility. If that virtue be necessary in discharging our duty to man, how much more necessary, how much more reasonable, how much more easily

practicable is it in the service which we owe to God ! Shall we say then that he has made known too little, and attempt, by those faculties which he alone has given us, to supply those deficiencies which impose the only effectual restraint on human pride ? “ This they begin to do, and now “ nothing will be restrained from them, which “ they have imagined to do.” Let us rather be content with what we are allowed to know, and be thankful. The Tree of Knowledge has already once been plucked, and, to the end of the world, mankind must feel the consequences of the rash transgression. If it be our duty to be just to our fellow creatures, it is our paramount duty to be obedient to our Creator ; and it must be no less criminal to pry into what he has concealed, than to reject what he has made known : in either case we betray a want of faith, and “ without faith it is “ impossible to please him.”

“ To be wise,” then, “ unto that which is “ good,” is so to acquaint ourselves with the religion which we profess, as to shew our belief by our obedience, and our knowledge by practice. While natural philosophy was confined to books and studied only on abstract principles, it remained a shapeless mass of ingenuity and error of no benefit to mankind ; but as soon as one of the humblest of the sons of men brought it to the

test of experiment, it became uniformly correct and universally practicable, and has ever since contributed, under divine providence, to the convenience, the comfort, and the happiness of the human race. As we long ago demolished monasteries because their inhabitants were useless to society, we might as well be consistent, and not make monks of ourselves by confining our religion to the closet, instead of exercising it in the active duties of life.

I have thus endeavoured to shew what it is to be “wise unto that which is good!” But this is not all. The Apostle’s advice is likewise to be “simple concerning evil.” This part of his admonition must be examined under two distinct heads—an ignorance and absence of evil in ourselves, and a backwardness in believing and speaking evil of others.

Now as to the former, it is self-evident that whosoever is “wise unto that which is good”—who takes sufficient care to learn and practice the christian religion—must be, in a great degree, “simple concerning evil.” But there is one point in which he may dangerously err, and that is in mixing too much with the wicked. We very properly caution youth against the influence of bad example; yet so baneful and insidious are its effects, that the oldest, the wisest, and the very best amongst

us are not, at all times, proof against them. In submitting to hold intercourse with the wicked, we in some measure countenance their wickedness; we must bear to witness bad actions, or at least to hear profane and licentious discourse, which we may not, in every instance, be in a situation to repress or to reprove. Whensoever it so happens to us, it is high time to withdraw, and to double our vigilance that we may not again expose ourselves to the like danger. The higher a christian's station is in this world, the less caution is, in this respect, needful, because he is the less liable to witness what he is known to dislike; but they who belong to the middle ranks of society cannot be too much upon their guard; for in mixing with those above them, they can have but a small share of influence in checking the improprieties which they observe, and probably no sufficient authority to restrain them in their inferiors. Wheresoever there is no power to control vice, there is the greatest danger of being ensnared by it. We were "born in sin," and our natural bias is to evil. Had the other disciples stood manfully by their betrayed Master, St. Peter would not have denied him; but after they "forsook him and fled," he was led to participate in their baseness and their guilt. They who err like him, may not like him atone for it by speedy and sincere repentance. If

then we would be "simple concerning evil," it would be our wisdom, as it is our duty, to follow the advice of the Apostle in a verse or two preceding my text, and rather than hold intercourse with the wicked without any prospect of reclaiming them, to "avoid them."

If then we are really "wise unto that which is good," and, with respect to ourselves, "simple concerning evil," we must necessarily be backward in thinking and speaking evil of others. In discountenancing or rebuking notorious sin, we cannot be too earnest or too active in our several stations. But a christian who is "simple concerning evil" in himself, will naturally think and speak as well of others as of himself, whensoever he sees nothing directly to the contrary. Knowing his own errors and defects, and having experienced the difficulty of preventing and supplying them, he will never be clamorous about the errors and defects of his neighbour, but rather sympathize with him, as in other misfortunes ; and if he would go still farther, as in fact he ought to do, he will warn him of those blemishes of which few are sufficiently if at all sensible in themselves. It is indeed certain that more and more good is thus done, in proportion as the world becomes wiser, which it can hardly do without growing better. On the other hand, when a man magnifies his neighbour's errors into

crimes, or suspects his *motives* to be wrong when he is *actually* doing right, can *he* be very "simple concerning evil?" He surely is not so towards others, and therefore the odds are great if he be so in his own bosom. It is rather to be believed that his wisdom concerning the motives of other mens' actions has been derived from the consciousness of his own, and that, because his own are not so pure as they ought to be, he supposes the like of others. "Thou hypocrite! first cast the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye."

These things, in the common matters of the world, are bad and mischievous enough, but they are still worse in matters of religion. In this country, where every christian may worship God in his own way, without danger or restraint, it might be expected that christians would not abuse and hate one another on account of their several tenets, and particularly that they would not question each others motives for embracing this or that particular persuasion. How, when we allow each other the right of chusing for himself, can we think evil of each other for exercising that right? Is it possible that a christian can appear in the more immediate presence of his Maker under a fictitious character, for the sordid purpose of pleasing any

man or any set of men, when he lies in no danger of any pains or penalties for appearing in his own ? Yet, if ever a man's principles be doubtful, it must be when he is so ready to doubt those of his neighbour. Suppose a man to be a conscientious member of our Established Church, to have founded his preference of it on a careful examination of the gospel, and to be sincerely thankful to God for living in the quiet profession of his faith, what good motive can he possibly have for disturbing others in the quiet profession of theirs, though it may be somewhat different from his own ? How, on the other hand, can any conscientious Dissenter suppose that any member of our Established Church would not belong to it, if it were not established ? I hope, and, as far as my small experience goes, I believe that the pulpit of the Church of England is very rarely employed to so ignoble and unchristian a purpose as that of vilifying Dissenters of any denomination. I would also hope that the pulpit in other places of divine worship is equally free from such profanation. Report, however, declares the contrary. Invective, which is always indecent in a christian, and most of all in a christian preacher, is said to be not unfrequently employed against the Established Church, for no other avowed reason than because *it is established*, or because it pretends not to be

infallible, or because many of its members are wicked. The two first of these reasons are unworthy of serious attention, and, as to the last, let it be considered that the same objection has been made to the christian religion altogether, and, in either case, amounts to nothing conclusive. There are christians of every sect who, in their practice, disregard the precepts which they hear, and the duties which they acknowledge; but I trust that there is no sect whatsoever that encourages or connives at wickedness of any kind. How then can christians look coldly on each other, on account of their difference in religious opinion? The Almighty Father of us all looks down with an equal eye upon us all, though he alone can distinguish between the mistaken and the deceitful. But *we*—short-sighted mortals as we are—how can *we* pretend to see into each other's hearts, and discover each other's secret motives of action? Let every christian take proper care of his own conduct, and he will have enough upon his hands to keep him from prying into the state of other men's minds: Let us endeavour, in the knowledge of our own duty, to be "wise as serpents;" so shall we become towards all others, in the literal meaning of the words, "harmless as doves."

SERMON VIII.



ST. LUKE, CHAP. X. VER. 28.

This do and thou shalt live.

THE parable of the good Samaritan, which makes part of the instruction requested of our blessed Lord by a Jewish lawyer, has been so often and so ably illustrated in the pulpit, that I can pretend to add nothing of any consequence to what you must have already heard on that interesting subject. The words of my text have, however, been less frequently noticed, though they lead directly to that parable, and are in themselves worthy of no less attention. The lawyer had asked what he should do "to inherit eternal life," expecting to receive such a narrow interpretation of the law as might allow a limited practice of it; but on reciting a short summary of the decalogue, which the divine Teacher demanded, he was start-

led at the concise yet comprehensive injunction, "this do and thou shalt live"—that is, keep this law *strictly in every point*, and thou shalt be saved, *but not otherwise*.

Here I cannot help observing how common and how dangerous it is for men thus to quarrel, as it were, with their religion, and to seek how to reduce it to their practice, rather than regulate their practice by it. This disposition has occasioned more schism in the church of Christ, and introduced more profligacy among christians than any other cause whatsoever.

The summary quoted by the lawyer might be thus briefly expressed : Thou shalt love God *with thyself*, and thy neighbour *as thyself*. The former of these terms is not suited to every capacity, and I shall therefore endeavour to explain that duty according to the express terms of the summary, which are these : "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbour as thyself."

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart"—that is, with all thy natural affections. Now what we *love* most, we *seek* most, and to the various idols of our love we willingly sacrifice domestic comfort, bodily health, and peace of conscience, and often risk our reputation and perso-

nal safety. We see men so devoted to them as to evince a degree of contrivance and industry worthy of a better object, and to a better object they are invited, encouraged, and directed. The things of this world are too imperfect, too changeable, and too transitory to satisfy him who obtains the most of them, to whom there will still appear an unmeasurable void, which God alone can fill. But if we first set our affections on *him*, and once succeed in rooting them *there*, we may usefully possess and innocently enjoy such worldly blessings as his goodness bestows upon us, and find no void if his wisdom withhold such blessings from us. To love God is not *so* to renounce the world as to shun society, but so to conduct ourselves in it as to neglect no part of our allotted task. To obtain the good opinion and favour of mortals like ourselves, we study and employ the means to please them, and we cannot be innocently ignorant of those means to please *him*, which are made known alike to all. We find it easy to love pleasure, because it is present and courts and gratifies the corporeal senses. God also is present—present where-soever we are—and encourages us to seek *him*, in a voice far sweeter than the fabled Syrens' song—the voice of religion—which declares that “at his right hand there is pleasure for evermore.” So easy it is to love wealth, that we soon set our in-

genuity at work in acquiring it, and are seldom satisfied with our success, though it exceed our first expectations ; and after a long life spent, and a thousand dangers incurred in search of it, “ whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?” But “ there is a treasure in heaven,” we know, “ that faileth not.” The love of power and of those in power is a part of our fallen nature : “ by that sin fell the angels.” Let us then direct it wisely. “ Knowest thou not,” said Pilate to our Saviour, “ that I have power to crucify thee and have power to release thee ?” Jesus said “ thou couldst have no power at all against me, unless it were given thee from above.” There is no power so worthy of our attainment as the power over our passions, and the only source of that power is “ King of kings and Lord of lords.”

Set your affections then—your first, your fondest, and your last affections—on things above, and whatsoever else you innocently and rationally love and *can* honestly obtain, you *may* lawfully possess.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God not only “ with all thy heart, but with all thy soul.” Thou shalt not doubt of his existence, his attributes, or his works, and thou shalt make him the only object of thy adoration. Men have worshipped “ the sun, moon, and stars” and “ idols which

“their own hands have made;” nay even beasts and creeping things. Even now divine honours are paid by millions of unconverted heathens to some of those very objects. But let us not too rashly despise them, nor be too ready to pity those, who unfortunately thus sin through ignorance. Do we ourselves, who understand our duty and have been “called from darkness unto light”—do *we*, though christians, never break the commandments of God, to please a party, or to gratify the vanity of those in high station? Do we never turn our backs on the place of public worship, for the sake of those toys and trifles which sober men despise? Do we never bow down to Mammon, and “trust in uncertain riches, rather than the living God,” “who giveth us richly all things to enjoy?” If we really do any of these things—that is, give up our time and attention to what is so far beneath our care—“it will be better” for those poor heathens “at the day of judgment than for us”. How many boast of loyalty to their king? And loyalty is a generous, a manly, and even an exalted virtue, and an important part of every christian’s duty. But what is loyalty compared with piety! Yet we see men sometimes smile at having their piety questioned, who would kindle into fury if you disputed their loyalty. Can such men love God with all their

soul? May they call to mind in time the fate of that deluded and ambitious prelate who lamented too late that he had served his God less faithfully than he had served his king! The loyalty of that person is, however, very questionable, for servility is not loyalty, and he who could forget his God to please his king, would forsake his king to benefit himself: the only sure foundation of loyalty is laid in piety. In short, the soul can be devoted to nothing except God, that is not inferior to itself and therefore unworthy of its homage. Well may every christian exclaim, in the words of the Psalmist: "whom have I in heaven but thee? and "there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee."

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength"—that is, with thy utmost endeavours. This probably refers to "the weakness of our mortal nature," opposed to the difficulties we have to overcome in our spiritual warfare. In the exertion of our efforts we shall find that the duties of our several stations, the health we enjoy, the wealth we possess, and the time allotted to us here below, are all included in the word strength, for they are so many different means of practising and proving our love of God. But how is it that so much effort is requisite in loving *him*, who is every way worthy of our love, while we so easily

and so naturally love other things and some of our fellow creatures, by a sort of impulse which it is difficult to resist? Why because “the corrupt-
 “able body presseth down the soul, and the earthly
 “tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth
 “upon many things.” Mankind may enquire into the end or design of each other’s actions, for they *may* obtain satisfactory information concerning it; and if we admit the omniscience and the goodness of the Almighty, we must be sure that he so constituted us for our ultimate good. This however *is* made known to us—that since the fall of our first parents, the material principle, the body, has more *natural* influence than the soul, which stands in need of divine assistance; and if we love God with all our strength, we shall frequently and urgently address ourselves to him in prayer; for if we try our strength as we ought, we shall soon find how deplorable our weakness is. To distinguish clearly between the things in which we may innocently indulge and those which lead to pernicious consequences—to oppose the temptations which *every where* attack us and *every day* solicit us—to repent as often as we do amiss—to forsake our bad habits and to keep our good resolutions,—such are the duties which we have to discharge—duties which demand all the patience, energy, and perseverance of every christian. Let us also consider

that the love of all earthly things is always attended by doubt, and often by disappointment ; but if we love God with all our strength, we shall not love other things as we do, too well, but with that moderation which will prevent or mitigate all disappointment concerning them. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in him—in whose heart are his ways.”

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *mind*” : with thy reason, to convince and direct thyself and to reform or convert others—with thy memory, to recal “the benefits that he hath done unto thee”—with thy imagination, to conceive the utmost of his perfections, of those rewards which he has promised, and of those punishments which he has threatened. Men of the brightest genius and most profound learning have not always attained the most perfect knowledge of the Creator, some of them have not known him at all, and some,—shocking to contemplate—have even denied him. Such will ever be more or less the dreadful effect of making religion a secondary consideration ; but melancholy has in general been the end of those men : they have either disgraced and ruined themselves for want of that very light which alone they disregarded, or lost the reason which they so abused, or put an end to a life which, without God, they could not long endure. On the other hand, the study of religion is the

first that offers itself to the understanding, and the most satisfactory to it in its progress. As soon as we find the use of speech, the natural objects of our enquiry are why we came hither, what is the sun that shines upon us, and what are the moon and the stars that appear when he retires. Such are the questions which many of our children ask, and such were those which many of us here present have asked in our infancy. Are they questions fit only for children to ask, and to be forgotten like their playthings as they advance towards manhood? No. *Such* questions lead to God, and are the beginning of that wisdom which is more valuable than all the languages which man can utter, and worth all the arts and sciences which he can either comprehend or improve. Let *that* wisdom *first* be cultivated, and instead of an obstacle, it will prove the greatest advantage to every kind of intellectual exertion; without it all will prove "vanity and vexation of spirit." "I am "wiser than the aged," says the Psalmist, "because I keep thy commandments."

We now come to our duty to man—"thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." So plain is the succeeding parable to this purpose, and so striking, that the import of it cannot be mistaken. It shews that neither proximity of habitation nor intercommunity of religious opinion makes a man

your neighbour, but that every fellow creature is entitled to that appellation and to that regard which belongs to it. The unfortunate traveller was a Jew, and "the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans," with whom they were at implacable strife. Though two of the Jewish nation—a Priest and a Levite—had previously noticed him in his distress, and "passed by on the other side," a certain Samaritan as he journeyed came where he was, and when *he* saw him, *he* had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."

The substance of the whole is this ; that the love of God and the love of man, *perfectly* and *constantly* exercised, will alone suffice to the attainment of "eternal life." "This do and thou shalt live." But what human being, Christ only excepted, ever *did this perfectly and constantly* ? Christ having done this, "ascended up where he was before," and having "offered himself a sacrifice for sin," now "draws all men after him," by the promise of divine assistance to our endeavours, and of pardon upon repentance when our endeavours fail. Endeavour therefore to do your best ; repent when you have done amiss ; and "*you shall live.*"

To conclude ; let us observe that here and in every part of the gospel, our blessed Lord describes and recommends his religion as a *practical religion*. Wheresoever he speaks of faith, he speaks of it, not, as certain zealous and well meaning enthusiasts would have us believe, in the abstract, but in the concrete—as inseparable from good works. The promise was not made to Abraham till he had proved the sincerity of his faith by every possible act except the last, which was then unnecessary ; and our Lord himself says to the Jews, “ if ye were Abraham’s children, *ye would do the works* of Abraham.” Nothing can be clearer or fuller to the purpose than this question of St. James : “ though a man say he hath faith “ and have not works, can faith save him ? ” St. Peter earnestly exhorts christians to “ give all diligence that they add to their faith *virtue*.”

We acknowledge that our works are imperfect in the very best of us ; but sincere repentance will qualify the very worst for participation in the benefits of Christ’s death ; whose words are these—and let them sink deep into our hearts—“ not “ every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall “ enter into the kingdom of heaven ; *but he that doeth the will* of my Father which is in heaven.”

SERMON IX.

MATT. CHAP. XXI. VER. 10.

Who is this ?

To this important question I humbly offer a distinct answer.

On our blessed Saviour's entrance into Jerusalem, after he had begun to exercise his ministry, attended by a multitude who had either seen or heard authentic reports of his miracles, exclaiming with natural and innocent enthusiasm " Hosanna to the Son of David : blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord," " all the city was moved, saying, who is this ?"—so false was the general opinion of his character, and so small the expectation of his coming, though " they had Moses and the Prophets" who fully but gradually foretold those things. Zechariah had express-

ly detailed this very transaction : “ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem ! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee. He is just and having salvation ; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass”—very different indeed from the triumphal entry of military heroes and imperial rulers, and sufficient to awaken, not the idle curiosity, but the serious enquiry of every beholder. And the people *did* enquire ; but when they were informed that it was “ Jesus of Nazareth, of Galilee”—“ the meek and lowly” Jesus, who disclaimed all pretensions to earthly sovereignty, whose “ kingdom was not of this world,” they only sought to silence the multitude, thinking him too insignificant for further notice.

Thus, on every return of that sacred season, when we joyfully commemorate our Saviour’s birth, who again comes, as it were, “ to visit us,” will the presumptuous unbeliever scoff at our ceremonial and ridicule the object of our gratitude and praise, saying, in the manner of the thoughtless inhabitants of Jerusalem, “ who is this ?” or perhaps, like the hardened king of Egypt, “ who is the Lord that I should obey his voice ?” In reply, I shall endeavour to delineate the character of our Redeemer, according to the account given of him by the four Evangelists.

Not only had his appearance among mankind been foretold, but the gracious cause of his coming, the place and manner of his birth, the more remarkable transactions of his life, the time of his death, and "what death he should die." Still, that nothing might be wanting to convince mankind of so important an event and prepare them to receive their Saviour, a precursor was, in an extraordinary manner, sent immediately to announce his approach. John the Baptist led a life of singular austerity in "the wilderness of Judea," and to those who resorted to him he declared that "the kingdom of heaven" —a new religion by which the happiness of a future state might be obtained—"was at hand!" He "baptized them "with water unto repentance," but at the same time he assured them, in terms of the deepest humility, that "there was one coming after him, "mightier than he, who should baptize them with "the Holy Ghost and with fire." He lived to baptize that divine personage; at which ceremony a singular sort of contest took place—a contest, not for wealth or power or any worldly advantage—a trial, not of strength but of self abasement. "I have need to be baptized of thee," exclaimed the humble messenger, "and comest thou to me?" "And Jesus answering, said unto him, "suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us

“ to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered
 “ him.” On this occasion “ the heavens were open-
 “ ed, and the spirit of God descended like a dove,
 “ and lighted upon him ; and lo ! a voice from
 “ heaven, saying ; this is my beloved Son, in
 “ whom I am well pleased.”

John the Baptist had signified that he himself
 “ should decrease,” and that Christ “ should in-
 “ crease,” and accordingly, after a short life of the
 most rigorous self denial and zealous exertion, he
 fell a sacrifice to the revenge of an abandoned wo-
 man, whom he had exasperated by admonishing
 Herod, against the sinfulness of living with her in
 a state of unlawful intercourse. Of this intrepid
 but humble minister our blessed Lord himself de-
 clared that he, was “ more than a prophet,” and
 that, till his own time, “ there had not arisen,
 “ among them that were born of a woman, a
 “ greater than John the Baptist.”

On the other hand, the account which John
 gives of our blessed Lord himself was verified in
 every part of his most holy life, and in particular
 throughout the course of his sacred ministry. At
 the period of his birth, when, “ there being no
 “ room for his parents in the inn,” he himself
 “ was laid in a manger,” though the city of Beth-
 lehem was not moved, though no acclamations
 rent the air, and though no triumphal arches were

erected to receive him, “ a multitude of the heavenly host” appeared to a few shepherds, “ praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.” Those who slight revealed religion will of course deny the reality of this supernatural phenomenon ; and had it been made use of to benefit the shepherds, or to aggrandize our Lord himself, or to promote the worldly interest of his parents, there might have been reasonable cause for doubt ; but what use did the shepherds ever attempt to make of it, or what steps were taken by Joseph and Mary on hearing it ? “ The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, and Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.”

The star too, observed by “ the wise men of the East,” and recognized by them as the harbinger of “ the King of the Jews,” which directed them where to find the new born infant, by “ going before them and standing over where the young child was”—was that also a dream or a fiction ? The commentators who agree in their belief of its appearance, differ in their manner of accounting for it. Now it is plain that this was no common object, for these observers, on arriving at Jerusalem and enquiring after him “ who was born King of the Jews,” denominated it “ *his*

“star,”—that star or other celestial phænomenon, whose appearance they had been taught to expect about the time of his birth. Without laying much stress, as some have done, upon “the star to arise out of Jacob” mentioned in the prophecy of Balaam, I ask, if this phænomenon was only, as many have supposed, a comet, by what natural means did the wise men discover the synchronism of its visibility in their hemisphere with the birth of “the King of the Jews?” If it was not a comet, nor a planet, nor a fixed star, it must have been a miraculous annunciation of the most extraordinary event that ever occurred since the creation of the world.

But these miraculous signs were not the most convincing attestations of our blessed Lord’s divine mission. Not only did “a multitude of the heavenly host” manifest themselves at his birth, an extraordinary celestial phænomenon announce the time and place of the event, and the Spirit of God descend in a bodily shape at his baptism, but he himself proved his participation in the divine power, by miracles of the most wonderful though of the most benevolent kind. When “John the Baptist sent two of his disciples unto him, saying art thou he that should come, or look we for another;” Christ “in that same hour cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of

“ evil spirits, and unto many that were blind he
 “ gave sight, and said unto John’s disciples, go
 “ your way, and tell John again what things ye
 “ have seen and heard : how that the blind see,
 “ the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf
 “ hear, the dead are raised.” Such was the short
 and simple account which our Saviour himself gave
 of those numerous and various miracles which the
 Evangelists have recorded ; and while each of these
 sacred writers has confirmed the testimony of the
 rest, no satisfactory refutation of them has ever come
 down to us, nor, as far as we can learn, ever ex-
 isted among the voluminous and well known wri-
 tings of contemporary heathens, who held the new
 religion in contempt, or those of the Jews who
 held it in abhorrence.

But not only the miracles of our Saviour are to
 be considered, but also that religion itself which
 he came to teach, and in confirmation of which
 those miracles were wrought. The purest mora-
 lity of the Greek and Roman philosophers, whose
 virtue was to be its own reward, and the Levitical
 law, the greatest blessing offered by which was
 length of days and worldly prosperity in the land
 of Canaan, fall to nothing in comparison with the
 simple but sublime religion of Jesus Christ, which
 reached the utmost height of improvement in di-
 recting mankind to “ love their enemies,” as well as

in perfecting every other duty which moralists and legislators had before taught imperfectly and partially. In the practice of what he thus zealously enjoined, this extraordinary person lived and died—he died in the very act of discharging the most difficult of all the duties which he preached—the forgiveness of his enemies—“Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do.” At that awful juncture, so unimportant in the opinion of those who had “spit on him and buffeted him;” “who had smitten him with the palms of their hands,” and in derision “crowned him with thorns,” how happened it that his death was distinguished from that of every other human being, if he had been an ordinary mortal, of no great consequence to the world, and in no remarkable favour with God? Enoch is supposed to have been taken up into heaven without suffering a natural death, and Elijah was seen to depart from the earth in some supernatural manner; but the very purpose for which Christ came into the world was *to die*—to die for the sins of mankind. Next to him, the greatest of the human race was the deliverer and legislator of the Jews, Moses, who expired on mount Nebo, without the concurrence of any circumstances to render his death remarkable. But when Jesus gave up the ghost, “the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and

“ and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent ;
 “ and the graves were opened, and many bodies
 “ of saints which slept, arose and came out of
 “ their graves after his resurrection, and appeared
 “ unto many.” When, therefore, we consider
 the extraordinary appearances that accompanied his
 birth, his baptism, and his death—when we con-
 template the character of his whole life, the pure
 precepts which he taught, and the duties thereon
 dependent which he uniformly practised, we can
 neither be at a loss to satisfy ourselves, nor back-
 ward in convincing others, that the belief of a
 christian is no delusion of the imagination or per-
 version of the judgment, but founded on a series
 of undeniable facts ; and should any unbeliever,
 as we now look forward to the approaching festival
 of our Lord’s nativity, ask “ who is this ?” we
 may reply, in the words of “ the Centurion and of
 “ them who were with him watching Jesus,” at
 the time of his crucifixion, and who witnessed all
 the circumstances which attended it, “ truly this
 “ *was* the Son of God.”

I cannot suffer you to depart, without observing
 that I have addressed you on this important sub-
 ject *merely as christians* , supposing you to have
 been previously convinced, *as every christian*
must be, that the Evangelical account of the whole
 matter is strictly true. Whosoever is not convin-

ced of this is not yet a christian, because he does not rationally believe the evidence on which the christian religion is founded. But the faith of a christian may be derived from two sources, as ordinary belief always is—the evidence of our own faculties, or the report of others. How slow would be the progress of human knowledge, if no man believed more than what he himself had heard or seen or retraced to its first principles? All the striking events in the history of your own country, which have happened before or within your own time, you believe implicitly on the credit of those who first related them and that of others who have since admitted them as facts. Few of you are either qualified by attainment, or blessed with leisure, for extensive and minute researches into history, and therefore you necessarily rely on the veracity of those who have enjoyed those advantages. Should you believe some things which are not true, it is no fault of yours but of those who misled you. To examine scrupulously the historical evidence of the christian religion—to compare accurately the ancient prophecies with the subsequent fulfilment of them—to account for the total silence of profane historians on some of the most remarkable events which the sacred writers have amply recorded—to reconcile the seeming disagreement of the latter with each other—to prove satisfactorily that

St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John did actually write the books which bear their names, and that, since these books were first written, nothing has been added to or taken from them—such *at least* is the task which every man has to perform, who wishes to become a christian entirely by his own exertions. How few then could be saved! for how few are competent to such a task! Justly indeed have those excellent persons been honoured or rewarded, who have performed it with industry, judgment, and success; and wisely has the task been and is still committed to those whose peculiar profession and whose duty it is to instruct others in “the way that leadeth unto life,” or few, probably, would ever find it. As far as the ministers of Christ are both willing and able, “in simplicity and godly sincerity,” to lead you right—and God forbid that one of them should be either unwilling or unable!—you may safely confide in their report of the evidence which they lay before you. The rest depends on yourselves. If you are satisfied that the Evangelical and Apostolical writings are authentic, then you must also be convinced that the precepts and the doctrines contained therein are divine and indispensable. Endeavour with all your might, and pray to God for his assistance, to follow these precepts; prepare your hearts and minds, by hu-

mility and reliance on the God of truth, for belief in those doctrines ; and though you may not uniformly practice every precept, nor fully understand every doctrine contained in the sacred volume, you will have striven to do as you have been directed and to believe as you have been taught. If unhappily you have been taught what may hereafter prove to be wrong, your disposition to believe what appeared to you to be right, must at least be blameless ; but you are in little danger of being led astray in that particular article of your belief, which all christian teachers, though in other points they unfortunately disagree, unanimously consent to regard as an indisputable truth—that this Jesus who has been “ to the Jews a stumbling block, and “ and to the Greeks foolishness, is unto them who “ are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the “ power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

You remember the interesting account of our Lord’s reproof after his resurrection, to the incredulous St. Thomas, and will take the words, as far as you conscientiously may, to your own comfort. That Apostle, having been told by the other disciples, that “ they had seen the Lord” who had so lately been crucified, refused “ to believe, except he should see in his hands the “ print of the nails, and put his finger into the

print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side." "Jesus," having convinced him by that very demonstrative proof which he demanded, "said "unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen "me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that "have not seen, and yet have believed."

SERMON X.

GALAT. CHAP. IV. VER. 4.

God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman.

I HAVE chosen these words in vindication of our Church, which still continues to be charged with blasphemy for retaining a doctrine, which she has no other reason for retaining than reverence of God's holy word. In this attempt, I am not moved by any disrespect for conscientious Dissenters: I mean not to attack others, but to defend ourselves. I shall, therefore, carefully abstain from meddling with the arguments of our opponents on this subject, and strictly confine myself to such as may contribute to prove that, when our Reformers renounced the errors which Papal infallibility had impiously presumed to sanctify, they acted righteously in their manner of

distinguishing between those errors and the doctrines which were wholly unconnected with human authority. The testimony which I shall produce for this purpose I mean to draw

1st. from the express declaration of scripture.

2dly. from the language of Christ himself.

3dly. and lastly, from the life of Christ.

No sooner had our first parents transgressed the divine commandment, than God declared that he would "put enmity between the woman and the serpent, and between his seed and *her* seed—and "that the latter should bruise *his* head"—not the posterity of the man, nor that of the man and the woman conjointly, but *only that of the woman*. Had the posterity of the man only been mentioned, that of the woman also must have been implied; but the very reverse is to be inferred from the passage as we find it, and the curse, in that sense, bears the most striking relation to the crime. The serpent had beguiled the woman, not the man, and from the seed of the woman—of the woman only—was to arise the threatened destruction of the serpent. This is the first prophecy which God, who "in his justice remembers mercy," ever delivered to man. I have attempted to explain it by the most literal interpretation which the words will bear. The Saviour of the world was, in the ful-

ness of time, to proceed from a woman, and from no other human being whosoever.

This prophecy was afterwards confirmed, and its precise meaning unfolded by the extraordinary birth of Isaac, at a time when his parents were both so advanced in age, that his mother had scoffed at the very mention of it. She was indeed a married woman ; but the narrative plainly shews that the event was miraculous. Had nothing of importance been signified by it, why did it not happen according to the common course of nature? and if it did not so happen, how happened it at all? Mark the words with which Sarah was rebuked for doubting the truth of the promise which she overheard : “ is any thing too hard for “ the Lord ?” Of all the types which represented the future Saviour Isaac is the most striking, and is so considered by St. Paul himself. He was not, indeed, born of a virgin, nor actually sacrificed upon the altar ; but in every thing else the resemblance is remarkable, for he was born of a woman who had passed the age of child-bearing, and he was only saved from death by divine interposition. At those points it was necessary to stop, or the likeness would have equalled the original. I say then that by the birth of Isaac was plainly signified the nature of Christ’s birth which was to follow, which was to be miraculous, and which was to ex-

ceed, in miraculous performance, that by which it had been represented.

Let us now consider the account of Christ's birth itself, which I will take from St. Luke and not from St. Matthew ; because, though it is hard to conceive how any thing should have been forged in confirmation of what was already believed, the account of the latter has been disputed, while that of the former, with which it entirely agrees, has been treated with more respect. That Evangelist declares that when the Virgin Mary doubted, as Sarah had before done, how she was to have a son according to the promise of the angel, the celestial messenger added these words : " The
 " Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the pow-
 " er of the highest shall overshadow thee ; there-
 " fore that holy thing which shall be born of thee,
 " shall be called the Son of God"—the Son of God in the highest possible sense, not begotten of man, and the Son of man, as he afterwards sometimes called himself, because *he was born of a woman*. When, in process of time, he submitted to be baptized by John, the same Evangelist relates that
 " the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost
 " descended, in a bodily shape like a dove upon
 " him, and a voice came from heaven which
 " said, thou art my beloved Son ; in thee I am
 " well pleased."

Having examined the first prediction concerning the nature of Christ's birth, the most remarkable type of it in the birth of Isaac, and the event itself according to St. Luke, I now request your attention

2dly. to the language of Christ himself. "While the Pharisees were gathered together, he asked them, what think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he? They say unto him the Son of David"—that is, the reputed Son of Joseph, who "was of the house and lineage of David." It appears that Joseph and Mary, partly from fear of the Jews, and partly for want of those proofs which would have been demanded, had rather been studious of concealing than eager to report the extraordinary manner of his birth. We are told that "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." Had he come down immediately from heaven a perfect man, nobody would have believed his assertion of the fact, until his character and miraculous powers had been made known. The circumstance, therefore, of his divine origin remained, for aught we find to the contrary, a secret to all but his reputed parents and a few shepherds; for though the latter "made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child," we read that "all who heard it *wondered*," but not that they *believed*

the things that were told them. After he had entered on his ministry, and begun to perform his stupendous miracles, they asked, "is not this the Carpenter's Son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man these things?" But his answer to the Pharisees was an express denial that he was the Son of Joseph: "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord? saying, the Lord said unto my Lord, set thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. If David then call him Lord, how is he his Son?"

In the parable of the wicked husbandmen, he compares the Jewish nation to a vineyard, which a certain householder had taken the utmost pains to dress and plant, and then let out, while "he went into a far country." At the time of vintage, the proprietor sent his servants to collect his share of the fruit. Those servants having been some beaten and some killed by the husbandmen, he at length "sent unto them his son, saying, they will reverence my son," who was no sooner sent accordingly, than "they cast him out of the vineyard and slew him." Now what can be more intelligible than this parable? The householder is God himself, who, at different times, sent forth

his servants the Prophets to demand from the Jewish nation—the vineyard—the fruits of repentance. Those Prophets were treated with every kind of cruelty and indignity, and some of them were put to death, until God sent *his* Son, who in the flower of his age was “crucified and slain.” Here is as plain a declaration as it was possible for a parable to convey, that Christ was the Son of God—not in the lower sense in which the term is sometimes applied to other men, but in the higher in which he was so proclaimed by “a voice from heaven”—God’s *only* Son. The householder does not say, I will send unto them my elder son, or my younger son, or one of my sons, but simply *my Son*—an expression which as strongly *implies* my only Son, as any other words could have *expressed* it.

After Christ had been brought, by the treachery of Judas, before the high Priest, he was taken for examination before the Council, where “the chief Priests and Scribes asked him, art thou the Son of God? And he said unto them, ye say that I am. And they said, what need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth?” Heard what? Why not that he was, in any common signification, the Son of God, but in the highest possible sense of the term; for which they convicted him of blasphemy, and condemned him to death.”

When, according to St. John, Christ had miraculously restored the impotent man, who lay by the Pool of Bethesda, of an infirmity under which he had laboured for the space of thirty eight years, the Jews persecuted and sought to slay the author of that benevolent and extraordinary act, because he had done it on their sabbath. "But Jesus answered them, my Father worketh hitherto and I work. Therefore the Jews sought *the more* to kill him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." Christ, so far from shewing that they had mistaken the meaning of his words, confirms their interpretation of them by adding still stronger expressions of the same import. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." In proof of the same meaning in these, and all other passages where he calls himself the Son of God, be it also observed, that he no where speaks of any earthly parent of his own, except where he resembles good men to his nearest relatives, and even there no *father* is once mentioned. This observation leads me to consider,

3dly and lastly, the life of Christ, in which we shall find the proof of his being the Son of God

to be as convincing as in any declaration of scripture, or in any part of his own testimony concerning himself. He not only "spake as never man spake," but lived as never man lived. He taught his disciples the practice of every virtue, and encouraged them to it by his own uniform example. Humility, or charity, or patience, or forbearance, or temperance, or fortitude, or forgiveness distinguished whatsoever he did. Even in his miracles his benevolence was manifested, and he wept at the death of Lazarus, though he intended to restore him to life. Yet this most gentle and amiable of human beings has left us no example of filial piety. In truth it was no duty to be expected of *him*, for, in consequence of his heavenly parentage, he had no earthly father to claim his obedience and filial affection, and his birth had brought the highest honour upon his mother, whom the angel pronounced "blessed among women". At the "marriage in Cana of Galilee," she said unto him, "they have no wine. Jesus saith unto her"—like one having authority, and disdainingly her control—"woman"—not *mother* but *woman*—"what have I to do with thee?" The force of these words is irresistible—it amounts to a stern rebuke for her presumption in acquainting *him* with that of which she ought to have known he could not be ignorant. Would the meek

and lowly Jesus have thus reprov'd the officious but harmless zeal of his own mother, if he had been her Son according to the ordinary course of nature, and subject to the performance of the fifth commandment? We know that in the exercise of benevolence, we are naturally disposed, except in some extraordinary instances of friendship, to prefer our own kindred, and even *them* in proportion to their nearness to us in blood, but Christ, in his own repeated practice, reversed this constant order of nature, and considered *his* kindred the least. "Behold," said he, "stretching forth his hands towards his disciples"—"behold *my* mother and *my* brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." He had, in fact, no such kindred, or his filial and fraternal virtues would have been no less remarkable than those which "put the Pharisees and Sadducees to silence," and called forth the gratitude and praise of the lame, the deaf, and the blind, whom he had restored to the use of their faculties.

When he lay extended on the cross, and the moment of his dissolution drew nigh, he recommended his mother to his beloved disciple St. John. But we do not find that he used any warmth of language, or many words on that affecting occasion. "Woman," said he—again woman, and no more

—“ behold thy Son. Then saith he to the disciple, behold thy mother”—a name by which it nowhere appears that he ever called her himself.

It remains for me to draw an useful practical conclusion from the whole.

As God created Christ, the second Adam, not indeed in a perfect state at once, like the first, but in his mother's womb, to “ take our nature upon him” and grow by degrees to maturity, and at length to “ offer himself without spot” to his offended Majesty “ for the sins of the whole world,” it is incontestably our duty, and if we have any gratitude, it must be our strongest inclination, to fulfil, in every thought, word, and action, his gracious purpose concerning us. Never ask, “ as the manner of some is,” *why* the Almighty *could not* forgive mankind on milder terms, or without any terms at all. If mercy were his *prevailing* attribute, the question would not be very irrational; but the God of mercy is also a God of justice: “ by him actions are weighed.” I say, then, that his justice *could not* be satisfied without such a sacrifice, *even because it was not*. Shall such a sacrifice have been made in vain? God has made known to us our spiritual weakness, and has accepted this sacrifice instead of our perfect obedience, provided we do our best, and humbly pray for his assistance. When we reflect upon the mystery of “ God ma-

nifest in the flesh," let us strive to draw nigh to him, as he has vouchsafed to draw nigh to us; and never forget that "in this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever *doeth not* righteousness, *is not* of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

Now unto him who "came down from heaven, not to do his own will but the will of him that sent him," and now "sitteth at the right hand of the throne of God," be honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, world without end.

SERMON XI.

2 CORINT. CHAP. XII. VER. 9.

My Grace is sufficient for thee.

IT appears from this chapter, that St. Paul, in addition to the marks of divine favour shewn him in his miraculous conversion, his deliverance from a series of cruel persecutions, and his extraordinary gifts, had been gratified with a beatific vision of so transporting a nature, that, lest "he should be exalted above measure," some strong temptation became necessary to humble him. "For this thing," says he, "I besought the Lord, that it might depart from me; and he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee." The meaning of the word grace, in the Apostolic writings, is different in different places; but wheresoever, as

here, it is called the grace of God emphatically, it means his blessing, or the influence of his Holy Spirit. "My grace is sufficient for thee"—that is, those spiritual gifts which have already been so abundantly conferred upon thee are, if thou wilt continue to use them as thou hast hitherto done, be sufficient to carry thee through this temptation, without further aid. The Apostle had so far forgotten himself that, in the pride of his heart, and with the impatience caused by the pressure of his burden, he prayed, not for strength to bear it but for deliverance from it; and his prayer was answered by the reproof expressed in my text.

How plainly does this teach *us* how *we* ought to act under the trials which we were born to undergo! *We* certainly *do not* possess those manifold gifts of the Spirit which were so conspicuous in the Apostle; but *we do* know what humility and charity are—we know the duties of reliance upon God, resignation to his will, and patience under affliction, and we have only to cultivate and pray for these graces, if we wish to withstand the world, the flesh, and the devil. In treating of the words before us, I shall consider

1st. How we commonly do act under our different trials, and

2dly. How we ought to act under them.

When we have entered upon the management of

our worldly concerns, we meet with difficulties and disappointments, and to overcome the former and make up for the latter we exercise all our ingenuity and industry. We boast, or if we do not boast, we secretly value ourselves on account of those exertions,—especially when they have proved successful; and our friends and neighbours applaud our contrivance or assiduity. We consult our acquaintance and ask their assistance occasionally, and perhaps follow their advice, and receive their assistance. All this is well, but is this all? Do we pray to God? If we pray that he would remove our difficulties or repair our losses, and for nothing more, we pray that he would perform miracles in our favour—for what is all our ingenuity, all our industry, and all our perseverance without reliance upon God for his blessing upon our poor endeavours, and without submission to his will in every exigency of our affairs? These are the graces for which we ought to pray, and which, if he vouchsafe to grant them to us,—as, if we pray for them in sincerity of soul, he certainly will—we shall find sufficient to quicken our natural powers, and to enable us to bear success with moderation, and disappointment with fortitude. Let difficulties encrease and misfortunes multiply upon us, the grace of God will alone amply suffice to overcome or to bear them all.

Suppose some dear friend or near relative lying stretched upon the bed of sickness, and the hand of death apparently approaching. You lose no time, you spare no expense, you withhold no attention. You shew your affection and your sorrow in every look, word, and gesture, and, on such an occasion, if on no other, you commonly pray to God; but if you pray to him without the aid of those whose professional duty it is to be at hand in such cases, do you not, even with some manual of devotion before you, while you are using the very form of words provided, pray in your hearts for the recovery rather than for the repentance of the sufferer, let his age and character be what they may? But which is of most consequence? If a sick man recover without having repented, it would have been better for him to die with fewer sins to answer for, than to live and add to their number, and "the last end of that man" may be deplorably "worse than the first;" for if a man repents not when death stares him in the face, it is not very probable that he will repent when the danger of death is over. How many, under the most ignominious sentence of the law, have lamented, at their last hour, that they were not taken off by some disease, from which, to the great joy of their friends and their own delight, they had formerly recovered! Could you see a fellow-creature slumbering on the

very brink of a precipice, without awakening him and helping him out of danger? And shall we see our friend lie heedless on the brink of eternity, and not awaken his attention to the danger of his soul? Such an occasion as that of which I am now speaking is, above every other, the most favourable to discover our friend's defects, and to supply them by the exertion of our own graces, if we have any. This is the time when notorious sin should be earnestly brought to a man's remembrance; for it is a time when the most obdurate heart is softened, and when the sight of danger *disposes* a sinner to receive that advice with thankfulness which, in the season of health, he would have rejected with disdain. Flatter him with no hopes of recovery, amuse not his mind with ordinary conversation, till you have succeeded in leading him to repentance and prayer, and so confirmed him in resolution to amend his life, under God's assistance, that his restoration to health and strength may not expose him defenceless to further danger in subsequent temptations. If we act thus charitably and wisely towards our friends and relatives, we shall want neither the wisdom nor the goodness necessary to direct ourselves when we are, in our turn, reduced to the like extremity. The grace of God which influenced us to contribute, as far as mortals can, to the salvation of our

friend, will still more powerfully contribute, through Christ, to our own salvation.

Before I proceed to the next part of my subject, it is necessary for me to guard against any misconception. Do I mean that the same measures should be pursued in *every* case of sickness, towards *every* friend or neighbour? By no means. There are doubtless many, or it would go hard with the world, who, in the time of their health, have readily yielded to the impulse of the Holy Spirit, and who therefore, in the time of sickness, feel more or less its divine consolation; and shall that consolation be withdrawn or diminished, to make room for the demon of despair, by magnifying their errors into sins, and their faults into crimes! Yet such is sometimes the conduct of certain enthusiasts, who, in the abundance of their zeal, are not content with rational and natural manifestations of repentance, but require such frantic and preternatural signs and fulsome expressions of it, that persons of weak minds are persuaded either to deceive themselves with false appearances and dubious feelings, or to give themselves up for lost. The grace of God, say these mistaken zealots—whose desire of doing good, is much more evident and laudable than their judgment in doing it—the grace of God must be so *felt*—you must be so transported by it—before you can ascertain that

your repentance is accepted—that you must be “caught up,” as it were, “into Paradise,” and hear like St. Paul, “unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” Alas! for mankind, if *such* proofs of their acceptance with God be still necessary! On the contrary, if a christian, in the season of health, feels delight in the discharge of his duty, and “a lively faith in God’s mercy through Christ;” and if in the agonies of a sick bed, he only prays to recover for the sake of further improvement in the practice of piety, he may find in every page of God’s holy word, that he has not “prayed for the grace of God in vain.”

One of the most common “messengers of Satan” is revenge. Every man has enemies, however blameless his life, however pure his piety, however active his benevolence; and every man of sense will expect, in his intercourse with the world, to meet with them. I will put one of the strongest cases. Suppose a man to have his life threatened, or, what is still worse, his character calumniated. This is “a thorn in the flesh” very difficult to extract. A man feels the injustice practised against him, and the danger arising from it, and his passions will soon prompt him to wish for a removal of the cause, as he seeks for water to extinguish the flames when his house is on fire;

and such a wish is natural, but for that very reason it is not to be trusted ; for as he does not call for more fire to consume his dwelling, so he ought not to indulge his passions in irritating and inflaming his own mind. Yet what horrible oaths and execrations are uttered on such occasions ! and if under the influence of such frantic rage the offended person were to pray, it would most probably be for the punishment or destruction of his adversary. Mistaken man ! “ A soft answer turneth away wrath.” If you have tried the effect of that expedient without success, as it sometimes happens, pray to God, not to punish him, but to give *him* grace to refrain from persecuting you, and to give *you yourself* grace also to forgive the injury he has done you, for the sake of him who intercedes for your trespasses, and who, in his dying moments, “ left you an example that you should follow his steps.”

The time would not serve me to enumerate half the temptations which, in our passage through life, demand the grace of God. I shall therefore only mention one more ; but *that* is of so horrible and deadly a nature that we cannot arm ourselves against it too early with instant prayer, distrust of ourselves, and faith in the promises of the gospel. It is a temptation to which all men are alike exposed, and to which men in other respects wise and

good have too often yielded, after going through their other trials as became their christian character. At a crime so unnatural, so irrational, and so unpardonable as self-murder, what heart does not throb with horror! What understanding does not pause in astonishment! God chastises us with a variety of afflictions which our reason as well as religion tells us are wise and just; and having given us the most plain and ample directions how to act under them, he expects us to bear them by the exertion of that "grace which is sufficient for us." How differently do men act on some of the most solemn occasions that require their fortitude! How strenuously do they endeavour, after the commission of any flagrant crime, to avoid all human ken, and especially the eye of an earthly judge! and yet they can, by committing the most shocking of all crimes, wilfully rush into the presence of "the Judge of the whole earth!" Nay, it is notorious that some have dared thus to defy *his* Majesty, on purpose to avoid being brought before a tribunal of men like themselves. There is something so very repugnant to reason in this crime, that it is charitably ascribed, in most cases, to insanity. Let us, however, seriously reflect that if, in our youth and prosperity, we neglect the care of our souls, the great enemy of mankind,

emphatically called the Tempter, is in a manner *invited* to take possession of them.

Here let me entreat your earnest attention to a part of my subject, concerning which, though I know my opinion to be unpopular, I also know it to be founded on reason, upon the most ancient records of history, and upon the plainest passages of scripture. Fools may deride, sceptics may doubt, and atheists—nay christians—may deny the personal existence of the devil. Still the question is of great importance; for if there does exist such a being—as in spite of any man's unbelief at least there *may*—how necessary must it be for us all to pray against his unhallowed influence! That they who do not believe in a God, or depend on the atonement of a Saviour, should deny the existence of a devil, it is not very remarkable; and indeed if there is no God, to help us in this world and to make us happy in the world to come, there certainly is no devil. But what tempts us to abuse the bounty of heaven, when our conscience directs us how to use it? What inclines us prefer “the pleasures of sin for a season,” when revelation discloses the joys of eternity? In our Church Catechism, in the Collect for this day,* and in many other parts of our excellent Liturgy, we speak of “the temptations of the world, the flesh,

* 18th. Sunday after Trinity.

“ and the devil.” In all these passages it is implied, that the evil Spirit employs the objects that surround us, and the passions that are within us, as his instruments for our destruction. Were “ the “ world and the flesh” sufficient of themselves to lead us into sin, they would be equally pernicious to every man ; every human being must submit to their dominion, and there would be no mercy in a state of trial. But as certainly as our souls influence our bodies, and make our limbs “ move when “ at rest, and stop when in motion,” so does the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Darkness influence our souls ; but with this difference,—that our bodies, consisting wholly of matter, *must* obey the soul in all things possible, whether right or wrong ; while the soul, endowed with reason, possesses a freedom of choice, whether to receive or to reject the suggestions of either Spirit.

I shall here notice one argument which has been advanced against the existence of a devil ; and only one, because I am but incidentally employed upon the subject. It has been thought incredible that so pure and perfect a Being as God should allow the interposition of so impure and destructive a being as Satan between him and his creatures. But it is still more difficult to conceive how “ the “ world and the flesh” should ever prevail, if the soul were subject to no other influence than that

of the Holy Spirit. If that Spirit had no adversary, every soul must obey its powerful impulse, and *necessarily* become virtuous here and happy hereafter. Except in the deplorable state of idiocy, we see the soul always intent upon good or evil, and never wholly indifferent. God suffers the interposition of Satan for the trial of our faith; and if we only pray to God to increase and confirm our faith, he "will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it." Evil thoughts arise in the minds of the best men living, but the grace of God permits them not to "enter in and dwell there."

To adduce the facts which profane history furnishes in proof of the personal existence of a devil, would require more time than I could reasonably expect to be allowed me in the pulpit; and the Bible is so full of them, that your own recollection cannot fail to supply you with numerous and satisfactory proofs, that he is no fabulous or fanciful chimaera, founded on superstition or derived from the literal construction of figurative language, but a spiritual substance, whose character and properties are as plainly and positively described as those of any being whosoever.

I cannot conclude this discourse more usefully or more consistently, than by warning you against

a very common and a very dangerous delusion, which has not been so strictly examined, nor so carefully guarded against, as it ought to have been. We know and extol many persons of good dispositions and of some inclination to piety, who are still unhappily addicted to some particular vice—such as swearing, drunkenness, gaming, &c.—which we think that our charity should, for the sake of their good qualities, excuse. Now the first thing we have to consider is, whether or not we have any right to excuse it. It is true that “charity thinketh no evil”—thinketh no evil where there is none, and thinketh no real evil greater than it is. Charity will not magnify a fault now and then committed, into a vice habitually indulged—but Charity cannot alter the nature either of sin or of truth—Charity cannot diminish the danger of wickedness, nor stay the vengeance of an offended God. Now he that said, “thou shalt not commit adultery, said also “thou shalt not kill: therefore, if thou commit no adultery, yet, if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” Such is the doctrine which we learn from the eloquent and instructive Epistle of St. James, in illustration of his direct assertion, that “whosoever shall keep the whole law (besides,) and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” Let our charity then be shewn, not in conniving at the pecu-

liar failing or vice of a friend, but rather in remonstrating with him on the folly and the danger of it. Let us remind him of the divine prohibition against it, and set before him the dreadful but inevitable consequences of disregarding and disobeying that prohibition. Let us do the same by ourselves in every sin that may "so easily beset us." There is no "messenger of sin" that "Satan can send to buffet us," against which there is not a messenger of peace at hand to defend us, if, in our christian warfare, we entirely trust in God and remain stedfast in our duty.

Why then, though assaulted by the most powerful temptation, should any christian despair? If he *is* a christian, he cannot be destitute of the grace of God; but if he cannot "stand against the wiles of the devil," "he has received the grace of God in vain."

S E R M O N X I I .

I CORINT. CHAP. I. VER. 13.

Is Christ divided?

THE Apostle St. Paul had not long established a church at Corinth, before there arose among its members such diversity of opinion, and eagerness for distinction, that he found it necessary to send them the Epistle from which I have taken the question now submitted to your consideration. "It has been," says he, "declared to me of you, that there are contentions among you." One "says I am of Paul," another "I am of Apollos," another I am of Cephas, and another I am of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" Merciful heaven! What a reproof of

the bold misleaders of the christian world is here ! The chosen Apostle who, by his superior learning and undaunted intrepidity, might have drawn whole nations after him, disclaims all pretensions to any higher character than that of “ a servant of Jesus Christ.” We know enough of Arians, Sabellians, and Socinians, but we find no traces of any sect called after the name of St. Paul. The name *he* laboured to make known, was the name of Christ ; the doctrine *he* taught, was the doctrine of Christ ; and he has left behind him his solemn and authoritative protest against any other name, and any other doctrine.

This diversity of opinion Christ himself foretold. He informed his disciples that “ false Christs and false prophets should arise”—that “ he came not to send peace on earth, but rather division”—such was to be one of the natural though not intended effects of his holy life and heavenly doctrine ; and this effect was soon discernible, even in the course of his ministry, for “ some said he is a good man ; others said nay, but he deceiveth the people.” He declared that he “ came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law and the prophets”—to fulfil the law by his own strict observance of it, and to insure the stability of moral obligation by displaying it in a state of absolute perfection. This declaration the Jews misunderstood, as they

did many of his other expressions, and soon began to disturb the harmony of his religion, by commanding the primitive christians to observe the ceremonial law, “saying that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”

When notwithstanding the awful warning given to mankind in the general deluge, idolatry began to overspread the earth, it pleased the Almighty to chuse an oppressed people to stem the torrent of profane licentiousness. That people became the object of his choice, in consequence of the faith and obedience distinguishable in their father Abraham. They were delivered from a long and cruel captivity by a leader who acted by divine command, and under divine direction, and who was aided by the miraculous interposition of divine power; and when God had vouchsafed to declare himself their King and Moses his viceroy, before they had been finally conducted into the land of Canaan—the polluted scene and strong hold of idolatries of every sort, and crimes of every name—they were instructed in the principles of a more pure religion, by the solemn promulgation of those commandments, which are still, and will ever remain, sacred among men. That religion with all its ceremonies and sacrifices, continued in full force till the time of Christ, when its original purity had been

long debased by pretended traditions, contemptible evasions, and dangerous errors. Among other sects which we find mentioned in the gospel, were the Pharisees and Sadducees, which seem to have been the most popular. The former, whom our Lord, for their vain glorious habits and notorious self sufficiency, calls "blind leaders of the blind," and condemns for other odious vices, retained nevertheless some belief of a future state, which the latter had either disbelieved or renounced. As Moses had before been sent to preserve mankind from a total loss of all religion, so, in the "fulness of time, Jesus Christ was sent," to purify religion from the pernicious ingredients which human folly had infused into it. The commandments had been awfully proclaimed from Mount Sinai amidst "thunderings and lightnings and the sound of a trumpet." The more perfect law of Christ was also delivered from a mount, but in the "still small voice" of mild persuasion; though, at the same time, with a dignity that inspired the multitude with astonishment and reverence, "for he taught them as one having authority." Instead of "the law engraven on stones," he gave them "a law written in their hearts;" and "instead of those sacrifices which were offered year by year continually," "he came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." In reference to

the twelve Tribes he commissioned twelve Apostles, "to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Those Apostles, except the traitor Judas, in whose room another was chosen, survived him long enough to disseminate his doctrine—particularly St. Peter and St. John. But the christian church thus established, no sooner began to flourish than christians enthusiastic rather than pious, or ambitious rather than honest, so distinguished themselves by peculiar opinions, that "the name of Christ at which every knee should bow," seemed to be forgotten amid the uproar of those who sought to exalt themselves by corrupting his doctrines. Christ was divided. Hence, by slow degrees, the Bishops of Rome assumed a new and a higher tone, together with a strange and loftier name, and, at the same time, by the most scandalous intrigues and the most abject conformity to this world, arrogated an infallibility of judgment in all matters of religion, and a paramount authority in all affairs of state. Images were adored and propitiated by prayer as well as the eternal God. The saints, and above all the Virgin Mary, were invoked as well as the Saviour, and, horrible to mention, indulgencies for committing sin were sold for money.

Such was the state of religion, when it pleased God to raise up a man, learned, wise, and intre-

pid enough to begin its necessary reformation. That man was Luther, though it must not be forgotten that the first attempt of that kind, and which had probably prepared the christian world for the next, was unsuccessfully made in England by our own countryman Wickliffe; but neither of these men was sufficiently qualified to complete so important a work, which was still reserved for this country. By the failure of one of those state intrigues, then very common between sovereign princes and the popes, a disappointed king first disputed the authority of the papal see, and then renounced all obedience to the Roman Pontiff. An enquiry was then instituted concerning the doctrines which the Church of Rome maintained, and the scriptures were now read to christian congregations in the vulgar tongue. The absurd and profane errors of that church were discovered and exploded, and, after diligent searching of the scriptures "whether these things were so," the doctrines found therein were retained, and no others. Among them was that of the Holy Trinity, which, though incomprehensible, appeared to be acknowledged in almost every part of the New Testament. It was not, like the doctrine of transubstantiation, contrary to reason, but above it. It was not derived from perverting the meaning of words, but from adhering to their lite-

ral sense and gramatical construction. Every man, by eating the bread and drinking the wine at the sacrament, had the evidence of his own bodily senses to convince him that they were still bread and wine, as well after the priest had consecrated them as before. But the manner in which the persons of the Trinity were one God was not susceptible of any such denial. Man himself is well known to consist of soul and body, and how very distinct they are is seen in death, by which the former ceases to act upon the latter. Those two substances, one of them material, the other immaterial, form the being called man. Of immaterial substances we can reason only from the effects of their union with matter, and of their abstract nature we can gather nothing except from the sacred writings. Therein we find the doctrine of the Trinity asserted but not explained, inculcated but not illustrated ; and, when we consider the nature of faith, we cannot deny that we are bounden as christians, to believe what is there asserted, and to maintain what is there inculcated. By taking this moderate and middle course between things impossible, and consequently no where taught or commanded in scripture, and things incomprehensible, and yet taught and commanded therein, our forefathers established a church more conformable to the word of God, than had for ages any where sub-

sisted. But Christ was still divided—divided from what was called the holy see. In other countries also some reformation had been effected, but not so radical nor so useful as that in England; and even that appeared to some less radical and useful than it ought to have been, because it still retained the doctrine of the Trinity, of the divinity of Christ, and of the atonement made by him for the sins of mankind, and also a few ceremonies which were thought of subordinate service in the celebration of public worship.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Religion still preserved its influence in the territories of its own ecclesiastical ruler, and in some adjacent kingdoms. But that influence has been ever since diminishing in proportion as mankind have advanced in knowledge, while those who objected to certain tenets of the reformed churches have been encreasing in number. These effects arise out of two opposite causes, for men as they have become more enlightened, have either used their reason soberly, cautiously, and honestly, or rashly, presumptuously, and craftily; they have either been satisfied with the detection and exposure of error, or have suspected and hunted after error in every thing. Christ is still divided. We now stand between the Roman Catholics on one hand, who regard us as heretics for

separating from them, and the Dissenters on the other, who blame us for not separating to a greater distance from the Catholics. Let us see how it may become us to act amidst such variety and opposition of opinion.

Be it our first concern to hold fast our own principles without wavering, and, while we do so, to respect the conscientious opinions of others. We have derided and renounced all pretensions to infallibility. If others may be mistaken so also may we be.

If we consider what doctrines we hold in common with those who in others differ from us, we shall find that, dividing religion into matters of faith and those of practice, in the latter we all agree. We agree in our duty to God—that he is “the only giver of all good”—that we ought to pray to him, both in public and in private, for his protection and blessing, and return thanks to him for “all the benefits that he hath done unto us”—that we should fear him, and love him, and keep his commandments. We agree in our duty to our neighbour—that “we should love him as ourselves,” and “do unto all men as we would that they should do unto us”—that we should be humble, just, and charitable, and each perform his part “in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call him”—that we should “ho-

“nour and obey the king,” love and revere our parents, protect and educate our children—that we should be gentle and courteous to our inferiors and benevolent to all mankind. We agree in our duty to ourselves—that we should be temperate to preserve our health, prudent to preserve our peace of mind, and pious to preserve our souls from misery hereafter—that we should forbear to think too highly of ourselves—that we should govern our passions, examine daily our own thoughts, words, and actions, repent when we have done wrong, and refrain from boasting when we have done right.

In these and many other practical precepts we all agree, and likewise—which is of the utmost importance—in the belief of a future state of retribution according to our works, “whether they have “been good or bad.”

Let us then reflect that, generally speaking, matters of faith lie between man and his Maker, who alone can judge truly of them ; and that matters of practice lie often between man and man, whose judgment is liable to error. We can judge only from appearances, and appearances are very frequently deceitful. Still there is one easy rule of conduct always at hand, which, though it may sometimes lead to erroneous conclusions, can never involve us in guilt ; an example of which is continually found in our criminal courts of justice

—to view every man's actions in the most favourable light, and wheresoever there is reasonable cause for believing him innocent, not even to suspect that he is guilty. Dissenters according to this equitable rule, would not accuse *us* of bigotry, worldly mindedness, or superstition; nor should we revile *them* for envy, disaffection to government, or infidelity.—*We* should not rashly condemn those who seem to be “righteous over-much,” nor would the seemingly righteous insolently accuse *us* of luke warmness or indifference.

On such important subjects as those which concern our welfare here and our happiness hereafter, it is not very reasonably to be expected, how earnestly soever it may be desired, that mankind should very readily or very soon agree. Still the time of so important an event is more rapidly approaching than we imagine. That wise and merciful Being who alone knows how to extract good from evil, has been incessantly watchful over the spirit which scatters religious disagreement.

It has been suggested by some reasoners, who seem to have considered the present state of religion among us as permanent and scarcely susceptible of further improvement in practical piety, that in the constitution of our own country it is easy to conceive what destruction might long ago have been the

consequence, if either Whigs or Tories had always exclusively conducted the government—that nothing less than the most absolute monarchy, or the most profligate anarchy would probably have arisen from either party's acting without interruption upon its own avowed principles; and that so long as they subsist together, they will continue to be a powerful check upon each other, and secure at once the safety of the crown, and the liberty of the people—that the same kind of good, and greater perhaps in degree, may be supposed to arise from a moderate, rational, and conscientious difference in religious opinion—that what *we* might become, without the vigilance of Dissenters, might be seen in the history of the church of Rome; and that what *they* might become without the prevalence of an Established Church, may be inferred from the extravagancies which distinguished the usurpation of Oliver Cromwell.

But instead of regarding each other with the jealousy of rivals in endless contest for worldly pre-eminence, rather let us welcome and assist each other as fellow travellers in the way to everlasting life. I have already reminded you of the many important truths in which we, and the whole body of Dissenters, profess to agree. We in common with them have also formidable adversaries to contend with—the world, the flesh, and the devil,

whom it is our common duty and interest to subdue. By one society lately formed among us,* our united strength has been called into powerful and beneficent action; and may the blessing of heaven light upon its labours! Then shall mankind yet behold that glorious day, when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters that cover the sea—when Christ shall no longer be divided; and his humble followers, forgetting all foul suspicion, and all party contention, shall rejoice together in “in the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.”

* The British and Foreign Bible Society.

SERMON XIII.

LUKE, CHAP. XVI. VER. 9.

Make to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness.

IN the parable of the unjust steward we have an example of the eagerness, diligence, and ingenuity which men commonly evince in providing for themselves in this world. The master of that steward commended him for having "done wisely" as to the particular end which he had in view; and Christ himself declared "the children of this world," who think little or nothing of another, to be "wiser in their generation than the children of light," who profess to think little of this world, and much of the world to come. The unjust steward made friends of his master's debtors,

by purchasing their good will at his master's expence. In reference to this circumstance, Christ exhorted his hearers to make themselves "friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness." But it may be objected that, as the steward behaved unjustly in so doing, his example leads to the like injustice. This objection I shall endeavour to answer.

The country which gave birth to Christ was then under the government of Rome, which, though itself addicted to the grossest idolatry, tolerated the Jewish and other Religions. Syria, particularly Palestine, still contained a great number of Jews, whose Religion had long been deeply corrupted by the errors of heathens, who, in that country, worshipped a God supposed to preside over wealth, and called by the name of Mammon, which signifies abundance. To this pretended deity our Saviour opposed the true God, when he told his followers that they "could not serve God and Mammon"—that they could not devote their attention to this world without hazarding the loss of the world to come. By a very common figure of speech, the name of the imaginary deity was applied to that over which he was supposed to preside, and Mammon became another name for wealth. In this sense it is used in my text, the meaning of which is, therefore, make a righteous, which is the only wise use of

wealth. Why? "That when *ye* fail"—when ye are called on for an account of your several stewardships—your worldly possessions and duties, at the day of judgment—"they may receive you"—or gain you admittance—"into everlasting habitations."

But it may be said, there is no fraud in this; and the application of the parable is not consistent with the parable itself. It will satisfy every candid enquirer, if application be made of the more striking parts only of a parable. It should moreover be considered that the steward, being unable to dig and ashamed to beg, could not accomplish his purpose without behaving unjustly, while christians who are unworthy of the name, if they would not rather dig or beg than defraud any man, can only attain their grand object by the most inflexible perseverance in the principle of justice. They are to follow the example of the unjust steward as far as christians can, and no further; and as *he* was commended by his master for having "done wisely," and for nothing else, so *they* are exhorted to copy his wisdom, but not his injustice.

It may be replied that, according to this explanation, the parable was stretched beyond its intended purpose, as the application of it shows; for an example of foresight and ingenuity might

have been given which contained no mixture of fraud.

This I readily allow, and I will therefore examine still farther into the meaning of the parable. Let me remind you of another—that of “the sower”—in which “*the deceitfulness of riches*” is said to “choke the word.” The term there used for riches is entirely synonymous with Mammon—that very Mammon of unrighteousness mentioned in my text. St. Paul warns his Hebrew converts to beware “lest any of them be hardened through “*the deceitfulness of sin,*” and instructs the Corinthians, in his second Epistle, to act “as deceivers and yet true.”

Now if we compare together these passages and many others of the same import, we shall find that all sin and the grand promoter of it—especially riches and the fictitious God or patron of them—are represented throughout the New Testament as *deceitful*. How then are christians to counteract the pernicious influence of such deceit, but by being themselves deceitful, though at the same time true?—deceitful by becoming true—by turning from the strongest temptations, and “cleaving stedfastly unto God.” In this manner was the arch fiend deceived by our blessed Lord himself in the wilderness.

In this view of the case, the example of the unjust

steward may be followed in every part of it. Apply it to religious concerns. You see that Mammon is still the master whom worldly minded persons erroneously but assiduously serve—a master who pays them in counterfeit coin, and in the end ruins them for their services. As they are always so deceived by him, what better advice can be given them than to disappoint his crafty designs, and to consult the only true interest they have in this state of trial? Let them make restitution of the wealth they have unjustly gotten—“sit down quickly and write fifty” instead of a hundred for all that they have fraudulently accumulated, and exhort others, who are so indebted to Mammon, to “go and do likewise.”

But how are we “to make to ourselves friends of riches?” Our Saviour has represented the extreme difficulty of those who have them to “enter into the kingdom of heaven.” On one occasion, when he so expressed himself, and his disciples asked “who then can be saved?” his answer was “with man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”—Man left wholly to himself, without the aid of religion, is too weak to conquer his natural love of the world, but the grace of God will give him strength enough to overcome this and still greater difficulties.

We should therefore learn to be contented and

thankful in our several stations, and earnestly pray to God for grace to keep us free from impatience and fretfulness of temper. "Godliness with contentment is great gain;" but there is no gain which, without godliness, will ever satisfy him "who heapeth up riches," because his desires are commonly increased by the very gratification of them. Among the heathen nations of the world there have been "gods many"—as many almost as there have been objects to attract the bodily senses, and excite the passions of man; but not one of them ever required or ever received such constant, and ardent, and sincere homage from his worshippers as Mammon, or ever deserved less. The offerings made to him have been made from the heart, and what have those offerings been? The most valuable of all the property they possessed—their time, their talents, and their souls' future expectations. The prayers made to him may be said to have been often heard; but they have been heard to the ruin of the petitioners, who, in time of sickness, and at the hour of death, have found health and salvation far above their purchase. Mammon has then been found their deadliest foe, by having diverted their attention from "the true riches"—peace of mind in this life, and the means of being for ever happy, when this perishable life is past. Of those means, wealth, if but

properly used, is the greatest. How many thousands are there who would probably make no other use of it if they had it, while thousands who have it are daily abusing it! Still the poorest man that lives may be rich in those graces which are impartially given to all who pray for them. But what are a poor man's means of benefiting the community? How feeble is the force of his example? Whom can he reward for doing well? Whose gratitude can he excite by extraordinary services? These and many other means of doing good to others are withholden from him; and it is his consolation that as much has not been given to him, much will not be required of him.

But a rich man is more or less furnished with the means of encreasing his own present and future happiness, so certainly and so obviously, that it is wonderful how, if he has common sense, he should ever neglect them. Let us then consider the use he often makes of them.

He has a right, he says, to do what he will with his own. Be it so. He accordingly studies his own amusement—if that can be called amusement to which he devotes more time and attention than would suffice for any useful occupation. He is fond of hunting perhaps, and he talks, thinks, and probably dreams of nothing but dogs and horses. One half of the year is spent in the con-

stant abuse of those useful animals, and the other half in procuring or changing them. More money is annually spent on his stable than would satisfy the demands of an hospital. The most profane swearing, and the most beastly intoxication keep religion at a distance, while every chace brings death or danger near. But this it is said, is an innocent amusement. So it certainly is while it is only followed occasionally *as such*; and as a species of bodily exercise it may be even useful. But can it be either innocent or useful as it is commonly practised, when a man's whole time and whole income are wasted upon it? The same question may be asked on every other object which we wilfully and eagerly pursue, to the loss of our time, the abuse of our talents, and the neglect of our souls.

No less sinful, therefore, is that ardor of devotion which many pay to business. Industry in our several stations is not only allowable but a duty—a *religious* duty, which we owe to God who sent us into the world to discharge it, which we owe to society which cannot subsist without it, and which we owe to our families for their welfare and preservation. Whosoever is providentially placed above the necessity of manual labour or commercial employment, is the more strongly bounden to exercise and improve his understanding on those

subjects which either interest mankind in general or his countrymen in particular. But industry itself may be abused, and is abused every day, for purposes of vanity, or pride, or avarice, or some other sordid passion. The plea of industry will not excuse him who keeps his account books in the best order, and neglects his Bible, or him who keeps ever so close to his office, while he forsakes the house of God. We are *all* invited to that heavenly and exhaustless banquet which is prepared for us in the mansions of eternal bliss, and though we may have purchased our land and our oxen, yet, if we must first go to see and prove them, we shall not be found worthy of a place at the feast.

Even the improvement of the mind may be carried to excess. The most valuable of all knowledge is the knowledge of religion. If learning is pursued merely for the purpose of obtaining literary honours and a distinguished name—unless only in the laudable struggle for early academical superiority—to the exclusion of religious meditation, and the neglect of religious duty, it will prove nothing better than vanity and vexation of spirit in this world, and the more certain and intense agony of the soul in the world to come, when what it has done, however extolled, shall be compared with what it has left undone of infinitely greater value.

If then we would follow the advice of our blessed Master and only Saviour in my text, we must employ our several portions of wealth, not as the world does in hoarding or abusing them; nor, as the world also does, in driving religion from our dwellings; but according to those directions with which the gospel every where abounds. There are thousands, no doubt, who would rather be the "rich man clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day," than the poor diseased beggar at his gate; but would they rather be that rich man in hell, than Lazarus in Abraham's bosom?

Religion should be the first, the constant, and the last study—the first, the constant, and the last practice of every christian—his delight and hope, his end and aim—the prompter of his words, the guide of his actions, and the director of his will. With a head so taught and a heart so influenced, he needs not be for ever on his knees, or devote that time to prayer which God gave him for practice. Poor deluded enthusiasts! who invert the order of religious duty! what will ye say to this? Why that you cannot strive and pray too much for grace! True. But will that grace be granted you according to the number or to the sincerity of your prayers? Doubtless according to your sincerity, and not to your "much speak-

“ing ;” and if you ask continually, and still have not, it is often “ because you ask amiss.”

He who daily prays honestly to heaven for grace to use God's bounty as he ought, will no more want that grace than he does that bounty. In the very act of prayer he humbly acknowledges whose steward he really is, and he will defraud Mammon of his prey by taking care of his own soul. He will, in the use of his wealth, consult justice always, and indulge generosity as far as justice will allow ; but he will not confound justice with meanness, nor generosity with extravagance. He will say to meanness “ sit down quickly and write fifty,” and to extravagance “ take thy bill and write fourscore.” We have a proverbial phrase of “ cheating the devil”—the only fraud which a christian can practice. A man can neither *become* a christian nor *continue* one without cheating him ; but he does not defraud him of his due : he only considers who is his proper Master to whom he must render an account ; and thus the graces which he has cultivated in opposition to the vices which he has renounced will alone, through Christ, secure him admission “ into the joy of his Lord.”

Do not suppose, ye who are destitute of wealth ! that you are not interested or concerned in the advice of my text. Mammon is worshipped not

only by those who have riches, but by those who have them not; and often more assiduously and constantly by the latter. A man may call himself a christian, because he has been baptized; but if he makes himself a slave or a tool of the great, and cannot be happy but when he follows in their train, or basks in the sunshine of their favour, he "would have fallen down," had he lived in the days and the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, "and worshipped the golden image" which that depraved monarch set up. He may be humble indeed, yet a total stranger to christian humility; for such courtly submission seldom fails to be accompanied by the most overbearing insolence towards equals, and the most abominable contempt of inferiors. He may say that he is only looking out for a stewardship, and that when he has succeeded, he will keep a good account of what is committed to his trust. Let me, however, remind him that he actually entered on the most important of all stewardships, when he released his sponsors from the promise they made in his name. This stewardship he neglects for the purpose of trying his fortune under another master. Instead of "rendering to all their due—tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, and honour to whom honour," he pays to Mammon the duty he owes to God, and consequently cares but

little about that which he owes his neighbour. He may, however, turn even this vile propensity to the best account, if he will but ask himself, like the unjust steward, what he is to do, and determine to follow his example. *He* may then call *his* Lord's debtors unto him, confess to them how he has wasted his own time and talents, convince *them* how they are wasting *theirs*, and resolve with them, as far as his influence goes, to pay as little attention to Mammon for the future, as he has already paid much—"to renounce," once for all, "the devil and his works, to believe in God and to serve *him*;" and those debtors whom he shall so persuade—those sinners whom he shall so reclaim—shall help, through Christ, to put him into possession of a home—"a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

SERMON XIV.

ROM. CHAP. III. VER. 7.

*If the truth of God hath more abounded,
through my Lie, unto his Glory, why yet am
I also judged as a Sinner?*

THE Apostle having, in the preceding chapter of this Epistle, shown the insignificance of the outward ceremonies enjoined by the Mosaic law, in comparison with the inward feeling of the heart, proceeds nevertheless in this chapter to maintain the importance of the Jewish religion, so long as it continued in full force. To those who belonged to it, says he, "were committed the oracles of God." *They* had the advantage of the commandments, for the regulation of their lives, and if some believed not, or did not attentively listen to those divine oracles, the truth of God still re-

mained inviolate. He then makes a transition to the gospel revelation, and puts the following question : suppose the unrighteousness of men, under the law of Christ, to display instead of disparaging the righteousness of God, what is to be said? Why that, if it were really the case, God could not judge the world ; for if the truth of God " hath more abounded, through my lie, unto his " glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner ?" The consequence would, on the contrary, be that just judgment which awaits those " who do evil " that good may come ;" and what greater good could any man propose to himself from doing evil than, if it were possible, to multiply the proofs of divine goodness and mercy? Then indeed we might, in these times, listen without danger to those, who either boldly teach or plainly insinuate, that grace alone, without " the fruit of good " works," is necessary to salvation.

Having taken for my text the most extensive case that can be imagined, I shall proceed to show

1st. That the doctrine of expediency is contrary to common sense,

2dly That it is against scripture,

3dly and lastly, That it is extremely dangerous to society.

How various, alas ! and how imperfect are our

notions of good ! Wealth, power, rank, pleasure, fame, honour, health, learning—these things and many others are all good in their kind ; and they are the objects of pursuit, some to one man and some to another, according to the dictates of his ruling passion, which, at all events, I will suppose must be gratified, or if already gratified to any extent, must be secured in the possession of its idol. Wealth alone may suffice for my present purpose, because it is the most common object of desire. The broad though rugged path of industry is open to every traveller, and the safe and steady guard of honesty is ever ready to conduct him to the end of his journey. In such a road he cannot be mistaken, and with such a guard he has naught to fear ; but if he turn aside, to the right hand or to the left, and dismiss his guard, from dislike to the ruggedness of his road, every step he takes will expose him to error or to danger. To provide against the loss of health, the infirmities of old age, and for our families especially, by a moderate and honest pursuit of wealth, is every christian's bounden duty. His industry and honesty in discharging the duties of his station, will seldom fail to gain him at least the esteem of wise and good men, and to secure the peace of his own conscience. Such blessings alone will be a large reward for his well-doing, even if he fail of success in his

expectations. I may, on the other hand suppose the contrast of such a man ; but I will keep closer to my purpose, and only imagine the case of a person who has seized upon one single opportunity only of promoting his own success by substituting cunning for industry, and fraud for honesty. What will be his feelings when next he “communes with his own heart?”—for every man, be he artful or be he honest, *must* sometimes do so in spite of himself.—He will then either approve or disapprove of what he has done. If he disapproves of it, he cannot expect to retain his general honesty, unless he immediately makes restitution of what he has unjustly gotten, and he cannot make that restitution without imminent danger of discovery. What agony must he feel in the consciousness of that danger!—Agony ! to be relieved from which, he would now forego all hopes of future success. Suppose the transaction to have been communicated to a single person only, he has put himself in the power of that person so long as both shall live ; and may he not, in some unlucky moment, wish for the death of that person ? I need not speak the rest.

Suppose, however, that in consequence of his honest restitution, no discovery is ever made. His neighbours of course continue to regard him as they did before, but what are his feelings when he

“ politics, a province may be given away to secure
 “ a kingdom ; and in medicine, a limb may be
 “ lopped off to save the body ; but in religion, the
 “ law is written and inflexible—*never to do evil.*
 “ And this law is right ; for otherwise, if we com-
 “ mit a smaller evil, to procure a greater good,
 “ *certain* guilt will be incurred, in expectation of
 “ *contingent* advantage ; and though the advan-
 “ tage should actually follow, yet the interval be-
 “ tween the crime and the benefit derived from it
 “ may be that in which we are called away to an-
 “ swer for the things we have done, and the vo-
 “ lume of human actions is closed for ever.” * I
 am naturally led by this passage to the

2nd point which I proposed to prove—that to do
 evil that good may come, is contrary both to the
 letter and the spirit of the New Testament. The
 Apostle declares that God “ hath given no man
 “ licence to sin.” A christian is not to exercise
 his own discretion about it, which he must do if
 he presumes to mingle evil with good. “ Be not
 “ deceived. God is not mocked, for whatsoever a
 “ man soweth that shall he reap”—that is, whoso-
 ever committeth sin shall receive the punishment due
 to it. Nothing but evil in the next life can be de-
 rived from wickedness in this ; and can it then be
 supposed, because men sometimes reap worldly

* Vicar of Wakefield, Vol. 2, Chap. 2.

advantage from their crimes, that God has so constituted this world as to allow success to be any mark of his favour? "He who soweth to his flesh, shall of his flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting"—that is, he who consults his worldly interest only or principally, shall receive the punishment due to so sordid a preference, but he who first consults his spiritual interests, shall receive the reward which the gospel has promised through Jesus Christ.

Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, did indeed deliberately murder Sisera, who commanded the forces of Jabin king of Canaan, in a manner that may seem to justify the practice of evil for the purpose of producing good. It is also true that Deborah the prophetess did, in a hymn composed in celebration of the victory which followed that transaction, set forth in the strongest terms the merit of Jael, and dwell with rapture on the deed. But it ought to be considered that this event happened at a time, when the Jews were without a regular government; and that the circumstances which are recorded of that period are extraordinary and out of the common course of things—that the discomfiture of Jabin's host was miraculous, Deborah who accompanied the Israelitish army being, like the other deliverers whom God occasionally

has significantly though obviously expressed the phrase of telling a lie by that of "saying the "the thing that is not." If we reflect that every falsehood we utter is more or less in contempt or defiance of the God of truth, in whose presence and in whose hearing we think and speak—that it is a presumptuous attempt to invert the order of nature, and to make things which are, as if they were not, and those which are not, as if they were, in mockery, as it were, of *his* sovereign power who alone can sustain or change the state of every thing in every moment of its existence—that it is a wilful and despicable abuse of confidence which ought to be sacred, and a deliberate advantage taken of simplicity which has a right to be protected—If we reflect that such is the nature of common falsehood, we must wonder indeed that it is not uncommon. Suppose a christian, therefore, to have formed a correct opinion of this offence, and you may also suppose him ready to die *with* his friend rather than save him from death at his own greater peril. Should he act otherwise he may indeed repent and be pardoned; but what man who tempts the vengeance of God by sinning in the hope of obtaining pardon by repentance, knows if he shall live to repent? It seems as if he would take advantage of the mercy of God, for the purpose of eluding his justice.

If my reasoning be right concerning a lie, I need say but little in applying it to a false oath, which comprehends all the guilt of a lie, and the additional guilt of breaking one of God's commandments, by calling on him to witness that which is false. What shall a man give or take in exchange for his soul? If he possess the wealth of Cræsus, he cannot ransom it, and if he take the whole world, he will receive no compensation for it. Shall a man then hazard it for his friend—his nearest or his dearest friend? I say, God forbid! He cannot possibly ascertain whether or not his friend's soul may be saved by the prolongation of his earthly existence; but he knows well that his own may be lost by the very means he thinks of employing to save him. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend." A christian would not go to hell for his friend to gain him even the happiness of heaven.

I would next apply the like reasoning to the case of a person committing a crime for the good of his country, but I shrink from the dangers of political discussion. I will rather recite to you the words of an excellent writer, which are so general, yet so just, so beautiful, yet so true, that they are worthy to be engraven on the heart of every christian: "In all human institutions, a smaller evil is allowed, to produce a greater good; as in

looks them in the face, and what is become of his self respect? The wise and virtuous amends he has made for the fraud, may in time reconcile him to himself, and his repentance will not fail, through Christ, to procure him the pardon of heaven; but he cannot, while he lives, blot out the transaction from his memory, and forget that he was once a villain. But the chance, if I may so speak, is great, that his self-love, the charms of success, and security from detection will too easily win his own approbation of what he has done. Restitution is then the last thing in his thoughts, and the very possession of what he has unjustly acquired familiarizes his mind to the contemplation of the means by which he acquired it. The consequence of familiarity with such means will be a gradual inclination towards them. That inclination will be heightened into desire of employing them again for similar purposes, and with increased hope of escaping without observation. He may again and again be successful, but he is nevertheless ruined, for he set out with the intentions, the principles, and the behaviour of an honest man, and the first deviation from rectitude made him the robber of himself. This is a very plain case—such an one, it may be said, as nobody will dispute, for every one allows the reasonableness, the advantage, and the duty of honesty. Why then so far I am

right: for what is *all dishonesty* but the perpetration of some evil for the sake of some real or imaginary good?

But it may be remarked that, in this case, the evil and the good may be nearly equal, and that therefore no objection can be distinctly made to the inference drawn from it—that there still are cases in which the evil to be committed is small in comparison with the good expected from it, and that in such a case the evil may be attended with little or no danger. May not a man, for instance, utter a falsehood or even forswear himself, to save the life of his friend? We must then suppose that his friend's life has been subjected to danger by his guilt, or that it has not. If the former, a person so protecting him would add his own guilt to his, and, if he succeeded by it, promote in this world the impunity of two guilty persons instead of one, and increase the difficulty of his own repentance, or the severity of his own punishment in the world to come. If his friend were unjustly exposed to death—this is the difficult point—is there any comparison between the merit and the satisfaction of saving his life, and the guilt of a lie or even of a false oath?—between the worthy end proposed and the unworthy means taken to accomplish it. One of our best writers *

* Swift in *Gulliver's Voyage to Houynnhms*.

raised up for their preservation, divinely inspired, and some others of the Jews inspired also—that nevertheless a temporal blessing only is promised to Jael, who, if she acted only on the mere suggestion of her own mind, had still to answer for it when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. Above all, let us reflect that if there was aught in this transaction repugnant to christian principles, it happened under the sanction of an imperfect religion, and holds forth no example to the followers of Jesus Christ, who rebuked Peter for cutting off a servant's ear, though in a righteous cause, and healed that servant. I am now

3dly and lastly, to show that the principle of doing evil to produce good is dangerous to society. We cannot see what passes in each other's minds or depend on every man's account of what passes in his own. If such a principle were recognized, what criminal could be punished? A Protestant might slay his Roman Catholic neighbour on the pretence of having found him worshipping an image, and thus set up one of God's commandments against another. A youth might break the sabbath to honour his parents, and steal a Bible to learn the word of God. Even the very worst of all human passions might find an excuse for the foulest of all human crimes, and revenge would never be at any loss for an apology. But suppose the motive to a bad ac-

tion manifestly and undoubtedly good; the example still remains as well as the guilt of the action, and perjury will continually be called in to make a sordid motive appear generous, and a vindictive one appear just. Let a man be influenced by the very best motives to a base action, how limited is his judgment between cause and effect! How feeble is his power to produce the good intended, and how very uncertain is the attainment of almost every object which he seeks! A man may indeed sometimes convert the evil he has already done into good, but that is not the question now before us. God himself mercifully does so every day, or what would become of the world? But when a man presumes to do a single wicked action even for a righteous purpose, he impiously mocks the Deity by insulting the holiness of his prohibitions, and pretending to partake of his prescience.

In short, there can be no compromise between a christian and his conscience. If he balances between the punishment threatened in another world, and any advantage to be acquired in this, his religion is abused instead of being employed in "working out his own salvation." He worships God and Mammon together, confounds truth with falsehood, and debases sincerity by deceit. The law of the gospel is before him; he may accept and

cannot however avoid mentioning one conjecture upon this subject, because it is rational, reconcilable with some passages of scripture, and serves for another proof of "the goodness and long suffering of God." I mean a state of preexistence,—that is, that our first parents, and all their posterity, existed in some other state before they came into this world—that in that state they incurred the displeasure of the most High, and must consequently have perished: but that God not willing that any should perish irrevocably, created this world to receive those fallen beings, to make further trial of their obedience, and, by a respite from punishment, give them an opportunity, not only of escaping it altogether, but of being restored again to his favour. Still this is a question more curious than useful. We shall never, with all the aid of human learning, arrive at any certainty about it, and had it been useful to us, our blessed Redeemer, who brought life and immortality to light, would have revealed to us this mystery also. Let us then confine our attention to what is necessary to salvation, and what it has pleased our heavenly Father, first by a succession of prophets, and afterwards by his Son, gradually to make known.

We learn then, that all mankind have descended from a single pair, who were created at once, and

not born after the manner of their posterity. Yet even that single pair so created were placed in a state of trial. The fruits of the earth were given them in perfection and abundance, which no labour was requisite to produce, and as long as they continued sensible of their happiness, they were liable neither to disease nor to decay. From the use of one tree alone they were commanded to abstain, under the penalty of death, that is, of becoming subject to decay and dissolution. Having thus graciously given them a choice, and shown them the consequences of it on either side, they were suffered to be tempted of the devil—perhaps that same rebellious spirit who had caused their previous fall from a more exalted state. In an evil hour they listened to his suggestions, transgressed the commandment of their Maker, and thus brought death into the world, and all the miseries which disturb and shorten human life. They were driven forth from the garden of Eden, and reduced to labour for their subsistence. Such was man's first disobedience, and the effects of it were transmitted to every son of Adam. Mankind were not only doomed like him to "eat bread in the sweat of their brow," but left exposed to the future temptations of that restless and perturbed spirit, to whose crafty persuasions their progenitors owed their ruin. As men "multiplied on the

part of it, had happened in the very country where our Lord himself exercised his ministry. The inhabitants of the two devoted cities had taken no warning from the flood, and the Pharisees with many others down to the time of Christ, though *they* had the additional example of those cities before their eyes, were still no better than their fathers. Our Saviour therefore warned them of the consequences which would follow such thoughtless conduct. "As it was," said he, "in the days of Lot, they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but on the day when Lot went forth out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all: so shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he that is on the house top, let him not come down to take any thing out, and he that is in the field, let him not return back"—let him not turn to the things that are behind him—"Remember Lot's wife."

The circumstances which attended the escape of Lot are briefly these. The wickedness of the inhabitants having reached its height, and called aloud for divine vengeance, two heavenly messengers appeared before Lot, and warned him of the impending ruin. He communicated the tidings to his family, and his wife and daughters consented to ac-

company him in his flight from the threatened danger. But Lot was ordered not to look behind him in his way to a place of security. He himself regarded the prohibition and survived: his wife, less mindful of her duty, "looked back and became a pillar of salt." Nothing could be more natural than her behaviour at that moment, in turning to cast a last look on the place of her late abode, which she was never to behold again; but it was criminal because she had been solemnly forbidden to do so. This is all that we read of that unfortunate woman. She makes no figure in sacred history, and we regard her fate with indifference. Our blessed Lord has, however, referred to it in such a manner as to confirm the authenticity of the whole narrative, and command the attention of every christian. I propose therefore

1st. To examine into the meaning and design of the admonition which I have chosen for my text.

2dly. To show the reason for which it ought not, in our days, to be slighted.

1st. As to the meaning and design of the admonition. We all know that this world is a state of trial. Why it pleased the Almighty to make it so, is a question that does not much concern us: it is enough for us to know that *it is so*. "It is he that hath made us and not we ourselves." I

practice it, or he may reject and violate it. But he is not at liberty to observe it at one time and neglect it at another; neither is he encouraged to depart from it in a single instance; "for whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Do you ask, "who then can be saved?" I answer in the words of our blessed Lord himself: "with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible;" but even we, frail and feeble mortals as we are, "can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengtheneth us."

SERMON XV.

LUKE, CHAP. XVII. VER. 32.

Remember Lot's Wife.

THE Pharisees had asked our Saviour when "the kingdom of God should come?" His answer was: "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation"—the approach of that event will not be discernible in the ordinary course of human affairs, but will come suddenly and unexpectedly. He then reminded them of two extraordinary judgments which had, in the earlier ages of the world, left a dreadful example to mankind—the general deluge, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The first and most remarkable of these catastrophes had overwhelmed the whole habitable globe—the other, though confined to a very small

“earth,” their vices multiplied also, till their wickedness became so great that “the thoughts of their heart were only evil continually.” God determined therefore to destroy the whole human race, but his mercy and compassion still prevailed: he would not destroy the righteous with the wicked, and, under his immediate direction, Noah and his family were saved from the general destruction. Thus again were mankind suffered to inhabit the earth, and again favoured with an opportunity of fulfilling the divine commands. But the descendents of Noah, like the former descendents of Adam, incurred the divine displeasure. They forsook the worship of a Deity whose power and whose goodness they had experienced, for the worship of they knew not what. They not only adored “the sun, moon, and stars, and all the host of heaven,” but even beasts and creeping things, and the very roots which sprang out of the ground. The Almighty at length chose an oppressed and wretched people, to drive out great and mighty nations from before them, and to take possession of their land. He gave them a law for the trial of their obedience, under a promise of the greatest temporal blessings, and a threat of the severest temporal sufferings. This same chosen people no sooner became prosperous, than “they turned their backs and fell away like their forefathers.”

The whole history of the Jewish people is one continued series of human wickedness and divine mercy. God had promised Abraham, long before he brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, that "in his seed should all the kingdoms of the earth be blessed." His posterity therefore continued, even after they had been reduced to a state of vassalage, to dwell in the country which God had encouraged and alone enabled them to subdue, till Christ was born and that promise fulfilled. Christ himself then assured them often, and in the most impressive and affecting manner, that the ruin of their nation was fast approaching. They disregarded his warnings and persecuted him with unrelenting barbarity, till they crucified him. A calamity then overtook them as remarkable as any that ever happened among men: they were not destroyed by the sword, by pestilence, or by famine, for then "their memorial would have perished with them;" but "they were scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth," and remain to this day a living monument of the just vengeance of the Almighty.

Let us now consider that this was the very people among whom Christ was born, whom "he came down from heaven to seek and to save," and whom in their fields, on their shores, in their streets, and in their synagogues he laboured to

convince of their danger by precept, by example, by miracles, and by all in vain. On one of those occasions, the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, which in its outline nearly resembled the signal overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, caused him to remind his hearers of the latter event, and had they only examined the state of their nation, and compared it with that of those cities as described by our Lord, though their crimes were not the same in kind, they were equal in degree, and from like causes might naturally have been expected like consequences. Ye are no less devoted to the world, or less careless of danger than they were. Lo! I give you warning. "Your city will be left unto you desolate." Haste, therefore, and "flee from the wrath to come." But beware how you content yourselves with asking me questions, and forming a few good resolutions. Persevere in "following after righteousness," and return not again to your evil courses. "Remember Lot's wife:" she followed her husband, and might with him have survived the calamity from which he fled, but instead of looking stedfastly towards Zoar, which was to be their place of refuge, she looked back to the scene of wickedness and misery from which she had but just departed, and which she had been commanded to behold no more, and in a remarkable manner perished.

If our Lord thought it necessary to warn the Jews, not only of the destruction which awaited their city, but also of that which was finally to befall the world, how much more does it behove *us* to meditate on the latter event, “upon whom the “ends of the world are come”! This brings me

2dly, to shew the reasons, why the admonition of my text ought not, in our days, to be slighted.

Mankind have continued to multiply on the earth for more than eighteen centuries since the birth of Christ, without any miraculous interruption of the course of nature, and in some parts of the world, they seem to have advanced in wickedness in proportion as they have increased in number. Yet if there be few that think about death, though they know that they must die, there are still fewer who think about the end of the world, though they also know that such an event must happen. But a man says thus to himself: I may not die yet, and the end of the world may not happen in my time, though I were to attain or even exceed the age of man. This is very true. If he could say I *cannot* die yet—the end of the world *cannot* happen in my time—there would be something like sense in the observation. But the very term *may not*, beyond which he dares not venture, necessa-

rily implies *may*, and while he confesses in words the total uncertainty of the matter, he shows by his actions that he considers the time of his death to be as certainly distant from the present hour, as he does the consummation of all things from the age in which he happens to live.

St. Peter in one of his Epistles declared the end of all things to be at hand, and recommended sobriety and vigilance on that account. If *he* considered it to be *then* at hand, how much more nearly must it be *now* approaching? and how much greater occasion must there be for *our* preparation? "Remember Lot's wife."

I have already remarked that her behaviour was natural, and that it was also criminal. There is not perhaps, in the whole extent of our language, a term more generally misapplied than the word *natural*. It is natural for a man to follow his pleasure, and therefore we excuse him. It is natural for him to take more pains in providing for this world rather than for the world to come, and we excuse him for that also. It is natural for him to hate his enemies, and we excuse, nay often encourage him in revenge on account of any slight provocation. In short, it is natural enough, if that be all, to practice every vice against which the word of God has denounced vengeance. Yet we call ourselves christians. Why then we acknow-

ledge that we have "renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil"—that we have bound ourselves by a solemn public act to keep the pleasures and the business of the world, the impulse of our passions, and every incitement of the soul, in strict subjection to the rules of the gospel. We did so bind ourselves, and it was required of us to do so for this very reason, because it is natural for man to be sinful. How then can a christian make that his excuse, the influence of which he has sworn to oppose with all his might? But he looks back with longing eyes to the world which he has renounced, in the hope of returning, after a while, to his duty. Let him "remember Lot's wife," and beware "lest a worse thing happen to" himself. Before he takes a single step in retreating, sudden death may overtake him, the lightening from above may blast him, he may fall by the hand of an assassin, or, in the moment of phrenzy or despair, perish by his own. Which of you here present, if he saw that such would be his own end, would not instantly again renounce every evil habit, every unlawful pursuit, and seriously prepare for his entrance into life eternal? Yet which of you here present will say "far be it from me, this shall not happen unto me," when every newspaper may serve to convince him that what happens somewhere or other every day, may befall him-

self ere ever we meet again? Let us consider that there was a time when even the frantic and desperate suicide would have exclaimed, "far be it from me!" If we look for safety we can find it only in the paths of righteousness. "I will lay me down in peace and take my rest, for it is thou, O Lord! only that makest me to dwell in safety." If we look for pleasure unalloyed with pain, and subject to no disappointment, let us pursue the ways of wisdom or religion. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

But disgraceful and dangerous as all sin whatsoever is, and shocking as those offences are which men individually commit, and for which they suffer the loss of character or the sentence of the law, there are some vices which are more particularly dangerous, because, however displeasing in the sight of God, they are sanctioned by fashion, and seem venial in the estimation of the world, and are seldom if ever subjected to shame or punishment in this life. It is notoriously the case in our own country, and there is every reason to believe it much the same in most other kingdoms of the christian world. Vices so prevalent are more dangerous than others, because when they become so common they lose the opprobrium, and along with it the appearance of guilt. I mean those vices of

the world at large, which men commit, as if by mutual consent, in open defiance of God and contempt of religion.—Drunkenness, gaming, adultery, and duelling, which, while vices less general hasten the ruin and the death of individuals, accelerate the downfall and destruction of the world itself. Of that destruction mankind have long had earnest and ample warning, and have fled for refuge to the christian faith. But they have afterwards looked back, and even returned to those vices which religion had taught them to forsake. “The voice of the archangel, and the trump of “God” will, while thunders roll around, awaken them at an hour when they are not aware, and “call the world, from the rising up of the sun “to the going down thereof” to judgment. That event awful and tremendous as it is to human contemplation, *may* happen before the oldest, or even before any one of us here assembled departs out of this life

Of those vices which so generally prevail, I can say but few words at present, though each of them would of itself furnish matter enough for a long discourse.

That drunkenness should be common among men is deplorable, because it sinks them down to a level with the very swine which they hold in sovereign contempt. That they who do not indulge

in this vice should think no scorn of those that do, is rather surprising, for he who is not habituated to it, is very apt, after his return to reason, on any act of such intemperance, to think scorn of himself. What folly is there so low, what wickedness so abominable, which men have not said or done in a state of intoxication? The habitual drunkard is no longer a man, for he paralyses those faculties which alone distinguish man from "the beasts that perish." The occasional drunkard is without excuse, for he witnesses the disgraceful and pernicious consequences of it in the other, and should therefore shun the cause. What shall then be said of those who by stratagem, or even by compulsion make others drunk? They would blush to spit in their neighbour's face without provocation; and how can they think of treating him with still greater insult? They who make allowances for the occasional inebriety of any friend, in proof perhaps of their own liberality, should beware how they offer one offence in excuse for another, and how they set up their own liberality in opposition to the precepts of religion. Yet this was done not long ago in one of the highest assemblies in this country. Does the drunkard call himself a christian? Whatever he may have been, he has looked back, in spite of the warnings of the

gospel, to a sin which he had vowed to resist, and let him "remember Lot's wife."

The vice of gaming is still too generally prevalent, in some shape or other, though the most wealthy families have often been reduced by it to poverty. Moderate recreation whether of body or of mind is not only innocent but even necessary. By gaming I mean—what we see on every side—the intense study of that which should only be resorted to for occasional relaxation, and the hazard of excessive loss without contributing to the pleasure of the amusement. When people of rank and fortune devote their time and talents to the turf and the gaming house, people of neither rank nor fortune eagerly follow their example, neglectful of their several callings, careless of their families, and regardless of all religion. Such people may call themselves gentlemen, noblemen, or whatsoever else they please, but they cannot be christians; and when they turn their backs on the house of God, in their way to the gaming house, let them "remember Lot's wife."

Adultery is now become a vice so notoriously prevalent, or, to borrow a term from the vocabulary of the guilty, so fashionable, that in some congregations a self convicted offender may be found, as it once actually happened to a most respectable preacher in the metropolis, rash enough

to call me to account for presuming to mention it. The adulterer would fire with indignation if he were accused of murder or of theft, but I would tell him to his face that he is both a thief and a murderer. He has stolen the affection of his neighbour's wife, which probably that neighbour prized above gold or precious stone and murdered his neighbour's peace—for mark—in most cases it is literally a neighbour, or friend, or relative, who is thus injured. “Men do not despise a thief, if
 “ he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry ;
 “ but if he be found, he shall restore seven-fold ;
 “ he shall give all the substance of his house. But
 “ whoso committeth adultery with a woman, lack-
 “ eth understanding. He that doeth it, destroy-
 “ eth his own soul.” In the history of David, we read that Nathan the prophet excited his vehement displeasure by laying before him a fictitious case of theft and oppression, and then pronounced him to be himself the aggressor. The seer did not compare David's guilt with murder, because his seduction of the wife of Uriah had led him to the actual commission of it. Let all those who would
 “ wash their hands in innocency, and so go to the
 “ altar” of God for the solemnization of matrimony, consider well in whose house, and in whose presence, they are going to enter into one of the most sacred of all human obligations, and beware how

they look behind them to the brothel house. The gospel admonishes them, in the strongest terms, against the extreme difficulty of their "escaping the damnation of hell." Let them "remember Lot's wife."

Duelling is an offence against God himself, and therefore even still more heinous than all the rest. Yet it is practiced at all times, in every country which is called civilized, almost exclusively by men of some rank and education, and in most cases with impunity if not with applause. Of this crime I shall say no more at present, than what relates to its peculiar enormity in being a direct and deliberate defiance of heaven. Can a man believe that by exposing his own life he acquires a right to seek the life of another? What law divine or human has given him any more power over his own life than over that of his adversary? But he has "set up an idol in his heart" called honour. He has "forsaken the guide of his youth, and forgotten the covenant of his God," and therefore let him "remember Lot's wife."

Such are the reigning vices of the world, and such the vices which unhappily prevail in this country—vices which even lawyers and legislators are not ashamed to practice; and shall not God visit us for these things? But so little are mankind disposed to forsake them, or to think seriously of them,

that, as Lot, when he urged his family to depart out of Sodom, "seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law," I may be derided and vilified for my freedom of speech. For myself I care not, so long as I conscientiously discharge my duty. The minister of Christ must be ready to suffer "evil report" as well "as good report." He must be "instant in season and out of season." He must "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering." Let the scorner then scoff on. I would only ask him if he himself also was not once a christian, and remind him of our blessed Saviour's solemn declaration: "No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

SERMON XVI.

ACTS, CHAP. XX. VER. 21.

*Testifying to the Jews, and also to the Greeks,
Repentance towards God, and Faith towards
our Lord Jesus Christ.*

ST. Paul, in haste to depart from Miletus, constrained by the influence of the Spirit to go again to Jerusalem, and knowing “that they all, among whom he had gone preaching the kingdom of God, should see his face no more, sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church” which he had founded there, and in a short but pathetic address reminded them of the trouble he had taken, and the dangers he had incurred for their edification, of the doctrines which he had taught them, and of the perfect disinterestedness of his whole conduct among them. In speaking

of the doctrines which he had taught them, he says no more than what I have just recited for my text, which therefore may be considered as a compendium of those doctrines. He had travelled into distant countries, for the express purpose of instructing the idolatrous inhabitants in the knowledge of the true God, and of the only means by which sinful man could be reconciled to his offended Maker. Wheresoever he succeeded in planting a church, he left it still exposed to the calumny of the insidious and the persecution of the powerful, and in proportion to the importance, he was naturally solicitous for the improvement of his work. But here in a country which has so long professed the christian faith, in which every child that is born is presently baptized, and where an avowed unbeliever is hardly ever to be found, the minister of the gospel has no cause for any such anxiety; he has only to instruct the young in the principles of religion, which their friends and relatives are able and eager to assist him in doing, and if at any time a christian of riper years should be inattentive to his duty, it must expose him so much to the reproaches or admonitions of his neighbours that he cannot be expected to hold out against their remonstrances, or to stand in need of ecclesiastical coercion. Such would be the opinion of any man who, about the age of maturity, after

having had the gospel fully explained to him and nothing more, should first come among us from some remote part of the globe. I will not stop to imagine the amazement of such a person at what his eyes would soon behold to the contrary, nor at what, if he understood our language, would soon assail his ears, for I disdain all artifice on every occasion, and far—far be it from me in a matter of such moment. The minister of Christ has now as much reason for solicitude and zeal in keeping christians awake to their spiritual concerns, as if they had been but lately converted to christianity—nay more, for converts are naturally attentive to a new religion, and comparing it with that which they have forsaken, endeavour to mark their preference of it by practical proof of their attachment. Now tell me, I beseech you, in what does your religion consist? In going to church on the Lord's day, and in having your children baptized, that they, when they come to age, may do the same? Is this all? Now let me tell you the real nature and design of your religion, and I will do it in a manner that shall bring conviction home to every one of you, for I will only remind you of the promises you made when your were baptized.

First, you promised in the house of God, after he had been invoked by solemn prayer, to “re-
“ nounce the devil and all his works, the vain

“pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that you would not follow nor be led by them.”

2dly. You promised to believe all the articles of the christian faith.

3dly. You promised obediently to keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of your life.

Such were the promises you solemnly made, not yourselves indeed, but by your godfathers and godmothers, when you were baptized; and whether you have since taken these promises upon yourselves in the regular ceremony of confirmation or not, your subsequent attendance at public worship, after you came to mature age, has been virtually an open recognition of your being bounden to fulfil those promises.

For what purpose were these promises made? Certainly for some purpose of considerable importance, because they were made for you at a time when you could not act, speak, or think for yourselves; because your parents would have been wretched if you had remained exposed to all the dangers of childhood without having made them; because these promises were made in the house of God, and because no less than three persons were required to become your sureties for the due

performance of them. Those persons were then distinctly informed, even supposing them, though christians, to need the information, that the solemn engagement, by which they proposed to bind themselves in your name, was required, in order that "our Lord Jesus Christ might vouchsafe to receive you, to release you of your sins, to give you the kingdom of heaven and everlasting life." They were moreover told, what most of you have probably read again and again, that "Jesus Christ hath promised in his gospel to grant all these things, which promise he, for his part, will most surely keep and perform." But then he has nowhere promised these things unconditionally. On the contrary, he has every where annexed, in the plainest and most urgent manner, the conditions upon which alone they are to be obtained. The promises made by your sureties, and your own subsequent performance of them, to the best of your power, were those conditions. If those promises had never been made, or if you yourselves have not since done your best to fulfil them, your right to the promises made by Christ has been forfeited. In short the sacrament of baptism is a positive and solemn covenant between God and the person who is baptized, made in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now with all our natural imperfections still be-

longing to us, and with all the temptations which continually seduce us, how is this solemn covenant to be faithfully kept? It cannot be presumed that the very best of us have kept it as faithfully as we ought to have done; but as in the ceremony of baptism, your original sin, contracted by your very birth, was mercifully forgiven you by compliance with that mere outward act, so the sins afterward actually committed by yourselves will also be forgiven you on your sincere and inward repentance, that repentance being founded on the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ which, at your baptism, you were engaged, with God's assistance, to acquire, as you advanced towards years of discretion.

The objects of that faith are first God Almighty himself, your Maker and Preserver, the Creator of the worlds around us, as well as of this in which he has placed us. Secondly, Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, not begotten of man, and that he was born of the Virgin Mary; that he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, that he died on the cross, and was buried; that he went down into hell, or passed through the intermediate state of the dead before their resurrection, and then rose again to life the third day; that he ascended into heaven, and for ever sitteth at the right hand of God, or

enjoys the highest degree of celestial dignity and immortal happiness that our imagination can possibly conceive ; and that from thence he shall come again, at the end of the world, to judge the quick, or all those who shall then be alive upon earth, as well as all those who shall then have died since the world began. Thirdly, the Holy Ghost—that divine Spirit by which the Prophets of old were inspired with the miraculous foreknowledge of things to come, with which our blessed Saviour was infinitely endowed, by which the Apostles were directed and supported in the arduous course of their important ministry, and by which “ the whole body of the church is still governed “ and sanctified.” Fourthly, the holy Catholic church—that whole society of christians who, from the time of Christ to the end of the world, shall have believed and practised his doctrines, and shall hereafter live with him in endless happiness. Fifthly, the communion of saints—that communion or fellowship with the divine Trinity and with each other, which all true christians enjoy through the efficacy of their baptismal covenant with God. Sixthly, the forgiveness of sins—that abolition of repented guilt, and that remission of the punishment due to it, which Christ purchased for us with his blood. Seventhly, the resurrection of the body—the resuscitation, at the last day, of those

bodies which, when we die, we leave behind us, to incorporate with the dust from which they came ; but purified from the corruptible particles of matter, and retaining those only which, however unknown to ourselves, are in their nature susceptible of no corruption or decay. Eighthly, and lastly, the life everlasting—the reunion of the soul with its former body thus purified, and their consequent participation in endless bliss or misery.

Such are the objects of that “ faith towards our “ Lord Jesus Christ” which St. Paul preached both to Jews and Greeks, and which you all have promised to embrace and to hold fast. But as that Apostle in his life time found the faith of his converts less lively and stedfast than was necessary to their spiritual improvement, consistent with the purity of their professions, and requisite to the prosperity of the church ; and as he found occasion for no less exertion of his zeal in confirming than in first instructing them in that faith, no wonder that his humble successors in the ministry of the gospel are as frequently and urgently called upon to remind the old, as well as to inform the young, of their perpetual obligation to keep inviolable the solemn covenant into which they have been graciously permitted to enter with God. The cause of this is very obvious. As in each of the two sacraments there are two parts—the outward

visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace—which, though perfectly distinct, ought always to accompany each other—and as the outward visible sign or form is only once required and easily complied with in baptism, while the inward spiritual grace is to be continually exerted, and, when it fails, invigorated by strenuous effort and fervent prayer; so in faith there are two parts which, though distinct, ought never to be separated—the outward oral profession of it, and the inward practical application of it; and the oral profession of it is made without trouble, while the practical application of it cannot be regularly and usefully made without great care, activity, and perseverance. It is easy to say but not to prove that you believe in God. You cannot do the latter without keeping his commandments, and reflecting that “he is about your path and about your bed, and spieth out all your ways.” It is as easy to say and as difficult to show that you believe in his Son Jesus Christ, which you cannot do, unless you diligently study the gospel and regulate your lives by its precepts. It is no less easy to say or less difficult to demonstrate that you believe in the Holy Ghost; for no man can believe in him without that earnest desire of grace which must naturally “bring forth the fruits of the spirit.” The like may be observed of the other objects of christian faith.

Is it not then astonishing that people in full possession of their reason, and calling themselves christians, should deliberately and frequently neglect the proof, and content themselves with the bare profession of their faith? They know well that both the profession and the proof are necessary to salvation, and yet, to avoid the trouble of proving it, they rest satisfied with the profession of it alone, as if salvation were not worth their trouble; or they heedlessly prefer "the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season," to "an eternal weight of glory;" and in this christian country, more laws have been found necessary to check the prevalence of crime, than in any civilized nation throughout the habitable globe. Now where is the wonder? Heedless and dissolute people are influenced only by example; and when they observe that no due attention is generally paid to the practical duties, while great stress is laid upon the mere external forms of religion, they infer that religion is a matter of form altogether—a shadow without the substance—a name without the thing. This unnatural and unjustifiable separation of practical obedience from professed belief is, and ever has been, the most formidable and destructive obstacle, which Satan has opposed to the progress of christianity. A child is baptized as soon as possible after it is born, and this is right, because, if it

were afterwards to die in its infancy, it would undoubtedly be saved, and because security has been given to the church for its future observance of the gospel covenant, if it should live to years of maturity. But generally speaking, parental anxiety is almost exclusively confined to the mere ceremony of what is called naming the child, who is often suffered to grow up without half that instruction in religion, which is bestowed upon it in those branches of literature that may entitle it to an advantageous place in society; though religious instruction, as far as it is necessary to salvation, requires by no means either the time or the pains which any single branch of human learning demands. Can parents who thus rest satisfied with only naming their children, be supposed to have that kind of faith which is the very characteristic of christians? What shall then be said of those godfathers and godmothers, who take upon themselves the friendly and important responsibility of guardians over a child's spiritual concerns, and never afterward trouble themselves about the matter?

Now the peculiar faith which St. Paul declares that he every where constantly testified or preached, was "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Faith in God alone can never make a christian. The followers of the impostor Mohammed are

much more numerous than those of Christ, and they all believe in God ; but of a christian something more is required. "Ye believe in God," said Christ, "believe also in me." Every other article of your creed, except the first, is founded on that belief. Now as you must not only believe in God, but also serve him, so you must not only believe in Christ, but also practise his righteous precepts and follow his divine example. It is not enough for a christian to abstain from vice : he must moreover, as far as is possible, excel in virtue, and "abstain from all appearance of evil." He is not only to forgive, but to love his enemies ; he is not only to do his duty in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call him, but to do it for the sake of that Redeemer, in whose name alone all human service is acceptable to God ; he is not only to follow his crucified Saviour, but to "deny himself, and take up his cross daily." Such are the strong injunctions delivered in the gospel, and they startle many well meaning persons, as if they were to be interpreted literally, and more were required of christians than man is able to perform. But Christ adapted his language to the hyperbolic mode of expression then in use among his countrymen, on all occasions of extraordinary importance. Such passages imply the necessity of our most strenuous endeavours to discharge our

religious duties, but nothing more. This is manifest from the concluding verse of the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, which contains part of our Saviour's sermon on the Mount, so replete with that kind of forcible and figurative language: "be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Now this is quite impossible, and therefore the meaning plainly is, be as perfect as you possibly can. St. Paul will bear me out in this mild and rational construction of such passages, who says that "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Our endeavours, you see—our constant and strenuous endeavours are implicitly and unequivocally demanded, and in proportion as our endeavours are constant and strenuous, and not according to the frequency or the publicity of our professions, will be the efficacy of our faith in Christ. But our endeavours—such are the frailty of our nature, the deceitfulness of sin, and the prevalence of worldly-mindedness—will too often be withholden. Our attention will be divided, our prayers will be forgotten, and our devotion will slumber. The consciousness of this occasional apostacy has sometimes excited such terror in the best disposed christians, that it is worth while to enquire after a preventive of the evil, and a remedy for the mis-

chievous consequences of it, when it has not been prevented.

There are two kinds of faith : one which is the mere belief of any thing, and another which is confidence in the effects of the thing believed. You believe, for instance, that an astronomer can, by certain calculations, foretel an eclipse of the sun or moon. On finding in your almanacks when any considerable eclipse is to happen, you go to observe it with as much confidence as you would any interesting spectacle that has been publicly advertised. Thus when you reflect on the regular succession of day and night, and learn that nothing has ever yet disturbed the regularity of their succession since the world began—that the world itself abounds with animals all exactly adapted to the several purposes for which they manifestly exist, and that not one of them can make itself or either of the others—that death equally takes them every one away, if no accident previously befalls them, at a certain period beyond which, according to their species, they are not suffered to endure—that man, the most perfect of all those animals, from which he is preeminently distinguished by the divine faculty of reason, and by the capacity of becoming, through the operation of the Spirit, “partaker of the divine nature,” is still such a stranger to himself that, though he sees every day

sufficient proof of the union between soul and body, he can never discern either how or why they are united.—When you reflect on these and other similar subjects, you discover and confess the superintendence of some superior Being, who is self-existent, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and the only Author of all good. As soon as you are convinced of this, your faith or confidence commences, and you dread his displeasure, you love him for his goodness, you adore him for his perfections, you thank him for his blessings, you rely on his wisdom and his justice, you pray to him for his favour and protection, you reverence his sacred name and his gracious communications to mankind, and study to serve him “in righteousness and true holiness all the days of your life.” But your faith so far well founded would still prove very defective. You would find little or no consolation in the trying season of adversity, no animating hope to sustain the soul while the body bends beneath the weight of increasing years, and no cheering prospect of future bliss to assuage the terrors of approaching death. Your sense of God’s infinite justice would discourage you from supplicating his mercy for the pardon of your sins, while your ignorance of original or hereditary guilt would leave you exposed to the dangerous error of ascribing merit to many of your actions. But when the gospel is

laid before you, and you are convinced of its authenticity, you cannot withhold your assent from the simple and pure though sublime morality which it inculcates, you can no longer doubt of a life after this, and you can no more presume on the merit of any thing that you do. You therefore place all your hopes on the atonement of a crucified Saviour, you "cease to do evil," seeing how all sin is aggravated by the revelation of that atonement, and you "learn to do well" from the certainty of that happiness hereafter, for which that atonement has qualified every practical believer in its divine efficacy: In short, you have faith, not only towards God but also towards his Son our Saviour, and you show your faith by such works as alone can render you capable of deriving benefit from your Saviour's blood, and such as can never fail to accompany a faith so founded.

But as in the instance by which I have sought to illustrate the nature of christian faith, a person may believe that an astronomer can foretel with certainty an eclipse, and yet that person may not be induced by curiosity to observe it himself, nor inclined by habit to admire the taste of those that are, so in religion a man may believe the divine origin of the scriptures, and yet for want of due attention to the importance of the doctrines they contain, not only remain uninfluenced by

them himself, but even disposed to deride the wiser conduct of those who make them their rule of life. They indolently stop as soon as they have arrived at a mere speculative belief, as if it were enough to understand the principles of religion, without reducing them to practice. Some, it is to be feared, even hold out against conscience, and though they are fully persuaded that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," had rather forego "the blessed hope of everlasting life" than renounce the fleeting and sordid pleasures of sin: or "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and they become unfruitful." "The kingdom of heaven," says our Lord himself, "is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Thus to avoid those occasional relapses into sin, and that irksome indifference to religious improvement, which so seriously alarm conscientious sufferers, I would advise those who begin their christian course to distinguish accurately between cause and effect, to satisfy themselves that their faith is something more than belief, and that they have more confidence in the promises of the gospel than in those of the world, which can be proved only by practical preference of the former. The field can be

purchased on no other condition than that of absolutely renouncing all that, at their baptism, they promised to renounce, in order to obtain those "exceeding great and precious promises" to which they could not be otherwise entitled. To remedy the terror which sometimes arises from such occasional apostacy, I would suggest that the very feeling of such terror strongly bespeaks a tenderness of conscience, which is one of the best preservatives against deliberate sin; that a moderate and rational use is so far from abuse of the world, that without it we cannot discharge the duty we owe to society; and that such infirmity is part of our fallen nature, to which if we were never subject, there would have been no necessity for any atonement. The most lively "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" cannot therefore be expected to keep us equally at all times pure from sin, any more than it can be supposed to inhabit a bosom which fosters any guilty passion. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "But what concord hath Christ with Belial?" Moreover there is, through Christ, a specific remedy for all sin: instead of perfect obedience, God is graciously pleased to accept repentance.

As that faith which is essential to salvation must be "towards our Lord Jesus Christ" "who is the

“propitiation for our sins” as well as towards God himself, so repentance must be towards God and to our Saviour only as God. It was to God that “the offering of Christ was made once for all”—it could not have been made to himself whilst he was incarnate—and it is to God that we must repent, if we expect to receive the benefit of that offering. “Repent ye,” said John the Baptist, “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” “Bring forth therefore,” said Christ, “fruits meet for repentance.” “But now,” said St. Paul, “God hath warned all men every where to repent.” Of the necessity of repentance there can be no doubt; “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” But what is repentance? We see a youth run headlong into needless bodily danger and providentially escape. What do we then expect of him? Why that he will be ashamed of his folly and sorry for his rashness, thankful for his safety, and particularly desirous of shunning the like imprudence in future. If we find him thus disposed, we forgive his indiscretion, and treat him as if he had never so offended. If, on the contrary, he cannot by any remonstrances be brought to a sense of his misconduct, we tremble for his fate and resent his obstinacy. Now the indiscretion of such a youth is not to be compared with that of one who wilfully hazards the safety of his soul

by sin ; for the value of human life is nothing in comparison with that of life eternal. What may then be expected of him who, with the word of God before him, has heedlessly run into "the snare of the devil?" Why that he will despise himself for his fatuity, and loath himself for his depravity, thank God from the bottom of his heart for not cutting him off in the midst of his perilous career, and resolve to exert all his vigilance for the time to come. Merely to confess our sins and formally to pray that God will forgive them is not to repent—it is only to compound, as it were, with conscience, for "the outward visible sign" instead of "the inward spiritual grace"—to deceive God, if it were possible, by the appearance of contrition, without feeling due abhorrence of the vice we have indulged, and without resolving to forsake it. There is no religion in this, but rather a profanation of its sacred purpose ; and no security, but rather an increase of danger. A penitent should carefully examine into the object of his sorrow, and beware lest the smallest regret at resigning any criminal pursuit still lurk about his bosom. Such regret would destroy the efficacy of his repentance, because it betrays a latent preference of this world to a better, a disposition to unite what God has put in opposition to each other, and a reluctance to receive salvation upon the easy and equitable

terms proposed. In short, true repentance is a clear perception of the foulness and deformity of all sin in general, and of those vices to which we have been addicted in particular, accompanied by a lively sorrow for our past indulgence of them, and followed by amendment of life. I say nothing of prayer to God for his forgiveness through Christ, for it is impossible for any man to feel such repentance without frequent, humble, and fervent supplication to his offended Maker. But if repentance, to be perfect, must be constantly followed by amendment of life, how greatly are the difficulty and uncertainty of it increased, whensoever it is unhappily deferred to the time of sickness, or the approach of danger, or the extremity of age? In sickness and other kinds of danger the most hardened sinners are often goaded by the fear of future misery into self-abasement and prayer; but surely this is not repentance, which the recovery or escape of such persons very plainly proves, for many of them immediately resume their former evil habits, and sometimes become worse than they were before. How little, therefore, is their apparent devotion to be depended on when they die? Moreover, though in certain instances repentance has been as sincere and perfect as it has also been sudden and unpremeditated, it is in general not the work of a moment, and cannot be

completed without amendment of life, or that ardent desire and stedfast resolution of such amendment of which, if life should previously cease, no human being can presume to judge. A man dies before he amends his life, and his doom, though irrevocably fixed by "the Judge of all the earth," must remain doubtful among his survivors. Some have lived a long life of iniquity, or at least of inattention to religion, and at length finding themselves no longer capable of enjoying "the pleasures of sin," and fearful of "the wrath to come," would fain make their peace with heaven, and dedicate the scanty remnant of their days to the service of God, and the care of their souls. But from the force of evil habits, the difficulty of their repentance is excessive, their motive to it, however urgent, is neither exemplary nor pious, if "the days of our age" were lengthened their repentance would probably be deferred, and their love of God has hitherto been neglected for the sake of those things which God has forbidden. Still let me not be supposed to discourage any sinner, under any circumstances, from returning, however late, to his duty. A late repentance may, by the mercy of God through Christ, be effectual, and no christian ought ever to despair. I have only pointed out the danger of that delay which too often frustrates our best designs, and

serves to multiply the obstacles which impede our progress in "the wisdom which is from above." "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding."

I have been speaking of those who till the time of sickness, or the approach of danger, or the extremity of age, have "lived without God in the world," and I have shown the difficulty of their repentance, and its imperfection when death precludes amendment of life. But even without such actual amendment, the mind may be so purified and spiritualized that, had life remained, amendment *must* have followed. In that case the penitent is undoubtedly saved, and happy is it for any sinner that he is called by any signal to repentance before he is summoned into eternity; for how many have gone down to the grave with all their unrepented sins upon their heads! Ye who are young and never think of death, beware how you "rejoice in your youth, and how you walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes." Cannot the mortality of infants which you daily witness, convince you that youth is no less under the dominion of the king of terrors than any other stage of human existence? and what will you say when I tell you that, on examining the registers of any town which is moderately populous and neither remarkable for the healthiness nor the unhealth-

iness of its inhabitants, it appears that of all the children born in any one year, not more than half live to the age of ten, that fewer still arrive at maturity, and that in forty years the number of those who have died is more than double that of those who have survived that period? But youth, you will say, is the proper and natural season for enjoyment, and so it is of all that is innocent; even monastic austerity might forbear to frown at the dance on the village green, the greetings of friends who have long been separated, and the diffusion of sympathy on the success of those we love. Youth however is prone to pleasure, impatient of restraint, and adverse to reflection. It therefore scarcely distinguishes between right and wrong, equally loses sight of its true interest and greatest danger, and disdains to retreat when it is no longer safe to proceed. With so irresistible a propensity to every thing that gratifies the passions, what would be any youth's sensations, if he could gain one momentary glimpse of heaven—or of hell! Away with all those worthless baubles, those fond conceits, those idle occupations, those mad desires, and those tumultuous joys, he would exclaim, that have so unworthily engaged my heart! “One day in thy courts,” O God? “is better than a thousand. “I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God; than dwell in the tents of ungodliness;”

and “ who among us shall dwell with the devour-
 “ ing fire ? Who among us shall dwell with ever-
 “ lasting burnings ?” Suppose not that I pretend
 to the smallest intercourse with the invisible world ;
 all that any man can now expect to know of it,
 must be derived from the imagination, under the
 guidance of the judgment, according to the scrip-
 tures. Now in youth the imagination is most ac-
 tive, most fertile, and most capable of good as well
 as of evil impressions, and the transport excited
 by the contemplation of the highest conceivable
 happiness, no less than the terror raised by medi-
 tation upon the deepest conceivable misery of the
 soul, has sometimes overwhelmed the youthful
 mind. But it much oftener happens that the
 whole attention of the young is misled to very in-
 ferior objects ; that all their transport is derived
 from the anticipation of approaching pleasure, and
 that all their terror is owing to the appearance of
 impending misfortune. Exert then your rational
 faculties. Call to mind that you have been bap-
 tized into the christian faith. Reflect on the pre-
 carious duration of human life. “ Set your affec-
 “ tions upon things above, not on things on the
 “ earth.” When the sins and offences of youth
 are talked of, the plea is put in of juvenile indis-
 cretion ; but how can this plea be admitted before
 the awful tribunal of heaven, since religion has

been sent in aid of our natural infirmities, to expose the fallacies of vice, and to exhibit virtue in all her native loveliness? Is it nothing then to renounce the world, and afterward to seek it? Is it nothing to believe in God, and not to serve him? Is it nothing to be called a christian, and yet to practise iniquity? A servant who runs away from his master, and a soldier who deserts his regiment, are justly punished or rendered infamous. God is your Master; the post which it has pleased him to assign you in this state of spiritual warfare is not to be abandoned; and you cannot suppose that, if you forsake God and abandon your post, you can obtain pardon upon the mere pretence of indiscretion. Your repentance is required; for if you have neglected the word of God, you have offended him; and unless you repent you cannot make your peace with him.

Ye who have passed the season of youth, and especially ye who are far advanced in years, consider that, if the plea of indiscretion be inadmissible in behalf of the young, *you* cannot expect it to be heard in your favour. The uncertainty of life has increased upon you every day; you have had the advantage of experience and ample time for serious reflection; and if you have hitherto lived in "friendship with the world" only, you have been at "enmity with God," and without repentance in

proportion to your guilt, you cannot obtain remission of your sins.

I have placed the two conditions of the christian covenant in an order the reverse of that in my text, to show that, in performing them, faith is the first to be attempted. I do not see how a man can "truly and earnestly repent" until he firmly believes the promises of the gospel, and throws himself entirely upon the mercy of God through Christ. The Apostle only declares, in the words before us, what he had taught, and not how he had taught it. As repentance must be preceded by faith, so faith must be followed by repentance. In fact, faith and repentance are inseparable, and neither of them alone can constitute a christian. Our Saviour, therefore, often insists upon one of them without mentioning the other. "I have prayed for thee" said he to Peter, "that thy faith fail not and *when*"—not *if*—"thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." That Apostle's faith did fail for a moment, and he "wept bitterly"—sincerely repented. "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans?"—"I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

The subject that I have now offered to your consideration is the most important that a christian can contemplate. Christ died for you that

you may “die unto sin and live unto God,” which if you do not, he has died for you in vain. He shewed himself after he rose again from the dead that you may believe. He has left behind him a church—a society of true believers, who humbly do their best to become “partakers of his resurrection,” in keeping the terms of the covenant that I have now described. You all have promised and vowed to do the same; but if you have not done it, you do not yet properly belong to that society, or possess any right to its inestimable privileges. If you deliberately break your word with your neighbour, or violate any compact, you know the consequences, and carefully avoid them by keeping your word and fulfilling your engagements; and are the promises you make, and the covenant you enter into when you are baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be forgotten and broken with impunity? “Because the sons of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, “have performed the commandment of their father,” “but this people hath not hearkened unto me; therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, “the God of Israel, Behold! I will bring upon “Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “all the evil that I have pronounced against them; “because I have spoken unto them, but they have “not heard; and I have called unto them, but

“ they have not answered.” This alarming threat was wonderfully executed. Then “ how shall we “ escape, if we neglect so great salvation ; which “ at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and “ was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?” “ Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be “ not judged of the Lord ; repent ye truly for your “ sins past ; have a lively and stedfast faith in Christ “ our Saviour”—I will add no more. All other duties must necessarily follow. You may judge of your faith by its divine effects, which, if you really, and not fancifully feel them, can alone satisfy you that you are “ members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of “ heaven.”

SERMON XVII.

I CORINTH. CHAP. XI. VER. 26.

For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.

THERE is no theological subject upon which the members of our church differ more in opinion than the nature and necessity of that sacrament which we call the Lord's Supper. Some suppose it to be so awful, that they are afraid to partake of it, and yet so necessary that they seek every opportunity of receiving it; some are so fearful of receiving it unworthily that they overlook the necessity of resorting to it; and others think so lightly of the ceremony, that they either disregard it altogether, or occasionally observe it as mere matter of decorum. Now all these notions are wrong. There is nothing more

awful about it than about the sacrament of baptism, and there is no less necessity for it ; the danger of receiving it unworthily arises solely from the hypocrisy and presumption of taking it from improper motives ; and it is not to be lightly regarded and omitted, because it is of divine institution and necessary to our spiritual comfort and improvement. To determine rightly concerning this sacrament we must examine

1st. Into the nature, and

2dly. Into the necessity of it.

As to its nature it is a representation of that spiritual sustenance which we derive from the body of Christ once offered, and his blood once shed “ for the sins of the whole world.” Whosoever worthily partakes of it, confessing his sins and praying to God for pardon, sanctifies his confession and his prayers more solemnly than at other times, by having this representation before his eyes. The bread and wine are bread and wine still ; but having been consecrated—devoutly set apart for this sacred purpose—they acquire that kind of holiness which belongs to a church in contradistinction to every other edifice. The act of eating the one and drinking the other is a stronger way of expressing faith in the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ than by words, and the person who so eats the bread and drinks the wine is more strongly bounden, if

possible, to act according to that faith, than if he only made a verbal declaration of it. In proportion as he more strongly binds himself so to act, he may expect the divine blessing on his earnest endeavours, and hope to improve in grace as he advances in years.

As Christ died for the sins of all men who truly repent, every penitent christian obtains forgiveness, and becomes entitled to the communion of the body and blood of Christ. He is indeed not worthy, according to the emphatical style of the service, to gather up the crumbs under the Lord's table, but what he cannot claim by his own desert, he implores of God's mercy. The unworthiness of man, though it called for vengeance, brought down the divine Mediator and Propitiator. "Lord, I am not worthy" said the devout Centurion, "that thou shouldst come under my roof;" nevertheless his "servant was healed in the self same hour." But some find on careful self-examination, that they do not yet truly repent—that they feel not that godly sorrow for their past offences, that abhorrence of sin, and that stedfast resolution of speedy amendment which are positively required—should they then presume to approach the Lord's Table? When it is considered that after we repent, we often "depart from grace, and fall again into sin;" that before repentance is perfected

there is still greater danger of such a relapse, and that perfect repentance only is implied in this condition of the christian covenant, it appears that they who are conscious of defective repentance had better avoid the presumption of hastily intruding into so important a solemnity. “If thou bring thy gift before the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee : leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” But a person may feel an earnest desire of complete repentance, and also of receiving this sacrament for the express purpose of imploring more earnestly the divine assistance, of quickening the progress of his piety, and of confirming himself in the good resolutions he has formed ; and under the influence of such a desire he may safely and usefully communicate. The strong inclination or stedfast purpose to lead a new life, is that mark of true repentance which our Catechism proposes, as one of the qualifications required of those who come to the Lord’s Supper. St. Paul nowhere mentions the unworthiness of those who partake of it ; yet it is manifest that as no man may serve God and Mammon—love the present world, and the world to come—wilfully indulge himself in any sinful habit, and at the same time possess a right to the bene-

fits of Christ's death ; so no man can live in the habitual practice of any sin and appear with safety or propriety at the Lord's Table, where the body and blood of Christ are represented. But people of common sense can hardly be supposed to act so inconsistently. They who devote their time and attention to worldly pursuits are too far from the kingdom of heaven to accept of any invitation to the Supper of the Lord. The silence of St. Paul concerning the unworthiness of communicants may be satisfactorily accounted for from the great improbability, in his days, of any wilful and unconverted sinner's presenting himself on such an occasion.

But though the Apostle *says* nothing about unworthiness, a great deal is *implied* in his advising a man to "*examine himself*, and so to eat of that "bread and drink of that cup"—not his manner of doing it, which must be apparent enough to himself and to others, but the state of his soul in regard to the promises which he made at his baptism.

On the danger of receiving this sacrament unworthily or in an irreverent manner the Apostle expresses himself very strongly. As it was at first usually administered in private houses at the feasts of charity, to which the communicants both rich and poor contributed according to their power,

and at which some would impiously eat and drink to excess ; but has long since been restricted to churches in a manner susceptible of no such indecorum, a late excellent divine of our church infers that “ the worst of men, if they receive the “ sacrament at all, cannot be guilty of that fault, “ with which the Corinthians are charged. They “ have not the opportunity of eating and drinking “ unworthily which the Corinthians had.” * This is true, as far as it relates to eating and drinking *in an unworthy manner*. Still a man may eat and drink at the Lord’s Supper from an unworthy motive, in order to partake of the alms now always offered at it, or to qualify himself for some public office, or to appear more religious than he really is. These motives are base, and whosoever is influenced by any one of them to partake of this sacrament, eats and drinks no less unworthily than the Corinthians did.

The alms indeed are appropriated to the relief of the poor, especially of the sick poor, who are regular communicants. In some parishes the money so collected is distributed immediately after the sacrament, and in others once a year. If there were no sick, either practice would be unobjectionable. But as in every place sickness must more or less befall the poor, and, what is much the same, the infirmities of age must overtake some of them ; as no parochial allowance com-

* Gilpin. Vol. 2. Ser. 31.

monly equals their necessities under these circumstances, and as the clergy in their visits often witness the most deplorable cases of distress among the most deserving, who are too patient to be importunate, and too resigned to be clamorous, these alms serve for a most charitable fund in the management of those whose disposition to relieve distress too often exceeds their own means of doing it. A general distribution of the alms as well among those who are in health as those who are sick, is something like a reward of merit, may lead the poor into a dangerous error, and encourage them to frequent the Lord's Table solely or chiefly for the sake of the alms so distributed. If they receive this sacrament according to the pious design for which it was instituted, they may safely partake of the alms ; but if they receive the latter, without a worthy motive to the former, they receive the reward of iniquity.

A person who has, of his own accord, from pure motives, already received this sacrament, may with a safe conscience take it again, to qualify himself for any public office that has been honourably conferred upon him. But it is notorious that many have never approached the Lord's Table till they have been required by law to qualify themselves for some office by so doing, and that the very same persons have ever after turned their backs

on the Lord's Table. Horrible impiety ! To refuse communion as the means of grace, and accept it as the condition of worldly advancement ! To obey man rather than God ! To welcome the pomps and vanities of this mortal life by commemorating a Saviour's death ! No wonder " that these prosper in the world, and that these have riches in possession ;" for while Christ promises the kingdom of heaven to those who look on perishable things with indifference, Satan promises these things to those who reject the kingdom of heaven. Men have their choice, and if they chuse what the latter offers, he frequently keeps his word to their future everlasting ruin.

Ye who often eat and drink at the Lord's Table to appear more religious than you really are ! How can you so defy the observation of him who " knoweth the very secrets of the heart," and deceive your fellow creatures who confide in your sincerity ! When hereafter, in the agonies of expiring nature, the delusions of this transitory state shall cease to operate on your minds, and you shall cry " Lord, Lord, open unto us," " we have eaten and drunk in thy presence ;" " he shall answer and say unto you" " I know you not whence you are, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

Having endeavoured to explain the nature of

this sacrament, I shall now proceed to enquire into the necessity of it.

A christian cannot be expected to keep inviolate the promises made for him at his baptism, though he may afterward, with the most pious intentions and the strongest resolutions of fidelity, have taken them upon himself by being confirmed. In many things the very best men offend God. "Who can say I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" The sacrament of baptism being administered but once, what refuge would a sinner, labouring under the consciousness of having broken his baptismal vow, find from despair, if the Lord's Supper were not offered him? But on again humbly confessing his sins, and again fervently imploring the divine forgiveness, he again, though in a different manner, renews his original engagement with God, and is again admitted to the inestimable privileges which he had forfeited.

You gaze with wonder at the meteor which unexpectedly passes before your eyes, and enquire into the properties of a comet whensoever it reappears, because you are not familiarized to such objects; while the glorious sun, whose light animates and whose heat invigorates all nature, and whose other properties are more numerous and extraordinary than all the researches of philosophers could ever

yet avail to discover, returns, as it were, continually to your view without exciting the smallest curiosity. But let it be brought in a manner near to you, with its dependent planets, by the machine called an orrery, and you become deeply interested by the amazing and regular effects of its attraction and its light, and, if not utterly void of sensibility, you cannot behold it again in the firmament without admiration, or contemplate its Almighty maker without pious gratitude. Thus after frequent hearing of God's word, the evangelical account of Christ's crucifixion, and the apostolical doctrine of the atonement made by his death, your devotion, without more constant effort and more fervent prayer than most christians are wont to practise, gradually subsides into indifference—you cease to be affected with what you hear, and require a more lively impression from what you see; and though in this sacrament you do not see the body and blood of Christ, nor eat his flesh, nor drink his blood, yet, by seeing a representation of them and eating and drinking the materials of that representation, your attention is excited to the subject most worthy of it, your devotion revives, your faith resumes all its strength, your repentance inclines to amendment of life, and you accept the terms of your salvation with encreasing thankfulness of heart.

This sacrament is necessary to humble us in our own sight, and to control our pride. "Every one that is proud in heart is abomination to the Lord." Can a man seriously make the confession which it requires—particularly that which is used in our service—declare that he earnestly repents and is heartily sorry for all his misdoings, that the remembrance of them is grievous unto him, and the burden of them intolerable—without the deepest self abasement? And can he make it in the company and the hearing of the poorest neighbour that he has, and in the same suppliant posture as he—so practical a proof of natural equality—and not feel "that God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him?" Let a man be proud of what he will, he now discerns that it cannot exempt him from the frailties of nature and the duties of religion; that he is himself as dependent on the mercy of God through Christ, as the meanest beggar; that "riches cannot profit in the day of wrath;" that rank is in this world a distinction very different from what it will be in the world to come; and that learning, how valuable and laudable soever among men, contributes nothing to make them "wise unto salvation."

The passion which least of all yields to the sug-

gestions of reason, the reproofs of conscience, and the precepts of the gospel, is also one of the most dangerous and detestable—revenge—but no devout communicant can indulge it ; for he cannot expect the forgiveness of his heavenly Father unless he himself first forgives his brother. He cannot surely implore, in the most solemn manner possible, the mercy of heaven, with malice and deadly hatred in his heart. No. He *must* reflect that if he forgives not men their trespasses, neither “ will his Father which is in heaven forgive him his trespasses ;” that if God forgives all offences against *him* in those who truly repent, every human being is bounden to follow the divine example, and forbear to resent those offences against himself, which admit of no comparison with those of a creature against his Creator, and that the last moments of his Saviour, whose death he now most particularly and solemnly commemorates, were partly spent in prayer for his murderers.

Benevolence, or charity in the most comprehensive signification of the word, is that virtue which “ never faileth”—which will still adorn and bless the righteous after death, as well as in their present imperfect state—without which he who is in other respects a christian, is “ nothing worth.” Sympathy with our fellow creatures in trouble and in joy is natural to every one of us. Vice may im-

pair but cannot totally eradicate it. On common occasions, when we meet in mirth, we find ourselves more than usually disposed to promote each other's entertainment, and each other's comfort when we meet in sorrow : how much more must we feel desirous of each other's happiness both present and future, when we meet at the same hallowed table to confess our common infirmities, to bewail our common negligences and ignorances, to pray for our common wants, to "eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink," and to implore forgiveness in common from the God and Father of us all ! Man is a social animal ; but when he begins to dislike and shun society, he soon becomes morose and selfish, his sympathy declines, and he requires a strong incentive to seek satisfaction in communion with his christian brethren. What stronger incentive can possibly affect him than an invitation to that genuine feast of the soul, of which his divine Saviour is the founder, and at which that Saviour's most faithful followers are the guests ? But he may say that the guests are some of them manifestly less faithful and less worthy to partake of it, than many who do not receive it ; that frequency of communion does not appear to diminish the number of their sins, and that he cannot think of communicating with persons of such presumption and hypo-

crisy. Here then is an opportunity for the exercise of his charity in thinking no evil, in rejoicing not in iniquity but in the truth ; in bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things. " Judge not " according to the appearance," says our blessed Lord himself, but " judge righteous judgment." A man may know many of his neighbour's former sins, but he cannot ascertain the present state of his neighbour's soul. The moment of the latter's regeneration has perhaps arrived, and he is now humbly making, or has already made his peace with God ; and shall any man, in the abundance of his zeal, condemn him whom God will soon forgive, or has already forgiven ! Say not, therefore, " Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," but meekly kneeling upon your knees, say rather, " God be merciful to me a sinner." Good will towards man is a necessary effect of that faith in God's mercy through Christ, which this sacrament is peculiarly designed to strengthen and encrease, and if a man can often partake of the Lord's Supper without feeling this effect, how far from feeling it would he probably be, if he never partook of it at all ?

Having endeavoured to explain the nature of this sacrament, to show the necessity of it, and also to display its divine efficacy in humbling our pride, subduing our resentment, and promoting

the improvement of our charity, I shall now conclude with a few reflections upon the whole.

The oftener a man examines into the state of his worldly affairs, the better he is able to correct his mistakes, to act more judiciously, and to adapt his means to every end that he has in view ; and the oftener a christian examines into the state of his soul, the better he will be able, with God's assistance, to know and repent of his sins, to shun the danger of temptation, and to regulate his life according to the precepts of the gospel. If he would perform so important a task daily, he would derive so much the more benefit from it ; but in this state of trial there is some danger of its being performed the less perfectly the more frequently—of its becoming more formal than effectual, more habitual than sincere—to use with all reverence the expressions of St. Paul, I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh—and the periodical return of extraordinary duties is of great use in heightening, as well as in keeping up our attention to “ the race that is set before us.” Every christian, it is to be presumed, prays and offers thanks to God daily ; but the sabbath affords him an opportunity of calling his ways more carefully to remembrance, furnishes him with suggestions important to his spiritual progress, and enables him to discover and supply the defects of his daily exercise ;

and the Sunday on which this sacrament is administered, when the benefits of his Saviour's death are visibly set forth, and the terms on which they are to be obtained declared with more than ordinary solemnity, reminds him of his duty to enter previously into the strictest self examination, and shows him the advantage of lessening the difficulty of it by performing it frequently and constantly. I see, therefore, no harm, but much good in those little manuals, which are written for the purpose of assisting christians in preparing themselves for the Lord's Supper. They never contain, as far as I have seen, the least encouragement to consider the receiving of it as a meritorious rather than a devout act, or as sufficient to justify or excuse any subsequent negligence of conduct.

Many christians, in other respects regular and devout, either communicate seldom and with a kind of superstitious awe, or keep away altogether from the Lord's Table. Now to the truly faithful and penitent there is every thing consolatory and nothing awful in the matter. They who are conscious of having no faith, and of living without repentance, may well regard it in that light, and tremble at their own presumption in sitting down at the marriage feast without having on a wedding garment ; but they who are only fearful of not being faithful and penitent enough for so sacred a

solemnity, may assure themselves that, on that very account, they are not unworthy of a place at the feast. Worthy, in the full sense of the word, the very best of us can never be. Let me, however, exhort those who assign such fear as the cause of their keeping away altogether from the Lord's Table, to distinguish well between a pious dread of presumption, and a dislike to the task of self examination and repentance. The latter is an aggravation of their fault, and little different from persistence in sin : it shows a sense of duty, and a reluctance to perform it ; a slothful preference of ease and false security, to all the consolations of religion, and all the certainty of salvation which faith in God, through Christ, can never fail to inspire.

I have visited many of advanced age, on their death beds, who had never, till they were brought to that dangerous state, received the sacrament, and who then felt a strong desire of taking it, in order to prepare themselves for the worst. This desire, even in such persons, is by no means to be discouraged, but to be gratified, in a manner conducive to their eternal salvation rather than to the quiet of their minds. The latter is not to be the primary object ; for if it be derived from mere outward compliance with the forms of the institution, and not of the sure and certain hope of peace

with God, through Christ, diligently sought in faith and repentance, it is delusive and dangerous. in every such case repentance should be directed principally to the sinfulness of living long in the world content with being only half a christian, satisfied with one sacrament when two are required, with the outward visible sign unaccompanied with the inward spiritual grace, essential to that one, and with having been admitted to the privileges without subsequent attention to the duties of religion, —in short, of living regardless of the purpose for which Christ died.

Ye who are yet in the full enjoyment of health, would do well to consider that “*now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation,”—*now* while you are invited to do that for Christ’s sake which, in sickness or any other dangerous extremity, you can do but for your own. You cannot be again baptized, but you can again and again be admitted to the Supper of the Lord, from time to time you may lament and confess at the Lord’s Table your occasional neglect of the christian covenant, obtain the remission of your sins and all other benefits of your Saviour’s passion. Reflect on the shortness and uncertainty of this life, the decisive and irremediable consequences of death to the impenitent, and the danger of continuing in an imperfect state of religious discipline. “If ye

“love me,” says Christ, “keep my commandments.” “The same night, in which he was betrayed, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take, eat ; this is my body which is broken for you ; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood ; this do ye, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.” The solemn commemoration of his death was thus, you see, not only one of Christ’s commandments, but the last which he ever gave—and gave in contemplation of that sacrifice of himself which he was then on the very point of making. “My Father,” said the servants of Naaman the Syrian to their master, “if the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it ? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, wash, and be clean ?” If you were fully sensible of the danger which is inseparable from dying in your sins, what rigorous and continual penance would ye not gladly perform ? How much rather then, when ye are bidden to eat bread and drink wine, faithfully and penitently, in remembrance of your only Saviour, “that your sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and your souls washed though his most precious

“ blood ?” So shall ye “ show the Lord’s death” in the righteousness of your own lives, “ fight “ the good fight of faith,” and obtain “ the crown “ of life,” which the Lord shall give you on the day of his coming, when the time of trial shall be past, and that of retribution shall commence without measure and without end.

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

ACTS, CHAP. II. VER. 15.

These are not drunken, as ye suppose.

IF we study that part of the human race which has embraced the christian faith, according to the visible effects of that religion, we may divide it into three classes ; those who are sincerely and practically devout, those who are openly and habitually wicked, and those who are precisely neither. The first will occasionally betray some inconsistency of character, the second is consistency itself, and the third is made up of inconsistency. The first, as zealous though humble workers together with God, seeing the imminent and continual danger which threatens the other two, earnestly endeavour to enlarge their own number by diminishing theirs, and cannot, even in charity, impute their defects

and vices to any but the real cause. The second would fain do the like, and too often succeed in their attempts to do it ; but when they are deterred from any such attempt or fail in making it, they attribute their disappointment to simulation, obstinacy, or constraint, as if none could be powerfully influenced by better motives to resist the force of plausible argumentation and bad example. Hence religious subjects are studiously avoided in most companies, as well by those of the first class I have now described, from the fear of being called or thought hypocrites, as by those of the second, from their dislike of all piety ; and hence the language of scripture, when religious subjects chance to be discussed or alluded to in conversation, is scornfully or spitefully called cant ; and while every art and every science is suffered to retain the use of its peculiar (technical) terms, though unintelligible to most of those who meet in ordinary intercourse ; religion alone is either browbeaten into silence, or restrained in the exercise of speech, by the boundless tyranny of fashion. Yet the country in which we live is a christian country, where the christian religion has prevailed for centuries, and where all classes of christians, however they may disagree in other respects, would probably unite, heart and hand, in opposing every attempt to supersede it. In the people of Jerusalem,

who were, for the most part, the determined and avowed enemies of all who separated from the law of Moses, and whose countrymen had already ascribed the power of Christ over unclean spirits to Beelzebub, it may appear quite consistent, when the Apostles began to speak in tongues to which they had ever been strangers, and which they had not, as every body knew, the smallest human means of attaining, and when a cloven tongue, "like as of fire," sat or rested upon each of them, to discredit so astonishing a fact, by imputing it to some unhallowed cause natural or preternatural. "They were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, what meaneth this?" though devout men, "out of every nation under heaven," heard them speak, every man in his own tongue "in which he was born;" though John the Baptist had declared "that one mightier than he was coming after him," who should "baptize them with the Holy Ghost *and with fire*," and though Christ himself, in the interval between his resurrection and ascension, had "commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem," and promised that they should be "baptized with the Holy Ghost" not many days thence. "Others mocking said, these men are full of new wine." St. Peter boldly strove to satisfy those who doubted, by an appeal to the prophetic writings, with

which they were well acquainted, and by reminding them of events which had recently happened before their eyes ; and the base accusation of drunkenness he repelled, by observing that the time of his then speaking was but “ the third hour of the day.”

Mark here the deplorable perverseness of human reason, when subjected to depravity of heart ! Could it in common sense be imagined that a whole company of men, in a state of intoxication, would find themselves disposed to illustrate “ the wonderful works of God,” think themselves capable of such a task even in their native language, and, above all, feign themselves qualified for it in languages which they knew not, but which many of their hearers knew ? Yet similar perverseness has often been discernible in every age and nation, and even now in this country the best men are liable to derision for their zeal towards God, the sanctity of their lives, and the sobriety of their conversation. I proceed to notice a few remarkable instances, without the smallest direct allusion to any particular person.

A man has been bred up in the love and practice of benevolence, but without much knowledge of the world, and without any suspicion of deceit. He relieves a worthless beggar, finds that he has so far misapplied his bounty, and straightway does the same by another still more worthless. Again he finds

that he has been mistaken, and again and again, according to his ability, he yields to the impulse of his heart, forgetful or regardless of his former experience. He lends a considerable sum to a neighbour in distress, or gives extensive credit to a customer of reputed integrity, who soon dies insolvent or is ruined. This benevolent creditor takes it not to heart : he makes no rash vow or secret resolution never to assist or trust another—on the contrary, he yields to the next importunity and, in consequence of repeated efforts to serve his acquaintance, loses now and then his money and is called a fool. He is not a fool, as some suppose, for all his wants and even his losses have been provided for by living far enough within his income : his estate remains entire, and he has only indulged himself in this habit out of preference to others, which, though less amiable and beneficent, might have been more expensive and troublesome. His simplicity ends not here. With the most friendly disposition of his own, he lends no inattentive ear to professions of friendship towards himself ; he opens his heart, communicates his sentiments, discloses his secrets, and the moment he unfortunately falls into any calamity however inevitable, his sentiments are published with the foulest misrepresentation, his secrets are revealed, and he exclaims with the Psalmist “ it was not an open enemy that

“ hath done me this dishonour, for then I could
“ have borne it ; but it was even thou, my compa-
“ nion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend !”
Still he distrusts no other person upon that ac-
count, but extends his good wishes, esteem, and
confidence still farther, and again finds his confi-
dence misplaced. Again he is more emphatically
called a fool. He is not a fool, as people suppose,
for he knows well how to estimate the value of
friendship and the usefulness of adversity ; without
the latter he would have had no fair opportunity of
trying the sincerity of the former, and he is con-
soled by the fidelity of one friend for the deceit-
fulness of many. This is not all. He marries
a woman who proves a termagant, often treats
him unkindly, and interrupts the peace of his fa-
mily. He laments the violence of her temper, but
resents it not ; he still retains his affection for her,
and studies her happiness more than his own. Oh
what an incorrigible fool ! his sagacious neigh-
bours cry.—Who that had a grain of sense would
live with such a woman ? Nevertheless he is not
a fool, as they suppose, for he reflects that she has
many virtues, that she is the fond and careful mo-
ther of his children, that anger is inflamed by op-
position, and that her peculiar failing would neither
justify him in separating from her, nor promote

the welfare of his household. Let us now turn to a different character.

A man has happily received early and strong impressions of piety, contemplated the imperfections of human nature and the perfections of God, remembered the conditions upon which he was admitted into the church of Christ, and resolved, with the divine assistance, to perform them. Though blessed with taste and eager for improvement in literature, he prefers the study of the Bible to that of every other book, he is *seldom* without it in his pocket, and *never* without it either in his head or heart, and he occasionally quotes it in defence of what is unjustly and unwisely condemned or derided by the world. He is suspected of being mad! Would to heaven that the rest of mankind were half as rational as he! Instead of being mad, as some suppose, he makes the best possible use of his reason, in devoting his attention to that subject which is most worthy of it, in seizing those means of happiness which are most conducive to it, and in opposing the word of God to the dictates of presumption. This is but one of his singularities. He neglects no opportunity of joining his fellow creatures in public worship, is not often seen in any other place of concourse but the house of prayer, and is never absent from the Lord's Table; he keeps the sabbath as strictly

as possible, and urges the like observance of it upon all that are under his influence ; he would no more begin or continue a journey on that day, unless compelled by absolute necessity, than neglect his Bible for the examination of his accout book, or suspend his studies for the indulgencies of sensuality. Poor man ! he must certainly be mad ; for otherwise would he think so seriously of such trifles, and suppose himself more bounden than the rest of his neighbours to omit no opportunity of going to church, and to deny himself the enjoyment and the benefit of innocent recreation ? Let him keep his church as constantly as he pleases ; but how can he possibly judge of the convenience and the leisure of his friends and dependents, whose business may often require their presence in some other place ? And what harm can there be in travelling now and then on a Sunday ? Such is the opinion generally expressed of his conduct. But he is not the more mad, as many suppose, for obediently striving to keep the commandments of God ; because he derives from his endeavours, feeble and defective as they are, an exalted pleasure and a secret satisfaction of more advantage to his corporeal and mental health, as well as of more consequence to his happiness, than any sensual gratification. “ My delight, ” saith the Psalmist, “ hath been in thy commandments

“ which I have loved.” “ The voice of joy and health is in the dwellings of the righteous.” While others are content with serving their friends and neighbours on ordinary occasions, he solicits and directs the attention of those around him to the most interesting and important of all concerns, by exposing the vanities of this world and displaying the glories of a better world than this. He considers that the sabbath is not only the day consecrated to the public worship of God, but the day of rest to all creatures—even to the animals that man employs in labour, as well as to man himself—and therefore that, unless in case of necessity, he has no right to their services on that day. But more suspicious eccentricities than these appear in his conduct. He is always contriving and executing, or assisting others to contrive and execute, some plan or other for the relief of misfortune, the encouragement of repentance, and the diffusion of religion, from which no ridicule can turn him, no remonstrances restrain him, in which no inconsiderable share of his time, attention, and money is expended, and for which he cheerfully submits to some personal privations, while his relatives are alarmed lest, at his death, he should bequeath a large legacy to some public hospital or other charitable establishment. This surely must be madness, for you see many men, who are remarkable

for strength of understanding and extent of attainment, who, with an equal command of money, engage in no such pursuits, but mix readily and pleasantly with the world, and are welcome whithersoever they go. Still he is not mad, as it is commonly supposed, for he knows that he must one day answer for the use of every talent committed to his care, that he was sent into this world only as a trustee of those talents, that every effort to promote piety, reform vice, and disseminate religion, is due to the improvement of his fellow creatures, and that every christian is especially bounden to diffuse the light of Christ's religion among those who still unfortunately walk in darkness ; and having reflected on the increased distress which necessarily arises from the increase of population, and on the duty of every member of society to contribute what he can to the present happiness of it, he carefully lays up all that remains after justice and generosity are satisfied, for that sacred purpose. But if the symptoms that I have already described do not fully prove that he is mad, what is to be said of this which I am now going to mention ? A considerable estate was unexpectedly left him by a person whom he had but lately known and very seldom seen. Ought he, with his religious sentiments and habits, to have rejected this blessing of heaven, and to have made a voluntary and formal surrender

of it to a perfect stranger of whom he had never before heard? Believe me, this was not only one of the most righteous, but one of the most rational acts of his whole life; for he had already enough, as might have been supposed, for a free indulgence in virtuous luxury, and hearing of a near relative of the deceased who had been passed over in the will, he immediately enquired into his life and character, and found him an obscure but patient and injured sufferer, who had been insidiously supplanted in the esteem of the testator by an artful expectant, and who in time might have been restored to favour and reinstated in the rights of natural justice. If there be among you one, who, under the same circumstances, would not “do like-wise,” though *he* may not indeed be mad, he has hitherto made no right use of his reason, and “seeing he sees, but does not perceive.”

The danger of judging from appearances is proverbially and universally acknowledged: experience has repeatedly proved it, philosophy has clearly explained it, and poetry has lent her powerful aid to imprint this lesson of experience and philosophy on the minds of men. Why then will they persist in courting error? Because they love not the truth, because they envy excellence, and because they dread the force of an example which they are sorry that it is their duty, and ashamed

that it is not their desire to imitate. The certain criterion of folly is a weakness of discernment between right and wrong, and one of the most common symptoms of insanity is the suspicion that others are insane. The most deplorable effect of the latter is a loathing of advice and consolation, accompanied by an ardent longing after self-destruction. The two characters that I have attempted to describe betray no such symptoms, while folly or madness is discoverable enough, nay palpable, in those who suspect them of it. Can aught be more miserably foolish than to mistake virtue for an idiot, or more absurdly irrational than to brand religion for a maniac? There is something indeed like reason in sloth and mediocrity, when they dare confess their dislike of that excellence which so often puts them to the blush, reminds vice of its deformity, and impedes the progress of fashion; but to ascribe the best actions to the vilest causes—the most useful pursuits and the most serious occupations to the weakness of folly or the strength of phrensy, would be pronounced by a skilful physician an infallible proof of insanity in any patient, if the bulk of mankind did not continually betray the very same symptoms. Shall I say that some are base enough to pretend such suspicions, while they are convinced of the contrary in their hearts? But truth is still the same, “yesterday, to day,

“and for ever,” though she should be forbidden from walking in our streets, condemned to languish in obscurity, or compelled to fight her way through the most formidable obstacles; and as wisely and effectually. might mortals combine to extinguish the light of the sun, by retiring beneath the surface of the earth or by putting out their own eyes, as to invalidate one tittle of her evidence, by withdrawing from the presence of virtue or stifling the reproofs of their own conscience.

Odious is the vice and contemptible is the cant of hypocrisy. If I thought that there were one hypocrite among you, I would address him thus: Thy object is to deceive mankind, for the sordid purpose of profiting by their good opinion. What a laborious task hast thou imposed upon thyself! Thou hast not the love of God in thy heart, yet thou art perpetually constrained to “honour him with thy lips.” Thou “hatest to be reformed,” yet thou must appear in no need of reformation. Thou lovest “unrighteousness more than goodness,” but thou darest not stir abroad without the robe of goodness upon thee, to conceal the filthy rags of unrighteousness which thou never puttest off. Thou lovest to “talk of lies more than righteousness.” Here indeed thou art in thy own element, for thy whole life is one monstrous lie, and the larger it becomes the more it is

in danger of detection. But shouldest thou escape being taken in "the crafty wiliness which thou hast imagined," till pain of body and anguish of mind alarm thee into preparation for a future state, thou wilt find that thou has cheated nobody so cruelly as thyself. Thou hast sought the approbation of the world by daring the displeasure of God. Now what canst thou ask of him, and what can the world do for thee in thy extremity? If "thou hast laid up much goods for many year," "whose shall these things soon be which thou hast provided?" Thou hast concealed thy depravity from a few, and thy "secret sins" shall presently be exposed before them and all mankind. In the pursuit of thy favourite object, thou hast lost sight of "the prize of thy high calling in Christ Jesus," and disregarded the frightful precipice which lies in thy desperate way. Into that precipice thou mayest quickly fall, never, never to rise again. Open then at once thine eyes, that thou "sleep not in death." Reflect on the ceaseless vigilance of that Being, whom no artifice can elude, no appearance deceive. Consider that thou art daily encreasing the difficulty of thy odious task, and doing injury to religion by assuming her sacred mantle—an injury which thy most public confession and most hearty repentance will not suffice to repair. Thou hast weakened the

force of good example, brought piety into disrepute, and given her enemies "occasion to blaspheme" Resolve to be, and entreat God to make thee what thou seemest, so shall "they be glad and rejoice that favour thy righteous dealing, and say alway, blessed be the Lord who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant."

Why have I thus digressed from the subject more immediately before me? Why have I left the avowed accusers of religious zeal, to notice her pretended friends? Because such friends are, as every body knows, more mischievous than open enemies; because the sincerity of friendship is exposed to suspicion by intercourse with the worthless, and because the sanctity of religion is both polluted by the arts of hypocrisy, and assailed by the weapons which that impostor puts into the hands of infidelity.

But though you yourselves may have detected or witnessed the exposure of hypocrisy in its vilest shape, remember that you are christians, that "the end of the commandment" which you have received "is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned," and if you feel not that fervor of devotion which you observe in some, it would be wiser in you to examine your own hearts, which you can do, than

pretend to search the hearts of others, which you cannot do. Rather than delight in suspecting your neighbours, endeavour to improve by distrusting yourselves. If the hatred of hypocrisy keeps a man away from the house of God or the Lord's Table, he betrays a fond conceit of his own sincerity, which is inconsistent with the humility of a christian; and if the dread of being thought a hypocrite restrains him in the performance of any religious duty, he labours either under weakness of judgment or self-delusion; for hypocrisy is not contagious, and his hatred of it will not excuse him from joining in the service of his Maker; to be thought a hypocrite by men is infinitely less dreadful than to be forsaken of God, and by no one is the dread of it more acutely felt, or the danger of it more studiously avoided, than by him whose conscience tells him that he himself is not perfectly sincere.

A man pursues his worldly business with assiduity, and he is esteemed for it; a servant consults his master's will and interest in every thing, and he is praised for it: though the former never keeps the sabbath, and the latter never thinks upon God. A christian may, it seems, neglect his religion for the sake of his business, but he must not resign even his pleasures for the sake of religion; but if he is pious he is suspected, if he is zealous he is

derided, and you see, in the chapter from which my text is taken, that the better the men the more they have been thus abused.

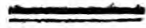
A general outcry has, of late years, been raised against hypocrisy. What is the cause of all this panic? A set of men whom I shall neither name nor describe have concurred, both in the Church of England and out of it, in opposing the rapid progress of vice with all the energy of their minds and all the force of their eloquence, and they have not been unsuccessful. Are they to be censured for this? God forbid. But some of these men have proved errant hypocrites, and while they pretended to be more devout, they have actually been more worldly minded, more licentious, and more corrupt than many of those whom they called so loudly to repentance. But you know that Christ himself bore with one of the vilest hypocrites among his chosen apostles. "Why was not this ointment," said Judas Iscariot, "sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." Though the real character of that miscreant was unknown to the eleven, it was well known to Christ himself, who nevertheless admitted him to the passover "in the same night in which he was betrayed," and accused him to

his face, before them all, of the treachery which he harboured in his bosom.

The outcry against hypocrisy is more violent than necessary, too often repeated to be heard with attention, and too commonly raised by those to whom religion herself is most unwelcome. Follow rather the example of the eleven apostles: be careful to preserve your own sincerity, and restrain the impudence of vice instead of suspecting the appearance of virtue. A man may be outwardly zealous without being inwardly pious, but he cannot be inwardly pious without being, in some respects at least, outwardly zealous. Consistency is the only test of sincerity, and as we are none of us so consistent as we ought to be, we are but ill qualified to try the sincerity of each other. There is moreover a cause of all this clamour which is neither honourable nor rational, and I shall close this discourse in the hope that you will reflect often and seriously on what I am going to mention. Religion, though not destitute of powerful friends is not yet a favourite with the fashionable world; and they who hunt after public patronage, or cultivate rich connections, or aspire to elevated station, are fearful of *seeming*, because they would be ashamed of being *thought* pious, and strive to manifest their impiety, by reviling religion under the name of hypocrisy. But Christ acknowledges no such christians. "Whosoever

“ therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my
“ words, in this adulterous and sinful genera-
“ tion, of him also shall the Son of Man be asham-
“ ed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father
“ with the holy angels.” *These* are his words,
and “ he that hath ears to hear, let him hear *them*,
for *they* are words that “ shall never pass away.”

S E R M O N X I X .



MATT. CHAP. XII. VER. 12.

Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.

ON this sacred day, as often as it returns, how variously are mankind employed! You are assembled here to worship God, while many others are sunk in sloth, engaged in pleasure, or still intent on worldly business. How far you are better employed than they, it is not for me to determine. That is a question which depends on your sincerity. I only distinguish you and the more regular part of your christian brethren from the rest, to show how very differently mankind seem to think of this day. They cannot all be right, and therefore it is important to know who are wrong. I would not presume to interfere if it were a matter of little or no consequence, because where prejudice is strong,

it requires no feeble effort to resist it ; but I stand here as the minister of God, whose mighty arm “ is stretched out still” “ to avenge him of his adversaries ;” and who are his adversaries but they who transgress his commandments? Of those commandments we can none of us pretend ignorance: they are taught us from our childhood, and read publicly every sabbath day, and the fourth of them entirely relates to that day. But you remember that, long before they were promulgated, when “ God rested from all his work that he had made,” “ he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it ;” and also that Moses, when, at the close of the fortieth year after he had led the Israelites out of Egypt, he recited the commandments in the hearing of all the people, added this reason for a strict observance of the fourth: “ that thy man-servant and thy “ maid-servant may rest as well as thou.”

In general men are ready enough to keep the sabbath as a day of rest from the duties of their several stations in life, by turning their attention to objects of pleasure. “ The sabbath,” say they,—quoting our Saviour’s words—“ was made for man, “ and not man for the sabbath”. I shall consider the meaning of these words by and by. How far they who are devoted to business six days in the week, and ardently pursue pleasure on the only one that remains, may be said with propriety to

rest at all, it is not difficult to decide. Our own private notions of this and every other duty are of no account—I speak as to christians—the gospel is our only guide, therefore let us see what light it throws upon this subject. Our Saviour Christ, who declared himself “ Lord also of the sabbath,” was constantly employed on that day, as on most others, in teaching and healing ; he also went into a house “ to eat bread” on that day. The Pharisees, who satisfied themselves with the mere formalities of their religion, and whom he often severely rebuked for their abominable hypocrisy, though they did not find fault with him for eating bread, “ asked him, is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days ? that they might accuse him. And he saith unto them, what man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will not lay hold on it and lift it out ? How much then is a man better than a sheep ? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.” On another occasion, when the ruler of the synagogue forbade the people to come and be healed on the sabbath days, the Lord then answered him, thou hypocrite ! doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering ?” From these passages, and from all that our blessed Lord is known to have said on

the subject, it is clear that many things are lawful on that day, beside the mere ritual observance of it. I shall therefore examine

- 1st. Into the use, and
- 2dly. Into the abuse of the sabbath.

The use of it consists in a cessation of labour, in private self examination, in studying the scriptures, in the religious instruction of our families, and in the public worship of God.

Some regular interval of rest from labour would have been found absolutely necessary, had God given no command to that effect. The health of millions must have been destroyed, and their lives consequently shortened without some periodical respite from toil. To most animals God "giveth their food in due season." "The lions roaring after their prey do seek their meat from God." "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." The nocturnal refreshment of sleep alone would not suffice to restore the exhausted strength of the husbandman or the mechanic. The stoutest of them would confess that he is unequal to the task of unremitted drudgery, and that nothing but his weekly rest could save him from sinking beneath the weight of his burden. Incessant toil would not only harass the body, but enfeeble or exasperate the mind. Condemned to exclusive servitude, what human being

could be contented with his lot? The wages of industry would be spurned, if offered on the terms of slavery; the many who eat their bread in the sweat of their brow, would, without some prospect of returning ease, rise up against the few whom heaven has exempted from bodily labour; and a state of anarchy would prevail, which nothing but the promise of occasional relief could suppress. Even before "the sun of righteousness arose," the very heathens allowed their slaves certain intervals of relaxation, though for no other purpose than to sustain the failing strength, and cheer the drooping spirits of those unfortunate victims. How much more necessary then is such relaxation in a christian country, where the poorest cottager and the meanest servant are taught that their souls are as precious as those of the richest and the highest princes in the sight of God, and that no man's daily occupations can excuse him from neglecting the important work of self-examination! It is true indeed that in the midst of those occupations the mind *may be free*, and that when it is, it may be actively and most usefully employed—as it often is in other things—in pious contemplation. Great and happy is the mind that can so disengage itself from the animal functions. But the galling wants of a family, the excruciating pains of poverty, and the laudable desire of pleasing a master by fulfilling

the allotted task, are commonly enough to absorb the whole attention of any man, how strong soever his natural understanding and his sense of religion. The temptations of the world he has indeed renounced, but the duties of his station he is still obliged to discharge, and in the discharge of them his whole time is occupied. The christian labourer in any vocation will think of God and the state of his soul as often and as seriously as he can, but he cannot do it as often and as seriously as he would. How infinitely important therefore is to him the weekly return of the sabbath, in relieving his mind from the distractions of business, and bringing him leisure to "commune with his own heart in his chamber, and be still!"

Of all the duties that man owes to himself, that of examination, though by many the least regarded, is the most indispensable, for without it there is no security for the due performance of the rest. He who can afford to spend every day in what manner he pleases, will, if he is a christian, regularly devote some part of it to that sacred purpose; yet even *he* will feel the force of some temptations, and must submit to some interruptions, and cannot at all times pacify his conscience. Self-love will sometimes intrude, and offer plausible excuses for what has been done, as well as for what has been left undone; or some perplexing subject will seize so

firmly on his attention that he cannot escape from it ; or his memory will not on every occasion faithfully retain the minute particulars of every transaction and every omission. As often as the sabbath returns, these imperfections may be supplied by reminiscence or expiated, through Christ, by repentance. The most prevalent and the most pernicious of all vulgar errors in religion is that the indulgence of some bad habit or other may be excusable in a man on account of some good qualities that he possesses ; as if virtue could ever be the advocate of vice, or we ourselves could pardon what God himself has condemned. Now a man who knows that the very best of his fellow creatures, though they may excuse him here, cannot save him hereafter, will watch with all caution the sin that doth most easily beset him, and on every Lord's Day examine whether or not he has succeeded in opposing it. This he may do with the better effect, because he can compare at more leisure the actions of one day with those of another in the week preceding ; and he will not only examine himself in this and all other matters, as on common days, but he will also embrace the opportunity which the sabbath affords of *reexamining* himself, and endeavour to ascertain the degree of fidelity with which he has discharged the duty of *daily* self-examination. The fittest part of the sabbath

for this purpose is the earliest ; for as some defects will on most trials be discovered ; as repentance should constantly follow the discovery, and as the divine forgiveness of those defects which may have escaped the memory is always to be implored, his own private confession and prayers will both prepare him for joining the congregation more earnestly in public devotion, and qualify him for receiving more readily the spiritual benefits of it. There are many who, with good intentions and some desire of religious improvement, find to their regret, on extraordinary occasions, that they have made little or no progress in practical piety. The primary cause of their failure is the total neglect of self examination, and to them the task of re-examination will appear superfluous. A man who has not attained the habit of *daily* self-examination certainly cannot perform that, nor expect to persevere in the performance of any other duty ; he will remain blind to many of his own errors and defects, and content with imperfectly confessing his sins before God, he will seldom pray to him with that fervor which only a true sense of his own wants and weakness can effectually produce. When in general can such a person more properly *begin* the business of self-examination than immediately after he retires from public worship on the Lord's Day, with the impression of the service still re-

maining on his mind, and in the absence of those temptations which will soon return to solicit his attention ?

The study of the scriptures is the most profitable of all studies. The arts and sciences have been, by the blessing of God, the means of present comfort and convenience to thousands ; but they contribute nothing to the happiness or the safety of the human soul. Profane history has made us acquainted with the many strange vicissitudes of this mortal state, but left us utterly uninformed of an immutable state hereafter. The knowledge of languages has made many a man learned—most sincerely do I love and respect learning—but it can never make a man “ wise unto salvation.” That “ wisdom which is from above ;” which places a man beyond the reach of adversity in this world and secures him an inheritance in the world to come, is an attainment of more value than that of the whole circle of sciences, which comprehends only the properties of perishable things ; than that of history which ends with events that have already passed : than that of all languages, which will soon cease and be for ever forgotten ; “ but the word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” I need not enlarge, in a christian assembly, on the importance of the scriptures : it is

my present purpose only to show that, if you have received them for your rule of life, it is your chief concern to understand them. He who has perused them with attention—who knows and remembers what is contained therein—should at least—whatsoever may be his employment the rest of the week, when the follies and the vices and the affairs and the distractions of the world conspire to turn religion out of doors—refresh his mind with the pure and benign and peaceful and holy precepts of the gospel on the sabbath day. He may indeed hear at church two chapters of it, and a portion of another, together with a part of one of the apostolic epistles ; but he will not surely be satisfied with what he hears in ordinary course. What a hardship he would probably think it if he were compelled to be satisfied with it ; if the Bible were again unhappily published only in a tongue which he had never learned, and if all his knowledge of religion were to be derived from the oracular dogmas of his priest ! It is not uncommon in men to complain bitterly of the want of what they have not, and to neglect it when they have once obtained it. Let him therefore who is already conversant in the sacred writings, take the word of God again in hand on this day, that he may invigorate the love of God in his heart ; and by reading it to a few who themselves unfortunately cannot read, he

may at once perform a service acceptable to God, contribute to the safety of another's soul, and promote, through Christ, the felicity of his own. But whether he apply his mind to the scriptures in company or alone, he may do it on the sabbath without danger of interruption. If he associates with the idle and the profane, he may not indeed, even on that day, be secure from their impertinence; yet as no man intimately mixes with those whose habits and principles are not similar to his own, he who is liable to interruption in the best use he can make of the Lord's Day, will probably be disposed to no very strict and conscientious observance of it himself. It cannot be denied that some people go to church "to be seen of men," rather than to benefit themselves or to serve God; but the exercise I recommend admits of no simulation, because it is done in private, with a willing mind, and for a purpose purely spiritual. "Thy testimonies," saith the Psalmist, "are my delight and my counsellors."

Another employment suitable to the sabbath is family instruction. You regard the health of your children and servants, and for the preservation of it you call in the assistance of others. You know that bodily health is a trifle compared with the safety of the soul, and few perhaps if any of you who have children and servants, are incompetent to the office of

teaching them the fundamental and essential doctrines of religion without the aid of any body. Parents and masters of families whose business deprives them of all leisure for this important purpose on other days, will therefore gladly embrace the opportunity which the sabbath affords, of reminding those whom they have brought into the world and those whom they have taken under their roof, "what a solemn vow, promise, and profession" they all made when they were baptized, what a weighty obligation lies upon them to act accordingly, what a state of misery was entailed upon them by the disobedience of their first parents, and what an immense ransom was paid to reinstate them in their eternal inheritance. These and all the articles of the christian faith should be diligently taught at home on the sabbath day, and nothing else but what tends to the advancement of religion. In the present happy age of active and flourishing charity, religion is almost every where taught at school, but still in a manner more or less impressive of a notion that it may be subordinate to other things. I mean not, by this remark, the smallest reflection upon the talents, or the industry, or the piety of those appointed to the office of public miscellaneous instruction: of their merit in general I entertain no doubt, for of their success I have seen the most satisfactory proofs. But

the laudable eagerness to qualify poor children, in the shortest possible time, to earn their own subsistence, and the practice necessary for that purpose, demand so much attention, that a comparatively small portion of it can only be allotted to religious subjects in the ordinary course of their education. The natural effect of this seeming preference of worldly matters on young minds is a correspondent regard to the subjects of their learning, to which they will be apt to incline, not according to the relative importance of them, but to the time and pains bestowed upon them. Thus they fall into considerable danger of assuming "a form of godliness" without feeling "the power thereof." This fatal delusion cannot be more effectually prevented or counteracted than by family instruction upon the Lord's Day—by pointing out, in the most direct and unequivocal terms, the superiority of religion to every other attainment, and by the practical exclusion of every other study. I cannot here refrain from offering my humble suffrage to the immense utility of Sunday schools, where-soever they have been established for the sole purpose of instruction in religion. Unfortunately some of the best disposed parents are not the best qualified to explain the principles of the christian faith, and these schools afford them ample means of supplying that deficiency. Thus regularly and

carefully taught their duty to God, their neighbours, and themselves, on the only day in which all worldly business gives place to public devotion, children early and effectually imbibe a reverence of the day itself, and form a correct estimate of the subject to which alone their attention is directed on it. The participation of servants in the benefit of such instruction is unquestionably their due. The remainder of their time is exacted for the bodily comfort and convenience of their employers, for which adequate remuneration, we will suppose, is made. But their souls are exclusively the property of God, and no conscientious employer will pretend that the highest wages he may give can ever exempt him from the duty of imparting those spiritual advantages which he himself enjoys, to those whose time is spent in his service. He will therefore not only encourage them to attend constantly at church, and restrain them from idleness and vice on the Lord's Day; but consider that he himself also is a servant to the great Lord of all Lords, and strive to convince the humblest menial by precept as well as by example that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The sabbath, if properly kept, relieves servants from a great part of their ordinary occupations: company are not invited to dine, horses are not wanted for travelling, the

necessaries of life only are required. This period of rest could never be designed for sleep or for sloth: the public worship of God to which it is in part devoted, clearly indicates what the private employment of it should principally be. The repose of the body admits the free activity of the soul, and that activity may be either injurious or beneficial to its future everlasting state. Many put the Bible and other religious books into their servants hands, and servants who can read may, by these means, if encouraged in the use of them, be in some degree their own teachers; but for the most part, even with the Bible in their hands, how can they understand, "except some man should guide them?" And who is so fit a person for their guide as the master of the house? The head of any family, if he feels an inclination, can neither want talents nor, on the sabbath, leisure to explain some of the most useful and familiar parts of the gospel, or fail to find an ample recompense of his benevolence in the love, respect, and obedience of his domestics, as well as in the approbation of his conscience; and he who neglects their spiritual welfare on that day, can hardly be supposed to think of it on any other. The commandment not only forbids a man from working personally, but also from employing his "son" or his daughter, his man-servant or his maid-

“servant, his ox or his ass;” and if God thus strictly commands a total cessation of labour, he doubtless expects that every human being should partake of the spiritual benefits derivable from it. Say not that servants go to church, and have opportunities *enough* of learning religion *there*. The best impressions commonly received from the most persuasive public exhortation and the most valuable public instruction, are effaced by contact with the next vanities that occur; and if you do no more than renew those impressions by recalling the attention of your households to the past service of the day, you retard the progress of vice, and encourage the advance of true religion and virtue. The warmest advocates for public prayer and preaching on sunday evenings—of whom I have ever been one—cannot deny that those excellent opportunities of religious improvement are liable to much abuse; and if every householder would himself condescend to undertake the spiritual guidance of his household, or, according to circumstances, appoint a proper substitute for that righteous purpose, towards the close of the sabbath, churches, if at other hours regularly frequented, need not be opened again at an hour when darkness is as favourable to the private designs of the vicious, as to the public edification of the pious. I have witnessed the happy effects of this kind of instruc-

tion which I am now recommending in one large and highly respectable family, whose cheerful, exemplary, and unfeigned piety diffuses itself almost throughout the parish, and excites the highest degree of respect for the Lord's Day, together with the strictest attention to all the public duties of it. I confess there is no great probability that such a spirit of pure devotion will soon very generally prevail ; but we may hope that it will still encrease as it has been long encreasing, and that every one who wishes to cultivate it will, when taunted by the dissolute, remember the words of Joshua to the Israelites : " as for me and my house, we will serve " the Lord."

I come now to the most important duty of the sabbath : the public and social worship of God. " In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, " the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the " seventh day ; wherefore the Lord blessed the " seventh day and hallowed it." For six days man is engaged in providing for the subsistence and prosperity, and on the sabbath he is commanded to consult the spiritual improvement of himself and his family. By blessing and hallowing that day, is meant separating it totally from all worldly employments, and dedicating it to those which are spiritual. Reflect here on the great goodness of God. I need not remind you how infinitely

more valuable the soul is than the body, nor contrast the joys of heaven with the torments of hell ; and yet six days are allowed you for the care of your bodies, while only one is demanded for the care of your souls ; and shall that one, in spite of God's commandment and in contempt of his promises, be devoted to indolence and pleasure? How few regard the duty of private devotion ! If therefore public worship were equally neglected, what would soon be the state of religion altogether? But while it is openly and publicly observed, according to the law of the land as well as of the decalogue, the pious are the more free from that interruption and ridicule to which they would be subject if no such law existed. *Entirely* free they are not even now ; for a scrupulous and regular attendance at church is still matter of offence to many, and if it were no longer respected as a duty, it would be condemned for superstition. As fellow-creatures we labour under common wants and participate in common blessings ; as fellow subjects, we have a common interest in the welfare of our country ; as fellow christians, we are " partakers of the same " promises of Christ by the gospel." Who alone is able to supply those wants, and from whom alone do we derive those blessings? Who alone can preserve our country? Who alone is the common Parent of us all? The Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, who ordained the day in

which he rested from his work to be a day of rest to all creatures, and in return a day of public acknowledgment to him for their creation and preservation. But does God want our acknowledgments? Certainly not. But having given us a common nature—the like parts and passions—he expects our sympathy with each other, which nothing can so powerfully excite as the act of meeting together in open assembly to address him in prayer and thanksgiving as the children of one large family. Here it is, in the house of God, that his ministers address the congregation, even when the king himself is present, though all the rest were beggars, by the endearing name of brethren. At home you pray for yourselves, or if you pray for others also—the whole race of mankind—you do it only in small numbers. Consider then how many thousands are at this moment employed as we are, in consequence of the general appropriation of this day to public worship—the whole family of Christ assembled in prayer for God's favour and protection, in praise for the numberless blessings of his providence, and in learning his will for the regulation of their conduct towards him, mankind, and themselves. As fellow subjects we thus publicly recognise each other as such, and pray for the prosperity of our country, for the security of the government, for the maintenance of true religion

and virtue among us, and for the safety, honour, and welfare of our sovereign. As fellow christians we meet in the name of the same Saviour, acknowledge the inestimable blessing of "the common salvation," and implore the same succour against the same temptations. Shall the solitary prayer of one human being, or the private supplications of a single family be heard, as they undoubtedly are, and the united prayers of congregated souls not prevail in proportion to the aggregate of piety thus solemnly poured forth? And when can such an aggregate be formed but on that only day when people, at other times widely dispersed and variously occupied, remain at home in the enjoyment of a respite from manual labour and worldly solicitude? The public observance of the sabbath bespeaks the character of a country. You know that in our Saviour's time the house of prayer had been so neglected and profaned as to have become a place of merchandize, which roused him to such a degree of holy indignation that he personally assailed those whom he found in the act of defiling it, and threatened that total destruction of the building and the city which speedily ensued. Hence you may perceive the great importance of public worship, and indeed if you look back into history, or abroad into the world, you will find that the most unenlightened heathens, as they become in some degree civilized, and united together under

one government, build, as it were instinctively, temples to their idols and observe regular periods of social devotion. Even among ourselves there are too probably thousands who offer homage to God with some sincerity in public, but seldom if ever pray to him or return him thanks in private, though they evidently possess many good qualities; and what may we suppose would become of *their* piety, scanty as it is, if this excitement of it were withdrawn? But, thank God! there is no occasion for enlarging on this particular duty, for notwithstanding the plausible arguments which mistaken men—especially one more remarkable for the extent of his attainments than for the soundness of his judgment—have vehemently or sily urged against it, the necessity of it is generally admitted and the practice of it more and more gains ground. Indeed this and the other duties that I have now recommended, do not properly belong to the subject which I shall proceed to examine. I have touched upon them incidentally to show that *they are duties* of too much importance to be omitted or interrupted by inferior avocations, and I shall now enquire into those for the discharge of which the others may occasionally be omitted without impropriety.

My text declares that “it is lawful to do good
“on the sabbath days,” and we all know that it is

lawful to do good on any day. The meaning is that, though all manner of work—that is, of worldly business or labour—is strictly forbidden, acts of charity and mercy and such labour as may be necessary for the performance of them, are not comprehended in the commandment; and there can be no doubt that such acts will be done more readily and effectually, in proportion to the greater regularity with which the duties peculiar to the day are observed.

If your state of life is such that you can spare no other day, you may go on foot or on horseback to visit a friend who lies sick or suffers under any heavy misfortune, or to take leave of one who is quitting your neighbourhood. The advantage derived from seeing and conversing with each other may be of more consequence, even on christian principles, than the mere keeping of a single sabbath, particularly if you are habituated to the due observance of it. Under the like circumstances a christian may of course correspond with his friend, taking proper care not to expatiate unnecessarily on worldly matters, but let there be no cant, no ostentation of religion in such visits or correspondence. Speak and write as you really think and feel, and if you do not think and feel piously, add not hypocrisy to your other sins, but take more thought for yourself, and leave your friend to God and persons better qua-

lified than you to give spiritual advice and consolation. "The sabbath was made for man"—for the benefit of his body, for which he is commanded to rest, as well as of his soul for which that rest was consecrated. Medical men may therefore lawfully exercise their profession, as far as may be necessary, on the sabbath, for in so doing they follow the example of our blessed Lord himself. Horses may as lawfully be employed in sending for them or conveying them. But then in proportion as such persons are wanted on that day for their professional aid, they are bounden to embrace every opportunity of joining in social worship, and of consulting their own spiritual welfare in the habit of private devotion.

Social converse is lawful on the sabbath, more especially for those who have well discharged the duties of the day, provided such subjects alone are chosen as lead to improvement in the doctrines and encouragement in the practice of religion. Of course it cannot be unlawful for christians to dine or sup together on the sabbath ; but there should be the like deference to the sanctity of it, and the strictest attention to that rest of which servants cannot be deprived unnecessarily without a violation of the commandment. The master of a family who loves God "with all his heart, with all his mind, with all his soul, and with all his strength," will as carefully guard against that violation in his

kitchen, as in his stables and his garden. The sabbath is indeed a festival with christians in joyful commemoration of their Saviour's triumph over death and the grave, and not a fast : it is " the " day which the Lord hath made, and we will rejoice and be glad in it ;" but let us rejoice in the hope of glory, not in rioting and drunkenness ; let us be glad in the spirit of benevolence, not in that of folly or of phrensy. We may fare even sumptuously without forgetting that servants have souls to be saved as well as their masters, and part of the day preceding may be well employed in preparing as much as possible for the wants of the sabbath.

Other books may lawfully be read as well as the scriptures on that day, if the latter are attentively read also. Natural philosophy, history, poetry, and music have contributed to the advancement of religion, and such works as Paley's Natural Theology, Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Paradise Lost, and Handel's Oratorios, at once afford the highest entertainment to the mind and dispose it to receive and retain the strongest impressions of religion.

As many objects we see in the fields may serve to remind us of the divine power and goodness, a walk on the sabbath into the country, after the duty of the day is over, is not only an innocent

enjoyment of the rest appointed, but a powerful inducement to pious meditation ; and if social converse, such as I have described, is not only lawful but beneficial to religion, a social walk, in which that converse may be more agreeably shared, cannot be less allowable, while it also promotes the health of the body and refreshes the animal spirits.

Without a more elaborate and distinct enumeration of such employments and recreations as are undoubtedly proper on the sabbath, it may suffice for me to say that whatsoever is either good in itself, or leads directly, obviously, and virtuously to good may safely be done on that as on other days. How far such things may be suffered to interfere with the peculiar duties of it must depend on the degree of their importance, of which if there be any doubt, the safest way is to persevere in that which you know to be of perpetual obligation. Those duties well performed, many things, though not useful may yet be innocent, provided they involve no breach of that rest which is commanded, and lead to no levity of thought or conduct inconsistent with the sacred character of the day. I would advise you however to reflect that what is merely innocent must, on all occasions, give way to what is useful and within your power. It is sometimes difficult to decide whether a thing be innocent or not.

Many things which are of that kind on other days assume a different nature on the sabbath, and all the leisure afforded you on that day should be employed in the duties of it, or in some religious pursuit as far as your health and circumstances allow. Consider that it is the only day which many of you can call your own ; that what is innocent in itself may sometimes lead to sin, and that to trifle with the little time you have to spare for the duties of religion is to tempt the displeasure of God, and to trample on the cross of your divine Redeemer. I proceed therefore to examine the abuses of the sabbath.

Here alas ! I have a spacious field before me, which I must traverse as quickly as I can, because I must not expect to be indulged in exploring it as minutely as I wish. An habitual neglect of public worship is one of those abuses. How common it is among all classes of our countrymen I need not say. But many who are not guilty of it themselves, are content to associate with those that are, without the smallest effort to convince them of their fault or even any apparent diminution of regard. But mark attentively the man who turns his back on the house of God, and you will seldom find him free from other vices which you would perhaps pointedly condemn. Why so lenient towards this ? Is it nothing to slight what

God himself has sanctified? Though a man may have the word of God often in his mouth without the love of God in his heart, yet whosoever cherishes that love must necessarily take delight in hearing that word. Whosoever loves God will love "his brother"—every fellow-creature—"also," and will omit no opportunity of uniting with others in public prayer for all estates and conditions of men, and in thanksgiving for the benefits which heaven bestows with impartial hand on all. He cannot be indifferent to these things and be a christian. He may say that he prays in his closet. I can hardly believe him; for surely he cannot be ignorant that private prayer is a duty of a very different nature from that of public devotion; that he is outwardly a member of Christ's holy catholic church; that as such he is called upon to "praise the Lord in the congregations," and that the most scrupulous and constant practice of one duty will never excuse the neglect or omission of another. Shall the great Shepherd of the sheep be without a flock? And where are his sheep to be found, if not in his fold? At your baptism you were "signed with the sign of the cross," in token that you would "manfully fight under Christ's banner, and continue his faithful soldiers unto your lives' end." Some of you have been soldiers yourselves, and most of you have associated

enough with soldiers to know that it is their duty to muster, at the time appointed for that purpose, on hearing the proper signal ; and shall the sabbath return and the church bells call you to the exercise of devotion, and you refuse to obey “ the Captain of your salvation,” without the guilt of mutiny against “ the Lord of hosts ?”

Worldly business is the next point to be considered. “ Thou shalt do no manner of work.” Under the Jewish dispensation, this part of the commandment was so strictly observed that when the man whom Jesus made whole, at the Pool of Bethesda, “ took up his bed and walked” at the command of his divine Benefactor, the people who met him said to him, “ it is the sabbath : it is not “ lawful for thee to carry thy bed.” Instead of denying the justness of the reproof, he only excused himself in this particular instance, by declaring that he acted on the authority of the same person who displayed such astonishing power as to heal an inveterate disease by his word. The children of Israel were, you know, fed, for the space of forty years, with a miraculous supply of food which they call Manna, or the gift of heaven. Learn thence the duty of abstaining from all labour on the day of rest. On the five first days of the week they found enough for each day’s consumption, and no more that did not become unfit for use, on the sixth day

they found a double quantity, and on the seventh none. The laws of nature were thus, you see, counteracted by the supreme Being himself for the express purpose of preventing the violation of this single law of the decalogue. "Six days," said Moses, "ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, how long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place: let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day," and we still acknowledge the duty of resting on the Lord's day. Notwithstanding this acknowledgment and that good example which, as I have said, abounds still more and more, too many are careless in this matter. In vain you close your shops, if you continue in your counting-houses. In vain you release your workmen from their employment, if you call them to receive their wages. In vain you relieve your horses from *the labour* if you harass them in *the pursuit* of business. What signifies your attention to the sabbath in one way, if you profane

it in another? The same all-seeing eye which observes you in public is still over you in private, and "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be made known." The day is the Lord's, and yours no farther than as you keep it holy. The commandment is the Lord's, and no human authority can exempt you from the obligation of it. As of all other sins so of sabbath breaking there are doubtless different degrees. There is less audacity in examining accout-books than in buying, selling, or exchanging articles of commerce on the sabbath; but there is another book in the contents of which you are more deeply interested, and when will you open it, if not on the day which the divine Author of it has expressly reserved to himself? There is less time and trouble taken in paying than employing workmen, but you are all the servants of one supreme Master, who will "reward every one according to his works." On the sabbath the service of all alike is due to him; and the payment of money on that day is at least as ill-timed as the tables of the money changers in the temple were ill-placed. To call again for the horse—that patient and valuable drudge in our wants, in our weaknesses, and even in our luxuries—unless in case of urgent necessity, is an unjustifiable invasion of that right to the benefit of rest

which he derives, as well as we, from the same commandment of the same Almighty Creator of all, who made other animals for our use and ourselves for his service and our own everlasting good. "A merciful man is" at all times "merciful to his beast." How unmerciful then is he who spares it at no time—even when the Lord God hath commanded! There are some other employments too minute and too variable in their usefulness for me to point out, which are not less improper on the sabbath than those which I have mentioned. Christians may judge for themselves concerning them, according to the degree in which such works are needful to the health and support of mankind, or conducive to the more general observance of the day.

If the cares of business cannot lawfully be suffered to intrude upon the spiritual concerns of the sabbath, how shall the impertinencies of pleasure be allowed to interfere? Yet pleasure seems more excusable than business in the opinion of the world. But the opinion of the world is not taken from the gospel. The pleasures of sin, you know, are never lawful. How much more unlawful then must they be on the sabbath! Many pleasures which are innocent at other times, become those of sin when they are purchased at the expence of that rest which God has enjoined. The pleasures

of society, for instance, are among the greatest blessings which heaven has given us to enjoy, and yet they are prized far above their value, if they are put in competition with those which heaven has yet in store for the faithful followers of Jesus Christ : and whosoever seeks the former without a view to some spiritual good, or forms, frequents, or encourages convivial entertainments, whether in a private house or a tavern, on the sabbath, as evidently opposes his own to the divine will as if he formed, frequented, or encouraged them in the house of God at any time : it is written in the word of God, “ my house shall be called an house “ of prayer ;” and it was “ written with the finger “ of God,” “ remember that thou keep holy the “ sabbath day.”

To sum up the whole, it appears that the right use of that day consists in the duties that I have described ; that there are some others equally sacred to which they may occasionally give place, and that there are many pursuits which, though innocent on other days, become criminal on that which the commandment pronounces hallowed.

While, therefore, on the one hand, you conscientiously abstain, for the love of God, from those things which cannot be done without a breach of the fourth commandment, fail not, on the other, to bear in mind, for the love both of

God and man, those duties which are indispensable at all times, and learn from my text the high importance of doing good. As without faith our best works are nothing, so without works all that we believe is ineffectual. The Scribes and Pharisees “loved the chief seats in the synagogues,” “and for a pretence made long prayers;” yet “they devoured widows houses,” and “omitted the weightier matters of the law : justice, mercy, and faith.” The strict observance of the sabbath is in itself a duty of the utmost consequence ; but if it promote not charity, the end of the commandment is frustrated and the whole law is broken. St. Paul thus wrote to one of the first christian bishops : “ This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly— that *they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.*” Our nature indeed is so depraved that our best actions are in themselves destitute of all merit. But though we cannot *do* we may *mean* well ; though we cannot *approach* we are taught to “ *go on unto perfection ;*” and if through the course of our weary pilgrimage, we take faith for our only guide, the blood of Christ will mix with the tears of our repentance, and the grace of God will sanctify our poor endeavours to the attainment of everlasting salvation.

S E R M O N X X .

JOHN CHAP. III. VER. 5.

*Except a man be born of water and of the spirit,
he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

NOTWITHSTANDING the malice of the Jews in general against our blessed Saviour, their contempt of his pretensions and their disparagement of his miracles, many were either so convinced of his divine mission that they openly confessed their faith, or so inclined to receive his instruction that they sought opportunities of conferring with him in private. Among the latter was Nicodemus, “a ruler of the Jews,” as he is called in the sacred narrative—probably a member of the sanhedrim—who “came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher sent “from God, for no man can do those works that

“thou doest, except God be with him.” In consequence of this explicit declaration, our Saviour proceeded at once to lay before him the fundamental principles of the new religion—the nature and necessity of regeneration, the heavenly origin and future crucifixion of himself the Messiah, the consequent redemption of man, and the danger of those who would not believe. Still he taught this man in parables, as he was wont to do unless in company with his avowed disciples, and when he began to speak of being born again, his attentive visitor, taking the words in their literal sense, interrupted him by a question tending to some explanation, and was answered in the words of my text, which, though illustrated by a comparison as simple, familiar, and apposite as possible, relieved him not from his embarrassment and made him ask, “how can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?” And how often do we find, even now, among those who call themselves christians, a disposition to scoff at the term new-birth, though derived from our Saviour’s own expressions in this interesting conference, and significative of the only means remaining to us of obtaining eternal life. In this discourse I propose to show

1st. What is meant by being born of water,

2dly. What is meant by being born of the spirit,

3dly. The necessity of both to the salvation of man, and

Lastly. The propriety of infant baptism.

1st. Our Saviour began his discourse by affirming that the eternal salvation of mankind depended on their being "born again." Our first parents were, you know, created by the immediate word of God, and placed in a situation adapted to the enjoyment of uninterrupted felicity and immortal life, on the single condition of abstaining from the fruit of one only tree. That condition, easy as it was, they failed to observe, and became subject to trouble and to death. But "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" were not to be frustrated by the wiles of the Devil. Man was still destined to live for ever, though in another life, and to live for ever in happiness, but upon new conditions. He was to be born again—already born in sin, the child of wrath—he was to be made the child of grace, "to die from sin and rise again unto righteousness;" that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all might be made alive." The posterity of the fallen pair soon betrayed that depravity of nature which was the effect of their disobedience, and increased in wickedness till the deluge, when, cleared of its inhabitants except a chosen few

preserved to replenish it, the face of nature presented a new appearance, and the duration of human life was contracted. Here was a new birth, as it were—a new state of things produced by the agency of water—a new world restored out of the wreck of the old. In reference to this memorable event, when John was sent as a messenger to prepare the way for Christ, he baptized or dipped those who confessed and repented of their sins in the river Jordan. Whether he first instituted or only adopted this practice it is not worth while to enquire. He acted on divine authority, and the ceremony of baptism became sacred in his hands, to represent the washing away of sin—the only sign of true conversion and so indispensable, that our blessed Saviour himself, before he entered on his own superior ministry, came to him from Galilee to be baptized of him, and removed his scruples on that particular occasion by observing that “thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” Christ was born “of a woman,” though not begotten of man; and he was “born of water,” though undefiled by sin; and what said the voice from heaven when he came up out of the river? “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”—my beloved Son, by this outward and visible sign—in whom I am well pleased, for his obedience to my will in this instance. The rainbow, though

a natural phænomenon, became the token of the first covenant that God graciously made with man after the flood, to remind the world of that extraordinary event, of his power to destroy, and of his mercy to save; and thus water, though every where applied to the most ordinary though useful purposes, particularly that of cleansing, was made the token of the last covenant, to remind christians of their former sinful state, and of their admission into the church of Christ. To be born of water is, therefore, to be baptized in his name.

But still a person may be born of water without being born of the spirit—receive the outward and visible sign without the inward and spiritual grace. He that would enter into the kingdom of God must, according to my text, be born of both: it no where appears that either will of itself suffice, or that he who is born of the spirit, is exempt from being born of water. St. Paul finding certain disciples at Ephesus, “said unto them, “have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, we have not “so much as heard whether there be any Holy “Ghost. And he said unto them, unto what “then were ye baptized? And they said, unto “John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily “baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying “unto the people, that they should believe on

“ him that should come after him, that is, on
 “ Christ Jesus. When they heard this they were
 “ baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And
 “ when Paul had laid his hands on them, the
 “ Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with
 “ tongues and prophesied.” They had before been
 baptized, to signify only the forgiveness of their
 sins ; but the Apostle required them to be rebap-
 tized, to signify their faith in Christ, and their re-
 generation—their birth in the spirit. What God
 hath thus joined together “ let no man put asun-
 “ der.” I shall now proceed to enquire

2dly, what is meant by being born of the spi-
 rit.

We come into the world under the influence of
 that destructive being, who contrived the fall of
 our first parents, and a natural propensity to sin is
 the lot of our inheritance. Were we doomed to
 continue in that state, “ no flesh could be saved.”
 “ Ye are of your father the devil,” said Christ to
 his obdurate hearers, “ and the lusts of your fa-
 “ ther ye will do”—their father as the author of all
 evil, and themselves his children in living under
 his ascendancy. But “ as many as are led by the
 “ spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” and
 “ we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth
 “ not ; but he that is begotten of God keepeth him-
 “ self, and that wicked one toucheth him not”—

sinneth not deliberately and heinously, and keepeth himself with all care out of the way of temptation. Born of God and born of the spirit are only different ways of expressing the same thing, and accordingly the church of Christ is, by St. Paul, spoken of under the name of a family, and christians are said to dwell with Christ, and Christ with them. The most familiar explanation of the term itself is to be found in the Epistle to the Galatians: "We brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now." This passage plainly refers to the expulsion of Ishmael from the house of Abraham after the birth of Isaac. The former was the son of a bond-woman, "born after the flesh" or according to nature; the latter was "the son of a free woman," the wife of his father, "born after the spirit" according to promise and against nature. "They who are born after the spirit" are, therefore, the children of promise; "and if children then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." "Now whosoever is born of the spirit will bring forth the fruits of the spirit, and they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." "Not every one that saith unto

“ me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of
 “ heaven, but he that *doeth the will* of my Fa-
 “ ther which is in heaven.” Whosoever therefore
 has attained the full assurance of faith in God’s
 mercy through Christ, is “ born of the spirit,”
 but unless he is baptized or born of water also, he
 “ cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” The
 next point we have to consider is

3dly. The necessity of both to the salvation of
 man.

The curse pronounced upon the serpent for his
 share in “ Adam’s transgresssion” was irreversible,
 but had not been fulfilled at the time of the flood.
 A chosen family was therefore exempted from the
 general destruction, and in process of time God
 vouchsafed to enter into covenant with Abraham,
 a branch of that family, promising to give him the
 land of Canaan, wherein he was then a stranger,
 on the condition of faith and obedience. Of this
 covenant circumcision was made the sign. For the
 trial of his sincerity, God commanded him to offer
 up his only son Isaac—his only child by marriage,
 the child of divine grace and promise, and most
 of all by every tie endeared to him—and when
 the obedient Patriarch had so far proved his
 faith as to “ take the knife to slay his son,” the
 will was taken for the deed, and, the command
 being reversed, an inferior offering was pointed out,

substituted, and accepted. The original promise was then immediately enlarged, that "in his seed" "all nations of the earth should be blessed." Abraham having steadily persevered to the last in his disposition and endeavours to observe his part of the covenant, his posterity were at length, under divine guidance, protection, and support, put in possession of the promised land, and this part of the promise was literally fulfilled. But yet all nations of the earth were to be blessed in his offspring. "Know ye therefore," says St. Paul, "that they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached the gospel before unto Abraham saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed." After the lapse of many ages came "Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham," whose approaching ministry and sacred character had previously been announced by John the Baptist, who declared that "all flesh" should then "see the salvation of God"—the complete fulfilment of the latter more extensive and more important part of the promise made to Abraham. The posterity of that Patriarch, so far from walking in his steps, had now become "a faithless and stubborn generation," "a disobedient and gainsaying people," "uncircumcised in heart and ears,"

“ Jews outwardly and not inwardly,” who “ had long transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.” Attentive only to the sign, they had neglected the conditions, and made “ the promise”—the remaining part of it—“ of none effect.” The justice of God was therefore to be satisfied ; for the whole world lying in wickedness was become obnoxious to another destruction. A new and real sacrifice was however ready and accepted : “ behold,” said John the Baptist, “ the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.” As the sacrifice was new in itself and of inestimable value, so one of the conditions of the covenant was graciously softened, and the sign of it changed for another more simple and significant : repentance was required instead of perfect obedience, and baptism in the place of circumcision. “ I indeed,” said John, “ baptize you with water unto repentance ; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” Accordingly Christ, having first been baptized himself, began to baptize his own disciples, and, after his resurrection, commanded his Apostles to “ go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized,” said he, “ shall be saved, and he that be-

“ lieveth not shall be damned.” “ No more sacrifice for sin” remaining, we “ to whom the ends of the world are come” can have no hope of God’s mercy through Christ, but in observing the conditions of the new covenant. But baptism, in the time of Christ and his Apostles, was a total immersion of the body, and, in conformity to that practice, the rubric of our church directs that, if the sponsors “ shall certify that the child may well endure it,” the priest shall dip it in the water. Moreover it does not appear that children were ever baptized by Christ himself or his Apostles. I shall therefore endeavour to show

Lastly, the propriety of infant baptism.

By the practice which alone prevailed when this sacrament was first instituted, and the tenderly affectionate manner in which our Lord always expressed himself concerning children, it seems as if they were safe without being baptized— if “ of such is the kingdom of heaven” or the church of Christ, they themselves either already belong to it, or being incapable of understanding and observing the conditions of the christian covenant, they are still the objects of God’s mercy. But when it is considered that we are all born in sin and must be regenerated before we can enter into life eternal, a doubt of their perfect safety arises, which nothing but their actual admission into the

church by baptism can entirely remove. If not a necessary it is at least a charitable work so to admit them ; and though they are yet without that faith which is the very foundation as well of the new as of the old covenant, they are still capable of receiving the outward and visible sign of faith and repentance or being born of water. The practice of baptizing them was therefore introduced as early at least as the second century ; and to provide for their compliance with the conditions upon which alone the future efficacy of their baptism depended, persons already baptized and of mature age were required to become their sureties—to promise that compliance in their name, and to see them properly instructed in the rudiments of their religion. Having thus “ put off the old man which is corrupt” and being afterwards “ renewed in the spirit of “ their mind,” they took upon themselves, when they came of age, the promises made for them in their infancy and completed what was before imperfect. But in cold climates the baptism of infants by immersion was found dangerous and often fatal to their health, and some have been known to expire under the operation. The practice was therefore either to be abandoned, or the severity of it to be abated, and that of sprinkling gradually became general in Northern countries. If we may reason from analogy upon the subject, there can

be no doubt of its equal acceptability; for the water of purification was only sprinkled on the Israelites, in allusion to which St. Paul speaks of having our hearts sprinkled from an evil "conscience"; "and when Jesus washed his disciples feet, and Peter said unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head, Jesus said to him, he that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." From the prevalence of this milder way of baptizing in our church, a notion has arisen that the other is set aside; but the real state of the case is, that immersion or dipping is still as much in force as ever, though disused among us; and any parent who, whether from conscientious scruples or arbitrary choice, prefers to have his child dipped rather than sprinkled, has a right to see it done according to his will.

Having thus endeavoured to explain, as briefly and as clearly as I could, the full sense of my text, I shall conclude with a short admonition.

If we must be born of water and of the spirit or be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, we must first die unto sin—renounce and forsake every evil habit, "continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living." Unless we

“put off the old” we cannot “put on the new man.” Beware, therefore, Oh! beware how you “quench the spirit”—the whisperings of conscience and the softer emotions of the soul within yourselves or others; “for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Be not ashamed of “that godly sorrow” which “worketh salvation not to be repented of,” and which even the most obdurate sinners sometimes feel; but rather rejoice that you are yet capable of “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” Indulge therefore the slightest transient propensity to good, and seize it as the immediate gift of heaven. The spirit that naturally dwelleth in us “lusteth to envy.” That spirit is not of God, and whosoever deliberately yields to its malignant influence, is not perfectly regenerate, though “grafted into the body of Christ’s church.” Take especial care, therefore, lest by rash suspicion or opprobrium, you wrong those who are more circumspect and zealous than yourselves. They perhaps would gladly promote your happiness while you are obstructing theirs. In heaven there is room for all, and every soul that gains admission there must sympathize with its Creator and Preserver, “who is not willing that any should

“perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Would you have diverted the good Samaritan from his charitable purpose? No. Why then would you disturb a fellow christian in his duty, who is labouring to convert a wanderer from “the error of his way,” whom Satan had lured to the brink of destruction?

“There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth,” but on earth doubt, distrust, and jealousy. It may appear strange, because it is rare and unexpected, when he who has been accustomed to speak and act wickedly, assumes and sustains an opposite character; but how can he do otherwise, if he “is born of the spirit” and received into the family of God? Be not angry then because he is restored to favour; “for this your brother was dead, and is alive again; was lost and is found.”

Whensoever you invoke the deity by the name of your heavenly Father, reflect that you are his sons, “born anew of water and the Holy Ghost.” He has taught you to honour your earthly parents. What love, submission, and reverence then are due to him, “who hath begotten you again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!” Of them you learn the lessons of fallible experience; of him the statutes of un-

erring wisdom. With them you live but for a time ; with him to all eternity. From them you inherit sin ; from him salvation. “ In this the
“ children of God are manifest, and the children
“ of the devil : whosoever doeth not righteousness
“ is not of God, neither he that loveth not his
“ brother.”

SERMON XXI.



ISAIAH CHAP. XXXII. VER. 17.

The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

THE prophet Isaiah—the evangelical prophet—from whose sublime writings I have selected this passage on the present interesting occasion, was commissioned by divine command, to predict not only the future judgments of God upon Jerusalem, but also the good that was afterward to arise out of that signal and merited destruction. He accordingly denounced vengeance upon the guilty inhabitants, and promised a better state of things to follow. The Jewish religion had been propagated and sustained by warfare, for the just punishment of other nations; and the chosen people who had been the

instruments of it, were doomed to suffer in their turn, for innumerable transgressions of their own. A new dispensation was then to succeed, and to unite all mankind by the bands of charity or brotherly love. "Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen; because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory." But in the end, "the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord: joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." In terms now no longer mysterious was described the happiness of mankind under the dominion of "the prince of peace," "when swords were to be beaten into plough-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks; when nation should not lift up sword against nation nor learn war any more."

When, in the fulness of time the birth of Christ was announced to the shepherds by "a multitude of the heavenly host," "peace on earth, good will towards men" was the burden of the celestial song; and when he had nearly fulfilled the gracious purpose of his ministry, he comforted his disciples in the like angelic strain. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."—not as the world giveth,

ah, no! what peace *does* the world give, with all its baneful envy, its imposing hypocrisy, its delusive hopes, its excruciating fears, its folly, pride, and restless discontent? “But be of good cheer,” added the divine comforter, “ye have overcome “the world”—ye who are truly and earnestly my disciples; my followers in principle as well as in profession—ye are now above those idle dreams and turbulent passions which inflame and destroy the mass of mankind. “Who is he,” says St. John, “that overcometh the world, but he that believeth “that Jesus is the son of God?”

The unfortunate though captious unbeliever, would fain interrupt me here and triumphantly exclaim: *you have, unluckily for your purpose, stumbled on those very parts of what you call prophecy, and those very assurances of Christ, which have least of all been verified; for has the world been at all more peaceful since he came into it than it was before? Witness this very war which, we will suppose, is at length drawing to an end—a war of unexampled duration—double that of the celebrated siege of Troy, in the most uncivilized state of society. To remind your congregation of those predictions at this time, when all your countrymen who have lived no more than twenty years in the world are utter strangers*

to the blessings of peace, betrays more zeal than discretion. The greater part of Europe has long professed the christian faith; and yet the whole of Europe, both continental and insular, has been for ages engaged in warfare, with no other intermission than what the intrigues of cabinets, influenced by a spirit very different from that of charity, contrived for selfish, mis-called patriotic purposes.*

Now every candid examiner of the gospels must allow that Christ also predicted this. "I came "not" said he, "to send peace, but a sword." In fact the very nature of fallen man and of Christ's religion is such, that without one universal miracle it could not have happened otherwise. The meek and lowly Jesus came not to *force* but only to *persuade* mankind into a discernment of true happiness and the right means of attaining it, without depriving them of the power to accept or to reject those means according to their choice. He came not to take away evil, but to reclaim the wicked by precept and example. He came not, like many an earthly prince, "to steal, and to kill, and to destroy," but to show, by innocence of life and in triumph over death, that "his kingdom was not of this "world"—that his dominion lay in the human soul;

* The peace of Amiens proved to be nothing better than an armed truce.

that "the peace of God should rule" in the heart of regenerate man, and, "that as sin had reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life."

The prevalence of war in Christendom is no proof of imposture in prophecy, but of the natural hardness of the human heart and the natural feebleness of human reason. Tell the most ignorant christian that his soul is to himself of more value than his body, than all the gold of Ophir, and than all the kingdoms of the world, and he will answer that he knows it quite as well as you; and yet, no sooner does an opportunity offer of pampering his body or gratifying his animal desires, for a few short years, than he leaves the care of his soul, though every moment liable to receive its final doom, to a more convenient season, or, if that season should not previously come, to perish in the unalterable state which is awfully termed everlasting death—death to all susceptibility of comfort, death to all for which he has yet lived, death to all hope. There is not one passion that cannot bring the judgment, unenlightened by revelation, under subjection to the will of man, and to which innumerable souls have not been voluntarily sacrificed.

The religion of Christ was graciously designed to correct this deplorable condition of the human race; but so long as they only assume the name

or pervert the principles of christians, in doubt or defiance of the truths they have been taught, peace among the different kingdoms of the world cannot be durable because it is not "the work of righteousness." You startle at the name of an atheist, and shudder when you contemplate the danger of infidelity; yet an atheist of sound moral character is a better man than a christian who lives in opposition to the gospel. Until religion shall obtain a positive and practical ascendancy over the nations of Europe, peace will be undervalued, and its blessings will be bartered for the baubles of vanity and the gewgaws of ambition. But can it be expected that when any nation disgraces the religion which it professes to believe, on the authority of the only true God, that he will not visit it for their impiety? He has not left himself without witnesses numerous, strong, and impartial. The kingdom of Israel, as long as the people "feared the Lord, and served him in truth with all their heart," was prosperous in peace and successful in war; but when they gradually sunk into such deep and general depravity, as to disregard the most awful and repeated warnings, enough to alarm the insensible and rouse the thoughtless to reflection, it fell to rise no more. Where is now the chosen race who "had the Lord their God for their King?" Scattered among the nations and dispersed into all the countries of the

world, "driven to and fro like chaff before the wind," strangers and sojourners in all lands; that mankind may see that the kingdoms of the earth are the Lord's, and "to whomsoever he will he giveth" them. And thus again has he begun to deal with the continent of Europe. What, for centuries, had religion been in that the only quarter of the globe almost exclusively christian? What vices had not assumed its sacred name? To what nefarious purposes had it not been perverted? Till in France the very existence of a Supreme Being was openly disputed without fear, the churches were deserted and profaned without remorse, and the mask of sanctity was without shame discarded! The crimes that followed have stigmatized the age in which we live: in number they could not be calculated, and in magnitude they never were surpassed. Now mark the just judgment and mighty arm of God! When the frantic and guilty people of that country had drunk enough of "the cup of trembling" administered to them by national assemblies, national conventions, councils of five hundred, consuls, and all the varieties of domination by which power could oppress or artifice deceive, the subtilty of a single head dissolved those fleeting shadows of liberty and equality, suppressed the pride and insolence of democratic fury, and subjected the influence of contending parties to the stronger attraction of internal

peace. Having dethroned their king, though their countryman, for no crime, they now enthroned an emperor, though a foreigner, for no merit, and servilely submitted to a yoke more galling than that from which they had desperately struggled to be free. Surrounding states had already begun to feel the bad effects of their own irreligion and misrule, and had sought to avert them by endeavouring to remove the natural and ultimate cause of popular discontent, and by uniting to restore the ancient government of France. Thus was war introduced and made "the overflowing scourge" of Europe, from the Mediterranean to the Baltic. The people thus doomed by human counsels to be crushed, soon became, you know, the only conquerors, exceedingly enlarged their border, and, infatuated with success, called themselves "great" and their emperor "great." Kings were dethroned at his nod, and upstart miscreants exalted in their stead, till royalty was only a name for vassalage to the tyrant and destiny for the will of "the great nation." But Europe now appears to have nearly reached the end of her appointed sufferings. It required no great stretch of sagacity in minds moderately stored with the principles of religion, to discern that such a series of extraordinary events as had never before astounded the christian world, could never have happened without the more immediate interposition

of divine power, for the punishment of "wickedness and vice and the maintenance of true religion and virtue." "When the judgments of God are in all the world," then, and seldom till then, "the inhabitants of the earth learn righteousness." And did the tyrant perform the will of the Almighty? Yes; not willingly but from necessity; for his plans, contrived for the aggrandizement of himself and his family, were directed by providence for the benefit of mankind, and led to consequences far beyond his foresight. He had preeminently qualified himself to become a destroyer, and Europe was for awhile forsaken of God and doomed to feel divine vengeance from a mortal arm; and now, the purpose of eternal justice being answered, the guilty instrument by which it was inflicted is thrown aside—the tyrant already trembles for his throne, stands in imminent danger of his life, and pants for that peace which he has denied the world so long.

Such at this moment is the state of Europe on the continent, and what is our own? With many errors to correct and many vices to forsake, we still flourish the most favoured of all countries, not for our own righteousness, but through the manifold and great mercies of heaven: our lands have been preserved from pillage, our dwellings from violence, and our churches from conflagration. "Our cattle have been strong to labour, there

“has been no decay, no leading into captivity, and no
“complaining in our streets.” The arts and sciences
have been patronised with as much liberality, pur-
sued with as much attention, and improved with
as much benefit, as if we had taken no part in the
contest and had been unconcerned spectators of the
events that were passing around us. Our public
debt has indeed accumulated to an amount unpre-
cedently enormous, but our property remains safe ;
and if, as it is to be hoped and even rationally ex-
pected, the world is at length tired of war and dis-
gusted with the odious scenes which have, for such
a series of years, been exhibited, the time may yet
arrive, and some of you may live to see it, when
the public credit shall be redeemed and the revenue
be sufficient of itself for the exigencies of the state.
But can we believe from past experience, that
we shall ever enjoy an interval of peace extensive
enough for such a consummation of our internal
prosperity ? When, in the annals of our country,
free from civil discord and foreign hostility, did
we ever breathe so long ? And if, without such an
interval, we again have recourse to arms, our pub-
lic burden must again be renewed and our posterity
will suffer still more than we for our folly ? But,
thanks be to God ! the influence of religion is
spreading farther and wider every day. The ran-
cour which unhappily subsisted between christians

of different denominations has at length subsided and given way to more just and charitable sentiments. Of all the events which have happened in this Island the rise of the British and Foreign Bible Society is the most remarkable and the most animating—the most remarkable, because it was the least probable; and the most animating because it leads to the most delightful consequences. We behold churchmen and every class of dissenters cooperating, in the spirit of true benevolence, to distribute among their indigent fellow-christians at home and their unenlightened fellow-creatures abroad the pure and uncorrupted word of God. Soon may the whole human race unite in submitting to its divine influence! The example will, ere long, if peace should now return, be followed on the continent, and that peace may then continue. Such a state of things has, you know, been predicted by the prophet, from whose writings my text is taken, “when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” In vain shall ambition then attempt to rule the world, when the prospect of a better shall engage the attention of “all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,” and when “the faith of Christ crucified” shall alone find followers. How seasonably too has this sudden and unexpected diffusion of the scriptures taken place, just before the termination of a war,

which has, more impressively than any other, taught mankind the instability of human grandeur, the insufficiency of human power, and the fallibility of human judgment! Half the former princes of Europe are still in exile; the power which invaded surrounding countries with success and haughtily menaced ours, will very probably be soon invaded in its turn; and the conquest of France, hitherto deemed chimerical by the wisest, is perhaps at no great distance. Exhausted in strength, satiated with slaughter, and eager for repose, the deluded worshippers of terrestrial glory will the better learn to be contented with the one thing needful, and be the better prepared to hear and read the scriptures with attention and spiritual improvement. Education too is becoming general among us, and by the time when the Bible will be in every christian's hands, the means of reading it will be in every christian's mind. These sublime objects are no longer the feeble wish of a few, but the strong desire of thousands, and will probably, at no very remote period, become familiar to all the human race. But at least let us look to ourselves, and prosecute with increasing ardour the work we have so happily begun. Then, "though the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together;" "though nation rise up against nation, and king-

“ dom against kingdom ;” so long as we are
“ God’s people and the sheep of his pasture,” “ the
“ Lord of Hosts will be with us, the God Jacob
“ will be our refuge”—“ HE shall give strength
“ unto his people ; HE shall give his people the
“ blessing of peace.”

SERMON XXII.

LUKE CHAP. I. VER. 74, 75.

That we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

THE divine promise made to Abraham, in reward of the faith which he had manifested by his obedience, was in a remarkable manner fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus Christ—"the lamb slain from the foundation of the world." "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death;" and "since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." The words of the promise are partly these: "thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;" and in reference to them, Zacharias, after the baptism of his son John, announced by inspiration the approaching fulfilment of them to

the utmost extent: "that we should be saved from
"our enemies and from the hand of all that hate
"us." Now this had long been literally accom-
plished in the land of Canaan; but the spiritual
sense of the words was still to be unfolded and
verified. The enemies yet to be vanquished were
not those of the Jews only but of all mankind—
"the powers of darkness," as they are called—
"the rulers of the darkness of this world," and
those tempestuous passions excited by them in the
minds of men, which the Holy Spirit only can
control by its milder and superior influence. It
follows then that even all the worldly foes to the
peace of christianity were ultimately to be subdued;
that the temptations of the world were also to
be resisted and overcome, and consequently the
tempters; and that, if religion were to triumph
over pride and ambition, proud and ambitious
men were to be humbled. Otherwise we might
well despair of seeing prospectively those hap-
pier times "when swords shall be beaten into
"ploughshares and spears into pruninghooks, when
"nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
"neither shall they learn war any more." You hear
on every sabbath, and cannot too often hear, the
triumph of Christ over sin and death illustrated;
but mindful of the particular occasion upon which

we are now assembled, I shall confine myself to the *literal* signification of my text, and

1st, describe the enemy from whom we have so recently been delivered,

2dly, show that the immediate hand of God has been clearly manifested in our deliverance, and

Lastly, consider the best use that, as christians, we can make of the blessing.

In treating the first of these heads, I have no political prejudices of my own to gratify, and no party in view either to applaud or to condemn; and if I had, the present is not the time or the place for such purposes. If there be any set of men among us who would unthankfully convert the peace we have obtained abroad into contention at home, by an unseasonable and fruitless examination into the cause of the war, "My soul! enter not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour! be not thou united." Let it suffice that the horrible and long protracted calamity is past; that peace is ours once more; and that, "if we follow after the things which belong to it," the brightness of the present scene is but the glimmering dawn of the fairest days that, since the fall of our first parents, have ever shone on man.

Out of a natural and ardent desire of the liberty that other nations enjoyed, to which the people of France had long been strangers, arose a popular

fervour, amounting even to phrensy, impatient of all control, and serving only to exasperate the evils of which they complained. It was easy to destroy, but not to restore ; to demolish, but not to rebuild. They destroyed without mercy, never thinking to restore ; and they demolished before they had determined on any feasible plan for a new building. Experiment after experiment was tried in vain, till the despotism of many became more intolerable than the tyranny of one, humanity shuddered at the cruelties she saw committed, reason spurned at the follies that assumed her name, and religion retreated from the altar. Such was the state of affairs in that wretched country, when a person, then only known to Europe as a skilful and successful soldier, suddenly appeared to crush the many headed monster democracy, and established a triumvirate, himself the foremost, in its stead ; restoring a regular form of government which, if it had been conducted on religious principles, might have endured for ages, to the benefit of the people, the happiness of mankind, and his own immortal honour. But it was not to be expected that the commander, who had clandestinely left his army to the contagion of a noxious climate and the resentment of an implacable foe, for the purpose of self aggrandizement, would prove a disinterested promoter of public good. The two whom he had accepted as his colleagues

were soon and easily set aside, and lo! the very people, to whose ears the title of king had lately been so odious, bowed the supple knee and offered the noisome incense of their adulation to an emperor—a ruler invested with supreme and, notwithstanding the pretext of two other coordinate estates, unlimited authority. From that moment his ambition knew no bounds. He deposed sovereign after sovereign and set up his minions in their place, with as much ease and as little hesitation—such was the righteous will of heaven—as his subjects had condemned his predecessor to the guillotine and exalted *him* to the throne. What at length was any potentate on the continent but, in fact, this tyrant's vassal? The peninsula alone held out, after one of the two royal families belonging to it had been forced to emigrate and the other had been decoyed into captivity. There our country—wisely shall I say? no—providentially unfurled her standard, and powerfully contributed to the deposition of a new king whom the spoiler of Europe had set up in the person of one of his brothers. Recollect the situation of the continent at that time. The German territories of the emperor had been reduced to that of Austria; three principalities of the German empire had been elevated into kingdoms; a whole circle of it had been also erected into a kingdom under another of his brothers; the seven

united provinces had been transferred in the same manner to another ; the papal see had been plundered and the Pope retained a prisoner ; the kingdom of Sardinia, the cantons of Switzerland, that part of Germany which lay within the Rhine, and the Austrian Netherlands had been incorporated into France. The few remaining states, subdued and enfeebled by his arms, had consulted their own safety by submitting to alliance with him, till all the rest of Europe combined against Great Britain, though, in their hearts, they prayed for her success. In short there is no instance in modern history, of such mighty power so rapidly acquired, or, according to every appearance, so likely to have continued. His plans were formed with consummate skill, and executed with a promptitude and vigour that astonished the world. Was it then to be supposed that a single nation should check the progress of this ruthless invader? Might we not have exclaimed in despair : all the kings of the continent “ stood not against him ; how then shall we stand ? ”

Nor was it in arms alone that our triumphant enemy excelled. His judgment and sagacity in the cabinet were not inferior to his valour and tactics in the field, and, having formed a matrimonial connection with a royal family still one of the most powerful in Europe, he seemed to all political observers not only to have perfected his military fame,

but to have secured a powerful sovereignty to himself and his kindred.

Now, I beseech you, mark well here the dealings of divine providence which, amid the discordant din of arms and the hideous yell of party contention, is commonly disregarded. God has never raised any obscure person to extraordinary greatness so much for the merit of the man himself, as for the deliverance of oppressed or the chastisement of guilty nations. Even Moses, who was "sent to be a ruler and deliverer" of the Israelites, was, after their emancipation had been effected and when they drew nigh to the promised land, cut off before their entrance into it, for having "spoken unadvisedly with his lips." The rapid successes of Alexander the great and the prodigious extent of the Roman conquests can only be accounted for in the same manner; and whosoever contemplates the state of morals in the countries they subdued, must discern in the wickedness of the vanquished the justice of their punishment. The Macedonian and the Roman power both fell in their turn, after having even exceeded in licentiousness the people they had conquered; the former with signal rapidity, and the latter with an ignominy commensurate only with its crimes. And in the case now immediately before us, "how are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" I proceed

2ndlv. To prove that the hand of God has been clearly manifested in our deliverance.

Start not at the term I employ. Has it been a matter of no consequence for us to be excluded, as a commercial country, from almost every port in Europe? Has it been an evil of no magnitude to keep up a standing army of unexampled strength, for a longer period than was ever before known among us, and a navy in proportion? to add scores upon scores of millions, year after year, to an enormous burden of national debt? All pride is folly or something worse, and national pride is not less contemptible or less criminal than personal pride, especially when it arrogantly opposes itself to the sacred dictates of truth. They who deny valour to our enemy, *because he was our enemy*, may feel their national pride a little mortified when *our deliverance* is spoken of, and may even scoff at our public thanksgiving for the event. But how can we thank God as we ought, unless we know and acknowledge the cause we have to be thankful? The hand of God then, I say again, has been clearly manifested in our deliverance. Had the tyrant been content with his own supremacy on the continent, he might easily have retained the power and influence he had acquired. Had Spain been left to her own scanty resources and feeble resistance, he must have become the arbiter of the peninsula as well as of the

continent. But his inordinate ambition spurred him on to hazard the whole of what was in his hands, with the hope of strengthening by encreasing his power. Thus he made way for a species of warfare to which his troops had not been accustomed, and by which the other countries, still reluctantly submissive to his will, were suffered to breathe awhile and take courage from example. No sooner however did he discover that the drooping spirits of a distant nation began to revive, than he proceeded in person to invade it and seized its ancient capital. It was not the bravery or the military skill of the Russians that alone destroyed his immense army. The rigour of the climate and other natural causes, under the providence of God, eminently contributed to his discomfiture, and again his bleeding victims took heart. The invaded pursued him, and were soon joined by the very sovereign whose daughter he had espoused, nor stopped till they entered his capital and procured his dethronement from a senate of his own making, which till then had trembled at his frown. Within a few days of that memorable act, he might not only have made peace on favourable terms, but even established himself in greater power than the monarchy of France had known for ages. When he set out on his last fatal expedition, intent on plunder and devastation, he saw not the arm of the Lord stretched

out against him, or, had he been a christian, he might have exclaimed: "I have sinned; for I knew "not that thou stoodest in the way against me; "therefore, if it displease thee, I will turn me back "again." It was to be expected that the prince to whom he had become nearly related by marriage, and still more closely allied by the birth of a son, would have consulted the safety of his own remaining territory, if not the restoration of that which he had lost, in confederacy with rather than in opposition to the power he had so earnestly propitiated; and this most improbable of all contingencies accelerated and completed the downfall of that "baseless fabric" which had been planned by fraud, founded on blood, and consecrated to tyranny. Such is the glorious uncertainty of the best laid schemes of human policy; so vain is all the art of man; and so necessary is religious principle to the success of all that human wisdom can contrive and human confidence pretend to execute! I say the glorious uncertainty of all such things, because, while they prove the imbecility of man, they set forth the glory of God. "My thoughts "are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your "ways saith the Lord." Who, that is at all conversant with his bible, can help calling to mind, on this memorable occasion, the words of God delivered by Moses to Pharaoh: "In very deed for

“ this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in
 “ thee my power, and that my name may be de-
 “ clared throughout all the earth.” The same
 hardness of heart which infatuated the king of Egypt
 bewildered the tyrant of Europe to his own destruc-
 tion. These are all common newspaper facts, and
 I have laid them before you the rather because you
 already know them, that you may the more plain-
 ly perceive the necessity of submitting things tem-
 poral to things eternal—of thanking God for his
 blessings, “ not only with our lips, but in our
 “ lives ;” “ that we being delivered out of the hand
 “ of our enemies, might serve him without fear,
 “ in holiness and righteousness before him all the
 “ days of our life.” I proceed therefore lastly, to shew
 the religious use we ought to make of the peace so
 unexpectedly obtained.

1st. How thankful ought we to be for our insu-
 lar situation—that the overwhelming force, success-
 fully directed against every other nation of Europe,
 could never approach our shores! What if we could
 have been invaded and had finally repelled the in-
 vader—what must have been the slaughter and the
 devastation committed in the dreadful conflict! One
 of the tyrant’s most active generals being asked if
 he expected to keep this country, should he gain a
 footing in it, replied, no; but that he would make
 it a country not worth keeping. By the blessing

of heaven and by means of the element interposed between us and the enemy, our dwellings have been preserved from pillage, our towns from desolation, and our altars from pollution. "Talk not so exceeding proudly" of our army and our navy. "We will not trust in our bow: it is not our sword that shall help us. But it is God that saveth us from our enemies; and putteth them to confusion that hate us." Remember the wretched king who "gave not God the glory," and was smitten by the angel of the Lord, "eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." Let our army and our navy receive all the honours and all the rewards they so justly deserve, at proper times and in proper places; but here and on this occasion, "the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

2ndly. Let us reflect that many of us have sons now grown up to manhood, who have never known till now one day of public peace—that we have seen our own troops marched to the house of God in all the pomp of military parade, to the sound of profane music from martial instruments—that even a rational and conscientious opinion unfavourable to warfare could not, for a long time, be honestly expressed, without the imputation of disloyalty. It is to be hoped that, at length, the world—at least the christian world—is tired of war; and that opinions unfavourable to peace may, in their turn,

become as unpopular as they have ever been unrighteous. But, after all, peace is not to be valued and sought merely for its own sake and its worldly advantages. If it avail not to make us better men and better christians, we know but little of its value, and cannot expect to enjoy it long without interruption. Unless we carefully endeavour to make it the means of our spiritual improvement, the blessing of heaven will never follow it; and without the blessing of heaven it cannot continue. Above all, let us cherish, cultivate, and promote, to the utmost of our power, that charity or benevolence "which is the very bond of peace and of all virtue." We have seen the baneful effects of persecution by the sword. Let us cease to persecute one another in private life by the sly insinuations of envy or the false assertions of malice, if we hope to preserve the peace which we hail with such enthusiasm. From the smallest perceptible causes the greatest events have frequently arisen: let us beware lest the fiend of party animosity revive, concerning Ireland or America, those internal dissensions among us, which, if we were really and not nominally christians, would cease at once and for ever.

3dly. Look to the obscure little island of Elba for a striking example of the instability of human grandeur, prosperity, and power.—The conqueror of conti-

nental Europe reduced to the sovereignty of the most insignificant spot that ever yet, in modern times, became the seat of royalty ! Mark its singular position. Within sight of Corsica, his native land, the exiled emperor may now find leisure and opportunity to contrast the days of his guilt and his greatness with those of his innocence and his childhood. : He may now discover which of them were the happiest, by finding on which he can reflect with the greatest satisfaction. When, in the plenitude of his sway, accident recalled to his mind the faith that he had violated, the frauds that he had practised, the tears that he had caused, the blood that he had shed, and the hearts that he had broken, he could easily dismiss the unwelcome recollection, to make way for further schemes of aggrandizement and further tidings of success. But *now* those ideas *will* return and *will not* depart at his pleasure, and can even repentance save him from despair ? With such a man *that* is impossible, “but with God all things “are possible.” We will not, however, join the multitude in decrying his talents or exulting at his misery. Let us rather thank God for withholding from us those advantages which might have tempted us to sins which we have never committed, and learn, from the awful example now shown to all the world, to set bounds even to our apparently moderate desires. It is better not to know prosperity than, knowing

it, to acquire a keener sense of misfortune; and which of us can say that his own greatest misfortune is already past?

4thly. After more than twenty annual days of "general fasting and humiliation," we now celebrate, for the second time in this year, "a devout thanksgiving." Let it *be* devout—free from intemperance of every kind, free from tumult and disorder, free from self-applause, and full of gratitude to God. Learn to depend less on human wisdom and human power, and more on the justice of him who alone "is mighty to save." "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in princes." "The Lord is our light and our salvation; whom then shall we fear? The Lord is the strength of our life; of whom then shall we be afraid?"

SERMON XXIII.

EZEKIEL CHAP. 24. VER. 16.

Son of man! behold, I take away the desire of thine eyes with a stroke; yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down.

To awaken and direct the attention of the thoughtless children of Israel to the impious state of their nation and the fatal consequences of the divine displeasure which it had so often and so justly excited, the prophet Ezekiel was commanded to “set on a “pot” and, in allusion to the sacred rites of their religion, to fill it with the choice pieces and to burn the bones thereof; in such a manner as to show at once the wickedness that disgraced and the vengeance that awaited that sinful people. The city of Jerusalem was their constant boast, and

the pride of that city was its temple, of which the inhabitants had rendered themselves so very unworthy, that it was doomed to fall in the general ruin. A very striking sign of that part of the catastrophe was shown by the prophet, whose wife was suddenly taken from him by death, after he had been forewarned of it by the word of the Lord, and commanded to abstain from all appearance of grief for her loss. “ Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men.” When the people, suspecting from the known character of the seer some extraordinary communication to be intended, or stimulated by curiosity at his seemingly unnatural apathy at a misfortune which would have deeply affected most other men, entreated him to explain his mysterious behaviour, his answer was : “ thus saith the Lord God, behold I will profane my sanctuary”—the temple—“ the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth ; and your sons and your daughters, whom ye have left, shall fall by the sword. And ye shall do as I have done”—Your grief shall be too sore for any outward expression—“ but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one towards another.”

The temple of the Jews—even the second temple—has now no longer “one stone upon another,” Jerusalem remains an awful monument of divine vengeance, and the once favoured people of God have remained for ages without any city of their own to dwell in. I take therefore the words of my text in a restrained but still interesting sense, to show

1st, the uncertainty of human life, and

2dly, what advantage may be derived from our knowledge of that uncertainty.

Thus the prophet may be made even “unto us a “sign” of those numerous accidents—as they are called—and those losses to which we are subject every moment of our lives, and of which, though we witness the continual occurrence of them, we seem to take as little notice as if they did not at all concern us—as if we were a race of beings exempt from death, and above the reach of those troubles which we ourselves do not feel. It cannot however be unprofitable to examine those things with some attention towards the close of another year which, in a few short days more, will be gone for ever, and may be the last which some of us here present are appointed to live in this world.

Of all the objects that naturally excite our love unmixed with any baser passion a child is the most interesting. Smiling in its native innocence,

a stranger to deceit, and just dropped, as it were, from the bosom of its God, we receive it as a precious, a sacred boon from heaven, to be cherished with all our care and protected with all our vigilance. Such is the disposition of mankind towards it—even of those to whom it does not belong, who have no private views of their own in its preservation, and who only obey the impulse of humanity. But to a parent, who wishes for an heir to a large estate, or for a successor to an ancient family, such an object is unspeakably dear, and welcome not only from animal instinct, but from the ample means provided for its health and security. Yet, such is the uncertainty of our mortal state! though an infant is evidently sent into the world to become capable of filling some useful station in society, it has so many dangers to encounter from disease, to say nothing of accident, that neither parental care nor medical skill can, in many cases, avail to prolong its earthly existence. Is the purpose of heaven then defeated? No. The purpose of heaven chiefly regards the welfare of the whole human race, who are thus instructed in what they are most unwilling to learn: that in no period of life however early, in no state of the soul however innocent, and in no degree of security however powerful, is there the smallest certainty of surviving the day that passes over them. “The desire of

“our eyes” may be taken away from us by one sudden and decisive stroke, which sometimes punishes us for our presumptuous confidence, and always reminds us of our own frail, precarious, and dependent condition.

Next to the death of infants who are torn from our embraces with a violence which, without the aid of religion, we can neither comprehend nor well sustain, the premature dissolution of a parent—especially the parent of a numerous and helpless family, demands and deserves our tenderest commiseration. Of all cases that call for sympathy this is among the foremost; and when that parent is a mother, whose nightly solicitude and daily exertions were constantly directed to the support, the comfort, and the improvement of her children, hard must be the heart of that man, and feeble the piety of that christian, who can pass her grave without a sigh, or reflect on the loss of those who are deprived of her advice, her example, and her assistance without one prayer for their welfare. When a lady of distinction departs out of this world, even if she leaves no family behind, or none that received or required much of her personal activity or suffered more than the ordinary shock of separation by her death, lamentation, mourning, and wo are echoed from place to place, every newspaper records the malancholy event, and every eye is eager

to behold the pomp of the funeral procession. It is right, as far as it relates to human society, that notice should be taken of those who die, in proportion to the rank they held while living. But we are now in the house of God, who "is no respecter of persons," where, and where only, except in the grave, all men are equal; and I ask, in the name of God, whether the premature decease of those who are exalted so far above us, whose faces we have never seen, whose voices we have never heard, and whose offspring, however numerous, are still secure of human protection, ought half so deeply to affect our sensibility or come half so near our hearts, as that of those less distantly removed from us in station, who resided with us in the same place, resorted with us to the same church, and whose numerous offspring have sustained a loss which divine providence alone can repair?

You see then that neither the innocence of childhood nor the relative importance of any human being can afford the smallest security against the fatal grasp of death. Let us therefore consider more generally by what various avenues the destroying angel finds admittance to us all. Numerous are the maladies to which our mortal frame is liable, many of which often baffle the most exquisite medical skill, even in its present improved state. Dis-

solution may indeed be retarded, but not prevented, and recovery is sometimes only a prolongation of suffering. How many are year after year swept away by epidemic or contagious diseases? which are commonly destructive in proportion to the extent of their progress. Even of that milder and safer species of distemper, which has of late years been successfully introduced among us, in mitigation, if not the total prevention, of another which was violent and dangerous, there remains a degree of doubt, as to its permanent efficacy, which time alone can remove; and yet I myself have known more than one instance of the heaviest affliction arising from that very doubt. So uncertain is life, and so precarious are the best means we can adopt for its preservation!

But though disease is the most common cause of death, innumerable are the accidents which contribute to the same effect—accidents which happen whether we be asleep or awake, abroad or at home, active or sedentary. Not to mention the ravages of fire and water, which happen somewhere or other almost daily, the puncture of a needle, or the fall of a tile from a building, has occasionally proved no less irremediable than the stroke of a sabre or the blow of a cannon-ball.

Is any event more awful to our contemplation than sudden death! Particularly when a wretched

being, with all his unrepented sins upon his head, is summoned in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to appear before the presence of his God, and “receive the due reward of his deeds.” Even in the best possible state of preparation, so frequent are our infirmities and backslidings that we are provided with a prayer against it in our admirable *Litany*; for “who can say, I have made my heart clean; I am pure from sin?” Often when death thus unexpectedly approaches, it surprises us at some important period, when the mind is either employed in the prosecution of some favourite design, or preparing for the enjoyment of some new acquisition. The bridegroom has been snatched from his bride, or the bride from her husband, between the rising and the setting of the same day’s sun; and a late excellent prelate, in our sister island, caught his death at the very time of his consecration.

In short, death is not far from every one of us, “for what is our life? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” Even of that little time we cannot secure the smallest part; and though the age of man be threescore years and ten, there is no assignable period of it which thousands and tens of thousands have not found to be their last.

But indeed we are ready enough to acknowledge the uncertainty and to lament the shortness of life,

though we live as if we knew the number of our days, and were satisfied that they would not be few. It happens therefore that the oldest among us are sometimes no better prepared for death than they who rejoice in the season of their youth. But were there no remedy for such an evil as the instability of our mortal existence; had we no hope in Christ; no faith in the promises of the gospel, we should be "of all men most miserable." Great however and deplorable as the evil is, powerful and efficacious is the remedy provided; and if the time of our death be uncertain, the means of meeting it with composure, come when and how it will, are graciously offered to every christian. "I came," says our blessed Saviour, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"—"that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"—"he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"—"the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." And what do those words teach us? That man is sinful and condemned to die, but that he may repent and be restored to immortal life; that the sins of man are laid upon the Son of God, but that the sufferings of one will suffice for the punishment of many; that this world is a state of trial and full of trouble, but that ano-

ther world is prepared for them who religiously abide their trial, where alone "there is fulness of joy." Yet so strong is the dread of dissolution, which essentially belongs to human nature, that even our blessed Saviour himself, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," prayed his heavenly Father that "the cup"—the destined agony of the cross—"might pass from him." But "nevertheless," added the all and only obedient Son of Man, "not my will, but thine be done." How then could sinful mortals endure the sharpness of death—the pain of body, the anguish of mind, the reproaches of conscience, and the danger of damnation, were they left to themselves in exploring their way through sin, sickness, and sorrow to a state unknown?

When they, whose lives have providentially been spared till they have seen their children brought up and settled in the world, behold their relatives and friends dropping into the grave before them, some natural tears will fall. The prophet Ezekiel, when even his wife, emphatically called "the desire of his eyes," was taken from him suddenly, had been forbidden "to mourn or weep" at her departure. This prohibition, though it served to indicate unutterable wo, reminds us of St. Paul's admonition, "not to be sorry as men without hope." Indeed,

if we *are* christians, we have hope—"a sure and " certain hope"—notwithstanding the uncertainty which surrounds us here, " of the resurrection to " eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ," whose nativity we are preparing to commemorate at the approaching season—a season of rejoicing in every christian country—and we do well to rejoice as oft as it returns. But let the few reflections I have now offered to your consideration conduce to show you what kind of rejoicing that of christians ought to be. As we are exhorted not to indulge our grief on one of the most melancholy events that call for it, so are we forbidden excessive and riotous mirth on all occasions whatsoever. " Rejoice " in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice." But what immediately follows? " Let your *moderation* " be known unto all men." " In the multitude of " our sorrows," the almighty Father of us all has graciously afforded us every kind of consolation even in this world, and opened to us the prospect of another, in which " we shall rejoice " for ever " with joy unspeakable and full of glory"—in which we shall, " through the merits of Christ and " faith in his blood," not only join the spirits of the just, but again embrace those whom we loved on earth, if they were worthy of a christian's love, and meet, to part no more—in which " there shall be

“ no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain,” and where the Lord God shall wipe away tears from off all “ faces ” for ever and ever ; to whose mercy, wisdom, and majesty, be thanks, adoration, and submission, world without end.

SERMON XXIV.

JAMES CHAP. 4. VER. 14.

What is your life? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth but a little time, and then vanisheth away.

NOTHING is much earlier learned or better understood among all mankind than the uncertainty of human life, and yet, such is the perverseness of human will ! though no subject more frequently or more earnestly demands our attention, misfortune only can lead most of us to the contemplation of our perishable state. When we ourselves suffer affliction, we perhaps begin to think upon God ; and when we see others suffer, we begin to think that their case may soon be ours. But the ordinary calamities that befall us, such as sickness, disappointed expectation, loss of property, fruitless industry, and undeserved obloquy, may, by the divine consolations of religion, be always alleviated,

and often, under the providence of God, removed or turned to the best account. But when a beloved relative, friend, or neighbour is torn from us by death, especially by one sudden and unexpected stroke, we not only begin to think upon God—of his pure and unchangeable justice, wisdom, and power—but also of our own unworthiness, weakness, and dependent condition. We look up to him with an awfulness of feeling which awakens the most dormant piety, and look into ourselves with that humility to which we had been strangers. This effect of misfortune is in itself a blessing worth all the advantages of prosperity; for though, whensoever we do think upon God, we do for the most part think worthily, or strive to think worthily of him, yet, whensoever we think of ourselves, we think too partially or too proudly; and nothing but that sympathy, which the death of a fellow-creature sometimes excites, can recal us to a proper sense of our mortality, the uncertainty of our continuance in this world, the necessity of preparing for a better, and the value of that redemption which our Saviour purchased for us with his own blood.

Shall a christian preacher then be silent when such misfortunes happen? Shall he unconcernedly see his flock in constant pursuit of the paltry, imposing, and dangerous, though change-

able and transitory things of this world—no matter what, be they profit, be they pleasure, be they distinction—shall he unconcernedly see them in constant pursuit of those things, at least six days in every week, and take no occasion from the occurrences before them, to remind them of objects far more deserving of their aim, to show them the fatal tendency of their folly, and convince them that their last hour is approaching and may arrive before they are aware? God forbid!

The moderate and rational desire of such things I mean not to condemn or to deride, as far as divine providence has placed them either within our reach or within our attainment; but surely our souls are of more value than our bodies, and the trifles that last but for a day are not worthy to be compared with the treasures that endure for ever. “This is none other than the house of God,” and here at least on the Lord’s own day, we may well enquire, with serious attention, why we have been sent into this world, how we may best perform our allotted task, to whom we are to give an account of our actions, and what is likely to become of us when that account has been given. After due examination into these momentous subjects, no christian can be satisfied with himself, on reflecting that he has actually devoted at least six times more diligence to the affairs of this world

than to the concerns of a better ; six times more to the care of his body than to the safety of his soul—to that which is daily falling into decay than to that which can never die.

Look but on any side of this sacred edifice, and you will find memorials—no matter how rude and unsculptured—you will find memorials of some who have lived to the age of man and beyond it ; of many who have not lived out half that period ; and of more who have died in their infancy. But thanks be to God for his boundless mercy, “ who would not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” the instances of sudden death are, on the whole, comparatively few, and happen but seldom in any particular neighbourhood. Were such a kind of death as common as most others, what multitudes would pass to their final doom in a state the most doubtful to their surviving friends, if not the most fatal to themselves ! But still, so very uncertain is the tenure of our human existence, that we who are now assembled together—many of us in the full possession of health and strength, many of us in all the confidence and gaiety of youth, many of us only advancing to the joyous season of manhood—we who are now assembled together know not which of us may not be summoned to meet his God before we next meet together again.

Since we last met it has been my painful duty to consign to dust the mortal remains not of a neighbour whose death had been expected, not of one who had been much exposed to the various vicissitudes of life—for such we see dropping before us daily—but of one who had not quite reached that period when young persons are permitted to act for themselves, and when, the dangers and diseases of childhood being past and the constitution confirmed in health and activity, death commonly seems to be at the greatest possible distance—of a female whom many of you well knew, most sincerely and deservedly loved, and now as sincerely and deservedly bewail—who saw the returning light of day in the full enjoyment of every faculty, and closed her mortal eyes for ever before that day's sun had set; who left her house in all the security of innocence, and was brought back a lifeless corpse. On such occasions, we are too apt to account, if we can, for the suddenness of a stroke so fatal—to impute such accidents as they are called, to some want of precaution, some kind or degree of obstinacy or mismanagement in the conduct of a journey however short, when it proves so disastrous; but, in the present instance, nothing appears to have been ventured which ought to have been avoided, or to have occurred that could have been prevented. It was as much the act of divine pro-

vidence alone as if it had been a blow of apoplexy—nay more so ; for symptoms often forerun the latter, by which it may be foreseen and sometimes obviated. If there was—as I have been credibly informed there certainly was, and as circumstances generally known among you indisputably prove—a presentiment, a foreboding in this amiable young person of her approaching dissolution, it could have come only from the same divine source from which her dissolution came ; and, according to all human discernment, the communication was made, not to warn her against the journey or any other means that might have caused her death, but to prepare her soul for a better life ; not because she stood in need of extraordinary preparation, but because, in the habitual purity of her mind, her early inclination to piety, and the comparatively spotless innocence of her manners, she was more than ordinarily qualified, through Jesus Christ, for receiving the sacred impression.

It was once a custom, long since wisely discontinued, for the clergy to preach what were called funeral sermons, on the interment of any, whether they were young or old, worthy or worthless ; whether they died a natural or a violent death ; whether they had lingered under slow disease or fallen under violent affliction ; whensoever the surviving relatives or friends desired it. But christian congregations

became at length disgusted to hear as much said in praise of the profligate as of the pious, almost the same thing said over and over again of all, and much more said in praise of the deceased than for the instruction of the living. Still, in some particular cases, when the manner of the death is striking and extraordinary and the character of the person interesting, the attention of christians should by all means be awakened, whether the surviving relatives or friends desire it or not, and it cannot be directed to a more important subject. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;" and life itself being uncertain, it is consequently uncertain how soon we may be summoned to appear before that tribunal, where "the kings of the earth and the judges of the land" must also appear, and to whom the time of their appearance there is as unknown as that of the humblest peasant or the meanest beggar. Had the deceased been of the most abandoned character and habits, still I would not have been silent on the manner of her death, had it been the same, or as sudden and unexpected as it was; but I should, in such a case, have acted from a desire to remind you of the dreadful danger, which every notorious sinner incurs of being called to his last account before he has made his peace with God; for sudden death alike befalls the righteous and the wicked. There

are difficulties, it is true, in that kind of admonition which require considerable care and prudence; for it would be inexcusable in a christian clergyman to speak ill of the dead, however truly, in the pulpit, before persons whose natural feelings might be sorely and uselessly wounded by censure, however just, on the character and conduct of one whom, though undeservedly, they loved. The task I have now imposed on myself is, I thank God, of a very different kind, and if I can perform it with advantage to any of you—if happily it be instrumental in converting one sinner from the error of his way—I shall not despair of success, through the blessing of heaven, in my future exertions. That task is not to dwell on the virtues of the deceased, for she cannot profit by mine or any mortal praise; but to show her afflicted family what comfort they may derive from her premature dissolution, and all of you what benefit you may reap from reflecting on an event so awful.

How many thousands have, in all probability, departed out of this world, after having attained or exceeded the age of man, to whom it would have been a blessing if they had died in their infancy, before they had become acquainted with sin and obnoxious to future punishment! What a blessing might it still have been to them if, after coming to years of discretion, they had been cut

off in the flower of their age; before sin had gained dominion over them and hurried them into crimes which not even the blood of Christ, without severe repentance, could ever wash away! Many a wretch, who has lived long enough to be so confirmed in wickedness that his salvation is scarcely possible, was once, in the time of his youth, as much a stranger to vice and a friend to virtue and religion as the excellent young woman of whom I have already spoken. What human being can answer for himself! Even this young woman might, had her days been increased, have found ample cause to lament that she had lived so long. Call to mind the example of St. Peter. He vehemently declared that he would die rather than betray his divine master; he drew his sword to defend him, and wounded one of the party that came to seize him; he was the rock on which Christ had declared that he would "build his church;" and yet even this zealous and devout apostle, who had always been one of the few who were permitted to continue with their Lord in his occasional retirement, when he found his heavenly teacher, guide, and friend actually in the hands and subjected to the malice of cruel and inveterate enemies, not only thrice denied that he himself had been "one of that man's disciples," but rashly and abominably confirmed his denial with an oath. St. Peter, it is

true, afterward and immediately afterward, repented and sincerely repented; but had he repented not, or had he been convicted of wounding a servant of the high priest and put to death for the deed, during the interval in which he appears to have been the object of strong suspicion, and after he had once denied his master, it might have been better for him, as our Saviour affirmed of Judas, "that he had not been born," or that he had not lived to see that day. Even the abandoned miscreant, Judas himself, of whom Christ expressed himself in terms so awful, yet so just—even *he* could not have been a bad man at the period when our Saviour, who "knew what was in man," chose him for one of his twelve apostles; and he was not suspected by his brethren till, on the very eve of the transaction which brought to light his real character, their dying master distinctly pointed him out for the wretch who was to betray him to his murderers. Had that most unfortunate but most perfidious and ungrateful ruffian been cut off by some accident, which his friends might naturally though erroneously have termed, as men do now, unlucky, he would have avoided the execrable crime of betraying his divine Lord, the unpardonable act of suicide, and perhaps the doom of eternal damnation. Never then, oh! never let those whose tenderest natural feelings are sorely wounded

by the premature decease of some dear friend or near and dear relation—never let them grieve as persons without hope! Had the departed object of their solicitude been lost, while living, to all sense of religion, an abject and habitual slave to sin, well might the afflicted survivors refuse awhile to be comforted, till their rational mourning subsided into calm and pious repose on the wisdom and justice of God; who orders all things—even *such* things—for the best, and whose severest judgments will hereafter prove no less necessary than his mercies to the ultimate happiness of his creatures, and the final perfection of all his works. In the present instance there is no room for fear and little for lamentation; but ample space for all the comfort that religion can impart, all the satisfaction that faith can inspire, and all the triumph that the victory of our blessed Redeemer over death and the grave can cause a christian to feel. He died, as you well know, “to save sinners;” and if a christian’s sins are comparatively few and small—though they cannot be absolutely so in the eyes of infinite purity—and if his heart is, for the most part, right towards God, how easy must be the task of his repentance, how short the time requisite for the last act of his contrition, and how sure and certain the hope in Christ of his entrance

into the mansions of eternal bliss ! The penitent returning prodigal was received by his compassionate father with open arms ; but what said his father to the other son who had never *so* offended ? “Thou art ever with me, and all that I have is “ thine.”

I cannot conclude without a few practical remarks on the frail, precarious, and fleeting nature of our mortal life, which, to repeat the words of the apostle, “ is even as a vapour, which appeareth but a little time, and then vanisheth away.” This is quite as well known to you as it was to the apostle himself. He pretended not to have made any discovery by writing so plain and familiar an observation: He knew that all christians, and not only all christians, but all mankind were experimentally acquainted with the fact. But he saw, as unhappily we still see, how few apply their knowledge of it to their spiritual improvement—how few ever lay it to heart and learn to live as they would wish to die. “ The “ world is all before you”—a world abounding with pleasures and with pains ; the former encompassed by the latter and rarely approached without difficulty or reached without danger. Still you are diligent in seeking after those pleasures, and even wise in adapting the means you have at hand to the end you have in view. But that end is “ vanity

“and vexation of spirit:” satiety and disgust succeed, and “the days draw nigh, when you shall say, there is no pleasure in them.” Even your subsistence depends upon the labour of your bodies or your minds, “in the sweat of your face you eat your bread,” and the curse of Adam still lies heavy on us all. “Wherefore” then “do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” “I,” said our blessed Saviour, “have meat to eat that ye know not of.” “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” And have *we* no work to do? Have we not the work of our salvation—the “work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ”—to perform, ere “the night cometh when no man work”? Experience alone cannot make men wise; and if it could, how many would depart out of this world without the benefit of experience! But there is a book, which offers alike to all, to the young and to the old, more instruction than human experience could ever have imparted: that this world is not our home, but the passage to it; that though it be a stormy and dangerous passage and the ship be covered with the waves, we have a divine pilot at the helm, and an unerring chart directing us “to the haven where

“we would be.” “Lord, save us: we perish,” said the disciples to our Saviour; and he said unto them: “why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith! “Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the “sea, and there was a great calm.”

This world is not your place of rest, therefore your continuance in it cannot be long; but another world has been made know to you, where you may be received “into everlasting habitations.” To qualify yourselves for admission into *that* world, you began your christian course with renouncing all the pomps and vanities of *this*. Will you persist in breaking that promise from time to time without reflecting that another year, another day, another hour may be the last of your present existence, and that in the life to which you may so soon, so unexpectedly be called, there is no repentance, but all is in a moment eternal and unchangeable, Christ indeed died *for your offences*, but not unless you die *unto sin*. If the life then which has been graciously granted you for the purpose of fitting you for a better, and which you well know to be so short and so uncertain, be devoted to the idols which you have been commanded to despise, the consequence is inevitable, dreadful, and decisive. But if you humbly and earnestly strive, with faith in God’s mercy through

Christ, to make that only use of this life for which it was bestowed, though your days be few and your death ever so sudden, you will rise to life immortal—"to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

SERMON XXV.

1 COR. CHAP. 4. VER. 5.

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart, and then shall every man have praise of God.

THE Corinthian converts to christianity had imbibed, along with the doctrines of their religion, such a degree of reverence and admiration of those who taught it, as to form themselves into parties which bore the names of their respective teachers. The apostle begins his admonitions, in his first epistle to them, by condemning such misdirected zeal, and disclaiming for himself all pretensions to any higher character than that of a minister of Jesus Christ. He assures his mistaken proselytes that he places no confidence in his own judgment ;

but that humbly and carefully striving to please the Lord only, he is perfectly indifferent to the opinions of men. In the words that I have just recited he advises them to observe the like caution and humility towards each other, and to leave all things that they could not comprehend to the just and final decision of God. Numerous indeed are the subjects which reason is competent to unfold and prove, according to the laws of nature or the essential properties of matter ; but there are some things into which we can never penetrate, particularly the untold secrets of the human heart and the unsearchable counsels of heaven. Men have nevertheless too often rashly determined on each others motives of action, and even impiously arrogated a foreknowledge of events ; but every wise and good man will shudder at any attempt to remove the veil, which the grand architect of the universe has drawn before the throne of his glory, and will spurn the thought of indulging in any liberty with others, which he knows they cannot conscientiously exercise towards himself. The immaterial and invisible God is known only by his works and his word, and the thoughts of men are communicable only by the means which his providence has bestowed. These means are left to the free agency of every human being, to be employed virtuously, or, *at his peril*, viciously. We are told

in other parts of scripture, as well as in my text, that there is no secret that shall not hereafter be revealed—that we shall one day know others as we ourselves shall then be known, and that according to “the counsels of the heart”—our secret purposes, principles, and motives, we shall all finally be judged by that only tribunal which cannot err. I shall therefore examine

1st, Into the use and

2dly, Into the abuse of secrecy.

and conclude with some observations upon the ancient and honourable society of free and accepted masons.

Had human nature never been depraved by sin, the world never would have known secrecy. The grand object of mankind would then have been obedience to God, in gratitude to him and for the good of each other, from which source alone individual good could have been derived. But sin produced shame, and shame sought for refuge in secrecy. No sooner had the first pair transgressed the divine commandment than “they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord amongst the trees of the garden,” and ever since that fatal period, their posterity have been debarred from that freedom of intercourse, for which the gift of speech had originally been intended. There is now a constant struggle between virtue and vice: virtue

standing in need of secrecy to save itself from the violence of vice, and vice resorting to it for concealment from the observation of virtue. The former is the use, and the latter the abuse of secrecy.

In the revolutions of empires, when vice too often gains ascendancy, what is to be done for the restoration of order and tranquility? The welfare of a nation, the commerce, laws, and religion of a country must remain at the disposal of the first successful invader, if good men were not to combine for the sacred purpose of restoring, under the providence of heaven, the blessings of which they had unjustly been deprived; and such a combination could neither well be formed nor long conducted without secrecy.

Even in a state of undisturbed prosperity, the affairs of no government could effectually be managed, were every measure of expediency regularly submitted to public discussion, and every plan devised by the few who understood its various relations and consequences, exposed to the examination of the many who understood them not. The best and mildest governments have therefore found some degree of secrecy absolutely necessary; and in our own country the government is assisted by a privy-council, every member of which is bound by a solemn oath to "keep the king's counsels secret."

Amidst the wildest turbulence of faction this obligation has ever been respected, and any direct infringement of it would incur the united odium of all parties, as being in itself a dishonourable breach of confidence, and a profane defiance of the divine displeasure.

In the darker ages, when all literature was discouraged and denounced, and ignorance in league with superstition lorded it over the nations of Europe; when things sacred and profane were promiscuously jumbled together, and men so impotent bore rule that they feared whatsoever they did not understand, and sought to understand nothing worthy of their study; the votaries of learning had no alternative but to continue their researches in privacy or to abandon them altogether; secret correspondence and private conferences alone kept alive the embers of knowledge, which have since burst forth into a flame that has enlightened and refreshed the world.

In the progress of the arts and sciences, while the preservation of established principles and of new discoveries depended on the fidelity of transcribers or the continuity of tradition; while innumerable errors were gradually introduced among the precepts of truth by the frauds or follies of pretenders, and neither the pen nor the memory could always be trusted with safety, it was found necessary, for

the purpose of avoiding error and of eluding the curiosity of empiricism, to teach the operations of art and the elements of science under the name of craft or mystery, and to impart them only to those who had been formally and carefully initiated. By the time when the invaluable art of printing was invented, the errors of art and of science had become monstrous and incalculable; how infinite and invincible therefore must they have proved, had no such precaution been observed, and had the sacred temple of wisdom not been closed against the interruptions of the idle, the intrusions of the ignorant, and the malice of the powerful.

To bring the matter nearer home—we talk of honour—It were to be wished that we talked more of religion; but we talk of honour as of a sacred principle, and how could honour subsist without secrecy? It is true, there are secrets with which honour can submit to no connection; of them by and by. But has friendship no secrets? no secrets of the most honourable kind, which a good man would not rather die than betray? We all know that it has, if we know and respect the nature of friendship, which no man can rightly know and respect not. How then am I to serve my friend, how assist him in difficulty or danger, how promote his interests, how defend his character, if I am first to disclose all his errors and foibles to the

world, and lay bare the inmost secrets of his soul? His errors, his foibles, like yours, like mine, like those of every son of Adam, are perhaps inseparable from our mortal condition, and such as it would only gratify the weak to know and the wicked to contemplate.

In the government of a private family are there to be no secrets? Is the master of a house to leave his letters and papers open on his table, for the inspection of his children and his servants? Is he to consult them on every thing he means to do, and acquaint them with every thing he does, lest he should be supposed ashamed of what he is doing?

In assessing the heaviest of all the imposts which the late perturbed state of Europe brought upon us, the commissioners were required to take an oath of secrecy—not to divulge those private circumstances which necessarily came within their cognizance and materially concerned the commercial or professional credit of any subject. Without such a restraint, the capital of many a respectable tradesman and merchant must have been endangered and his affairs exposed to misrepresentation. Bold and unprincipled speculators, no doubt, took all possible advantage of this just provision; but so long as the wicked are suffered to hold intercourse with the good, mankind will never be at a

loss for such proofs of the dependency of vice on the excellence of virtue.

I hope then that no doubt remains among you, my christian brethren, of the *possible* purity, propriety, and even moral benefit of secrecy. I have shown that it has been, from time to time, still is, and probably ever will be employed occasionally by the best and wisest men, for the most useful and laudable purposes. It may also be and often has been made subservient to the most abominable depravity, and to the prosecution of schemes the most dangerous both to private and the public welfare.

The ancient Pagan mysteries—even, in the opinion of many writers, those of Eleusis—whatever may have been their origin, became so many regular systems of vice founded upon secrecy. The conspiracy of Catiline and numberless other plots of desperate men, recorded both in sacred and profane history, depended upon secrecy for success. But in no instance is the abuse of it more distinctly shown than in the miserable end of Samson, as related in the book of Judges. He had been a “Nazarite from his mother’s womb;” consequently “no razor had ever been upon his head.” By this outward sign he was devoted to the service of the most high, and, as long as he retained his hair, he was endowed with the most stupendous degree

of corporeal strength. He easily baffled every attempt of the Philistines to enslave or to slay him, till, in an evil hour, he revealed to an abandoned "woman of the valley of Sorek" the means by which alone he might be overcome. His head was then shaven as he slept, and he immediately became "weak and as another man." You know the affecting sequel: his eyes were put out, he was "bound with fetters of brass," and "made to grind in the prison house" till his death. Did any one of you ever read this interesting narrative without surprise and contempt at so degrading a proof of human infirmity? Who then, though himself unacquainted with the secrets of Free Masons, would not blush for one of that fraternity who could so abuse the confidence of his brethren?

But if we believe the minute and elaborate accounts of a late writer,* the most mischievous conspiracies have, of late years, been formed and conducted on the continent, in Mason's Lodges or under the name and the pretext of Free Masonry. It is certain that any society which overspreads the whole habitable globe, the members of which are united by the closest bands of fellowship, bound by the same obligations, easily known

* Baruel.

to each other by night as well as by day, and possessing certain secrets in common, would be universally formidable if it were founded on bad principles. Many volumes professedly illustrative of the craft have, from time to time, been published in this country; most of them absurd and the work of mere conjecture; a few of them authentic and compiled from the mass of our materials. In the latter, as well as in our constitutions, which are also printed and open to public examination, you may find that loyalty is, in whatsoever country we meet, a virtue indispensable in every brother, and I pronounce a disloyal Free Mason the worst of all disloyal men. But civil discord seldom fails to furnish citizens with new means of distinguishing themselves, and, next to the instigators of rebellion, the most desperate intruders on the public peace are they who talk of conspiracies that never existed, or ascribe treason to any society to which they themselves do not belong. Should any of our brethren basely lend themselves to the schemes of innovators or the plots of rebels they would be more liable to detection than other men; for any brother's knowledge of the common secret would give him freer access to the illicit meetings of such conspirators, and no worthy member of the society would be at a loss to distinguish what he ought to conceal from

what he ought to reveal, or fail to procure the expulsion of those who so wickedly disgraced their badge and brought odium on their ancient order.

The most horrible abuse of secrecy was that which belonged to the inquisition, in those devoted countries where once it exercised a paramount authority. The unfortunate victim who fell under its cognizance neither knew his accusers nor his judges : all was secret as the grave. No oral or written communication was allowed between the prisoner and any friend, unless through bribery, or interest, or consummate address he obtained a temporary relaxation of rigour. Every process of his trial was secret, the place of his confinement was a secret, and nothing was made known but his ultimate acquittal or death. If any country could long endure, as some have done, such secrecy as this, why then well may all countries endure without suspicion that of Free Masons, who disclaim all interference in political and religious disputes, and all secrets but such as any worthy man may know on the same terms as they themselves received them. Having shown that secrecy is not necessarily improper in itself, but that it is capable of being applied to the most righteous as well as to the most flagitious purposes, I leave you, my Christian brethren, to judge, from the characters of those who preside over us and the principles we

openly profess, to which of these purposes it is most likely to be applied by a set of men whose bye laws are every where founded entirely on social order, and whose constitutions are framed with the strictest subservience to the laws and ordinances of the realm. I therefore crave your further attention to a few observations upon the ancient and honourable Society of free and accepted Masons.

Of its antiquity I can say nothing, without reference to those sources of information which are necessarily witholden from the popular world.

It is honourable ; for in all ages since its institution, the most honourable men have borne testimony to its purity and excellence by belonging to it themselves, and kings have not blushed to call us brethren. Our beloved and revered Sovereign is one of us, his Royal Highness the Prince Regent is our avowed Patron, and his Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex is our Grand Master. These facts alone may suffice to silence the busy tongue of calumny and to pacify the restlessness of suspicion.

It is free ; for it is open to all men, of every religious persuasion, who believe in God. Think not, however, that it is therefore any branch of theism, and designed to contravene the christian covenant. God forbid ! If we respect and cultivate the principles of our order, many of us still more respect and cultivate, as we ought to do, in

common with the rest of our countrymen, the principles of that divine religion, which alone can give salvation to us all. Otherwise, why are we met here, and why do we constantly meet on the festival of St. John the Evangelist, and often on that of St. John the Baptist?

It is continually asked why females are excluded from our society. Take this answer once for all. Many of the best husbands, and others who most respect the purity of the female character, are to be found in a lodge. But we cannot meet together as Free Masons without conforming to the indispensable custom of guarding our doors against intrusion. How then "would the ungodly triumph," if male and female were to meet so guarded!

Some have laughed us to scorn for having, as they suppose, no secrets; and this supposition they draw from the probability that, if we had any, they would long ago have been divulged. But it is not every Free Mason who could divulge them if he would; for it would require more time than many are willing to take for the performance of the infamous task, and they who know our secrets best, respect them most—not that we rejoice because they *are* secrets, for they are too worthy of being known; but as secrets we receive them, as secrets we must keep them, and the moment they

cease to be secrets will immediately followed by the dissolution of the society. No institution can be expected to subsist, after the fundamental principle of it has been subverted.

Why then did it originate in secrecy? For wise and good reasons; and though the same reasons no longer conduce to the continuance of it, the virtuous Obligation to it remains the same, and wo to that brother who can deliberately attempt the profanation of any virtue!

But some brethren disgrace themselves and bring obloquy upon the order, by vices as shameful and notorious as those of other men. Some return home on a lodge night in a state of intoxication. Take notice, however, that we do not profess to meddle with the free agency of man; and if we did, our influence as Free Masons is much less extensive than that which we possess as christians, and how inadequate the latter is to the reformation of the thoughtless, the vicious, and the stubborn I need not mention. A lodge is in most places holden at an inn; for our funds are generally applied to more disinterested and public purposes than that of building lodge rooms for ourselves; and it is only at an inn where we can freely exercise the duties of our mysterious calling. If any brother chuses to continue there and drink to excess after the lodge is closed, he is no longer under our control.

Why are there not more persons of liberal education, talents, learning, professional celebrity, wealth, and rank among us?

It is one of our avowed principles to recognise no other distinction between the candidates for our mysteries than that of moral worth; and we prefer the acquisition of one brother on that ground to the acceptance of a thousand, howsoever accomplished, fortunate, or exalted, on any other consideration. Indeed all men profess to act according to the like rule; but I confess that I have seldom seen those professions so beautifully and completely realized as in a lodge. If persons of opulence or high descent are too proud to hold intercourse with their inferiors, the fault is not ours. If they chuse to learn how to do it without degradation, we are ready to teach them that useful lesson.

In this brief apology for Free Masonry I have not studied to be eloquent. Our institution requires no aid from artifice, and if it did I should unfeignedly despise it. My object has been to prove, as plainly and satisfactorily as I could, from the principles which we maintain in common with our fellow subjects and fellow christians, the purity of those which it is our duty to conceal.

If there be any truth in my text—and if there be not, there is no truth in Scripture—a day will come, when ours and all other secrets shall be dis-

closed, and the God of truth shall deal with us according to their tendency and the use we have made of them.

To you, my brethren in particular, I need only recommend the assiduous cultivation of that happy union, which has at length been providentially effected between those who pursued the same end by similar though different means. Our end is still and our means are now the same. May they redound to the perfection of our **WORK**, the stability of our **ORDER**, and the glory of the **MOST HIGH**!

To you, my brethren in general! my brethren in a still higher and more enlarged sense of the word, I submit this practical inference; that, as you are exhorted by the Apostle to judge nothing into which you cannot fairly penetrate, till the time come when it shall be brought to light, your duty towards us is, either to qualify yourselves for judging of us *according to knowledge*, or to refrain from judging of us *by what you do not know*. "There is one that seeketh and judgeth," and his judgment alone is just; for he alone knoweth all things, and "from him no secrets are hidden."

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

FINIS.

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