

THE WORKS OF JOHN WESLEY

VOLUME VII

SECOND SERIES OF SERMONS (87-108)

THIRD SERIES OF SERMONS (109-126)

FOURTH SERIES OF SERMONS (127-133)

FIFTH SERIES OF SERMONS (134-141)

by John Wesley

 HYPERTEXT TABLE OF CONTENTS

 Second Series
 Continued
SERMON LXXXVII

The Danger of Riches.
 I Timothy 6:9.

SERMON LXXXVIII

On Dress.
 I Peter 3:3, 4.

SERMON LXXXIX

The More Excellent Way.
 I Corinthians 12:31.

SERMON XC

An Israelite Indeed.
 John 1:47.

SERMON XCI

On Charity.
 I Corinthians 13:1-3.

SERMON XCII

On Zeal.
 Galatians 4:18.

SERMON XCIII

On Redeeming the Time.
 Ephesians 5:16.

SERMON XCIV.

On Family Religion.
 Joshua 24:15.

SERMON XCV On the
 Education of Children.
 Proverbs 22:6.

SERMON XCVI

On Obedience to Parents.
 Colossians 3:20.

SERMON XCVII

On Obedience to Pastors.
 Hebrews 13:17.

SERMON XCVIII

On Visiting the Sick.
 Matthew 25:36.

SERMON XCIX

The Reward of the
 Righteous.
 Matthew 25:34.

SERMON C

On Pleasing all Men.
 Romans 15:2.

SERMON CI

The Duty of Constant
 Communion.
 Luke 22:19.

SERMON CII

Of Former Times.
 Ecclesiastes 7:10.

SERMON CIII.

What is Man?
 Psalm 8:3, 4.

SERMON CIV

On Attending the Church
Service.
I Samuel 2:17.

SERMON CV

On Conscience
2 Corinthians 1:12.

SERMON CVI

On Faith.
Hebrews 9:6.

SERMON CVII

On God's Vineyard.
Isaiah 5:4.

SERMON CVIII

On Riches.
Matthew 19:24.

Third Series**SERMON CIX**

What is Man?
Psalm 8:4.

SERMON CX

On the Discoveries of Faith.
Hebrews 11:1.

SERMON CXI

On the Omnipresence of
God.
Jeremiah 23:24.

SERMON CXII

The Rich Man and Lazarus.
Luke 16:31.

SERMON CXIII

Walking by Sight, and by
Faith
2 Corinthians 5:7.

SERMON CXIV

The Unity of the Divine
Being.
Mark 12:32.

SERMON CXV

The Ministerial Office.
Hebrews 5:4.

SERMON CXVI

Causes of the Inefficacy of
Christianity.
Jeremiah 8:22.

SERMON CXVII

On Knowing Christ after
the Flesh.
2 Corinthians 5:16.

SERMON CXVIII

On a Single Eye.
Matthew 6:22, 23.

SERMON CXIX

On Worldly Folly.
Luke 12:20.

SERMON CXX

On the Wedding Garment.
Matthew 22:12.

SERMON CXXI

Human Life a Dream.
Psalm 73:20.

SERMON CXXII

On Faith.
Hebrews 11:1.

SERMON CXXIII

On the Deceitfulness of the
Human Heart.
Jeremiah 17:9.

SERMON CXXIV

The Heavenly Treasure in
Earthen Vessels.
2 Corinthians 4:7.

SERMON CXXV

On Living without God.
Ephesians 2:12.

SERMON CXXVI

On the Danger of Increasing
Riches.
Psalm 62:10.

Fourth Series

SERMON CXXVII

The Trouble and Rest of
Good Men.
Job 3:17.

SERMON CXXVIII

Free Grace.
Romans 8:32.

SERMON CXXIX

The Cause and Cure of
Earthquakes.
Psalms 46:8.

SERMON CXXX

National Sins and Miseries.
2 Samuel 24:17.

SERMON CXXXI

Some Account of the Late
Work of God in
North-America.
Ezekiel 1:16.

SERMON CXXXII

On Laying the Foundation
of the New Chapel, Near
the City-Road, London.
Numbers 23:23.

SERMON CXXXIII

On the Death of the Rev.
Mr. John Fletcher.
Psalms 37:37.

Fifth Series

SERMON CXXXIV

True Christianity Defended.
Isaiah 1: 21.

SERMON CXXXV

On Morning for the Dead.
2 Samuel 12:23.

SERMON CXXXVI

On Corrupting the Word of
God.
2 Corinthians 2:17.

SERMON CXXXVII

On the Resurrection of the
Dead.
1 Corinthians 2:35.

SERMON CXXXVIII

On Grieving the Holy
Spirit.
Ephesians 4:30.

SERMON CXXXIX

On Love.
1 Corinthians 13:3.

SERMON CXL

On Public Diversions.
Amos 3:6.

SERMON CXLI

On the Holy Spirit.
2 Corinthians 3:17.

THE WORKS
OF
JOHN WESLEY

Third Edition

Complete and Unabridged
(1872 edition)

VOLUME VII

Second Series of Sermons (87-108)
Third Series of Sermons (109-126)
Fourth Series of Sermons (127-133)
Fifth Series of Sermons (134-141)

CONTENTS

SECOND SERIES CONTINUED

SERMON LXXXVII. — The Danger of Riches.

I Timothy 6:9. *They that be rich full into temptation and a snare, etc.*

SERMON LXXXVIII. — On Dress.

1 Peter 3:3, 4. *Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of — wearing of gold. etc.*

SERMON LXXXIX. — The More Excellent Way.

1 Corinthians 12:31. *Covet earnestly the best gifts: etc.*

SERMON XC. — An Israelite Indeed.

John 1:47. *Behold an Israelite indeed, in who is no quile!*

SERMON XCI. — On Charity.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, etc.*

SERMON XCII. — On Zeal.

Galatians 4:18. *It is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing.*

SERMON XCIII. — On Redeeming the Time.

Ephesians 5:16. *Redeeming the time.*

SERMON XCIV. On Family Religion.

Joshua 24:15. *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

SERMON XCV. — On the Education of Children.

Proverbs 22:6. *Train up a child in the way he should go: etc.*

SERMON XCVI. — On Obedience to Parents.

Colossians 3:20. *Children, obey your parents in all things.*

SERMON XCVII. — On Obedience to Pastors.

Hebrews 13:17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, etc.*

SERMON XCVIII. — On Visiting the Sick.

Matthew 25:36. *I was sick, and ye visited me.*

SERMON XCIX. — The Reward of the Righteous.

Matthew 25:34. *Come, ye blessed of my Father, etc.*

SERMON C. — On Pleasing all Men.

Romans 15:2. *Let every man please his neighbor for his good to edification.*

SERMON CI. — The Duty of Constant Communion.

Luke 22:19. *Do this in remembrance of me.*

SERMON CII. — Of Former Times.

Ecclesiastes 7:10. *When I consider they havens, the work of thy fingers, etc.*

SERMON CIII. — What is Man?

Psalms 8:3, 4. *The sin of the young men was very great.*

SERMON CIV. — On Attending the Church Service.

I Samuel 2:17. *Without faith it is impossible to please him.*

SERMON CV. — On Conscience

2 Corinthians 1:12. *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.*

SERMON CVI. — On Faith.

Hebrews 9:6. *Without faith it is impossible to please Him.*

SERMON CVII. — On God's Vineyard.

Isaiah 5:4. *What could have been done more to my vineyard,
that I have not done in it? etc.*

SERMON CVIII. — On Riches.

Matthew 19:24. *It is easier for a camel to go through, etc.*

THIRD SERIES**SERMON CIX. — What is Man?**

Psalms 8:4. *What is man?*

SERMON CX. — On the Discoveries of Faith.

Hebrews 11:1. *Now faith is the evidence of things not seen.*

SERMON CXI. — On the Omnipresence of God.

Jeremiah 23:24. *Do not I fill heaven and earth? etc.*

SERMON CXII. — The Rich Man and Lazarus.

Luke 16:31. *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will
they be persuaded, etc.*

SERMON CXIII. — Walking by Sight, and Walking by Faith.

2 Corinthians 5:7. *We walk by faith, not by sight.*

SERMON CXIV. — The Unity of the Divine Being.

Mark 12:32. *There is one God.*

SERMON CXV. — The Ministerial Office.

Hebrews 5:4. *No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is
called of God, as was Aaron.*

SERMON CXVI. — Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity.

Jeremiah 8:22. *Is there no balm in Gilead? etc.*

SERMON CXVII. — On Knowing Christ after the Flesh.

2 Corinthians 5:16. *Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: etc.*

SERMON CXVIII. — On a Single Eye.

Matthew 6:22, 23. *If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. etc.*

SERMON CXIX. — On Worldly Folly.

Luke 12:20. *But God said unto him, Thou fool!*

SERMON CXX. — On the Wedding Garment.

Matthew 22:12. *How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?*

SERMON CXXI. — Human Life a Dream.

Psalms 73:20. *Even like as a dream when one awaketh; so shalt thou make their image to vanish out of the city.*

SERMON CXXII. — On Faith.

Hebrews 11:1. *Now faith is the evidence of things not seen.*

SERMON CXXIII. — On the Deceitfulness of the Human Heart.

Jeremiah 17:9. *The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Who can know it?*

SERMON CXXIV. — The Heavenly Treasure in Earthen Vessels.

2 Corinthians 4:7. *We have this treasure in earthen vessels.*

SERMON CXXV. — On Living without God.

Ephesians 2:12. *Without God in the World.*

SERMON CXXVI. — On the Danger of Increasing Riches.

Psalms 62:10. *If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*

FOURTH SERIES

SERMON CXXVII. — The Trouble and Rest of Good Men.

Job 3:17. *There the wicked cease from troubling; etc.*

SERMON CXXVIII. — Free Grace.

Romans 8:32. *He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, etc.*

SERMON CXXIX. — The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes.

Psalms 46:8. *O come hither, and behold the works of the Lord; etc.*

SERMON CXXX. — National Sins and Miseries.

2 Samuel 24:17. *Lo, I have sinned, etc.*

SERMON CXXXI. — Some Account of the Late Work of God in North-America.

Ezekiel 1:16. *The appearance was, — as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.*

SERMON CXXXII. — On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel, Near the City-Road, London.

Numbers 23:23. *According to this time it shall be said, — What hath God wrought!*

SERMON CXXXIII. — On the Death of the Rev. Mr. John Fletcher.

Psalms 37:37. *Mark the Perfect man, etc.*

FIFTH SERIES

SERMON CXXXIV. — True Christianity Defended.

Isaiah 1: 21. *How is the faithful city become an harlot!*

SERMON CXXXV. — On Morning for the Dead.

2 Samuel 12:23. *Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? etc.*

SERMON CXXXVI. — On Corrupting the Word of God.

2 Corinthians 2:17. *We are not as many, who corrupt the word of God.*

SERMON CXXXVII. — On the Resurrection of the Dead.

1 Corinthians 2:35. *But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? etc.*

SERMON CXXXVIII. — On Grieving the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, etc.*

SERMON CXXXIX. — On Love.

1 Corinthians 13:3. *Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, etc.*

SERMON CXL. — On Public Diversions.

Amos 3:6. *Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? etc.*

SERMON CXLI. — On the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:17. *Now the Lord is that Spirit.*

SERMON LXXXVII.

THE DANGER OF RICHES.

“They that will be rich fell into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”

1 Timothy 6:9.

1. How innumerable are the ill consequences which have followed from men’s not knowing, or not considering, this great truth! And how few are there even in the Christian world, that either know or duly consider it! Yea. how small is the number of those, even among real Christians, who understand and lay it to heart! Most of these too pass it very lightly over, scarce remembering there is such a text in the Bible. And many put such a construction upon it, as makes it of no manner of effect. “They that will be rich,” say they, “that is, will be rich at all events; who will be rich, right or wrong; that are resolved to carry their point, to compass this end, whatever means they use to attain it; ‘they fall into temptation’ and into all the evils enumerated by the Apostle.” But truly if this were all the meaning of the text, it might as well have been out of the Bible.

2. This is so far from being the whole meaning of the text, that it is no part of its meaning. The Apostle does not here speak of gaining riches unjustly, but of quite another thing: His words are to be taken in their plain obvious sense, without any restriction or qualification whatsoever. St. Paul does not say, “They that will be rich *by evil means*, by theft, robbery, oppression, or extortion; “they that will be rich by fraud; or dishonest art;” but simply, “They that will be rich:” These, allowing, supposing the means they use to be ever so innocent, “fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”

3. But who believes that? Who receives it as the truth of God? Who is deeply convinced of it? Who preaches this; Great is the company of

preachers at this day, regular and irregular; but who of them all, openly and explicitly, preaches this strange doctrine? It is the keen observation of a great man, “The pulpit is the preacher’s strong-hold.” But who even in his stronghold has the courage to declare so unfashionable a truth? I do not remember that in threescore years I have heard one sermon preached upon this subject. And what author, within the same term, has declared it from the press? at least, in the English tongue? I do not know one. I have neither seen nor heard of any such author. I have seen two or three who just touch upon it; but none that treats of it professedly. I have myself frequently touched upon it in preaching, and twice in what I have published to the world: Once in explaining our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, and once in the discourse on the “Mammon of unrighteousness;” but I have never yet either published or preached any sermon expressly upon the subject. It is high time I should; — that I should at length speak as strongly and explicitly as I can, in order to leave a full and clear testimony behind me, whenever it pleases God to call me hence.

4. O that God would give me to speak right and forcible words; and you to receive them in honest and humble hearts! Let it not be said, “They sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words; but they will not do them. Thou art unto them as one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but do them not!” O that ye may “not be forgetful hearers, but doers of the word,” that ye may be “blessed in your Need!” In this hope I shall endeavor,

I. To explain the Apostle’s words. And,

II. To apply them.

But, O! “who is sufficient for these things?” Who is able to stem the general torrent? to combat all the prejudices, not only of the vulgar, but of the learned and the religious world? Yet nothing is too hard for God! Still his grace is sufficient for us. In his name then, and by his strength, I will endeavor

I.

To explain the words of the Apostle.

1. And, First, let us consider, what it is to be rich. What does the Apostle mean by this expression?

The preceding verse fixes the meaning of that: “Having food and raiment,” (literally *coverings*; for the word includes lodging as well as clothes,) “let us be there with content.” “But they that will be rich;” that is, who will have more than these; more than *food* and *coverings*. It plainly follows, what ever is more than these is, in the sense of the Apostle, *riches*; whatever is above the plain necessities, or at most conveniences, of life. Whoever has sufficient food to eat, and raiment to put on, with a place where to lay his head, and something over, is rich.

2. Let us consider, Secondly, What is implied in that expression, “They that will be rich?” And does not this imply, First, they that desire to be rich, to have more than *food* and *coverings*; they that seriously and deliberately desire more than food to eat, and raiment to put on, and a place where to lay their head, more than the plain necessities and conveniences of life? All, at least, who allow themselves in this desire, who see no harm in it, desire to be rich.

3. And so do, Secondly, all those that calmly, deliberately, and of set purpose, *endeavor* after more than food and coverings; that aim at and endeavor after, not only so much worldly substance as will procure them the necessities and conveniences of life, but more than this, whether to lay it up, or lay it out in superfluities. All these undeniably prove their “desire to be rich,” by their endeavors after it.

4. Must we not, Thirdly, rank among those that desire to be rich, all that, in fact, “lay up treasures on earth?” a thing as expressly and clearly forbidden by our Lord, as either adultery or murder. It is allowed,

- (1.) That we are to provide necessities and conveniences for those of our own household:
- (2.) That men in business are to lay up as much as is necessary for the carrying on of that business:
- (3.) That we are to leave our children what will supply them with necessities and conveniences after we have left the world: And,

- (4.) That we are to provide things honest in the sight of all men, so as to “owe no man anything:” But to lay up any more, when this is done, is what your Lord has flatly forbidden.

When it is calmly and deliberately done, it is a clear proof of our desiring to be rich. And thus to lay up money is no more consistent with a good conscience, than to throw it into the sea.

5. We must rank among them, Fourthly, all who *possess* more. of this world’s goods, than they use according to the will of the Donor: I should rather say, of the Proprietor; for he only *lends* them to us as Stewards; reserving the *property* of them to himself. And, indeed, he cannot possibly do other wise, seeing they are the work of his hands; he is, and must be, the possessor of heaven and earth. This is his unalienable right; a right he cannot divest himself of. And together with that portion of his goods which he hath lodged in our hands, he has delivered to us a writing, specifying the purposes for which he has intrusted us with them. It; therefore, we keep more of them in our hands than is necessary for the preceding purposes, we certainly fill under the charge of “desiring to be rich:” Over and above, we are guilty of burying our Lord’s talent in the earth; and on that account are liable to be pronounced wicked, because unprofitable, servants.

6. Under this imputation of “desiring to be rich,” fall, Fifthly, all “lovers of money.” The word properly means, those that *delight in money*; those that take unpleasure in it; those that seek their happiness therein; that brood over their gold or silver, bills or bonds. Such was the man described by the fine Roman painter, who broke out in that natural soliloquy: —

*Populus me sibilat, al mihi plaudo
Ipse domi simul ac nummos contemplor in arca.*¹

If there are any vices which are not natural to man, I should imagine this is one; as money of itself does not seem to gratify any natural desire or appetite of the human mind; and as, during an observation of sixty years, I do not remember one instance of a man given up to the love of money, till he had neglected to employ this precious talent according to the will of his

Master. After this, sin was punished by sin; and this evil spirit was permitted to enter into him.

7 But beside this gross sort of covetousness, the love of money, there is a more refined species of covetousness, mentioned by the great Apostle, — **πλεονεξια** — which literally means, a desire of having more; more than we have already. And those also come under the denomination of “they that will be rich” It is true that this desire, under proper restrictions, is innocent; nay, commendable. But when it exceeds the bounds, (and how difficult is it not to exceed them!) then it comes under the present censure.

8. But who is able to receive these hard sayings? Who can believe that they are the great truths of God? Not many wise not many noble, not many famed for learning; none, indeed, who are not taught of God, And who are they whom God teaches? Let our Lord answer: “If any man be willing to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” Those who are otherwise minded will be so far from receiving, it, that they will not be able to understand it. Two as sensible men as most in England sat down together, some time since, to read over and consider that plain discourse on, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.” After much deep considerations one of them broke out, “Positively, I cannot understand it. Pray do yet understand it, Mr. L.?” Mr. L. honestly replied, “Indeed, not I. I cannot conceive what Mr. W. means. I can make nothing at all of it.” So utterly blind is our natural understanding touching the truth of God!

9. Having explained the former part of the text, “They that will be rich,” and pointed out, in the clearest manner I could, the persons spoken of; I will now endeavor, God being my helper, to explain what is spoken of them: “They fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”

“They fall into temptation.” This seems to mean much more than simply, they are tempted. They enter into the temptation: They fall plump down into it. The waves of it compass them about, and cover them all over. Of those who thus enter into temptation, very few escape out of it. And the few that do are sorely scorched by it, though not utterly consumed. If

they escape at all, it is with the skin of their teeth, and with deep wounds that are not easily healed.

10. They fall, Secondly, into “a snare,” the snare of the devil, which he hath purposely set in their way. I believe the Greek word properly means a gin, a steel trap, which shows no appearance of danger. But as soon as any creature touches the spring, it suddenly closes; and either crushes its bones in pieces, or consigns it to inevitable ruin.

11. They fall, Thirdly, “into many foolish and hurtful desires;” *ανοητους*, — *silly, senseless fantastic*; as contrary to reason, to sound understanding, as they are to religion: *Hurtful*, both to body and soul, tending to weaken, yea, destroy, every gracious and heavenly temper: Destructive of that faith which is of the operation of God; of that hope which is full of immortality; of love to God and to our neighbor, and of every good word and work.

12. But what desires are these? This is a most important question, and deserves the deepest consideration.

In general, they may all be summed up in one, the desiring happiness out of God. This includes directly, or remotely, every foolish and hurtful desire. St. Paul expresses it by “loving the creature more than the Creator;” and by being “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” In particular, they are, (to use the exact and beautiful enumeration of St. John,) “the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life;” all of which, the desire of riches naturally tends both to beget and to increase.

13. “The desire of the flesh” is generally understood in far too narrow a meaning. It does not, as is commonly supposed, refer to one of the senses only; but takes in all the pleasures of sense, the gratification of any of the outward senses. It has reference to the *taste* in particular. How many thousands do we find at this day, in whom the ruling principle is, the desire to enlarge the pleasure of tasting! Perhaps they do not gratify this desire in a gross manner, so as to incur the imputation of intemperance; much less so as to violate health or impair their understanding by gluttony or drunkenness: But they live in a genteel, regular sensuality; in an elegant

epicurism, which does not hurt the body, but only destroys the soul; keeping it at a distance from all true religion.

14. Experience shows that the imagination is gratified chiefly by means of the eye: Therefore, “The desire of the eyes,” in its natural sense, is, the desiring and seeking happiness in gratifying the imagination. Now, the imagination is gratified either by grandeur, by beauty, or by novelty: Chiefly by the last; for neither grand nor beautiful objects please any longer than they are new.

15. Seeking happiness in *learning*, of whatever kind, falls under “the desire of the eyes;” whether it be in history, languages, poetry, or any branch of natural or experimental philosophy: Yea, we must include the several kinds of learning, such as Geometry, Algebra, and Metaphysics. For if our supreme delight be in any of these, we are herein gratifying “the desire of the eyes.”

16. “The pride of life” (whatever else that very uncommon expression, **η αλαζονειζ του βιου**, may mean) seems to imply chiefly, the *desire of honor*; of the esteem, admiration, and applause of men; as nothing more directly tends both to beget and cherish pride than the honor that cometh of men. And as riches attract much admiration, and occasion much applause, they proportionally minister food for pride, and so may also be referred to this head.

17. *Desire of ease* is another of these foolish and hurtful desires; desire of avoiding every cross, every degree of trouble, danger, difficulty; a desire of slumbering out life, and going to heaven (as the vulgar say) upon a feather-bed. Every one may observe how riches first beget, and then confirm and increase, this desire, making men more and more soft and delicate; more unwilling, and indeed more unable, to “take up their cross daily;” to “endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ,” and to “take the kingdom of heaven by violence.”

18. Riches, either desired or possessed, naturally lead to some or other of these foolish and hurtful desires; and, by affording the means of gratifying them all, naturally tend to increase them. And there is a near connection

between unholy desires, and every other unholy passion and temper. We easily pass from these to pride, anger, bitterness, envy, malice, revengefulness; to an headstrong, unadvisable, unreprouable spirit: Indeed, to every temper that is earthly, sensual, or devilish. All these, the desire or possession of riches naturally tends to create, strengthen, and increase.

19. And by so doing, in the same proportion as they prevail, they “pierce men through with many sorrows;” sorrows from remorse, from a guilty conscience; sorrows flowing from all the evil tempers which they inspire or increase; sorrows inseparable from those desires themselves, as every unholy desire is an uneasy desire; and sorrows from the contrariety of those desired to each other, whence it is impossible to gratify them all. And, in the end; “they drown” the body in pain, disease, “destruction,” and the soul in everlasting “perdition.”

II.

1. I am, in the Second place, to apply what has been said. And this is the principal point. For what avails the clearest knowledge, even of the most excellent things, even if the things of God, if it go no farther than speculation if it be not reduced to practice? He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! And what he hears, let him instantly put in practice. O that God would give me the thing which I long for! that, before I go hence and am no more seen, I may see a people wholly devoted to God, crucified to the world, and the world crucified to them; a people truly given up to God, in body, soul, and substance! How cheerfully should I then say, “Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!”

2. I ask, then, in the name of God, Who of you “desire to be rich?” Which of *you* (ask your own hearts in the sight of God) seriously and deliberately desire (and perhaps applaud yourselves for so doing, as no small instance of your *prudence*) to have more than food to eat, and raiment to put on, and a house, to cover you? Who of you desires to have more than the plain necessaries and conveniences of life? Stop! Consider! What are you doing? Evil is before you! Will you rush upon the point of a sword? By the grace of God, turn and live!

3. By the same authority I ask, Who of you are *endeavoring* to be rich? So procure for yourselves more than the plain necessities and conveniences of life? Lay, each of you, your hand to your heart, and seriously inquire, Am I of that number? Am I laboring, not only for what I want, but for more than I want?" May the Spirit of God say to every one whom it concerns, "Thou art the man!"

4. I ask, Thirdly, Who of you are, in fact, "laying, up for yourselves treasures upon earth?" increasing in goods? adding, as fast as you can, house to house, and field to field! As long as *thou* thus "doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee." They will call thee a wise, a prudent man! a man that *minds the main chance*. Such is, and always has been, the wisdom of the world! But God saith unto thee, "Thou fool!" art thou not 'treasuring up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God!'"

5. Perhaps you will ask, "But do not you yourself advise, to gain all we can, and to save all we can? And is it possible to do this, without both *desiring* and *endeavoring to be rich*? nay, suppose our endeavors are successful, without actually, laying up treasures upon earth?"

I answer, It is possible. You may gain all you can, without hurting either your soul or body; you may save all you can, by carefully avoiding every needless expense; and yet never lay up treasures on earth, nor either desire or endeavor so to do.

6. Permit me to speak as freely of myself as I would of any other man. I *gain all I can* (namely, by writing) without hurting, either my soul or body. I *save all I can*, not willingly wasting anything, not a sheet of paper, not a cup of water, I do not lay out anything, not a shilling, unless as a sacrifice to God. Yet by *giving all I can*, I am effectually secured from "laying up treasures upon earth." Yea, and I am secure from either desiring or endeavoring, it, as long as I give all I can. And that I do this, I call all that know me, both friends and foes, to testify.

7. But some may say, "Whether you endeavor it or no, you are undeniably *rich*. You have more than the necessities of life." I have. But the Apostle

does not fix the charge, barely on *possessing* any quantities of goods, but on possessing more than we employ according to the will of the Donor.

Two-and-forty years ago, having a desire to furnish poor people with cheaper, shorter, and plainer books than any I had seen, I wrote many small tracts, generally a penny apiece; and afterwards several larger. Some of these had such a sale as I never thought of; and, by this means, I unawares became rich. But I never desired or endeavored after it. And now that it is come upon me unawares, I lay up no treasures upon earth: I lay up nothing at all. My desire and endeavor, in this respect, is, to “wind my bottom round the year. — I cannot help leaving my books behind me whenever God calls me hence; but, in every other respect, my own hands will be my executors.

8. Herein, my brethren, let you that are rich, be even as I am. Do you that possess more than food and raiment, ask, “What shall we do? Shall we throw into the sea what God hath given us?” God forbid that you should! It is an excellent talent: It may be employed much, to the glory of God. Your way lies plain, before your face; if you have courage, walk in it. Having *gained*, in, a right sense, *all you can*, and *saved all you can*; in spite of nature, and custom, and worldly prudence, *give all you can*. I do not say, “Be a good Jew giving a tenth of all you possess.” I do not say, “Be a good Pharisee; giving a fifth of all your substance.” I dare not advise you to give half of what you have; no, nor three quarters; but all! Lift up your hearts, and you will see clearly, in what sense this is to be done. If you desire to be “a faithful and a wise steward,” out of that portion of your Lord’s goods which he has for the present lodged in your hands, but with the right of resumption whenever it pleaseth him,

- (1.) Provide things needful for yourself; food to eat, raiment to put on; whatever nature moderately requires, for preserving you both in health and strength:
- (2.) Provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others who pertain to your household.

If, when this is done, there is an overplus left, then do good to “them that are of the household of faith.” If there be an overplus still, “as you have opportunity, do good unto all men.” In so doing, you *give all you can*;

may, in a sound sense, all you have. For all that is laid out in this manner, is really given to God. You render unto God the things that are God's, not only by what you give to the poor, but also by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household.²

9. O ye Methodists, hear the word of the Lord! I have a message from God to all men, but to *you* above all. For above forty years I have been a servant to you and to your fathers. And I have not been as a reed shaken with the wind: I have not varied in my testimony. I have testified to you the very same thing, from the first day even until now. But “who hath believed our report?” I fear, not many rich: I fear there is need to apply to some of *you* those terrible words of the Apostle, “Go to now, ye rich men! weep and howl for the miseries which shall come upon you. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall witness against you, and shall eat your flesh, as it were fire.” Certainly it will, unless ye both save all you can, and give all you can. But who of you hath considered this, since you first heard the will of the Lord concerning it? Who is now determined to consider and practice it? By the grace of God, begin to day!

10. O ye lovers of money, hear the word of the Lord. Suppose ye that money, though multiplied as the sand of the sea, can give happiness? Then you are “given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie;” — a palpable lie, confuted daily by a thousand experiments. Open your eyes! Look all around you! Are the richest men the happiest? Have those the largest share of content who have the largest possessions? Is not the very reverse true? Is it not a common observation, that the richest of men are in general, the most discontented, the most miserable? Had not the far greater part of them more content, when they had less money? Look into your own breasts. If you are increased in goods, are you proportionably increased in happiness? You have more substance; but have you more content? You know that in seeking happiness from riches, you are only striving to drink out of empty cups. And let them be painted and gilded ever so finely, they are empty still.

11. O ye that *desire or endeavor to be rich*, hear ye the word of the Lord! Why should ye be stricken any more? Will not even experience teach you wisdom? Will ye leap into a pit with your eyes open? Why should you

any more “fall into temptation?” It cannot be but temptation will beset you, as long as you are in the body. But though it should beset you on every side, why will you *enter into it*? There is no necessity for this: It is your own voluntary act and deed. Why should you any more plunge yourselves *into a snare*, into the trap Satan has laid for you that is ready to break your bones in pieces? to crush your soul to death? After fair warning, why should you sink any more into “foolish and hurtful desires?” desires as inconsistent with reason as they are with religion itself; desires that have done you more hurt already than all the treasures upon earth can countervail.

12. Have they not hurt you already, have they not wounded you in the tenderest part, by slackening, if not utterly destroying, your “hunger and thirst after righteousness?” Have you now the same longing that you had once, for the whole image of God? Have you the same vehement desire as you formerly had, of “going on unto perfection?” Have they not hurt you by weakening your *faith*? Have you now faith’s “abiding impression, realizing things to come?” Do you endure, in all temptations, from pleasure or pain, “seeing Him that is invisible?” Have you everyday, and every hour, an uninterrupted sense of his presence? Have they not hurt you with regard to your *hope*? Have you now a hope full of immortality? Are you still big with earnest expectation of all the great and precious promises? Do you now “taste the powers of the world to come?” Do you “sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus?”

13. Have they not so hurt you, as to stab your religion to the heart? Have they not cooled (if not quenched) your *love to God*? This is easily determined. Have you the same delight in God which you once had? Can you now say,

I nothing want beneath, above;
Happy, happy in thy love?

I fear not. And if your love of God is in anywise decayed, so is also your love of your neighbor. You are then hurt in the very life and spirit of your religion! If you lose love, you lose all.

14. Are not you hurt with regard to your *humility*? If you are increased in goods, it cannot well be otherwise. Many will think you a better, because you are a richer, man: And how can you help thinking so yourself? especially, considering the commendations which some will give you in simplicity, and many will a design to serve themselves of you.

If you are hurt in your humility, it will appear by this token: You are not so teachable as you were, not so advisable; you are not so easy to be convinced, not so easy to be persuaded; you have a much better opinion of your own judgment and are more attached to your own will. Formerly, one might guide you with a thread; now one cannot turn you with a cart rope. You were glad to be admonished, or reprov'd; but that time is past. And you now account a man your enemy because he tells you the truth. O let each of you calmly consider this, and see if it be not your own picture!

15. Are you not equally hurt, with regard to your meekness? You had once learned an excellent lesson of him that was meek as well as lowly in heart. When you were reviled, you reviled not again. You did not return railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing. Your love was *not provoked*, but enabled you on all occasions to overcome evil with good. Is this your case now? I am afraid, not. I fear you cannot; "hear all things" Alas, it may rather be said, you can bear nothing; no injury, nor even affluent! How quickly are you ruffled! How readily does that occur, What! to use me so! What insolence is this! How did he dare to do it? I am not now what I was once. Let him know, I am now able to defend myself." You mean, to revenge yourself. And it is much, if you are not willing, as well as able; if you do not take your fellow-servant by the throat.

16. And are you not hurt in your *patience* too? Does your love now endure all things? "Do you still in patience possess your soul," as when you first believed? O what a change is here! You have again learned to be frequently out of humor. You are often fretful; you feel, nay, and give way to, peevishness. You find abundance of things go so cross, that you cannot tell how to bear them.

Many years ago I was sitting, with a gentleman in London, who feared God greatly, and generally gave away, year by year, nine tenths of his

yearly income. A servant came in and threw some coals on the fire. A puff of smoke came out. The baronet threw himself back in his chair and cried out, "O Mr. Wesley, these are the crosses I meet with daily!" Would he not have been less impatient, if he had had fifty, instead of five thousand, pounds a year?

17. But to return are not you who have been successful in your endeavors to increase in substance, insensibly sunk into softness of mind, if not of body too? You no longer rejoice to "endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." You no longer "rush into the kingdom of heaven, and take it as by storm." You do not cheerfully and gladly "deny yourselves, and take up your cross daily?" You cannot deny yourself the poor pleasure of a little sleep, or of a soft bed, in order to hear the word that is able to save your souls! Indeed, you cannot go out so early in the morning; besides it is dark, nay, cold, perhaps rainy too. Cold, darkness, rain, all these together, — I can never think of it." You did not say so when you were a poor man. You then regarded none of these things. It is the change of circumstances which has occasioned this melancholy change in your body and mind you are but the shadow of what you were! What have riches done for you? "But it cannot be expected I should do as I have done. For I am now grown old." Am not I grown old as well as you? Am not I in my seventy-eighth year? Not, by the grace of God, I do not slack my pace yet. Neither would you, if you were a poor man still.

18. You are so deeply hurt, that you have nigh lost your zeal for works of mercy, as well as of piety. You once pushed on, through cold or rain, or whatever cross lay in your way, to see the poor, the sick, the distressed. You went about doing good, and found out those who were not able to find you. You cheerfully crept down into their cellars, and climbed up into their garrets,

To supply all their wants,
And spend and be spent in assisting his saints.

You found out every scene of human misery, and assisted according to your power:

Each form of woe your generous pity moved;
Your Savior's face you saw, and, seeing, loved.

Do you now tread in the same steps? What hinders? Do you fear spoiling your silken coat? Or is there another lion in the way? Are you afraid of catching vermin? And are you not afraid lest the roaring lion should catch you? Are you not afraid of Him that hath said, "Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto the least of these, ye have not done it unto me?" What will follow? "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

19. In time past, how mindful were you of that word, "Thou shalt, not hate thy brother in thy heart: Thou shalt in anywise reprove thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him!" You did reprove, directly or indirectly, all those that sinned in your sight. And happy consequences quickly followed. How good was a word spoken in season! It was often as an arrow from the hand of a giant. Many a heart was pierced. Many of the stout-hearted, who scorned to hear a sermon,

Fell down before his cross subdued,
And felt his arrows dipt in blood.

But which of you now has that compassion for the ignorant, and for them that are out of the way? They may wander on for you, and plunge into the lake of fire, without let or hindrance. Gold hath steeled your hearts. You have something else to do.

Unhelp'd, unpitied let the wretches fall.

20. Thus have I given you, O ye gainers, lovers, possessors of riches, one more (it may be the last) warning. O that it may not be in vain! May God write it upon all your hearts! Though "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," yet the things impossible with men are possible with God. Lord, speak! and even the rich men that hear these words shall enter thy kingdom, shall "take the kingdom of heaven by violence," shall "sell all for the pearl of great price:" shall be "crucified to the world, and count all things dung, that they may win Christ!"

SERMON LXXXVIII.

ON DRESS.

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

“But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

1 Peter 3:3, 4.

1. ST. PAUL. exhorts all those who desire to “be transformed by the renewal of their minds,” and to approve what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God,” not to be “conformed to this world,” Indeed this exhortation relates more directly to the *wisdom* of the world, which is totally opposite to his “good and acceptable and perfect will.” But it likewise has a reference even to the *manners* and *customs* of the world, which naturally flow from its wisdom and spirit, and are exactly suitable thereto. And it was not beneath the wisdom of God to give us punctual directions in this respect also.

2. Some of these, particularly that in the text, descend even to the apparel of Christians. And both this text, and the parallel one of St. Paul, are as express as possible. St. Paul’s words are, (1 Timothy. 2:9, 10,) “I will that women adorn themselves in modest apparel; not — with gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”

3. “But is it not strange,” say some, “that the all-wise Spirit of God should condescend to take notice of such trifles as these? to take notice of such insignificant trifles things of so little moment, or rather of none at all? For what does it signify, provided we take care of the souls what the body

is covered with, whether with silk or sackcloth? What harm can there be in the wearing of gold, or silver, or precious stones, or any other of those beautiful things with which God has so amply provided us? May we not apply to this what St. Paul has observed on another occasion, that ‘every creature of God is good, and nothing to be rejected?’”

4. It is certain, that many who sincerely fear God have cordially embraced this opinion. And their practice is suitable thereto: They make no scruple of conformity to the world, by putting on, as often as occasion offers, either gold, or pearls, or costly apparel. And indeed they are not well pleased with those that think it their duty to reject them; the using of which they apprehend to be one branch of Christian liberty. Yea, some have gone considerably farther; even so far as to make it a point; to bring those who had refrained from them for some time to make use of them again, assuring them that it was mere superstition to think there was any harm in them. Nay, farther still: A very respectable person has said, in express terms, “I do not desire that any who *dress plain* should be in our society.” It is, therefore, certainly worth our while to consider this matter thoroughly; seriously to inquire whether there is any harm in the putting on of gold, or jewels, or costly apparel.

5. But, before we enter on the subject, let it be observed, that slovenliness is no part of religion; that neither this, nor any text of Scripture, condemns neatness of apparel. Certainly this is a duty, not a sin. “Cleanliness is, indeed, next to godliness.” Agreeably to this, good Mr. Herbert advises every one that fears God: —

Let thy mind’s sweetness have its operation
Upon thy person, clothes, and habitation.

And surely every one should attend to this, if he would not have the good that is in him evil spoken of.

6. Another mistake, with regard to apparel, has been common in the religious world. It has been supposed by some, that there ought to be no difference at all in the apparel of Christians. But neither these texts, nor any other in the book of God, teach any such thing, or direct that the dress of the master or the mistress should be nothing different from that of their

servants. There may, undoubtedly, be a moderate difference of apparel between persons of different stations. And where the eye is single, this will easily be adjusted by the rules of Christian prudence.

7. Yea, it may be doubted, whether any part of Scripture forbids (at least I know not any) those in any nation that are invested with supreme authority, to be arrayed in gold and costly apparel; or to adorn their immediate attendants, or magistrates, or officers, with the same. It is not improbable, that our blessed Lord intended to give countenance to this custom when he said, without the least mark of censure or disapprobation, "Behold, those that wear gorgeous," splendid, "apparel are in kings' courts." (Luke 7:25)

8. What is then the meaning of these scriptures? What is it which they forbid? They manifestly forbid ordinary Christians, those in the lower or middle ranks of life, to be adorned with gold, or pearls, or costly apparel. But why? What harm is there herein? This deserves our serious consideration. But it is highly expedient, or rather absolutely necessary, for all who would consider it to any purpose, as far as is possible to divest themselves of all prejudice, and to stand open to conviction: Is it not necessary, likewise, in the highest degree, that they should earnestly beseech the Father of Lights, that, "by his holy inspiration, they may think the things that are right, and, by his merciful guidance, perform the same?" Then they will not say, no, not in their hearts, (as I fear too many have done,) what the famous Jew said to the Christian, "Thou shalt not persuade me, though thou hast persuaded me!"

9. The question is, what harm does it do, to adorn ourselves with gold, or pearls, or costly array, suppose you can afford it; that is, suppose it does not hurt or impoverish your family? The first harm it does, is, it engenders pride, and, where it is already, increases it. Whoever narrowly observes what passes in his own heart will easily discern this. Nothing is more natural than to think ourselves better because we are dressed in better clothes; and it is scarce possible for a man to wear costly apparel, without, in some measure, valuing himself upon it. One of the old Heathens was so well apprised of this, that, when he had a spite to a poor man, and had a mind to turn him head, he made him a present of a suit of fine clothes.

*Eutrapelus cuicumque nocere voiebat,
Vestimenta dabat pretiosa.*³

He could not then but imagine himself to be as much better as he was finer than his neighbor. And how many thousands, not only lords and gentlemen, in England, but honest trades men, argue the same way! inferring the superior value of their persons from the value of their clothes!

10. “But may not one man be as proud, though clad in sackcloth, as another is, though clad in cloth of gold?” As this argument meets us at every turn, and is supposed to be unanswerable, it will be worth while to answer it once for all, and to show the utter emptiness of it. “May not, then, one clad in sackcloth,” you ask, “be as proud as he that is clad in cloth of gold?” I answer, Certainly he may: I suppose no one doubts of it. And what inference can you draw from this? Take a parallel case. One man that drinks a cup of wholesome wine, may be as sick as another that drinks poison: But does this prove that the poison has no more tendency to hurt a man than the wine? Or does it excuse any man for taking what has a natural tendency to make him sick? Now, to apply Experience shows that fine clothes have a natural tendency to make a man sick of pride; plain clothes have not. Although it is true, you may be sick of pride in these also, yet they have no natural tendency either to cause or increase this sickness. Therefore, all that desire to be clothed with humility, abstain from that poison.

11. Secondly. The wearing gay or costly apparel naturally tends to breed and to increase vanity. By vanity I here mean, the love and desire of being admired and praised. Every one of you that is fond of dress has a witness of this in your own bosom. Whether you will confess it before man or no, you are convinced of this before God. You know in your hearts, it is with a view to be admired that you thus adorn yourselves; and that you would not be at the pains were none to see you but God and his holy angels. Now, the more you indulge this foolish desire, the more it grows upon you. You have vanity enough by nature; but by thus indulging it, you increase it a hundred fold. O stop! Aim at pleasing God alone, and all these ornaments will drop off.

12. Thirdly. The wearing of gay and costly apparel naturally tends to beget anger, and every turbulent and uneasy passion. And it is on this very account that the Apostle places this “outward adorning” in direct opposition to the “ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.” How remarkably does he add, “which is in the sight of God of great price!”

Than gold or pearls more precious far,
And brighter than the morning star.

None can easily conceive, unless himself were to make the sad experiment, the contrariety there is between the “outward adorning,” and this inward “quietness of spirit.” You never can thoroughly enjoy this, while you are fond of the other. It is only while you sit loose to that; “outward adorning,” that you can in “patience possess your soul.” Then only when you have cast off your fondness for dress, will the peace of God reign in your hearts.

13, Fourthly. Gay and costly apparel directly tends to create and inflame lust. I was in doubt whether to name this brutal appetite; or, in order to spare delicate ears, to express it by some gentle circumlocution. (Like the Dean, who, some years ago, told his audience at Whitehall, is “If you do not repent, you will go to a place which I have too much manners to name before this good company.”) But I think it best to speak out; since the more the word shocks your ears, the more it may arm your heart. The fact is plain and undeniable; it has this effect both on the wearer and the beholder. To the former, our elegant poet, Cowley, addresses those fine lines: —

The’ adorning thee with so much art
Is but a barbarous skill;
‘Tis like the poisoning of a dart,
Too apt before to kill.

That is, (to express the matter in plain terms, without any coloring,) “You poison the beholder with far more of this base appetite than otherwise he would feel.” Did you next know this would be the natural consequence of your elegant adorning? To push the question home, Did you not *desire*, did you not design it should? And yet, all the time, how did you

Set to public view
A specious face of innocence and virtue!

Meanwhile you do not yourself escape the snare which you spread for others. The dart recoils, and you are infected with the same poison with which you infected them. You kindle a flame which, at the same time, consumes both yourself and your admirers. And it is well, if it does not plunge both you and them into the flames of hell!

14. Fifthly. The wearing costly array is directly opposite to the being, adorned with good works. Nothing can be more evident than this; for the more you lay out on your own apparel, the less you have left to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to lodge the strangers, to relieve those that are sick and in prison, and to lessen the numberless afflictions to which we are exposed in this vale of tears. And here is no room for the evasion used before: "I may be as *humble* in cloth of gold, as in sackcloth." If you could be as humble when you choose costly as when, you choose plain apparel, (which I flatly deny,) yet you could not be as beneficent, — as plenteous in good works. Every shilling which you save from your own apparel, you may expend in, clothing the naked, and relieving the various necessities of the poor, whom ye "have always with you." Therefore, every shilling which you needlessly spend on your apparel is, in effect, stolen from God and the poor! And how many precious opportunities of doing good have you defrauded yourself of! How often have you disabled yourself from doing good by purchasing what you did not want! For what end did you buy these, ornaments? To please God? No; but to please our own fancy, or to gain the admiration and applause of those that were no wiser than yourself. How much good might you have done with that money! and that an irreparable loss have you sustained by not doing it, if it be true that the day is at hand when "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor!"

15. I pray consider this well. Perhaps you have not seen it in this light before. When you are laying out that money in costly apparel which you could have otherwise spared for the poor, you thereby deprive them of what God, the proprietor of all, had lodged in your hands for their use. If

so, what you put upon yourself, you are, in effect tearing from the back of the naked; as the costly and delicate food which you eat, you are snatching; from the mouth of the hungry. For mercy, for pity, for Christ's sake. for the honor of his gospel, stay your hand! Do not throw this money away! Do not lay out on nothing, yea, worse than nothing, what may clothe your poor, naked, shivering fellow-creature!

16. Many years ago, when I was at Oxford, in a cold winter's day, a young maid (one of these we kept at school) called upon me. I said, "You seem half-starved. Have you nothing to cover you but that thin linen gown?" She said, "Sir, this is all I have!" I put my hand in my pocket; but found I had scarce any money left, having just paid away what I had: It immediately struck me, "Will thy Master say, 'Well done, good and faithful steward?' Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold! O justice! O mercy! Are not these pictures the blood, of this poor maid?" See thy expensive apparel in the same light; thy gown, hat, head-dress! Everything about thee which cost more than Christian duty required thee to lay out is the blood of the poor! O be wise for the time to come! Be more merciful! more faithful to God and man! more abundantly *adorned* like men and women professing godliness *with good works*!

17. It is true, great allowance is to be made for those who have never been warned of these things, and perhaps do not know that there is a word in the Bible which forbids costly apparel. But what is *that to you*? You have been warned over and over, yea, in the plainest manner possible. And what have you profited thereby? Do not you still dress like other people of the same fortune? Is not your dress as gay, as expensive as theirs who never had any such warning? as expensive as it would have been, if you had never heard a word said about it: O how will you answer this, when you and I stand together at the judgment-seat of Christ? Nay, have not many of you grown finer as fast as you have grown richer? As you increased in substance, have you not increased in dress? Witness the profusion of ribbons, gauze, or linen about your heads! What have you profited then by bearing the reproach of Christ? by being called Methodists? Are you not as fashionably dressed as others of your rank that are no Methodists? Do you ask, "But may we not as well buy

fashionable things as unfashionable?" I answer, Not if they give you a bold, immodest look, as those huge hats, bonnets, head-dresses do. And not if they cost more. "But I can *afford* it." O lay aside for ever that idle, nonsensical word! No Christian can *afford* to waste any part of the substance which God has entrusted him with. How long are you to stay here? May not you tomorrow, perhaps tonight, be summoned to arise and go hence, in order to give an account of this and all your talents to the Judge of quick and dead?

18. How then can it be, that, after so many warnings, you persist in the same folly? Is it not hence? There are still among you, some that neither profit themselves by all they hear, nor are willing that others should: And these, if any of you are almost persuaded to dress as Christians, reason, and rally, and laugh you out of it. O ye pretty triflers, I entreat you not to do the devil's work any longer! Whatever ye do yourselves, do not harden the hearts of others. And you that are of a better mind, avoid these tempters with all possible care; and if you come where any of them are, either beg them to be silent on the head, or quit the room.

19. Sixthly. The putting on of costly apparel is directly opposite to what the Apostle terms, "the hidden man of the heart;" that is, to the whole "image of God" wherein we were created, and which is stamped anew upon the heart of every Christian believer; — opposite to "the mind which was in Christ Jesus," and the whole nature of inward holiness. All the time you are studying this outward adorning, the whole inward work of the Spirit stands still; or, rather, goes back, though by very gentle and almost imperceptible degrees. Instead of growing more heavenly-minded, you are more and more earthly-minded. If you once had fellowship with the Father and the Son, it now gradually declines; and you insensibly sink deeper and deeper into the spirit of the world, — into foolish and hurtful desires, and groveling appetites. All these evils, and a thousand more, spring from that one root, — indulging yourself in costly apparel.

20. Why then does not every one that either loves or fears God, flee from it, as from the face of a serpent? Why are *you* still so conformable to the irrational, sinful customs of a frantic world? Why do you still despise the express commandment of God uttered in the plainest terms? You see the

light: Why do not you follow the light of your own mind? Your conscience tells you the truth: Why do you not obey the dictates of your own conscience?

21. You answer, “Why, universal custom is against me; and I know not how to stem the mighty torrent.” Not only the profanes but the religious world, run violently the other way. Look into, I do not say, the theaters, but the churches, now, and the meetings of every denomination; (except a few old-fashioned Quakers, or the people called Moravians;) look into the congregations, in London or elsewhere, of those that are styled Gospel Ministers; look into Northampton-Chapel; yea, into the Tabernacle, or the chapel in Tottenham-Court Road; nay, look into the chapel in West-Street, or that in the City-Road; look at the very people that sit under the pulpit, or by the side of it; and are not *those that can afford it*, (I can hardly refrain from doing them the honor of naming their names,) as fashionably adorned, as those of the same rank in other places?

22. This is a melancholy truth. I am ashamed of it: But I know not how to help it. I call heaven and earth to witness this day, that it is not my fault! The trumpet has not “given an uncertain sound,” for near fifty years last past. O God! thou knowest I have born a clear and a faithful testimony. In print, in preaching, in meeting the society, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I am therefore clear of the blood of those that will not hear. It lies upon their own head.

23. I warn you once more, in the name, and in the presence of God, that the number of those that rebel against God is no excuse for your rebellion. He hath expressly told us, “Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil.” It was said of a great, good man, he

Fear’d not, had Heaven decreed it, to have stood
Adverse against a world, and singly good.

Who of you desire to share in that glorious character? to stand adverse against a world? If millions condemn you, it will be enough that you are acquitted by God and your own conscience.

24. “Nay, I think,” say some, I could bear the contempt or reproach of all the world beside. I regard none but my own relations, those especially that are of my own household. My father, my mother, my brothers and sisters, (and perhaps one that is nearer than them all,) are teasing me continually.” This is a trial indeed; such as very few can judge of; but those that hear it “I have not strength to bear it.” No not of your own: Certainly you have not. But there is strength laid up for you on; “One that is mighty!” His grace is sufficient for you; and he now sees your case, and is just ready to give it you. Meantime, remember his awful declaration, touching them that regard man more than God: “He that loveth father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife, more than me, is not worthy of me.”

25. But are there not some among you that did once renounce this conformity to the world, and dress, in every point, neat and plain, suitable to your profession? Why then did you not persevere therein? Why did you turn back from the good way? Did you contract an acquaintance, perhaps a friendship, with some that were still fond of dress? It is no wonder then that you was, sooner or later, moved to “measure back your steps to earth again.” No less was to be expected, than that one sin would lead you on to another. It was one sin to contract a friendship with any that knew not God: For is know ye not that; friendship with the world is enmity with God?” And this led you back into another, into that conformity to the world from which you had clean escaped. But what are you to do now? Why, if you are wise, escape for your life: No delay: Look not behind you! Without loss of time, renounce the cause and the effect together! Stop, today, before the heart is burdened by the deceitfulness of sin, cut out at one stroke, that sinful friendship with the ungodly, and that sinful conformity to the world! Determine this day! Do not delay till tomorrow, lest you delay for ever. For God’s sake, for your own soul’s sake, fix your resolution now!

26. I conjure you all who have any regard for *me*, show me before I go hence, that I have not labored, even in this respect, in vain, for near half a century. Let me see, before I die, a Methodist congregation, full as plain dressed as a Quaker congregation. Only be more consistent with yourselves. Let your dress be *cheap* as well as plain otherwise you do but trifle with God, and me, and your own souls. I pray, let there be no costly

silks among you, how grave so ever they may be. Let there be no Quaker-linen, — proverbially so called, for their exquisite fineness; no Brussels lace, no elephantine hats or bonnets, — those scandals of female modesty. Be all of a piece, dressed from head to foot as persons, *professing godliness*; professing to do every thing, small and great, with the single view of pleasing God.

27. Let not any of you who are rich in this world endeavor to excuse yourselves from this by talking nonsense. It is stark, staring nonsense to say, “O, I can *afford* this or that: If you have regard to common sense, let that silly word never come out of your mouth. No man living can *afford* to waste any part of what God has committed to his trust. None can *afford* to throw any part of that food and raiment into the sea, which was lodged with him on purpose to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked. And it is far worse than simple waste, to spend any part of it in gay or costly apparel. For this is no less than to turn wholesome food into deadly poison. It is giving so much money to poison both yourself and others, as far as your example spreads, with pride, vanity, anger, lust, love of the world, and a thousand “foolish and hurtful desires,” which tend to “pierce them through with many sorrows.” And is there no harm in all this? O God, arise and maintain thy own cause! Let not men or devils any longer put out our eyes, and lead us blindfold into the pit of destruction!

28. I beseech you, every man that is here present before God, every woman, young or old, married or single, yea, every child that knows good from evil, take this to yourself. Each of you for one, take the Apostle’s advice; at least, hinder not others from taking it. I beseech you, O ye parents, do not hinder your children from following their own convictions, even though you might think they would *look prettier* if they were adorned with such gewgaws as other children wear! I beseech you, O ye husbands, do not hinder your wives! You, O ye wives, do not hinder your husbands, either by word or deed, from acting just as they are persuaded in their own minds! Above all, I conjure you, ye half-Methodists, you that trim between us and the world, you that frequently, perhaps constantly, hear our preaching, but are in no farther connection with us; yea, and all you that were once in full connection with us, but are not so now; whatever ye do yourselves, do not say one word to hinder others from

receiving and practicing the advice which has been now given! Yet a little while, and we shall not need these poor coverings; for this corruptible body shall put on incorruption. Yet a few days hence, and this mortal body shall put on immortality. In the mean time, let this be our only care, “to put off the old man,” — our old nature, — “which is corrupt” — which is altogether evil, — and to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” In particular “put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, gentleness, long-suffering.” Yea, to sum up all in one word, “put on Christ;” that “when he shall appear, we may appear with him in glory.”

SERMON LXXXIX.

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY.

“Covet earnestly the best gifts: And yet I show unto you a more excellent way.”

1 Corinthians 12:31.

1. IN the Preceding verses, St. Paul has been speaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; such as healing the sick; prophesying, in the proper sense of the word, that is, foretelling things to come; speaking with strange tongues, such as the speaker had never learned; and the miraculous interpretation of tongues. And these gifts the Apostle allows to be desirable; yea, he exhorts the Corinthians, at least the teachers among them, (to whom chiefly, if not solely, they were wont to be given in the first ages of the Church,) to *covet* them *earnestly*, that thereby they might be qualified to be more useful either to Christians or Heathens. “And yet,” says he, “I show unto you a more excellent way;” far more desirable than all these put together: Inasmuch as it will infallibly lead you to happiness, both in this world and in the world to come; whereas you might have all those gifts, yea, in the highest degree, and yet be miserable both in time and eternity.

2. It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian; and, from a vain imagination of promoting the Christian cause thereby, heaped riches and power and honor upon the Christians in general, but in particular upon the Christian Clergy. From this time they almost totally ceased; very few instances of the kind were found. The cause of this was not, (as has been vulgarly supposed,) “because there was no more occasion for them,” because all the world was become Christians. This is a miserable mistake; not a twentieth part of it

was then nominally Christian. The real cause was, “the love of many,” almost of all Christians, so called, was “waxed cold.” The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other heathens the Son of Man, when he came to examine his Church, could hardly “find faith upon earth.” This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church; because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left.

3. However, I would not at present speak of these, of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, but of the ordinary; and these likewise we may “covet earnestly,” in order to be more useful in our generation. With this view, we may covet “the gift of *convincing speech*,” in order to “sound the unbelieving heart;” and the gift of *persuasion*, to move the affections, as well as enlighten the understanding. We may covet *knowledge*, both of the word and of the works of God, whether of providence or grace. We may desire a measure of that *faith* which, on particular occasions, wherein the glory of God or the happiness of men is nearly concerned, goes far beyond the power of natural causes. We may desire an easy elocution, a pleasing address, with resignation to the will of our Lord; yea, whatever would enable us, as we have opportunity, to be useful wherever we are. These gifts we may innocently desire; but there is “a more excellent way.”

4. The way of love, — of loving all men for God’s sake; of humble, gentle, patient love, — is that which the Apostle so admirably describes in the ensuing chapter. And without this he assures us, all eloquence, all knowledge, all faith, all works, and all sufferings are of no more value in the sight of God than sounding brass or a rumbling cymbal, and are not of the least avail toward our eternal salvation. Without this, all we know, all we believe, all we do, all we suffer, will profit us nothing in the great day of accounts.

5. But at present I would take a different view of the text, and point out a “more excellent way” in another sense. It is the observation of an ancient writer, that there have been from the beginning two orders of Christians. The one lived an innocent life, conforming in all things, not sinful, to the customs and fashions of the world; doing many good works, abstaining from gross evils, and attending the ordinances of God. They endeavored, in

general, to have a conscience void of offense in their behavior, but did not aim at any particular strictness, being in most things like their neighbors. The other Christians not only abstained from all appearance of evil, were zealous of good works in every kind, and attended all the ordinances of God, but likewise used all diligence to attain the whole mind that was in Christ, and labored to walk, in every point, as their beloved Master. In order to this, they walked in a constant course of universal self-denial, trampling on every pleasure which they were not divinely conscious prepared them for taking pleasure in God. They took up their cross daily. They strove, they agonized without intermission, to enter in at the strait gate. This one thing they did, they spared no pains to arrive at the summit of Christian holiness; “leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on to perfection;” to “know all that love of God which passeth knowledge, and to be filled with all the fullness of God.”

6. From long experience and observation I am inclined to think, that whoever finds redemption in the blood of Jesus, whoever is justified, has then the choice of walking in the higher or the lower path. I believe the Holy Spirit at that time sets before him the “more excellent way,” and incites him to walk therein; to choose the narrowest path in the narrow way; to aspire after the heights and depths of holiness, — after the entire image of God. But if he does not accept this offer, he insensibly declines into the lower order of Christians. He still goes on in what may be called a good way, serving God in his degree, and finds mercy in the close of life, through the blood of the covenant.

7. I would be far from quenching the smoking, flax, — from discouraging, those that serve God in a low degree. But I could not wish them to stop here: I would encourage them to come up higher. Without thundering hell and damnation in their ears, without condemning the way wherein they were, telling them it is the way that leads to destruction, I will endeavor to point out to them what is, in every respect, “a more excellent way.”

8. Let it be well remembered, I do not affirm that all who do not walk in this way are in the high road to hell. But this much I must affirm, they will not have so high a place in heaven as they would have had if they had chosen the better part. And will this be a small loss, — the having so

many fewer stars in your crown of glory? Will it be a little thing to have a lower place than you might have had in the kingdom of your Father? Certainly there will be no sorrow in heaven; there all tears will be wiped from our eyes but if it were possible grief could enter there, we should grieve at that irreparable loss. Irreparable then, but not now. Now, by the grace of God, we may choose the “more excellent way.” Let us now compare this, in a few particulars, with the way wherein most Christians walk.

I.

To begin at the beginning of the day. It is the manner of the generality of Christians, if they are not obliged to work for their living, to rise, particularly in winter, at eight or nine in the morning, after having lain in bed eight or nine, if not more, hours. I do not say now, (as I should have been very apt to do fifty years ago,) that all who indulge themselves in this manner are in the way to hell. But neither can I say, they are in the way to heaven, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily. Sure I am, there is “a more excellent way” to promote health both of body and mind. From an observation of more than sixty years, I have learned, that men in health require, at an average, from six to seven hours’ sleep, and healthy women a little more, — from seven to eight — in four and twenty hours. I know this quantity of sleep to be most advantageous to the body as well as the soul. It is preferable to any medicine which I have known, both for preventing and removing nervous disorders. It is, therefore, undoubtedly, the most excellent way, in defiance of fashion and custom, to take just so much sleep as experience proves our nature to require; seeing this is indisputably most conducive both to bodily and spiritual health. And why should not you walk in this way? Because it is difficult? Nay, with men it is impossible. But all things are possible with God; and by his grace, all things will be possible to *you*. Only continue instant in prayer, and you will find this not only possible, but easy: Yea, and it will be far easier to rise early constantly, than to do it sometimes. But then you must begin at the right end; if you would rise early, you must sleep early. Impose it upon yourself, unless when something extraordinary occurs, to go to bed at a fixed hour. Then the difficulty of it will soon be over; but the advantage of it will remain for ever.

II.

The generality of Christians, as soon as they rise, are accustomed to use some kind of *prayer*; and probably to use the same form still, which they learned when they were eight or ten years old. Now, I do not condemn those who proceed thus, (though many do,) as mocking God; though they have used the same form, without any variation, for twenty or thirty years together. But surely there is “a more excellent way” of ordering our private devotions. What if you were to follow the advice given by that great and good man, Mr. Law, on this subject? Consider both your outward and inward state, and vary your prayers accordingly. For instance: Suppose your outward state is prosperous; suppose you are in a state of health, ease, and plenty, having your lot cast among kind relations, good neighbors, and agreeable friends, that love you, and you them; then your outward state manifestly calls for praise and thanksgiving to God. On the other hand, if you are in a state of adversity; if God has laid trouble upon your loins; if you are in poverty, in want, in outward distress; if you are in imminent danger; if you are in pain and sickness; then you are clearly called to pour out your soul before God in such prayer as is suited to your circumstances. In like manner you may suit your devotions to your inward state, the present state of your mind. Is your soul in heaviness, either from a sense of sin, or through manifold temptations? Then let your prayer consist of such confessions, petitions, and supplications as are agreeable to your distressed situation of mind. On the contrary, is your soul in peace? Are you rejoicing in God? Are his consolations not small with you? Then say, with the Psalmist, “Thou art my God, and I will love thee: Thou art my God, and I will praise thee.” You may, likewise, when you have time, add to your other devotions a little reading and meditation, and perhaps a psalm of praise, — the natural effusion of a thankful heart. You must certainly see, that this is “a more excellent way” than the poor dry form which you used before.

III.

1. The generality of Christians, after using some prayer, usually apply themselves to the *business* of their calling. Every man that has any pretense to be a Christian will not fail to do this; seeing it is impossible that an idle man can be a good man, — sloth being inconsistent with

religion. But with what view, for what end, do you undertake and follow your worldly business? “To provide things necessary for myself and my family.” It is a good answer, as far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. For a Turk or a Heathen goes so far, — does his work for the very same ends. But a Christian may go abundantly farther: His end in all his labors to please God; to do, not his own will, but the will of Him that sent him into the world, — for this very purpose, to do the will of God on earth as angels do in heaven. He works for eternity. He “labors not for the meat that perisheth,” (this is the smallest part of his motive,) “but for that which endureth to everlasting life.” And is not this “a more excellent way?”

2. Again: In what *manner* do you transact your worldly business? I trust, with diligence, whatever your hand findeth to do, doing it with your might; in justice, rendering to all their due, in every circumstance of life, yea, and in mercy, doing unto every man what you would he should do unto you. This is well: But a Christian is called to go still farther, — to add piety to justice; to intermix prayer, especially the prayer of the heart, with all the labor of his hands. Without this, all his diligence and justice only show him to be an honest Heathen; and many there are who profess the Christian religion, that go no farther than honest Heathenism.

3. Yet again: In what *spirit* do you go through your business? in the spirit of the world, or in the spirit of Christ? I am afraid thousands of those who are called good Christians do not understand the question. If you act in the spirit of Christ, you carry the end you at first proposed through all your work from first to last. You do everything in the spirit of sacrifice, giving up your will to the will of God, and continually aiming, not at ease, pleasure, or riches, not at anything “this short enduring world can give,” but merely at the glory of God. How, can any one deny, that this is the most excellent way of pursuing worldly business?

IV.

1. But these tenements of clay which we bear about us require constant reparation, or they will sink; into the earth from which they were taken, even sooner than nature requires. Daily food is necessary to prevent this,

to repair the decays of nature. It was common in the Heathen world, when they were about to use this, — to take meat, or even drink, — *libare pateram Jovi*; “to pour out a little to the honor of their God;” although the gods of the Heathens were but devils, as the Apostle justly observes. “It seems,” says a late writer, “there was once some such custom as this in our own country. For we still frequently see a gentleman, before he sits down to dinner in his own house, holding his hat before his face, and perhaps seeming to say something; though he generally does it in such a manner that no one can tell what he says.” Now what if, instead of this, every head of a family, before he sat down to eat and drink, either morning, noon, or night, (for the reason of the thing is the same at every hour of the day,) were seriously to ask blessing from God on what he was about to take? yea, and afterward, seriously to return thanks to the Giver of all his blessings? Would not this be “a more excellent way” than to use that dull farce which is worse than nothing; being, in reality, no other than mockery both of God and man?

2. As to the *quantity* of their food, good sort of men do not usually eat to excess; at least, not so far as to make themselves sick with meat, or to intoxicate themselves with drink. And as to the manner of taking it, it is usually innocent, mixed with a little mirth, which is said to help digestion. So far, so good. And provided they take only that measure of plain, cheap, wholesome food, which most promotes health both of body and mind, there will be no cause of blame! Neither can I require you to take that advice of Mr. Herbert, though he was a good man: —

Take thy meat: think it dust: Then eat a bit,
And say with all, Earth to earth I commit.

This is too melancholy; it does not suit with that cheerfulness which is highly proper at a Christian meal. Permit me to illustrate this subject with a little story. The King of France, one day pursuing the chase, outrode all his company, who, after seeking him some time, found him sitting in a cottage eating bread and cheese. Seeing them, he cried out, “Where have I lived all my time? I never before tasted so good food in my life!” “Sire,” said one of them, “you never had so *good sauce* before; for you were never hungry.” Now it is true, hunger is a good sauce; but there is one that is better still; that is, thankfulness! Sure, that is the most agreeable food

which is seasoned with this. And why should not yours at every meal? You need not then fix your eye on death; but receive every morsel as a pledge of life eternal. The Author of your being gives you, in this food, not only a reprieve from death, but an earnest that, in a little time, “death shall be swallowed up in victory.”

3. The time of taking our food is usually a time of *conversation* also; as it is natural to refresh our minds while we refresh our bodies. Let us consider a little in what manner the generality of Christians usually converse together. What are the ordinary subjects of their conversation? If it is harmless, (as one would hope it is,) if there be nothing in it profane, nothing immodest, nothing untrue, or unkind, if there be no tale-bearing, backbiting, or evil-speaking, they have reason to praise God for his restraining grace. But there is more than this implied in “ordering our conversation aright.” In order to this it is needful, First, that “your communication,” that is, discourse or conversation, “be good;” that it be materially good, on good subjects; not fluttering about any thing that occurs; for what have you to do with courts and kings? It is not your business to

Fight o’er the wars, reform the state;

unless when some remarkable event calls for the acknowledgment of the justice or mercy of God. You *must* indeed sometimes talk of worldly things, otherwise we may as well go out of the world. But it should be only so far as is needful: Then we should return to a better subject. Secondly, let your conversation be “to the use of edifying;” calculated to edify either the speaker or the hearers, or both; to build them up, as each has particular need, either in faith, or love, or holiness. Thirdly, see that it not only gives entertainment, but, in one kind or other, “ministers grace to the hearers.” Now, is not this “a more excellent way” of conversing than the harmless way above-mentioned?

V.

1. We have seen what is the “more excellent way” of ordering our conversation, as well as our business. But we cannot be always intent upon business: Both our bodies and minds require some relaxation. We

need intervals of diversion from business. It will be necessary to be very explicit upon this head, as it is a point which has been much misunderstood.

2. Diversions are of various kinds. Some are almost peculiar to men, as the sports of the field: Hunting, shooting, fishing, wherein not many women (I should say ladies) are concerned. Others are indifferently used by persons of both sexes: Some of which are of a more public nature, as races, masquerades, plays, assemblies, balls. Others are chiefly used in private houses; as cards, dancing, and music; to which we may add, the reading of plays, novels, romances, newspapers, and fashionable poetry.

3. Some diversions, indeed, which were formerly in great request, are now fallen into disrepute. The nobility and gentry, in England at least, seem totally to disregard the once fashionable diversion of hawking; and the vulgar themselves are no longer diverted by men hacking and hewing each other in pieces at broad sword. The noble game of quarter-staff, likewise, is now exercised by very few. Yea, cudgeling has lost its honor, even in Wales itself. Bear-baiting also is now very seldom seen, and bull-baiting not very often. And it seems cock fighting would totally cease in England, were it not for two or three right honorable patrons.

4. It is not needful to say anything more of these foul *remains of Gothic barbarity*, than that they are a reproach, not only to all religion, but even to human nature. One would not pass so severe a censure on the sports of the field. Let those who have nothing better to do, still run foxes and hares out of breath. Neither need much be said about horse races, till some man of sense will undertake to defend them. It seems a great deal more may be said in defense of seeing a serious tragedy. I could not do it with a clear conscience; at least not in an English theater, the sink of all profaneness and debauchery; but possibly others can. I cannot say quite so much for balls or assemblies, which, though more reputable than masquerades, yet must be allowed by all impartial persons to have exactly the same tendency. So, undoubtedly, have all public dancings. And the same tendency they must have, unless the same caution obtained among modern Christians which was observed among the ancient Heathens. With them, men and women never danced together, but always in separate rooms this

was always observed in ancient Greece, and for several ages at Rome; where a woman dancing in company with men would have at once been set down for a prostitute. Of playing at cards I say the same as of seeing plays. I could not do it with a clear conscience. But I am not obliged to pass any sentence on those that are otherwise minded. I leave them to their own Master: To Him let them stand or fall.

5. But supposing these, as well as the reading of plays, novels, newspapers, and the like, to be quite innocent diversions; yet are there not more excellent ways of diverting themselves for those that love or fear God? Would men of fortune divert themselves in the open air? They may do it by cultivating and improving their lands, by planting their grounds, by laying out, carrying on, and perfecting their gardens and orchards. At other times they may visit and converse with the most serious and sensible of their neighbors; or they may visit the sick, the poor, the widows, and the fatherless in their affliction. Do they desire to divert themselves in the house? They may read useful history, pious and elegant poetry, or several branches of natural philosophy. If you have time, you may divert yourself by music, and perhaps by philosophical experiments. But above all, when you have once learned the use of prayer, you will find, that as

That which yields or fills
All space, the ambient air, wide interfused
Embraces round this florid earth;

so will this, till through every space of life it be interfused with all your employments, and wherever you are, whatever you do, embrace you on every side. Then you will be able to say boldly: —

With me no melancholy void,
No moment lingers unemploy'd
Or unimproved below:
My weariness of life is gone,
Who live to serve my God alone,
And only Jesus know.

VI.

One point only remains to be considered; that is, the use of money. What is the way wherein the generality of Christians employ this? And is there not “a more excellent way?”

1. The generality of Christians usually set apart something yearly, perhaps a tenth or even one-eighth part of their income, whether it arise from yearly revenue, or from trade, for charitable uses. A few I have known, who said, like Zaccheus, “Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.” O that it would please God to multiply those friends of mankind, those general benefactors! But,

2. Besides those who have a stated rule, there are thousands who give large sums to the poor; especially when any striking instance of distress is represented to them in lively colors.

3. I praise God for all of you who act in this manner. May you never be weary of well doing! May God restore what you give, seven-fold, into your own bosom! But yet I show unto you “a more excellent way.”

4. You may consider yourself as one in whose hands the Proprietor of heaven and earth, and all things therein, has lodged a part of his goods, to be disposed of according to his direction. And his direction is, that you should look upon yourself as one of a certain number of indigent persons, who are to be provided for out of that portion of his goods wherewith you are entrusted. You have two advantages over the rest: The one, that “it is more blessed to give than to receive;” the other, that you are to serve yourself first, and others afterwards. This is the light wherein you are to see yourself and them. But to be more particular: First, if you have no family, after you have provided for yourself, give away all that remains; so that

Each Christmas your accounts may clear,
And wind your bottom round the year.

This was the practice of all the young men at Oxford who were called Methodists. For example: One of them had thirty pounds a year. He lived

on twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away two-and-thirty. The third year he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received a hundred and twenty pounds. Still he lived as before on twenty-eight; and gave to the poor, ninety-two. Was not this a more excellent way? Secondly, if you have a family, seriously consider before God, how much each member of it wants, in order to have what is needful for life and godliness. And in general, do not allow them less, nor much more, than you allow yourself. Thirdly, this being done, fix your purpose, to “gain no more.” I charge you in the name of God, do not increase your substance! As it comes, daily or yearly, so let it go: Otherwise you “lay up treasures upon earth.” And this our Lord as daily forbids as murder and adultery. By doing it, therefore, you would “treasure up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

5. But suppose it were not forbidden, how can you, on principles of reason, spend your money in a way which God may *possibly forgive*, instead of spending it in a manner which he will *certainly reward*? You will have no reward in heaven for what you *lay up*; you will, for what you *lay out*. Every pound you put into the earthly bank is sunk: It brings no interest above. But every pound you give to the poor is put into the bank of heaven. And it will bring glorious interest; yea, and, as such, will be accumulating to all eternity.

6. Who then is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him resolve this day, this hour, this moment, the Lord assisting him, to choose in all the preceding particulars the “more excellent way.” And let him steadily keep it, both with regard to sleep, prayer, work, food, conversation, and diversions; and particularly with regard to the employment of that important talent, money. Let *your* heart answer to the call of God, “From this moment, God being my helper, I will lay up no more treasure upon earth: this one thing I will do, I will lay up treasure in heaven; I will render unto God the things that are God’s: I will give him all my goods, and all my heart!”

SERMON XC.

AN ISRAELITE INDEED.

“Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” John 1:47.

1. **SOME** years ago, a very ingenious man, Professor Hutcheson of Glasgow, published two treatises on the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue. In the latter of these he maintains that the very essence of virtue is, the love of our fellow-creatures. He endeavors to prove, that virtue and benevolence are one and the same thing; that every temper is only so far virtuous, as it partakes of the nature of benevolence; and that all our words and actions are then only virtuous, when they spring from the same principle. “But does he not suppose gratitude, or the love of God, to be the foundation of this benevolence?” By no means: Such a supposition as this never entered into his mind. Nay, he supposes just the contrary: He does not make the least scruple to ever, that if any temper or action be produced by any regard to God, or any view to a reward from him, it is not virtuous at all; and that if an action spring partly from benevolence, and partly from a view to God, the more there is in it of a view to God, the less there is of virtue.

2. I cannot see this beautiful essay of Mr. Hutcheson’s in any other light, than as a decent, and therefore more dangerous, attack upon the whole of the Christian Revelation: Seeing, this asserts the love of God to be the true foundation, both of the love of our neighbor, and all other virtues; and, accordingly, places this as “the first and great commandment,” on which all the rest depend, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.” So that, according to the Bible, benevolence, or the love of our neighbor, is only the second commandment. And suppose the Scripture to be of God, it is so far from being true, that benevolence alone is both the foundation

and the essence of all virtue, that benevolence itself is no virtue at all, unless it spring from the love of God.

3. Yet it cannot be denied, that this writer himself has a marginal note in favor of Christianity. “Who would not wish,” says he, “that the Christian Revelation could be proved to be of God? seeing it is, unquestionably, the most benevolent institution that ever appeared in the world!” But is not this, if it be considered thoroughly, another blow at the very root of that Revelation? Is it more or less than to say, “I wish it could, but in truth it cannot, be proved?”

4. Another ingenious writer advances an hypothesis totally different from this. Mr. Wollaston, in the book which he entitles, “The Religion of Nature Delineated,” endeavors to prove, that truth is the essence of virtue, or conformableness to truth. But it seems, Mr. Wollaston goes further from the Bible than Mr. Hutcheson himself. For Mr. Hutcheson’s scheme sets aside only one of the two great commandments, namely, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,” whereas Mr. Wollaston sets aside both: For his hypothesis does not place the essence of virtue in either the love of God or of our neighbor.

5. However, both of these authors agree, though in different ways, to put asunder what God has joined. But St. Paul unites them together in teaching us to “speak the truth in love.” And undoubtedly, both truth and love were united in him to whom He who knows the hearts of all men gives this amiable character, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”

6. But who is it, concerning whom our blessed Lord gives this glorious testimony? Who is this Nathanael, of whom so remarkable an account is given in the latter part of the chapter before us? Is it not strange that he is not mentioned again in any part of the New Testament? He is not mentioned again under this name; but probably he had another, whereby he was more commonly called. It was generally believed by the ancients, that he is the same person who is elsewhere termed Bartholomew; one of our Lord’s Apostles, and one that, in the enumeration of them, both by St. Matthew and St. Mark, is placed immediately after St. Philip, who first brought him to his Master. It is very probable, that his proper name was

Nathanael, — a name common among the Jews; and that his other name, Bartholomew, meaning only the son of Ptolemy, was derived from his father — a custom which was then exceeding common among the Jews, as well as the Heathens.

7. By what little is said of him in the context, he appears to have been a man of an excellent spirit; not hasty of belief, and yet open to conviction, and willing to receive the truth, from whencesoever it came. So we read, (verse 45,) “Philip findeth Nathanael,” (probably by what we term accident,) “and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth.” “Nathanael saith unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Has Moses spoke, or did the Prophets write, of any Prophet to come from thence? “Philip saith unto him, Come and see;” and thou wilt soon be able to judge for thyself. Nathanael took his advice, without staying to confer with flesh and blood. “Jesus saw Nathanael coming, and saith, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” “Nathanael saith,” doubtless with surprise enough, “Whence knowest thou me?” Jesus saith, “Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.” “Nathanael answered and said unto him,” — so soon was all prejudice gone! — “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.”

But what is implied in our Lord’s character of him? “In whom is no guile.” It may include all that is contained in that advice, —

Still let thy heart be true to God,
Thy words to it, thy actions to them both.

I.

1. We may, First, observe what is implied in having our hearts true to God. Does this imply any less than is included in that gracious command, “My son, give me thy heart?” Then only is our heart true to God, when we give it to him. We give him our heart, in the lowest degree, when we seek our happiness in him; when we do not seek it in gratifying “the desire of the flesh,” — in any of the pleasures of sense; nor in gratifying “the desire of the eye,” — in any of the pleasures of the imagination, arising from grand, or new, or beautiful objects, whether of nature or art; neither

in “the pride of life,” — in “the honor that cometh of men,” in being beloved, esteemed, and applauded by them; no, nor yet in what some term, with equal impudence and ignorance, the main chance, the “laying up treasures on earth.” When we seek happiness in none of these, but in God alone, then we, in some sense, give him our heart.

2. But in a more proper sense, we give God our heart, when we not only seek but find happiness in him. This happiness undoubtedly begins, when we begin to know him by the teaching of his own Spirit; when it pleases the Father to reveal his Son in our hearts, so that we can humbly say, “My Lord and my God;” and when the Son is pleased to reveal his Father in us, by “the Spirit of adoption, crying in our hearts, Abba, Father,” and bearing his “testimony to our spirits that we are the children of God.” Then it is that “the love of God also is shed abroad in our hearts.” And according to the degree of our love, is the degree of our happiness.

3. But it has been questioned, whether it is the design of God, that the happiness which is at first enjoyed by all that know and love him, should continue any longer than, as it were, the day of their espousals. In very many, we must allow, it does not; but in a few months, perhaps weeks, or even days, the joy and peace either vanishes at once, or gradually decays. Now, if God is willing that their happiness should continue, how is this to be accounted for?

4. I believe, very easily: St. Jude’s exhortation, “Keep yourselves in the love of God,” certainly implies that something is to be done on our part, in order to its continuance. And is not this agreeable to that declaration of our Lord, concerning this and every gift of God? “Unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: But from him that hath not,” — that is, uses it not, improves it not, — “shall be taken away even that which he hath.” (Luke 8:18.)

5. Indeed, part of this verse is translated in our version, “That which he seemeth to have.” But it is difficult to make sense of this. For if he only *seemeth* to have this, or any other gift of God, he really hath it not. And if so, it cannot be taken away: For no man can lose what he never had. It is plain, therefore, ο δοκει εχειν, ought to be rendered, *what he assuredly*

hath. And it may be observed, that the word **δοκεω** in various places of the New Testament does not lessen, but strengthen, the sense of the word joined with it. Accordingly, whoever improves the grace he has already received, whoever increases in the love of God, will surely retain it. God will continue, yea, will give it more abundantly: Whereas, whoever does not improve this talent, cannot possibly retain it. Notwithstanding all he can do, it will infallibly be taken away from him.

II.

1. Meantime, as the heart of him that is “an Israelite indeed” is true to God, so his words are suitable thereto: And as there is no guile lodged in his heart, so there is none found in his lips. The first thing implied herein, is veracity, — the speaking the truth from his heart, — the putting away all willful lying, in every kind and degree. A lie, according to a well known definition of it, is, *falsum testimonium, cum intentione fallendi*: “A falsehood known to be such by the speaker, and uttered with an intention to deceive.” But even the speaking of a falsehood is not a lie, if it be not spoken with an intent to deceive.

2. Most casuists, particularly those of the Church of Rome, distinguish lies into three sorts: The First sort is malicious lies; the Second, harmless lies; the Third, officious lies: Concerning which they pass a very different judgment. I know not any that are so hardy as even to excuse, much less defend, *malicious* lies; that is, such as are told with a design to hurt any one: These are condemned by all parties. Men are more divided in their judgment with regard to harmless lies, such as are supposed to do neither good nor harm. The generality of men, even in the Christian world, utter them without any scruple, and openly maintain, that, if they do no harm to any one else, they do none to the speaker. Whether they do or no, they have certainly no place in the mouth of him that is “an Israelite indeed.” He cannot tell lies in jest, any more than in earnest. Nothing but truth is heard from his mouth. He remembers the express command of God to the Ephesian Christians: “Putting away lying, speak every man truth to his neighbor.” (Ephesians 4:25.)

3. Concerning *officious* lies, those that are spoken with a design to do good, there have been numerous controversies in the Christian Church.

Abundance of writers, and those men of renown, for piety as well as learning, have published whole volumes upon the subject, and, in despite of all opposers, not only maintained them to be innocent, but commended them as meritorious. But what saith the Scripture? One passage is so express that there does not need any other. It occurs in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where the very words of the Apostle are, (verses 7, 8,) “If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why am I yet judged as; a sinner?” (Will not that lie be excused from blame, for the good effect of it?) “And not rather, as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, Let us do evil that good may come? Whose damnation is just.” Here the Apostle plainly declares,

- (1.) That the good effect of a lie is no excuse for it.
- (2.) That it is a mere slander upon Christians to say, “They teach men to do evil that good may come.”
- (3.) That if any, in fact, do this, either teach men to do evil that good may come, or do so themselves; their damnation is just.

This is peculiarly applicable to those who tell lies in order to do good thereby. It follows, that officious lies, as well as all others, are an abomination to the God of truth. Therefore, there is no absurdity, however strange it may sound, in that saying of the ancient Father, “I would not tell a lie to save the souls of the whole world.”

4. The Second thing which is implied in the character of “an Israelite indeed,” is, *sincerity*. As veracity is opposite to lying, so sincerity is to cunning. But it is not opposite to wisdom, or discretion, which are well consistent with it. “But what is the difference between wisdom and cunning? Are they not almost, if not quite, the same thing?” By no means. The difference between them is exceeding great. Wisdom is the faculty of discerning the best ends, and the fittest means of attaining them. The end of every rational creature is God; the enjoying him in time and in eternity. The best, indeed the only, means of attaining this end, is, “the faith that worketh by love.” True *prudence*, in the general sense of the word, is the same thing with wisdom. *Discretion* is but another name for prudence, — if it be not rather a part of it, as it is sometimes referred to our outward behavior, — and means, the ordering our words and actions right. On the

contrary, cunning (so it is usually termed amongst common men, but policy among the great) is, in plain terms, neither better nor worse than the art of deceiving. If, therefore, it be any wisdom at all, it is “the wisdom from beneath;” springing from the bottomless pit, and leading down to the place from whence it came.

5. The two great means which cunning uses in order to deceive, are, *simulation* and *dissimulation*. Simulation is the seeming to be what we are not; dissimulation, the seeming not to be what we are; according to the old verse, *Quod non est simulo: Dissimuloque quod est*. Both the one and the other we commonly term, the “hanging out of false colors.” Innumerable are the shapes that simulation puts on in order to deceive. And almost as many are used by dissimulation for the same purpose. But the man of sincerity shuns them, and always appears exactly what he is.

6. “But suppose we are engaged with artful men, may we not use silence or reserve, especially if they ask insidious questions, without falling under the imputation of cunning?” Undoubtedly we may: Nay, we ought on many occasions either wholly to keep silence, or to speak with more or less reserve, as circumstances may require. To say nothing at all, is, in many cases, consistent with the highest sincerity. And so it is, to speak with reserve, to say only a part, perhaps a small part, of what we know. But were we to pretend it to be the whole, this would be contrary to sincerity.

7. A more difficult question than this is, May we not speak the truth in order to deceive? Like him of old, who broke out into that exclamation, applauding his own ingenuity, *Hoc ego mihi puto palmarium, ut vera dicendo eos ambos fallam*. “This I take to be my masterpiece, to deceive them both by speaking the truth!” I answer, A Heathen might pique himself upon this; but a Christian could not. For although this is not contrary to veracity, yet it certainly is to sincerity. It is therefore the most excellent way, if we judge it proper to speak at all, to put away both simulation and dissimulation, and to speak the naked truth from our heart.

8. Perhaps this is properly termed, *simplicity*. It goes a little farther than sincerity itself. It implies not only, First, the speaking no known

falsehood; and, Secondly, the not designedly deceiving any one; but, Thirdly, the speaking plainly and artlessly to every one when we speak at all; the speaking as little children, in a childlike, though not a childish, manner. Does not this utterly exclude the using any *compliments*? A vile word, the very sound of which I abhor; quite agreeing with our poet: —

It never was good day
Since lowly fawning was call'd compliment.

I advise men of sincerity and simplicity never to take that silly word into their mouth, but labor to keep at the utmost distance both from the name and the thing.

9. Not long before that remarkable time,

When Statesmen sent a Prelate 'cross the seas,
By long-famed Act of pains and penalties,

several Bishops attacked Bishop Atterbury at once, then Bishop of Rochester, and asked, “My Lord, why will you not suffer your servants to deny you when you do not care to see company? It is not a lie for them to say your lordship is not at home; for it deceives no one: Every one knows it means only, your lordship is busy.” He replied, “My Lords, if it is (which I doubt) consistent with sincerity, yet I am sure it is not consistent with that simplicity which becomes a Christian Bishop”

10. But to return. The sincerity and simplicity of him in whom is no guile have likewise an influence on his whole behavior: They give a color to his whole outward conversation; which, though it be far remote from everything of clownishness and ill-breeding, of roughness and surliness, yet is plain and artless, and free from all disguise, being the very picture of his heart. The truth and love which continually reign there, produce an open front, and a serene countenance; such as leave no pretense to say, with that arrogant king of Castile, “When God made man, he left one capital defect: He ought to have set a window in his breast;” — for he opens a window in his own breast, by the whole tenor of his words and actions.

11. This then is real, genuine, solid virtue. Not truth alone, nor conformity to truth. This is a property of real virtue; not the essence of it. Not love alone; though this comes nearer the mark: For *love*, in one sense, “is the fulfilling of the law.” No: Truth and love united together, are the essence of virtue or holiness. God indispensable requires “truth in the inward parts,” influencing all our words and actions. Yet truth itself, separate from love, is nothing in his sight. But let the humble, gentle, patient love of all mankind, be fixed on its right foundation, namely, the love of God springing from faith, from in full conviction that God hath given his only Son to die for *my* sins; and then the whole will resolve into that grand conclusion, worthy of all men to be received: “Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love.”

SERMON XCI.

ON CHARITY.

“Although I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”

1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

WE know, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” and is therefore true and right concerning all things. But we know, likewise, that there are some scriptures which more immediately commend themselves to every man’s conscience. In this rank we may place the passage before us; there are scarce any that object to it. On the contrary, the generality of men very readily appeal to it. Nothing is more common than to find even those who deny the authority of the Holy Scriptures, yet affirming, “This is my religion; that which is described in the thirteenth chapter of the Corinthians.” Nay, even a Jew, Dr. Nunes, a Spanish physician, then settled at Savannah, in Georgia, used to say with great earnestness, “That Paul of Tarsus was one of the finest writers I have ever read. I wish the thirteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians were wrote in letters of gold. And I wish every Jew were to carry it with him wherever he went.” He judged, (and herein he certainly judged right,) that this single chapter contained the whole of true religion. It contains “whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely: If there be any virtue, if there be any praise” it is all contained in this.

In order to see this in the clearest light, we may consider,

- I. What the charity here spoken of is:
- II. What those things are which are usually put in the place of it. We may then,
- III. Observe, that neither of them, nor all of them put together, can supply the want of it.

I.

1. We are, First, to consider what this charity is. What is the nature and what are the properties of it?

St. Paul's word is *αγαπη*, exactly answering to the plain English word, *love*. And accordingly it is so rendered in all the old translations of the Bible. So it stood in William Tyndale's Bible, which; I suppose, was the first English translation of the whole Bible. So it was also in the Bible published by the authority of King Henry VIII. So it was likewise, in all the editions of the Bible that were successively published in England during the reign of King Edward VI., Queen Elizabeth, and King James I. Nay, so it is found in the Bibles of King Charles the First's reign; I believe, to the period of it. The first Bibles I have seen wherein the word was changed, were those printed by Roger Daniel and John Field, printers to the Parliament, in the year 1649. Hence it seems probable that the alteration was made during the sitting of the Long Parliament; probably it was then that the Latin word *charity* was put in place of the English word *love*. In was in an unhappy hour this alteration was made; the ill effects of it remain to this day; and these may be observed, not only among the poor and illiterate; — not only thousands of common men and women no more understand the word *charity* than they do the original Greek; — but the same miserable mistake has diffused itself among men of education and learning. Thousands of these are mislead thereby, and imagine that the *charity* treated of in this chapter refers chiefly, if not wholly, to outward actions, and to mean little more than almsgiving! I have heard many sermons preached upon this chapter, particularly before the University of Oxford. And I never heard more than one, wherein the meaning of it was not totally misrepresented. But had the old and proper word *love* been retained, there would have been no room for misrepresentation.

2. But what kind of love is that whereof the Apostle is speaking throughout the chapter? Many persons of eminent learning and piety apprehend that it is the love of God. But from reading the whole chapter numberless times, and considering it in every light, I am thoroughly persuaded that what St. Paul is here directly speaking of is the love of our neighbor. I believe whoever carefully weighs the whole tenor of his discourse will be fully convinced of this. But it must be allowed to be such a love of our neighbor, as can only spring from the love of God. And whence does this love of God flow? Only from that faith which is of the operation of God; which whoever has, has a direct evidence that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself:” When this is particularly applied in his heart, so that he can say with humble boldness, “The life which I now live, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me;” then, and not till then, “the love of God is shed abroad in his heart.” And this love sweetly constrains him to love every child of man with the love which is here spoken of; not with a love of esteem or of complacency; for this can have no place with regard to those who are (if not his personal enemies, yet) enemies to God and their own souls; but with a love of benevolence, — of tender goodwill to all the souls that God has made.

3. But it may be asked, “If there be no true love of our neighbor but that which springs from the love of God; and if the love of God flows from no other fountain than faith in the Son of God; does it not follow, that the whole heathen world is excluded from all possibility of salvation? seeing they are cut off from faith; for faith cometh by hearing; and how shall they hear without a preacher?” I answer, St. Paul’s words, spoken on another occasion, are applicable to this: “What the law speaketh, it speaketh to them that are under the law.” Accordingly, that sentence, “He that believeth not shall be damned,” is spoken of them to whom the Gospel is preached. Others it does not concern; and we are not required to determine any thing touching their final state. How it will please God, the Judge of all, to deal with *them*, we may leave to God himself. But this we know, that he is not the God of the Christians only, but the God of the Heathens also; that he is “rich in mercy to all that call upon him,” according to the light they have; and that “in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.”

4. But to return. This is the nature of that love whereof the Apostle is here speaking. But what are the properties of it, — the fruits which are inseparable from it? The Apostle reckons up many of them; but the principal of them are these.

First. “Love is not puffed up.” As is the measure of love, so is the measure of humility. Nothing humbles the soul so deeply as love: It casts out all “high conceits, engendering pride;” all arrogance and overweening; makes us little, and poor, and base, and vile in our own eyes. It abases us both before God and man; makes us willing to be the least of all, and the servants of all, and teaches us to say, “A mote in the sun-beam is little, but I am infinitely less in the presence of God.”

5. Secondly. “Love is not provoked.” Our present English translation renders it, “is not easily provoked.” But how did the word *easily* come in? There is not a tittle of it in the text: The words of the Apostle are simply these, *ου παροξυνεται*. Is it not probable, it was inserted by the translators with a design to excuse St. Paul, for fear his practice should appear to contradict his doctrine? For we read, (Acts 15:36, et seq.,) “And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take with them one who departed from the work. And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other: And so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed; being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.”

6. Would not any one think, on reading these words, that they were both equally sharp? that Paul was just as hot as Barnabas, and as much wanting in love as he? But the text says no such thing; as will be plain, if we consider first the occasion. When St. Paul proposed, that they should “again visit the brethren in every city where they had preached the word,” so far they were agreed. “And Barnabas determined to take with them John,” because he was his sister’s son, without receiving or asking St.

Paul's advice. "But Paul thought not good to take him with them who had departed from them from Pamphylia," — whether through sloth or cowardice, — "and went not with them to the work." And undoubtedly he thought right; he had reason on his side. The following words are, *εγενετο ουν παροξυσμος*, literally, "and there was a fit of anger." It does not say, in St. Paul: Probably it was in Barnabas alone: who thus supplied the want of reason with passion; "So that they parted asunder." And Barnabas, resolved to have his own way, did as his nephew had done before, "departed from the work," "took Mark with him, and sailed to Cyprus." But Paul went on his work, "being recommended by the brethren to the grace of God;" which Barnabas seems not to have stayed for. "And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches." From the whole account, it does not appear that St. Paul was in any fault; that he either felt any temper, or spoke any word, contrary to the law of love. Therefore, not being in any fault, he does not need any excuse.

7. Certainly he who is full of love is "gentle towards all men." He "in meekness instructs those that oppose themselves;" that oppose what he loves most, even the truth of God, or that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord: Not knowing, but "God, peradventure, may bring them to the knowledge of the truth" However provoked, he does "not return evil for evil, or railing for railing." Yea, he "blesses those that curse him, and does good to them that despitefully use him and persecute him." He "is not overcome of evil, but" always "overcomes evil with good."

8. Thirdly. "Love is long-suffering." It endures not a few affronts, reproaches, injuries; but *all things*; which God is pleased to permit either men or devils to inflict. It arms the soul with inviolable patience; not harsh stoical patience, but yielding as the air, which, making no resistance to the stroke, receives no harm thereby. The lover of mankind remembers Him who suffered for us, "leaving us an example that we might tread in his steps." Accordingly, "If his enemy hunger, he feeds him; if he thirst, he gives him drink:" And by so doing, he "heaps coals of fire," of melting love, upon his head. "And many waters cannot quench this love; neither can the floods" of ingratitude "drown it."

II.

1. We are, Secondly, to inquire, what those things are, which, it is commonly supposed, will supply the place of love. And the first of these is eloquence; a faculty of talking, well, particularly on religious subjects. Men are generally inclined to think well of one that talks well. If he speaks properly and fluently, of God, and the things of God, who can doubt of his being in God's favor? And it is very natural for him to think well of himself; to have as favorable an opinion of himself as others have.

2. But men of reflection are not satisfied with this: They are not content with a flood of words; they prefer thinking before talking; and judge, one that knows much is far preferable to one that talks much. And it is certain, knowledge is an excellent gift of God; particularly knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, in which are contained all the depths of divine knowledge and wisdom. Hence it is generally thought that a man of much knowledge, knowledge of Scripture in particular must not only be in the favor of God, but likewise enjoy a high degree of it.

3 But men of deeper reflection are apt to say, "I lay no stress upon any other knowledge, but the knowledge of God by faith. Faith is the only knowledge, which, in the sight of God, is of great price. "We are saved by faith, by faith alone: This is the one thing needful. He that believeth, and he alone, shall be saved everlastingly." There is much truth in this: It is unquestionably true, that "we are saved by faith:" Consequently, that "he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

4. But some men will say, with the Apostle James, "Show me thy faith without thy works;" (if thou canst, but indeed it is impossible;) "and I will show thee my faith by my works." And many are induced to think that good works, works of piety and mercy, are of far more consequence than faith itself, and will supply the want of every other qualification for heaven. Indeed this seems to be the general sentiment, not only of the members of the Church of Rome, but of Protestants also; not of the giddy and thoughtless, but the serious members of our own Church.

5. And this cannot be denied, our Lord himself hath said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits:" By their works ye know them that believe, and them

that believe not. But yet it may be doubted, whether there is not a surer proof of the sincerity of our faith than even our works, that is, our willingly suffering for righteousness' sake: Especially if, after suffering reproach, and pain, and loss of friends and substance, a man gives up life itself; yea, by a shameful and painful death, by giving his body to be burned, rather than he would give up faith and a good conscience by neglecting his known duty.

6. It is proper to observe here, First, what a beautiful gradation there is, each step rising above the other, in the enumeration of those several things which some or other of those that are called Christians, and are usually accounted so, really believe will supply the absence of love. St. Paul begins at the lowest point, *talking well*, and advances step by step every one rising higher than the preceding, till he comes to the highest of all. A step above eloquence is knowledge: Faith is a step above this. Good works are a step above that faith; and even above this, is suffering for righteousness' sake. Nothing is higher than this, but Christian love; the love of our neighbor, flowing from the love of God.

7. It may be proper to observe, Secondly, that whatever passes for religion in any part of the Christian world, (whether it be a part of religion, or no part at all, but either folly, superstition, or wickedness,) may with very little difficulty be reduced to one or other of these heads. Every thing which is supposed to be religion, either by Protestants or Romanists, and is not, is contained under one or another of these five particulars. Make trial as often as you please, with anything, that is called religion, but improperly so called, and you will find the rule to hold without any exception.

III.

1. I am now, in the third place, to demonstrate, to all who have ears to hear, who do not harden themselves against conviction, that neither any one of these five qualifications, nor all of them together, will avail anything before God, without the love above described.

In order to do this in the clearest manner, we may consider them one by one. And, First, “though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels” with an eloquence such as never was found in men, concerning the nature, attributes, and works of God, whether of creation or providence; though I were not herein a whit behind the chief of the Apostles preaching like St. Peter, and praying like St. John; — yet unless humble, gentle, patient love, be the ruling temper of my soul, I am no better, in the judgment of God, “than sounding brass, or a rumbling cymbal.” The highest eloquence, therefore, either in private conversation, or in public ministrations, — the brightest talents either for preaching or prayer, — if they were not joined with humble, meek, and patient resignation, might sink me the deeper into hell, but will not bring me one step nearer heaven.

2. A plain instance may illustrate this. I knew a young man between fifty and sixty years ago, who, during the course of several years, never endeavored to convince any one of a religious truth, but he *was* convinced; and he never endeavored to persuade any one to engage in a religious practice, but he was persuaded: What then? All that power of convincing speech, all that force of persuasion, if it was not joined with meekness and lowliness, with resignation and patient love, would no more qualify him for the fruition of God, than a clear voice, or a fine complexion. Nay, it would rather procure him a hotter place in everlasting burnings!

3. Secondly. “Though I have the gift of prophecy,” — of foretelling those future events which no creature can foresee; and “though I understand all” the “mysteries” of nature, of providence, and the word of God; and “have all knowledge” of things, divine or human, that any mortal ever attained to; though I can explain the most mysterious passages of Daniel, of Ezekiel, and the Revelation; — yet if I have not humility, gentleness, and resignation, “I am nothing” in the sight of God.

A little before the conclusion of the late war in Flanders, one who came from thence gave us a very strange relation. I knew not what judgment to form of this, but waited till John Haime should come over, of whose veracity I could no more doubt than of his understanding. The account he gave was this: — “Jonathan Pyrah was a member of our society in Flanders. I knew him some years, and knew him to be a man of an

unblamable character. One day he was summoned to appear before the Board of General Officers. One of them said, "What is this which we hear of you? We hear you are turned prophet, and that you foretell the downfall of the bloody house of Bourbon, and the haughty house of Austria. We should be glad if you were a real prophet, and if your prophecies came true. But what sign do you give, to convince us you are so, and that your predictions will come to pass?" He readily answered, "Gentlemen, I give you a sign: Tomorrow, at twelve o'clock, you shall have such a storm of thunder and lightning as you never had before since you came into Flanders. I give you a second sign: As little as any of you expect any such thing, as little appearance of it as there is now, you shall have a general engagement with the French within three days. I give you a third sign: I shall be ordered to advance in the first line. If I am a false prophet, I shall be shot dead at the first discharge; but if I am a true prophet, I shall only receive a musket-ball in the calf of my left leg." At twelve the next day there was such thunder and lightning as they never had before in Flanders. On the third day, contrary to all expectation, was the general battle of Fontenoy. He was ordered to advance in the first line; and, at the very first discharge, he did receive a musket-ball in the calf of his left leg."

4. And yet all this profited him nothing, either for temporal or eternal happiness. When the war was over, he returned to England; but the story was got before him: In consequence of which he was sent for by the Countess of St — s, and several other persons of quality, who were desirous to receive so surprising an account from his own mouth. He could not bear so much honor. It quite turned his brain. In a little time he ran stark mad. And so he continues to this day, living still, as I apprehend, on Wibsey Moorside, within a few miles of Leeds.⁴

5. And what would it profit a man to "have all knowledge," even that which is infinitely preferable to all other, — the knowledge of the Holy Scripture? I knew a young man about twenty years ago, who was so thoroughly acquainted with the Bible, that if he was questioned concerning any Hebrew word in the Old, or any Greek word in the New Testament, he would tell, after a little pause, not only how often the one or the other occurred in the Bible, but also what it meant in every place. His name was

Thomas Walsh. ⁵ Such a master of Biblical knowledge I never saw before, and never expect to see again. Yet if, with all his knowledge, he had been void of love; if he had been proud, passionate, or impatient; he and all his knowledge would have perished together, as sure as ever he was born.

6. “And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains.” — The faith which is able to do this cannot be the fruit of vain imagination, a mere madman’s dream, a system of opinions; but must be a real work of God: Otherwise it could not have such an effect. Yet if this faith does not work by love, if it does not produce universal holiness, if it does not bring forth lowliness, meekness, and resignation, it will profit me nothing. This is as certain a truth as any that is delivered in the whole oracles of God. All faith that is, that ever was, or ever can be, separate from tender benevolence to every child of man, friend or foe, Christian, Jew, Heretic, or Pagan — separate from gentleness to all men; separate from resignations in all events, and contentedness in all conditions, — is not the faith of a Christian, and will stand us in no stead before the face of God.

7. Hear ye this, all you that are called Methodists! You, of all men living, are most concerned herein. You constantly speak of salvation by faith: And you are in the right for so doing. You maintain, (one and all,) that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law. And you cannot do otherwise, without giving up the Bible, and betraying your own souls. You insist upon it, that we are saved by faith: And, undoubtedly, so we are. But consider, meantime, that let us have ever so much faith, and be our faith ever so strong, it will never save us from hell, unless it now save us from all unholy tempers, from pride, passion, impatience; from all arrogance of spirit, all haughtiness and overbearing, from wrath, anger, bitterness; from discontent, murmuring, fretfulness, peevishness. We are all men most inexcusable, if, having been so frequently guarded against that strong delusion, we still, while we indulge any of these tempers, bless ourselves, and dream we are in the way to heaven!

8. Fourthly. “Although I give all my goods to the poor;” though I divide all my real and all my personal estate into small portions, (so the original word properly signifies,) and diligently bestow it on those who, I have reason to believe, are the most proper objects; — yet if I am proud,

passionate, or discontented; if I give way to any of these tempers; whatever good I may do to others, I do none to my own soul. O how pitiable a case is this! Who would not grieve that these beneficent men should lose all their labor! It is true, many of them have a reward in this world, if not before, yet after their death. They have costly and pompous funerals. They have marble monuments of the most exquisite workmanship. They have epitaphs wrote in the most elegant strain, which extol their virtues to the skies. Perhaps they have yearly orations spoken over them, to transmit their memory to all generations. So have many founders of religious houses, of colleges, alms-houses, and most charitable institutions. And it is an allowed rule, that none can exceed in the praise of the founder of his house, college, or hospital. But still what a poor reward is this! Will it add to their comfort or to their misery, suppose (which must be the case if they did not die in faith) that they are in the hands of the devil and his angels? What insults, what cutting reproaches, would these occasion, from their infernal companions! O that they were wise! that all those who are zealous of good works would put them in their proper place; would not imagine they can supply the want of holy tempers, but take care that they may spring from them!

9. How exceeding strange must this sound in the ears of most of those who are, by the courtesy of England, called Christians! But stranger still is that assertion of the Apostle, which comes in the last place: “Although I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.” Although rather than deny the faith, rather than commit a known sin, or omit a known duty, I voluntarily submit to a cruel death; “deliver up my body to be burned;” ye; if I am under the power of pride, or anger, or fretfulness, — “it profiteth me nothing.”

10. Perhaps this may be illustrated by an example. We have a remarkable account in the tracts of Dr. Geddes, — a Civilian, who was Envoy from Queen Anne to the Court of Portugal, in the latter end of her reign. He was present at one of those *Auto da Fes*, “Acts of Faith,” wherein the Roman inquisitors burned heretics alive. One of the persons who was then brought out for execution, having been confined in the dungeons of the Inquisition, had not seen the sun for many years. It proved a bright sunshiny day. Looking up, he cried out in surprise, “O how can any one

who sees that glorious luminary, worship any but the God that made it!" A Friar standing by, ordered them to run an iron gag through his lips, that he might speak no more. Now, what did that poor man feel within when this order was executed? If he said in his heart, though he could not utter it with his lips, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," undoubtedly the angels of God were ready to carry his soul into Abraham's bosom. But if, instead of this, he cherished the resentment in his heart which he could not express with his tongue, although his body was consumed by the flames, I will not say his soul went to paradise.

11. The sum of all that has been observed is this: Whatever I speak, whatever I know, whatever I believe, whatever I do, whatever I suffer; if I have not the faith that worketh by love, that produces love to God and all mankind, I am not in the narrow way which leadeth to life, but in the broad road that leadeth to destruction. In other words: Whatever eloquence I have; whatever natural or supernatural knowledge; whatever faith I have received from God; whatever works I do, whether of piety or mercy; whatever sufferings I undergo for conscience' sake, even though I resist unto blood: All these things put together, however applauded of men, will avail nothing before God, unless I am meek and lowly in heart, and can say in all things, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt!"

12. We conclude from the whole, (and it can never be too much inculcated, because all the world votes on the other side,) that true religion, in the very essence of it, is nothing short of holy tempers. Consequently all other religion, whatever name it bears, whether Pagan, Mahometan, Jewish, or Christian; and whether Popish or Protestant, Lutheran or Reformed; without these, is lighter than vanity itself.

13. Let every man, therefore, that has a soul to be saved, see that he secure this one point. With all his eloquence, his knowledge, his faith, works, and sufferings, let him hold fast this "one thing needful." He that through the power of faith endureth to the end in humble, gentle, patient love; he, and he alone, shall, through the merits of Christ, "inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world."

SERMON XCII.

ON ZEAL.

“It is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing.” Galatians 4:18.

1. THERE are few subjects in the whole compass of religion, that are of greater importance than this. For without zeal it is impossible, either to make any considerable progress in religion ourselves, or to do any considerable service to our neighbor, whether in temporal or spiritual things. And yet nothing has done more disservice to religion, or more mischief to mankind, than a sort of zeal which has for several ages prevailed, both in Pagan, Mahometan, and Christian nations. In so much that it may truly be said, pride, covetousness, ambition, revenge, have in all parts of the world slain their thousands; but zeal its ten thousands. Terrible instances of this have occurred in ancient times, in the most civilized heathen nations. To this chiefly were owing the inhuman persecutions of the primitive Christians; and, in later ages, the no less inhuman persecutions of the Protestants by the Church of Rome. It was zeal that kindled fires in our nation, during the reign of bloody Queen Mary. It was zeal that soon after made so many provinces of France a field of blood. It was zeal that murdered so many thousand unresisting Protestants, in the never to be forgotten massacre of Paris. It was zeal that occasioned the still more horrid massacre in Ireland; the like whereof, both with regard to the number of the murdered, and the shocking circumstances wherewith many of those murders were perpetrated, I verily believe never occurred before since the world began. As to the other parts of Europe, an eminent German writer has taken immense pains to search both the records in various places and the most authentic histories, in order to gain some competent knowledge of the blood which has been shed since the Reformation, and computes that, partly by private persecution, partly by

religious wars, in the course of forty years, reckoning from the year 1590, above forty millions of persons have been destroyed!

2. But is it not possible to distinguish right zeal from wrong? Undoubtedly it is possible. But it is difficult; such is the deceitfulness of the human heart; so skillfully do the passions justify themselves. And there are exceeding few treatises on the subject; at least in the English language. To this day I have seen or heard of only one sermon; and that was wrote above a hundred years ago, by Dr. Sprat, then Bishop of Rochester; so that it is now exceeding scarce.

3. I would gladly cast in my mite, by God's assistance, toward the clearing up this important question, in order to enable well-meaning men, who are desirous of pleasing God, to distinguish true Christian zeal from its various counterfeits. And this is more necessary at this time than it has been for many years. Sixty years ago there seemed to be scarce any such thing as religious zeal left in the nation. People in general were wonderfully cool and undisturbed about *that trifle, religion*. But since then it is easy to observe, there has been a very considerable alteration. Many thousands, almost in every part of the nation, have felt a real desire to save their souls. And I am persuaded there is at this day more religious zeal in England, than there has been for a century past.

4. But has this zeal been of the right or the wrong kind? Probably both the one and the other. Let us see if we cannot separate these, that we may avoid the latter, and cleave to the former. In order to this, I would first inquire,

- I. What is the nature of true Christian zeal?
- II. What are the properties of it? And,
- III. Draw some practical inferences.

I.

And, First, What is the nature of zeal in general, and of true Christians zeal in particular?

1. The original word, in its primary signification, means *heat*, such as the heat of boiling water. When it is figuratively applied to the mind, it means

any warm emotion or affection. Sometimes it is taken for envy. So we render it, Acts 5:17, where we read, “The High Priest, and all that were with him, were filled with envy,” — *επληοθησαν ζηλου* although it might as well be rendered, *were filled with zeal*. Sometimes, it is taken for anger and indignation; sometimes, for vehement desire. And when any of our passions are strongly moved on a religious account, whether for anything good, or against anything which we conceive to be evil, this we term, religious zeal.

2. But it is not all that is cited religious zeal which is worthy of that name. It is not properly religious or Christian zeal, if it be not joined with charity. A fine writer (Bishop Sprat) carries the matter farther still. “It has been affirmed,” says that great man, “no zeal is right, which is not charitable, but is mostly so. Charity or love, is not only one ingredient, but the chief ingredient in its composition.” May we not go further still? May we not say, that true zeal is not mostly charitable, but wholly so? that is, if we take charity, in St. Paul’s sense, for love; the love of God and our neighbor. For it is a certain truth, (although little understood in the world,) that Christian zeal is all love. It is nothing else. The love of God and man fills up its whole nature.

3. Yet it is not every degree of that love, to which this appellation is given. There may be some love, a small degree of it, where there is no zeal. But it is, properly, love in a higher degree. It is *fervent love*. True Christian zeal is no other than the flame of love. This is the nature, the inmost essence, of it.

II.

1. From hence it follows, that the properties of love are the properties of zeal also. Now, one of the chief properties of love is humility: “Love is not puffed up.” Accordingly, this is a property of true zeal: Humility is inseparable from it. As is the degree of zeal, such is the degree of humility: They must rise and fall together. The same love which fills a man with zeal for God, makes him little, and poor, and vile in his own eyes.

2. Another of the properties of love is meekness: Consequently it is one of the properties of zeal. It teaches us to be meek, as well as lowly; to be

equally superior to anger or pride, like as the wax melteth at the fire, so before this sacred flame all turbulent passions melt away, and leave the soul unruffled and serene.

3. Yet another property of loves and consequently of zeal, is unwearied patience: For “love endureth all things.” It arms the soul with entire resignation to all the disposals of Divine Providence, and teaches us to say, in every occurrence, “It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.” It enables us, in whatever station, therewith to be content; to repine at nothing, to murmur at nothing, “but in everything to give thanks.”

4. There is a Fourth property of Christian zeal, which deserves to be more particularly considered. This we learn from the very words of the Apostle; “It is good to be zealously affected always” (not to have transient touches of zeal, but a steady, rooted disposition) “in a good thing:” In that which is good; for the proper object of zeal is, good in general; that is, everything that is good, really such, in the sight of God.

5. But what is good in the sight of God? What is that religion, wherewith God is always well pleased? How do the parts of this rise one above another, and what is the comparative value of them?

This is a point exceeding little considered, and therefore little understood. Positive divinity, many have some knowledge of. But few know anything of comparative divinity. I never saw but one tract upon this head; a sketch of which it may be of use to subjoin.

In a Christian believer *love* sits upon the throne which is erected in the inmost soul; namely, love of God and man, which fills the whole heart, and reigns without a rival. In a circle near the throne are all holy tempers; — long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, fidelity, temperance; and if any other were comprised in “the mind which was in Christ Jesus.” In an exterior circle are all the *works of mercy*, whether to the souls or bodies of men. By these we exercise all holy tempers; by these we continually improve them, so that all these are real means of grace, although this is not commonly adverted to. Next to these are those that are usually termed works of piety; — reading and hearing the word, public, family, private prayer,

receiving the Lord's Supper, fasting or abstinence. Lastly, that his followers may the more effectually provoke one another to love, holy tempers, and good works, our blessed Lord has united them together in one body, the Church, dispersed all over the earth; a little emblem of which, of the Church universal, we have in every particular Christian congregation.

6. This is that religion which our Lord has established upon earth, ever since the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. This is the entire, connected system of Christianity: And thus the several parts of it rise one above another, from that lowest point, the assembling ourselves together, to the highest, — love enthroned in the heart. And hence it is easy to learn the comparative value of every branch of religion. Hence also we learn a Fifth property of true zeal.

That as it is always exercised *εν καλω*, *in that which is good*, so it is always *proportioned* to that good, to the degree of goodness that is in its object.

7. For example. Every Christian ought, undoubtedly, to be zealous for the Church, bearing a strong affection to it, and earnestly desiring its prosperity and increase. He ought to be thus zealous, as for the Church universal, praying for it continually, so especially for that particular Church or Christian society whereof he himself is a member. For this he ought to wrestle with God in prayer; meantime using every means in his power to enlarge its borders, and to strengthen his brethren, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

8. But he should be more zealous for the ordinances of Christ than for the Church itself; for prayer in public and private; for the Lord's Supper; for reading, hearing, and meditating on his word; and for the much neglected duty of fasting. These he should earnestly recommend; first, by his example; and then by advice, by argument, persuasion, and exhortation, as often as occasion offers.

9. Thus should he show his zeal for works of piety; but much more for works of mercy; seeing "God will have mercy and not sacrifice;" that is,

rather than sacrifice. Whenever, therefore, one interferes with the other, works of mercy are to be preferred. Even reading, hearing, prayer, are to be omitted, or to be postponed, “at charity’s almighty call, when we are called to relieve the distress of our neighbor, whether in body or soul.

10. But as zealous as we are for all good works, we should still be more zealous for holy tempers; for planting and promoting, both in our own souls, and in all we have any intercourse with, lowliness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, contentedness, resignation unto the will of God, deadness to the world and the things of the world, as the only means of being truly alive to God. For these proofs and fruits of living faith we cannot be too zealous. We should “talk of them as we sit in our house,” and “when we walk by the way,” and “when we lie down,” and “when we rise up.” We should make them continual matter of prayer; as being far more excellent than any outward works whatever: Seeing those will fail when the body drops off, but these will accompany us into eternity.

11. But our choicest zeal should be reserved for love itself, — the end of the commandment, the fulfilling of the law. The Church, the ordinances, outward works of every kind, yea, all other holy tempers, are inferior to this, and rise in value only as they approach nearer and nearer to it. Here then is the great object of Christian zeal. Let every true believer in Christ apply, with all fervency of spirit, to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that his heart may be more and more enlarged in love to God and to all mankind. This one thing let him do: Let him “press on to this prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

III.

It remains only to draw some practical inferences from the preceding observations.

1. And, First, if zeal, true Christian zeal, be nothing but the flame of love, then *hatred*, in every kind and degree, then every sort of *bitterness* toward them that oppose us, is so far from deserving the name of zeal, that it is directly opposite to it. If zeal be only fervent love, then it stands at the utmost distance from *prejudice*, jealousy, evil-surmising; seeing “love

thinketh no evil.” Then *bigotry* of every sort, and, above all, the spirit of *persecution*, are totally inconsistent with it. Let not, therefore, any of these unholy tempers screen themselves under that sacred name. As all these are the works of the devil, let them appear in their own shape, and no longer under that specious disguise deceive the unwary children of God.

2. Secondly. If lowliness be a property of zeal, then pride is inconsistent with it. It is true, some degree of pride may remain after the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, as this is one of the last evils that is rooted out, when God creates all things new; but it cannot reign, nor retain any considerable power, where fervent love is found. Yea, were we to give way to it but a little, it would damp that holy fervor, and, if we did not immediately fly back to Christ, would utterly quench the Spirit.

3. Thirdly. If meekness be an inseparable property of zeal, what shall we say of those who call their anger by that name? Why, that they mistake the truth totally; that they, in the fullest sense, put darkness for light, and light for darkness. We cannot be too watchful against this delusion, because it spreads over the whole Christian world. Almost in all places, zeal and anger pass for equivalent terms; and exceeding few persons are convinced, that there is any difference between them. How commonly do we hear it said, “See how zealous the man is!” Nay, he cannot be zealous; that is impossible, for he is in a passion; and passion is as inconsistent with zeal, as light with darkness, or heaven with hell!

It were well that this point were thoroughly understood. Let us consider it; a little farther. We frequently observe one that bears the character of a religious man vehemently angry at his neighbor. Perhaps he calls his brother *Raca*, or *Thou fool*. He brings a railing accusation against him. You mildly admonish him of his warmth. He answers, “It is my zeal!” No: It is your sin, and, unless you repent of it, will sink you lower than the grave. There is much such zeal as this in the bottomless pit. Thence all zeal of this kind comes; and thither it will go, and you with it, unless you are saved from it before you go hence!

4. Fourthly. If patience, contentedness, and resignation, are the properties of zeal, then murmuring, fretfulness, discontent, impatience are wholly

inconsistent with it. And yet how ignorant are mankind of this! How often do we see men fretting at the ungodly, or telling you they are *out of patience* with such or such things, and terming all this their zeal! O spare no pains to undeceive them! If it be possible, show them what zeal is; and convince them that all murmuring, or fretting at sin, is a species of sin, and has no resemblance of, or connection with, the true zeal of the gospel.

5. Fifthly. If the object of zeal be that which is good, then fervor for any *evil thing* is not Christian zeal. I instance, In *idolatry*, worshipping of angels, saints, images, the cross. As though, therefore, a man were so earnestly attached to any kind of idolatrous worship, that he would even “give his body to be burned,” rather than refrain from it, call this bigotry or superstition, if you please, but call it not zeal; that is quite another thing.

From the same premises it follows, that fervor for *indifferent things* is not Christian zeal. But how exceedingly common is this mistake too! Indeed one would think that men of understanding could not be capable of such weakness. But, alas! the history of all ages proves the contrary. Who were men of stronger understandings than Bishop Ridley and Bishop Hooper? And how warmly did these, and other great men of that age, dispute about the *sacerdotal vestments*! How eager was the contention for almost a hundred years, for and against wearing a *surplice*! O shame to man! I would as soon have disputed about a straw or a barley-corn! And this, indeed, shall be called zeal! And why was it not rather called wisdom or holiness?

6. It follows also, from the same premises, that fervor for *opinions* is not Christian zeal. But how few are sensible of this! And how innumerable are the mischiefs which ever this species of false zeal has occasioned in the Christian world! How many thousand lives have been cast away by those who were zealous for the Romish opinions! How many of the excellent ones of the earth have been cut off by zealots, for the senseless opinion of transubstantiation! But does not every unprejudiced person see, that this zeal is “earthly, sensual, devilish;” and that it stands at the utmost contrariety to that zeal which is here recommended by the Apostle?

What an excess of charity is it then which our great poet expresses, in his “Poem on the Last Day,” where he talks of meeting in heaven —

Those who by mutual wounds aspired,
By seal for their distinct persuasions fired!

Zeal indeed! What manner of zeal was this, which led them to cut one another’s throats? Those who were *fired* with this spirit, and died therein, will undoubtedly have their portion, not in heaven, (only love is there,) but in the “fire that never shall be quenched.”

7. Lastly. If true zeal be always proportioned to the degree of goodness which is in its object, then should it rise higher and higher according to the scale mentioned above; according to the comparative value of the several parts of religion. For instance, all that truly fear God should be zealous for the *Church*; both for the catholic or universal Church, and for that part of it whereof they are members. This is not the appointment of men, but of God. He saw it was is not good for men to be alone, even in this sense, but that the whole body of his children should he “knit together, and strengthened, by that which every joint supplieth.” At the same time they should be more zealous for the *ordinances* of God; for public and private prayer, for hearing and reading the word of God, and for fastings, and the Lord’s Supper. But they should be more zealous for *works of mercy*, than even for works of piety. Yet ought they to be more zealous still for all *holy tempers*, lowliness, meekness, resignation: But most zealous of all, for that which is the sum and the perfection of religion, the *love* of God and man.

8. It remains only to make a close and honest application of these things to our own souls. We all know the general truth, that “it is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing.” Let us now, every one of us, apply it to his own soul in particular.

9. Those, indeed, who are still dead in trespasses and sins have neither part nor lot in this matter; nor those that live in any open sin, such as drunkenness, Sabbath breaking, or profane swearing. These have nothing to do with zeal; they have no business at all even to take the word in their mouth. It is utter folly and impertinence for any to talk of zeal for God,

while he is doing the works of the devil. But if you have renounced the devil and all his works, and have settled it in your heart, I will. “worship the Lord my God, and him only will I serve,” then beware of being neither cold nor hot; then be zealous for God. You may begin at the lowest step. Be zealous for *the Church*; more especially for that particular branch thereof wherein your lot is cast. Study the welfare of this, and carefully observe all the rules of it, for conscience’ sake. But, in the mean time, take heed that you do not neglect any of the *ordinances* of God; for the sake of which, in a great measure, the Church itself was constituted: So that it would be highly absurd to talk of zeal for the Church, if you were not more zealous for them. But are you more zealous for *works of mercy*, than even for works of piety? Do *you* follow the example of your Lord, and prefer mercy even before sacrifice? Do you use all diligence in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting them that are sick and in prison? And, above all, do you use every means in your power to save souls from death? If, as you have time, “you do good unto all men,” though “especially to them that are of the household of faith,” your zeal for the Church is pleasing to God: But if not, if you are not “careful to maintain good works,” what have you to do with the Church? If you have not “compassion on your fellow-servants,” neither will your Lord have pity on *you*. “Bring no more vain oblations.” All your service is “an abomination to the Lord.”

10. Are you better instructed than to put asunder what God has joined than to separate works of piety from works of mercy? Are you uniformly zealous of both? So far you walk acceptably to God; that is, if you continually bear in mind, that God “searcheth the heart and reins;” that “he is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;” that, consequently, no outward works are acceptable to him, unless they spring from *holy tempers*, without which no man can have a place in the kingdom of Christ and God.

11. But of all holy tempers, and above all others, see that you be most zealous for *love*. Count all things loss in comparison of this, — the love of God and all mankind. It is most sure, that if you give all your goods to feed the poor, yea, and your body to be burned, and have not humble,

gentle, patient love, it profiteth you nothing. O let this be deep engraved upon your heart: “All is nothing without love!”

12. Take then the whole of religion together, just as God has revealed it in his word; and be uniformly zealous for every part of it, according to its degree of excellence, grounding all our zeal on the one foundation, — “Jesus Christ and him crucified;” holding fast this one principle, — “The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved ME, and gave himself for Me.” Proportion your zeal to the value of its object. Be calmly zealous, therefore, First, for the *Church*; “the whole state of Christ’s Church militant here on earth;” and in particular for that branch thereof with which you are more immediately connected. Be more zealous for all those “*ordinances* which our blessed Lord hath appointed, to continue therein to the end of the world. Be more zealous for those *works of mercy*, those “sacrifices wherewith God is well pleased,” those marks whereby the Shepherd of Israel will know his sheep at the last day. Be more zealous still for *holy tempers*, for long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, lowliness, and resignation: But be most zealous of all for love, the queen of all graces, the highest perfection in earth or heaven, the very image of the invisible God, as in men below, so in angels above. For as God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him,”

SERMON XCIII.

ON REDEEMING THE TIME.

“Redeeming the time.” Ephesians 5:16.

1. “**S**EE that ye walk circumspectly,” says the Apostle in the preceding verse, “not as fools, but as wise men, redeeming the time;” saving all the time you can for the best purposes; buying up every fleeting moment out of the hands of sin and Satan, out of the hands of sloth, ease, pleasure, worldly business; the more diligently, because the present “are evil days,” days of the grossest ignorance, immorality, and profaneness.

2. This seems to be the general meaning of the words. But I purpose, at present, to consider only one particular way of “redeeming the time,” namely, from sleep.

3. This appears to have been exceeding little considered even by pious men. Many that have been eminently conscientious in other respects, have not been so in this. They seemed to think it an indifferent thing, whether they slept more or less; and never saw it in the true point of views as an important branch of Christian temperance.

That we may have a more just conception hereof, I will endeavor to show,

I. What it is to redeem the time from sleep.

II. The evil of not redeeming it. And,

III. The most effectual manner of doing it.

I.

1. And, First, What is it to redeem the time from sleep? It is, in general, to take that measure of sleep every night which nature requires, and no more; that measure which is most conducive to the health and vigor both of the body and mind.

2. But it is objected, “One measure will not suit all men; — some require considerably more than others. Neither will the same measure suffice even the same persons at one time as at another. When a person is sick, or, if not actually so, yet weakened by preceding sickness, he certainly wants more of this natural restorative, than he did when in perfect health. And so he will when his strength and spirits are exhausted by hard or long-continued labor.

3. All this is unquestionably true, and confirmed by a thousand experiments. Whoever, therefore, they are that have attempted to fix one measure of sleep for all persons, did not understand the nature of the human body, so widely different in different persons: as neither did they who imagined that the same measure would suit even the same person at all times. One would wonder, therefore, that so great a man as Bishop Taylor should have formed this strange imagination; much more, that the measure which he has assigned for the general standard should be only three hours in four and twenty. That good and sensible man, Mr. Baxter, was not much nearer the truth; who supposes four hours in four and twenty will suffice for any man. I know an extremely sensible man, who was absolutely persuaded, that no one living needed to sleep above five hours in twenty-four. But when he made the experiment himself, he quickly relinquished the opinion. And I am fully convinced, by an observation continued for more than fifty years, that, whatever may be done by extraordinary persons, or in some extraordinary cases, (wherein persons have subsisted with very little sleep for some weeks, or even months,) a human body can scarce continue in health and vigor, without, at least, six hours’ sleep in four and twenty. Sure I am, I never met with such an instance: I never found either man or woman that retained vigorous health for one year, With a less quantity of sleep than this.

4. And I have long observed, that women, in general, want a little more sleep than men; perhaps, because they are, in common, of a weaker, as well as a moister, habit of body. If, therefore, one might venture to name one standard, (though liable to many exceptions and occasional alterations,) I am inclined to think this would come near to the mark: Healthy men, in general, need a little above six hours sleep, healthy

women, a little above seven, in four-and-twenty. I myself want six hours and a half, and I cannot well subsist with less.

5. If any one desires to know exactly what quantity of sleep his own constitution requires, he may very easily make the experiment which I made about sixty years ago: I then waked every night about twelve or one, and lay awake for some time I readily concluded, that this arose from my lying longer in bed than nature required. To be satisfied, I procured an alarm, which waked me the next morning at seven; (near an hour earlier than I rose the day before;) yet I lay awake again at night. The second morning I rose at six; but, notwithstanding this, I lay awake the second night. The third morning I rose at five; but, nevertheless, I lay awake the third night. The fourth morning I rose at four; (as, by the grace of God, I have done ever since;) and I lay awake no more. And I do not now lie awake (taking the year round) a quarter of an hour together in a month. By the same experiment, rising earlier and earlier every morning, may any one find how much sleep he really wants.

II.

1. “But why should any one be at so much pains:” What need is there of being so scrupulous? Why should we make ourselves so particular? What harm is there in doing as our neighbors do? suppose in lying from ten till six or seven in summer, and till eight or nine in winter?”

2. If you would consider this question fairly, you will need a good deal of candor and impartiality; as what I am about to say will probably be quite new; different from any thing you ever heard in your life; different from the judgment, at least from the example, of your parents and your nearest relations; nay, and perhaps of the most religious persons you ever were acquainted with. Lift up, therefore, your heart to the Spirit of truth, and beg of him to shine upon it, that, without respecting any man’s person, you may see and follow the truth as it is in Jesus.

3. Do you really desire to know what harm there is in not redeeming all the time you can from sleep? suppose in spending, therein an hour a day more than nature requires? Why, First, *it hurts your substance*; it is throwing away six hours a week, which might turn to some temporal account. If you

can do any work, you might earn something in that time, were it ever so small. And you have no need to throw even this away. If you do not want it yourself; give it to them that do; you know some of them that are not far off. If you are of no trade, still you may so employ the time that it will bring money, or money's worth, to yourself, or others.

4. The not redeeming all the time you can from sleep, the spending more time therein than your constitution necessarily requires, in the Second place, *hurts your health*. Nothing can be more certain than this, though it is not commonly observed, because the evil steals on you by slow and insensible degrees. In this gradual and almost imperceptible manner it lays the foundation of many diseases. It is the chief real (though unsuspected) cause of all nervous diseases in particular. Many inquiries have been made, why nervous disorders are so much more common among us than among our ancestors. Other causes may frequently concur; but the chief is we lie longer in bed. Instead of rising at four, most of us who are not obliged to work for our bread lie till seven, eight, or nine. We need inquire no farther. This sufficiently accounts for the large increase of these painful disorders.

5. It may be observed, that most of these arise, not barely from sleeping too long, but even from, what we imagine to be quite harmless, the lying too long, in bed. By *soaking* (as it is emphatically called) so long between warm sheets, the flesh is, as it were, parboiled, and becomes soft and flabby. The nerves, in the mean time, are quite unstrung, and all the train of melancholy symptoms, faintness, tremors, lowness of spirits, (so called,) come on, till life itself is a burden.

6. One common effect of either sleeping too long, or lying too long in bed, is *weakness of sight*, particularly that weakness which is of the nervous kind. When I was young, my sight was remarkably weak. Why is it stronger now than it was forty years ago? I impute this principally to the blessing of God, who fits us for whatever he calls us to. But undoubtedly the outward means which he has been pleased to bless was the rising early in the morning.

7. A still greater objection to the not rising early, the not redeeming all the time we can from sleep, is, *it hurts the soul*, as well as the body; it is a sin

against God. And this indeed it must necessarily be, on both the preceding accounts. For we cannot waste, or (which comes to the same thing) not improve, any part of our worldly substance, neither can we impair our own health, without sinning against Him.

8. But this fashionable intemperance does also hurt the soul in a more direct manner. It sows the seeds of foolish and hurtful desires; it dangerously inflames our natural appetites; which a person stretching and yawning in bed is just prepared to gratify. It breeds and continually increases sloth, so often objected to the English nation. It opens the way, and prepares the soul; for every other kind of intemperance. It breeds an universal softness and faintness of spirit, making us afraid of every little inconvenience unwilling to deny ourselves any pleasure, or to take up or bear any cross. And how then shall we be able (without which we must drop into hell) to “take the kingdom of heaven by violence?” It totally unfits us for “enduring hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; and, consequently, for “fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold on eternal life.”

9. In how beautiful a manner does that great man, Mr. Law, treat this important subject! ⁶ Part of his words I cannot but here subjoin, for the use of every sensible reader.

“I take it for granted, that every Christian who is in health is up early in the morning. For it is much more reasonable to suppose a person is up early because he is a Christian, than because he is a laborer, or a tradesman, or a servant.

“We conceive an abhorrence of a man that is in bed when he should be at his labor. We cannot think good of him, who is such a slave to drowsiness to neglect his business for it.

“Let this, therefore, teach us to conceive how odious we must appear to God, if we are in bed, shut up in sleep, when we should be praising God; and are such slaves to drowsiness as to neglect our devotions for it.

“Sleep in such a dull, stupid state of existence, that, even among mere animals, we despise them most which are most drowsy. He, therefore, that chooses to enlarge the slothful indolence of sleep, rather than be early at his devotions. chooses the dullest refreshment of the body, before the noblest enjoyments of the soul. He chooses that state which is a reproach to mere animals, before that exercise which is the glory of angels.

10. “Besides, he that cannot deny himself this drowsy indulgence, is no more prepared for prayer when he is up, than he is prepared for fasting or any other act of self-denial. He may indeed more easily read over a form of prayer, than he can perform these duties; but he is no more disposed for the spirit: of prayer, than he is disposed for fasting. For sleep thus indulged gives a softness to all our tempers, and makes us unable to relish any thing but what suits an idle state of mind, as sleep does. So that a person who is a slave to this idleness is in the same temper when he is up. Every thing that is idle or sensual pleases him. And every thing that requires trouble or self-denial, is hateful to him, for the same reason that he hates to rise.

11. “It is not possible for an epicure to be truly devout. He must renounce his sensuality, before he can relish the happiness of devotion. Now, he that turns sleep into an idle indulgence, does as much to corrupt his soul, to make it a slave to bodily appetites, as an epicure does. It does not disorder his health, as notorious acts of intemperance do; but, like any more moderate course of indulgence, it silently, and by smaller degrees, wears away the spirit of religion, and sinks the soul into dullness and sensuality.

“Self-denial of all kinds is the very life and soul of piety. But he that has not so much of it as to be able to be early at his prayers, cannot think that he has taken up his cross, and is following Christ.

“What conquest has he got over himself? What right hand has he cut off? What trials is he prepared for? What sacrifice is he ready to offer to God, who cannot be so cruel to himself as to rise to pray at such a time as the drudging part of the world are content to rise to their labor?

12. “Some people will not scruple to tell you, that they indulge themselves in sleep because they have nothing to do, and that if they had any business to rise to, they would not lose so much of their time in sleep. But they must be told, that they mistake the matter; that they have a great deal of business to do; they have a hardened heart to change they have the whole spirit of religion to get. For surely he that thinks he has nothing to do, because nothing but his prayers want him, may justly be said to have the whole spirit of religion to seek.

“You must not therefore consider how small a fault it is to rise late; but how great a misery it is to want the spirit of religion, and to live in such softness and idleness as make you incapable of the fundamental duties of Christianity.

“If I was to desire you not to study the gratification of your palate, I would not insist upon the sin of wasting your money, though it is; a great one; but I would desire you to renounce such a way of life, because it supports you in such a state of sensuality as renders you incapable of relishing the most essential doctrines of religion.

“For the same reason, I do not insist much upon the sin of wasting your time in sleep, though it be a great one, but I desire you to renounce this indulgence, because it gives a softness and idleness to your soul, and is so contrary to that lively, zealous, watchful, self-denying spirit, which was not only the spirit of Christ and his Apostles, and the spirit of all the saints and martyrs that have ever been among men, but must be the spirit of all those who would not sink in the common corruption of the world.

13. “Here, therefore, we must fix our charge against this practice. We must blame it, not as having this or that particular evil, but as a general habit that extends itself through our whole spirit, and supports a state of mind that is wholly wrong.

“It is contrary to piety; not as accidental slips or mistakes in life are contrary to it; but in such a manner as an ill state of body is contrary to health.

“On the other hand, if you was to rise early every morning, as an instance of self-denial, as a method of renouncing indulgence, as a means of redeeming your time and fitting your spirit for prayer, you would soon find the advantage. This method, though it seems but a small circumstance, might be a means of great piety. It would constantly keep it in your mind, that softness and idleness are the bane of religion. It would teach you to exercise power over yourself, and to renounce other pleasures and tempers that war against the soul. And what is so planted and watered. Will certainly have an increase from God.”

III.

1. It now only remains to inquire, in the Third place, how we may redeem the time, how we may proceed in this important affair. In what manner shall we most effectually practice this important branch of temperance?

I advise all of you who are thoroughly convinced of the unspeakable importance of it, suffer not that conviction to die away, but instantly begin to act suitably to it. Only do not depend on your own strength; if you do, you will be utterly baffled. Be deeply sensible, that as you are not able to do any thing good of yourselves, so here, in particular, all your strength, all your resolution, will avail nothing. Whoever trusts in himself will be confounded. I never found an exception. I never knew one who trusted in his own strength that could keep this resolution for a twelve-month.

“I advise you, Secondly, cry to the Strong for strength. Call upon Him that hath all power in heaven and earth, and believe that he will answer the prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips. As you cannot have too little confidence in yourself, so you cannot have too much in him. Then see out in faith; and surely his strength shall be made perfect in your weakness.

3. I advise you, Thirdly, add to your faith, prudence: use the most rational means to attain your purpose. I particularly, begin at the right end, otherwise you will lose your labor. If you desire to rise early, sleep early; secure this point at all events. In spite of the most dear and agreeable companions, in spite of their most earnest solicitations, in spite of entreaties, railleries, or reproaches, rigorously keep your hour. Rise up

precisely at your time, and retire without ceremony. Keep your hour, notwithstanding the most pressing business: Lay all things by till the morning. Be it ever so great a cross, ever so great self-denial, keep your hour, or all is over.

4. I advise you, Fourthly, be steady, keep your hour of rising without intermission. Do not rise two mornings, and lie in bed the third; but what you do once, do always. “But my head aches. Do not regard that. It will soon be over. But I am uncommonly drowsy; my eyes are quite heavy.” When you must not parley; otherwise it is a lost case; but start up at once. And if your drowsiness does not go off; lie down for awhile an hour or two after. But let nothing make a breach upon this rule, rise and dress yourself at your hour.

5. Perhaps you will say, “The advice is good; but it comes too late! I have made a breach already. I did rise constantly for a season, nothing hindered me. But I gave way by little and little, and I have now left it off for a considerable time.” Then, in the name of God, begin again! Begin tomorrow; or rather tonight, by going to bed early, in spite of either company or business. Begin with more self-diffidence than before, but with more confidence in God. Only follow these few rules, and, my soul for yours, God will give you the victory. In a little time the difficulty will be over, but the benefit will last for ever.

6. If you say, “But I cannot do now as I did then; for I am not what I was: I have many disorders, my spirits are low, my hands shake; I am all relaxed,” — I answer: All these are nervous symptoms; and they all partly arise from your taking too much sleep: Nor is it probable they will ever be removed, unless you remove the cause. Therefore, on this very account, (not only to punish yourself for your folly and unfaithfulness, but,) in order to recover your health and strength, resume your early rising. You have no other way; you have nothing else to do. You have no other possible means of recovering, in any tolerable degree, your health both of body and mind. Do not murder yourself outright. Do not run on in the path that leads to the gates of death! As I said before, so I say again, In the name of God, this very day, set out anew. True, it will be more difficult than it was at the beginning. But bear the difficulty which you have

brought upon yourself, and it will not last long. The Sun of Righteousness will soon arise again, and will heal both your soul and your body.

7. But do not imagine that this single point, rising early, will suffice to make you a Christian. No: Although that single point, the not rising, may keep you a Heathen, void of the whole Christian spirit; although this alone (especially if you had once conquered it) will keep you cold, formal, heartless, dead, and make it impossible for you to get one step forward in vital holiness, yet this alone will go but a little way to make you a real Christian. It is but one step out of many; but it is one. And having taken this, go forward. Go on to universal self-denial, to temperance in all things, to a firm resolution of taking up daily every cross whereto you are called. Go on, in a full pursuit of all the mind that was in Christ, of inward and then outward holiness, so shall you be not almost but altogether a Christian; so shall you finish your course with joy: You shall awake up after his likeness, and be satisfied.

SERMON XCIV.

ON FAMILY RELIGION.

“As for me and my house, we, will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15.

1. IN the foregoing verses we read that Joshua, now grown old, “gathered the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges and officers; and they presented themselves before the Lord. (Verse 1.) And, Joshua rehearsed to them the great things which God had done for their fathers; (verses 2-13;) concluding with that strong exhortation: “Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth; and put away the God, which your fathers served on the other side the flood, (Jordan,) and in Egypt.” (Verse 14.) Can anything be more astonishing than this? that even in Egypt, yea, and in the wilderness, where they were daily fed, and both day and night guided by miracle, the Israelites, in general, should worship idols, in flat defiance of the Lord their God! He proceeds: “If it seemeth evil to you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve: whether the gods your fathers served on the other side of the flood, or the Gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

2. A resolution this worthy of a hoary headed saint, who had had large experience, from his youth up, of the goodness of the Master to whom he had devoted himself, and the advantages of his service. How much is it to be wished that all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, all whom he has brought out of the land of Egypt, out of the bondage of sin, — those especially who are united together in Christian fellowship, — would adopt this wise resolution! Then would the work of the Lord prosper in our land; then would his word run and be glorified. Then would multitudes of sinners in every place stretch out their hands unto God, until “the glory of the Lord covered the land, as the waters cover the sea.”

3. On the contrary, what will the consequence be, if they do not adopt this resolution? — if family religion be neglected? — if care be not taken of the rising generation? Will not the present revival of religion in a short time die away? Will it not be as the historian speaks of the Roman state in its infancy, — *res unius aetatis*? — “an event that has its beginning and end within the space of one generation!” Will it not be a confirmation of that melancholy remark of Luther’s, that “a revival of religion never lasts longer than one generation?” By a generation, (as he explains himself,) he means thirty years. But, blessed be God, this remark does not hold. With regard to the present instance; seeing this revival, from its rise in the year 1729, has already lasted above fifty years.

4. Have we not already seen some of the unhappy consequences of good men’s not adopting this resolution? Is there not a generation arisen, even within this period, yea, and from pious parents, that know not the Lord? that have neither his love in their hearts, nor his fear before their eyes? How many of them already “despise their fathers, and mock at the counsel of their mothers!” How many are utter strangers to real religion, to the life and power of it! And not a few have shaken off all religion, and abandoned themselves to all manner of wickedness! Now, although this may sometimes be the case, even of children educated in a pious manner, yet this case is very rare: I have met with some, but not many, instances of it. The wickedness of the children is generally owing to the fault or neglect of their parents. For it is a general, though not universal rule, though it admits of some exceptions, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

5. But what is the purport of this resolution, “I and my house will serve the Lord?” In order to understand and practice this, let us, First, inquire, what it is to “serve the Lord.” Secondly, Who are included in that expression, “my house.” And, Thirdly, What can we do, that we and our house may serve the Lord.

I.

1. We may inquire, First, what it is to “serve the Lord.” not as a Jew, but as a Christian; not only with an outward service, (though some of the Jews

undoubtedly went farther than this,) but with inward, with the service of the heart, is worshipping him in spirit and in truth. The First thing implied in this service is faith, believing in the name of the Son of God. We cannot perform an acceptable service to God, till we believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. There the spiritual worship of God begins. As soon as any one has the witness in himself, as soon as he can say, “The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me;” he is able truly to “serve the Lord.”

2. As soon as he believes, he loves God, which is another thing implied in “serving the Lord.” “We love him because he first loved us;” of which faith is the evidence. The love of a pardoning God is “shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Indeed this love may admit of a thousand degrees: But still every one, as long as he believes, may truly declare before God, is “‘Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.’ Thou knowest that ‘my desire is unto thee, and unto the remembrance of thy name.’”

3. And if any man truly love God, he cannot but love his brother also. Gratitude to our Creator will surely produce benevolence to our fellow-creatures. It we love Him, we cannot but love one another, as Christ loved us. We feel our souls enlarged in love toward every child of man. And toward all the children of God we put on “bowels of kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, forgiving one another,” if we have a complaint against any, “even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven us.”

4. One thing more is implied in “serving the Lord,” namely, the obeying him; the steadily walking in all his ways, the doing his will from the heart. Like those, “his servants” above, “who do his pleasure, who keep his commandments, and hearken to the voice of his words;” these, his servants below, hearken unto his voice, diligently keep his commandments, carefully avoid whatever he has forbidden, and zealously do whatever he has enjoined; studying always to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man.

II.

“I and my house will serve the Lord,” will every real Christian say. But who are included in that expression, “my house?” This is the next point to be considered.

1. The person in your house that claims your first and nearest attention, is, undoubtedly, your wife; seeing you are to love her, even as Christ hath loved the Church, when he laid down his life for it, that he might purify it unto himself; not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” The same end is every husband to pursue, in all his intercourse with his wife; to use every possible means that she may be freed from every spot, and may walk unblamable in love.

2. Next to your wife are your children; immortal spirits whom God hath, for a time, entrusted to your care, that you may train them up in all holiness, and fit them for the enjoyment of God in eternity. This is a glorious and important trust; seeing one soul is of more value than all the world beside. Every child, therefore, you are to watch over with the utmost care, that, when you are called to give an account of each to the Father of Spirits, you may give your accounts with joy and not with grief.

3. Your servants, of whatever kind, you are to look upon as a kind of secondary children: These, likewise, God has committed to your charge, as one that must give account. For every one under your roof that has a soul to be saved is under your care; not only indented servants, who are legally engaged to remain with you for a term of years; not only hired servants, whether they voluntarily contract for a longer or shorter time; but also those who serve you by the week or day: For these too are, in a measure, delivered into your hands. And it is not the will of *your* Master who is in heaven, that any of these should go out of your hands before they have received from you something more valuable than gold or silver. Yea, and you are in a degree accountable even for “the stranger that is within your gates.” As you are particularly required to see that he does “no manner of work” on the Lord’s day, while he is within your gates so, by purity of reason, you are required to do all that is in your power to prevent his sinning against God in any other instance.

III.

Let us inquire, in the Third place, What can we do that all these may “serve the Lord?”

1. May we not endeavor, First, to *restrain* them from all outward sin; from profane swearing; from taking the name of God in vain, from doing any needless work. or taking any pastime, or the Lord’s day? This labor of love you owe even to your visitants; much more to your wife’s children, and servants. The former, over whom you have the least influence, you may restrain by argument or mild persuasion. If you find that, after repeated trials, they will not yield either to one or the other; it is your bounden duty to set ceremony aside, and to dismiss them from your house. Servants also, whether by the day, or for a longer space, if you cannot reclaim, either by reasoning added to your example, or by gentle or severe reproofs, though frequently repeated, you must, in anywise, dismiss from your family, though it should be ever so inconvenient.

2. But you cannot dismiss your wife, unless for the cause of fornication, that is, adultery. What can then be done, if she is habituated to any other open sin? I cannot find in the Bible that a husband has authority to strike his wife on any account, even suppose she struck him first, unless his life were in imminent danger. I never have known one instance yet of a wife that was mended thereby. I have heard, indeed, of some such instances; but as I did not see them, I do not believe them. It seems to me, all that can be done in this case is to be done partly by example, partly by argument or persuasion, each applied in such a manner as is dictated by Christian prudence. If evil can ever be overcome, it must be overcome by good. It cannot be overcome by evil: We cannot beat the devil with his own weapons. Therefore, if this evil cannot be overcome by good, we are called to suffer it. We are then called to say, “This is the cross which God hath chosen for me. He surely permits it for wise ends; ‘let him do what seemeth him good.’ Whenever he sees it to be best, he will remove this cup from me.” Meantime continue in earnest prayer, knowing that with God no word is impossible; and that he will either in due time take the temptation away, or make it a blessing to your soul.

3. Your children, while they are young, you may restrain from evil, not only by advice, persuasions and reproof, but also by *correction*; only remembering, that this means is to be used last, — not till all other have been tried, and found to be ineffectual. And even then you should take the utmost care to avoid the very appearance of passion. Whatever is done should be done. With mildness, nay, indeed, with kindness too. Otherwise your own spirit will suffer loss, and the child will reap little advantage.

4. But some will tell you, “All this is lost labor: A child need not to be corrected at all. Instruction, persuasion, and advice, will be sufficient for any child without correction; especially if gentle reproof be added, as occasion may require.” I answer, There may be particular instances, wherein this method may be successful. But you must not, in anywise lay this down as a universal rule; unless you suppose yourself wiser than Solomon, or, to speak more properly wise than God. For it is God himself, who hast knoweth his own creatures, that has told us expressly, “He that spareth the rod, hateth his son: But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” (Proverbs 13:24.) And upon this is grounded that plain commandment, directed to all that fear God, “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.” (19:18.)

5. Nay we not endeavor, Secondly, to instruct them? to take care that every person who is under our roof have all such knowledge as is necessary to salvation? to see that our wife, servants, and children be taught all those things which belong to their eternal peace? In order to this you should provide that not only your wife, but your servants also, may enjoy all the public means of instruction. On the Lord’s day in particular, you should so forecast what is necessary to be done at home, that they may have an opportunity of attending all the ordinances of God. Yea, and you should take care that they have some time everyday for reading, meditation, and prayer; and you should inquire whether they do actually employ that time in the exercises for which it is allowed. Neither should any day pass without family prayer, seriously and solemnly performed.

6. You should particularly endeavor to instruct your children, early, plainly, frequently, and patiently. Instruct them *early*, from the first hour that you perceive reason begins to dawn. Truth may then begin to shine

upon the mind far earlier than we are apt to suppose. And whoever watches the first openings of the understanding, may, by little and little, supply fit matter for it to work upon, and may turn the eye of the soul toward good things, as well as toward bad or trifling ones

Whenever a child begins to speak, you may be assured reason begins to work. I know no cause why a parent should not just then begin to speak of the best things, the things of God. And from that time no opportunity should be lost, of instilling all truths as they are capable of receiving.

7. But the speaking to them early will not avail, unless you likewise speak to them *plainly*. Use such words as little children may understand, just such as they use themselves, carefully observe the few ideas which they have already, and endeavor to graft what you say upon them. To take a little example: Bid the child look up; and ask. "What do you see there?" "The sun." "See, how bright it is! Feel how warm it shines upon your hand! Look, how it makes the grass and the flowers to grow, and the trees and everything look green. But God, though you cannot see him, is above the sky, and is a deal brighter than the sun! It is he, it is God that made the sun, and you, and me, and everything. It is he that makes the grass and the flowers grow; that makes the trees green, and the fruit to come upon them! Think what he can do! He can do whatever he pleases. He can strike me or you dead in a moment! But he loves you; he loves to do you good. He loves to make you happy. Should not you then love *him*? You love *me*, because I love you and do you good. But it is God that makes me love you. Therefore, you should love him. And he will teach you how to love him."

8. While you are speaking in this, or some such manner, you should be continually lifting up your heart to God, beseeching him to open the eyes of their understanding, and to pour his light upon them. He, and he alone, can make them to differ herein from the beasts that perish. He alone can apply your words to their hearts; without which all your labor will be in vain, but whenever the Holy Ghost teaches, there is no delay in learning.

9. But if you would see the fruit of your labor, you must teach them not only early and plainly, but *frequently* too. It would be of little or no

service to do it only once or twice a week. How often do you feed their bodies? Not less than three times a day. And is the soul of less value than the body? Will you not then feed this as often? If you find this a tiresome task, there is certainly something wrong in your own mind. You do not love them enough; or you do not love Him who is your Father and their Father. Humble yourself before him! Beg that he would give you more love; and love will make the labor light.

10. But it will not avail to teach them both early, plainly, and frequently, unless you *persevere* therein. Never leave off, never intermit your labor of love, till you see the fruit of it. But in order to this, you will find the absolute need of being endued with power from on high; without which, I am persuaded, none ever had, or will have, patience sufficient for the work. Otherwise, the inconceivable dullness of some children, and the giddiness or perverseness of others, would induce them to give up the irksome task, and let them follow their own imagination.

11. And suppose, after you have done this, after you have taught your children from their early infancy, in the plainest manner you could, omitting no opportunity, and persevering therein, you did not presently see any fruit of your labor, you must not conclude that there will be none. Possibly the "bread" which you have "cast upon the waters" may be "found after many days." The seed which has long remained in the ground may, at length, spring up into a plentiful harvest. Especially if you do not restrain prayer before God, if you continue instant herein with all supplication. Meantime, whatever the effect of this be upon others, your reward is with the Most High.

12. Many parents, on the other hand, presently see the fruit of the seed they have sown, and have the comfort of observing that their children grow in grace in the same proportion as they grow in years. Yet they have not done all. They have still upon their hands another task, sometimes of no small difficulty. Their children are now old enough to go to school. But to what school is it advisable to send them?

13. Let it be remembered, that I do not speak to the wild, giddy, thoughtless world, but to those that fear God. I ask, then, for what end do

you send your children to school?; “Why that they may be fit to live in the world,” In which world do you mean, — this or the next? Perhaps you thought of this world only; and had forgot that there is a world to come; yea, and one that will last for ever! Pray take this into your account, and send them to such masters as will keep it always before their eyes.

Otherwise, to send them to school (permit me to speak plainly) is little better than sending them, to the devil. At all events, then, send your boys, if you have any concern for their souls, not to any of the large public schools, (for they are nurseries of all manner of wickedness,) but a private school, kept by some pious man, who endeavors to instruct a small number of children in religion and learning together.

14. “But; what shall I do with my girls?” By no means send them to a large boarding-school. In these seminaries too the children teach one another pride, vanity, affectation, intrigue, artifice, and, in short, everything which a Christian woman ought not to learn. Suppose a girl were well inclined, yet what would she do in a crowd of children, not one of whom has any thought of God, or the least concern for her soul? Is it likely, is it possible, she should retain any fear of God, or any thought of saving her soul in such company? especially as their whole conversation points another ways and turns upon things which one would wish she would never think of. I never yet knew a pious, sensible woman that had been bred at a large boarding-school, who did not aver, one might as well send a young maid to be bred in Drury-Lane.

15. “But where, then, shall I send my girls? If you cannot breed them up yourself, (as my mother did, who bred up seven daughters to years of maturity,) send them to some mistress that truly fears God; one whose life is a pattern to her scholars, and who has only so many that she can watch over each as one that must give account to God. Forty years ago I did not know such a mistress in England, but you may now find several; you may find such a mistress, and such a school, at Highgate, at Deptford, near Bristol, in Chester, or near Leeds.

16. We may suppose your sons have now been long enough at school, and you are thinking of some business for them. Before you determine anything on this head, see that your eye be single. Is it so? Is it your view

to please God herein? It is well if you take him into your account! But surely, if you love or fear God yourself, this will be your first consideration, — “In what business will your son be most likely to love and serve God? In what employment will he have the greatest advantage for laying up treasure in heaven?” I have been shocked above measure in observing how little this is attended to, even by pious parents! Even these consider only how he may get most money: not how he may get most holiness! Even these, upon this glorious motive, send him to a heathen master, and into family where there is not the very form, much less the power of religion! Upon this motive they fix him in a business which will necessarily expose him to such temptations as will leave him not a probability, if a possibility, of serving God. O savage parents! unnatural, diabolical cruelty. — if you believe there is another world.

“But what shall I do?” Set God before your eyes, and do all things with a view to please him. Then you will find a master, of whatever profession, that loves, or at least fears, God; and you will find a family wherein is the form of religion, if not the power also. Your son may nevertheless serve the devil if he will; but it is probable he will not. And do not regard, if he get less money, provided he get more holiness. It is enough, though he have less of earthly goods, if he secure the possession of heaven.

17. There is one circumstance more wherein you will have great need of the wisdom from above. Your son or your daughter is now of age to marry, and desires your advice relative to it. Now you know what the world calls a *good match*, — one whereby much money is gained. Undoubtedly it is so, if it be true that money always brings happiness: But I doubt it is not true; money seldom brings happiness, either in this world or the world to come. Then let no man deceive you with vain words; riches and happiness seldom dwell together, Therefore, if you are wise, you will not seek riches for your children by their marriage. See that your eye be single in this also: Aim simply at the glory of God, and the real happiness of your children, both in time and eternity. It is a melancholy thing to see how Christian parents rejoice in selling their son or their daughter to a wealthy Heathen! And do you seriously call this a *good match*? Thou fool by purity of reason, thou mayest call hell a *good lodging*, and the devil a *good master*. O learn a better lesson from a better

Master! “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” both for thyself and thy children, “and all other things shall be added unto you.”

18. It is undoubtedly true, that if you are steadily determined to walk in this path; to endeavor by every possible means, that you and your house may thus serve the Lord; that every member of your family may worship him, not only in form, but in spirit and in truth; you will have need to use all the grace, all the courage, all the wisdom which God has given you; for you will find such hindrances in the way, as only the mighty power of God can enable you to break through. You will have all the *saints of the world* to grapple with, who will think you carry things too far. You will have all the powers of darkness against you, employing both force and fraud; and, above all, the deceitfulness of your own heart; which, if you will hearken to it, will supply you with many reasons why you should be a *little more* conformable to the world. But as you have begun, go on in the name of the Lord, and in the power of his might! Set the smiling and the frowning world, with the prince thereof; at defiance. Follow reason and the oracles of God; not the fashions and customs of men. “Keep thyself pure.” Whatever others do, let you and your house “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.” Let you, your yoke-fellow, your children, and your servants, be all on the Lord’s side; sweetly drawing together in one yoke, walking in all his commandments and ordinances, till every one of you “shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor!”

SERMON XCV.

ON THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

“Train up a child in the way wherein he should go: And when he is old, he will not depart, from it.”

Proverbs. 22:6

1. WE must not imagine that these words are to be understood in an absolute sense, as if no child that had been trained up in the way wherein he should go had ever departed from it. Matter of fact will by no means agree with this: So far from it, that it had been a common observation, “Some of the best parents have the worst children.” It is true, this might some times be the case, because good men have not always a good understanding; and, without this, it is hardly to be expected that they will know how to train up their children. Besides, those who are in other respects good men have often too much easiness of temper; so that they go no farther in restraining their children from evil, than old Eli did, when he said gently, “Nay, my sons, the report I hear of you is not good.” This, then, is no contradiction to the assertion; for their children are not “trained up in the way wherein they should go.” But it must be acknowledged, some have been trained therein with all possible care and diligence; and yet before they were old, yea. in the strength of their years, they did utterly depart from it.

2. The words, then, must be understood with some limitations, and then they contain an unquestionable truth. It is a general, though not an universal, promise; and many have found the happy accomplishment of it. As this is the most probable method for making their children pious which any parents can take, so it generally, although not always, meets with the desired success. The God of their fathers is with their children; he blesses

their endeavors; and they have the satisfaction of leaving their religion, as well as their worldly substance, to those that descend from them.

3. But what is “the way wherein a child should go?” and how shall we “train him up” therein? The ground of this is admirably well laid down by Mr. Law, in his “Serious Call to a Devout Life.” Part of his words are, —

“Had we continued perfect as God created the First man, perhaps the perfection of our nature had been a sufficient self-instructor for every one. But as sickness and diseases have created the necessity of medicines and physicians, so the disorders of our rational nature have introduced the necessity of education and tutors.

“And as the only end of a physician is, to restore nature to its own state, so the only end of education is, to restore our rational nature to its proper state. Education, therefore, is to be considered as reason borrowed at second-hand, which is, as far as it can, to supply the loss of original perfection. And as physic may justly be called the art of restoring health, so education should be considered in no other light, than as the art of recovering to man his rational perfection.

“This was the end pursued by the youths that attended upon Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato. Their everyday lessons and instructions were so many lectures upon the nature of man, his true end, and the right use of his faculties; upon the immortality of the soul, its relation to God; the agreeableness of virtue to the divine nature; upon the necessity of temperance, justice, mercy, and truth; and the folly of indulging our passions.

“Now, as Christianity has, as it were, now created the moral and religious world, and set everything that is reasonable, wise, holy, and desirable in its true point of light; so one would expect the education of children should be as much mended by Christianity, as the doctrines of religion are.

“As it has introduced a new state of things, and so fully informed us of the nature of man, and the end of his creation; as it has fixed all our goods and evils, taught us the means of purifying our souls, of pleasing God, and

being happy eternally; one might naturally suppose that every Christian country abounded with schools, not only for teaching a few questions and answers of a catechism, but for the forming, training, and practicing children in such a course of life as the sublimest doctrines of Christianity require.

“An education under Pythagoras or Socrates had no other end, but to teach children to think and act as Pythagoras and Socrates did.

“And is it not reasonable to suppose that a Christian education should have no other end but to teach them how to think, and judge, and act according to the strictest rules of Christianity?

“At least one would suppose, that in all Christian schools, the teaching them to begin their lives in the spirit of Christianity, — in such abstinence, humility, sobriety, and devotion as Christianity requires, — should not only be more, but a hundred times more, regarded than any or all things else.

“For those that educate us should imitate our guardian angels; suggest nothing to our minds but what is wise and holy; help us to discover every false judgment of our minds, and to subdue every wrong passion in our hearts.

“And it is as reasonable to expect and require all this benefit from a Christian education, as to require that physic should strengthen all that is right in our nature, and remove all our diseases.”

4. Let it be carefully remembered all this time, that God, not man, is the physician of souls; that it is he, and none else, who giveth medicine to heal our natural sickness; that all “the help which is done upon earth, he doeth it himself;” that none of all the children of men is able to “bring a clean thing out of an unclean;” and, in a word, that “it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” But it is generally his pleasure to work by his creatures; to help man by man. He honors men to be, in this sense, “workers together with him.” By this means the reward is ours, while the glory redounds to him.

5. This being premised, in order to see distinctly what is the way wherein we should train up a child, let us consider, What are the diseases of his nature? What are those spiritual diseases which every one that is born of a woman brings with him into the world?

Is not the first of these *Atheism*? After all that has been so plausibly written concerning “The innate idea of God;” after all that has been said of its being common to all men, in all ages and nations; it does not appear that man has naturally any more idea of God than any of the beasts of the field; he, has no knowledge of God at all; no fear of God at all; neither is God in all his thoughts. Whatever change may afterwards be wrought, (whether by the grace of God, or by his own reflection, or by education,) he is, by nature, a mere Atheist.

6. Indeed it may be said, that every man is by nature, as it were, his own God. He worships himself. He is, in his own conception, absolute Lord of himself. Dryden’s hero speaks only according to nature, when he says, “Myself am king of *me*.” He seeks himself in all things. He pleases himself: And why not? Who is Lord over him? *His own will* is his only law; he does this or that because it is his good pleasure. In the same spirit as the “son of the morning” said in old time, “I will sit upon the sides of the North,” he says, “*I will* do thus or thus.” And do we not find sensible men on every side who are of the self-same spirit? who if asked, “Why did you do this?” will readily answer, “Because I had a mind to it.”

7. Another evil disease which every human soul brings into the world with him, is *pride*; a continual proneness to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. Every man can discern more or less of this disease in every one — but himself. And, indeed, if he could discern it in himself, it would subsist no longer; for he would then, in consequence, think of himself just as he ought to think.

8. The next disease, natural to every human soul, born with every man, is *love of the world*. Every man is, by nature, a lover of the creature, instead of the Creator; a “lover of pleasure,” in every kind, “more than a lover of God.” He is a slave to foolish and hurtful desires, in one kind or another;

either to the “desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, or the pride of life.” “The desire of the flesh” is a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies one or more of the outward senses. “The desire of the eyes” is a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies the internal sense, the imagination, either by things grand, or new, or beautiful. “The pride of life” seems to mean a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies the sense of honor. To this head is usually referred “the love of money;” one of the basest passions that can have place in the human heart. But it may be doubted whether this be not an acquired, rather than a natural, distemper.

9. Whether this be a natural disease or not, it is certain *anger* is. The ancient philosopher defines it, “A sense of injury received, with a desire of revenge.” Now, was there ever any one born of a woman who did not labor under this? Indeed, like other diseases of the mind, it is far more violent in some than in others. But it is *furor brevis*, as the poet speaks; it is a real, though short madness wherever it is.

10. A *deviation from truth* is equally natural to all the children of men. One said in his haste, “All men are liars;” but we may say, upon cool reflection, all natural men will, upon a close temptation, vary from, or disguise, the truth. If they do not offend against veracity, if they do not say what is false, yet they frequently offend against *simplicity*. They use art; they hang out false colors; they practice either simulation, or dissimulation. So that you cannot say truly of any person living, till grace has altered nature, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”

11. Every one is likewise prone, by nature, to speak or act *contrary to justice*. This is another of the diseases which we bring with us into the world. All human creatures are naturally partial to themselves, and, when opportunity offers, have more regard to their own interest or pleasure than strict justice allows. Neither is any man, by nature, *merciful* as our heavenly Father is merciful; but all, more or less, transgress that glorious rule of mercy as well as justice, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, the same do unto them.”

12. Now, if these are the general diseases of human nature, is it not the grand end of education to cure them? And is it not the part of all those to whom God has entrusted the education of children, to take all possible care, first, not to increase, not to feed, any of these diseases; (as the generality of parents constantly do it and next, to use every possible means of healing them?

13. To come to particulars. What can parents do, and mothers more especially, to whose care our children are necessarily committed in their tender years, with regard to the *Atheism* that is natural to all the children of men? How is this fed by the generality of parents, even those that love, or at least fear, God; while, in spending hours, perhaps days, with their children, they hardly name the name of God! Meantime, they talk of a thousand other things in the world that is round about them. Will not then the things of the present world, which surround these children on every side, naturally take up their thoughts, and set God at a greater distance from them (if that be possible) than he was before? Do not parents feed the *Atheism* of their children farther, by ascribing the works of creation to *nature*? Does not the common way of talking about nature, leave God quite out of the question? Do they not feed this disease, whenever they talk in the hearing of their children, of anything *happening* so or so? of things coming by *chance*? of good or ill *fortune*? as also when they ascribe this or that event to the wisdom or power of men; or, indeed, to any other second causes, as if these governed the world? Yea, do they not feed it unawares, while they are talking of their own wisdom, or goodness, or power to do this or that, without expressly mentioning, that all these are the gift of God? All tends to confirm the *Atheism* of their children, and to keep God out of their thoughts.

14. But we are by no means clear of their blood, if we only go thus far, if we barely do not feed their disease. What can be done to cure it? From the first dawn of reason continually inculcate, God is in this and every place. God made you, and me, and the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and every thing. And every thing is his; heaven, and earth, and all that is therein. God orders all things: He makes the sun shine, and the wind blow, and the trees bear fruit. Nothing comes by chance; that is a silly word; there is no such thing as chance. As God made the world, so he governs

the world, and every thing that is in it. Not so much as a sparrow falls to the ground without the will of God. And as he governs all things, so he governs all men, good and bad, little and great. He gives them all the power and wisdom they have. And he over-rules all. He gives us all the goodness we have; every good thought, and word, and work, are from him. Without him we can neither think anything right, or do anything right. Thus it is, we are to inculcate upon them, that God is all in all.

15. Thus may we counteract, and, by the grace of God assisting us, gradually cure, the natural Atheism of our children. But what can we do to cure their *self-will*? It is equally rooted in their nature, and is, indeed, the original idolatry, which is not confined to one age or country, but is common to all the nations under heaven. And how few parents are to be found even among Christians, even among them that truly fear God, who are not guilty of this matter! Who do not continually feed and increase this grievous distemper in their children! To let them have their own will, does this most effectually. To let them take their own way, is the sure method of increasing their self-will sevenfold. But who has the resolution to do otherwise? One parent in a hundred! Who can be so singular, so cruel, as not, more or less, to *humor* her child? “And why should you not? What harm can there be in this, which every body does?” The harm is, that it strengthens their will more and more, till it will neither bow to God nor man. To humor children is, as far as in us lies, to make their disease incurable. A wise parent, on the other hand, should begin to break their will the first moment it appears. In the whole art of Christian education there is nothing more important than this. The will of a parent is to a little child in the place of the will of God. Therefore studiously teach them to submit to this while they are children, that they may be ready to submit to his will when they are men. But in order to carry this point, you will need incredible firmness and resolution; for after you have once begun, you must never more give way. You must hold on still in an even course; you must never intermit your attention for one hour; otherwise you will lose your labor.

16. If you are not willing to lose all the labor you have been at, to break the will of your child, to bring his will into subjection to yours, that it may be afterward subject to the will of God, there is one advice, which, though

little known, should be particularly attended to. It may seem a small circumstance; but it is of more consequence than one can easily imagine. It is this: Never, on any account, give a child any thing that it cries for. For it is a true observation, (and you may make the experiment as often as you please,) if you give a child what he cries for, you pay him for crying; and then he will certainly cry again. “But if I do not give it him when he cries, he will scream all day long.” If he does, it is your own fault; for it is in your power effectually to prevent it: For no mother need suffer a child to cry aloud after it is a year old. “Why, it is impossible to hinder it.” So many suppose, but it is an entire mistake. I am a witness of the direct contrary; and so are many others. My own mother had ten children, each of whom had spirit enough; yet not one of them was ever heard to cry aloud after it was a year old. A gentlewoman of Sheffield (several of whose children I suppose are alive still) assured me she had the same success with regard to her eight children, when some were objecting to the possibility of this, Mr. Parson Greenwood (well known in the North of England) replied, “This cannot be impossible; I have had the proof of it in my own family. Nay, of more than this. I had six children by my former wife; and she suffered none of them to cry aloud after they were ten months old. And yet none of their spirits were so broken, as to unfit them for any of the offices of life.” This, therefore, may be done by any woman of sense, who may thereby save herself abundance of trouble, and prevent that disagreeable noise, the squalling of young children, from being heard under her roof. But I allow, none but a woman of sense will be able to effect this; yea, and a woman of such patience and resolution as only the grace of God can give. However, this is doubtless the more excellent way: And she that is able to receive it, let her receive it!

17. It is hard to say, whether self-will or *pride* be the more fatal distemper. It was chiefly pride that threw down so many of the stars of heaven, and turned angels into devils. But what can parents do in order to check this until it can be radically cured?

First. Beware of adding fuel to the flame, of feeding the disease which you should cure. Almost all parents are guilty of doing this, by praising their children to their face. If you are sensible of the folly and cruelty of this, see that you sacredly abstain from it. And, in spite of either fear or

complaisance, go one step farther. Not only do must encourage, but do not suffer, others to do what you dare not do yourself: How few parents are sufficiently aware of this, — or, at least, sufficiently resolute to practice it, — to check every one at the first word, that would praise them before their face! Even those who would not, on any account, *sit attention to their own applause*, nevertheless, do not scruple to sit attentive to the applause of their children; yea, and that to their face! O consider! Is not this the spreading a net for their feet? Is it not a grievous incentive to pride, even if they are praised for what is truly praise-worthy? Is it not doubly hurtful, if they are praised for things not truly praise worthy; — things of an indifferent nature, as sense, good-breeding, beauty, elegance of apparel? This is liable not only to hurt the heart, but their understanding also. It has a manifest and direct tendency to infuse pride and folly together; to pervert both their taste and judgment; teaching them to value what is dung and dross in the sight of God.

18. If, on the contrary, you desire without loss of time to strike at the root of their pride, teach your children, as soon as possibly you can, that they are fallen spirits; that they are fallen short of that glorious image of God wherein they were first created; that they are not now as they were once, incorruptible pictures of the God of glory; bearing the express likeness of the wise, the good, the holy Father of spirits; but more ignorant, more foolish, and more wicked, than they can possibly conceive. Show them that, in pride, passion, and revenge, they are now like the devil; and that in foolish desires and groveling appetites, they are like the beasts of the field. Watch over them diligently in this respect, that, whenever occasion offers, you may “pride in its earliest motions find,” and check the very first appearance of it.

If you ask, “But how shall I encourage them when they do well, if I am never to commend them?” I answer, I did not affirm this; I did not say, “You are *never* to commend them.” I know many writers assert this, and writers of eminent piety. They say, “To commend man, is to rob God;” and therefore condemn it altogether. But what say the Scriptures? I read there, that our Lord himself frequently commended his own disciples; and the great. Apostle scruples not to commend the Corinthians, Philippians, and divers others to whom he writes, we may not, therefore, condemn this

altogether. But I say, use it exceeding sparingly; and when you use it, let it be with, the utmost caution, directing them, at the same moment, to look upon all they have as the free gift of God; and With the deepest self-abasement to say, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give thy praise!”

19. Next to self-will and pride, the most fatal disease with which we are born, is “love of the world.” But how studiously do the generality of parents cherish this in its several branches! They cherish “the desire of the flesh,” that is, the tendency to seek happiness in pleasing the outward senses, by studying to enlarge the pleasure of tasting in their children to the uttermost; not only giving them before they are weaned other things beside milk, the natural food of children; but giving them, both before and after, any sort of meat or drink that they will take. Yea, they entice them, long before nature requires it, to take wine or strong drink; and provide them with comfits, gingerbread, raisins, and whatever fruit they have a mind to. They feed in them “the desire of the eyes,” the propensity to seek happiness in pleasing the imagination, by giving them pretty playthings, glittering toys, shining buckles or buttons, fine clothes, red shoes, laced hats, needless ornaments, as ribbons, necklaces, ruffles; yea, and by proposing any of these as *rewards* for doing their duty, which is stamping a great value upon them. With equal care and attention they cherish in them the third branch of the love of the world, “the pride of life;” the propensity to seek their happiness in the “honor that cometh of men.” Nor is the love of money forgotten; many an exhortation do they hear on *securing the main chance*; many a lecture, exactly agreeing with that of the old Heathen, *Si possis, recte; si non, quocunque modo rem*: “Let money, honestly if you can; but if not, get money” And they are carefully taught to look on riches and honor as the reward of all their labors.

20. In direct opposition to all this, a wise and truly kind parent will take the utmost care, not to cherish in her children the desire of the flesh; their natural propensity to seek happiness in gratifying the outward sense. With this view she will suffer them to taste no food but milk, till they are weaned; which a thousand experiments show is most safely and easily done at the seventh month. And then accustom them to the most simple

food, chiefly of vegetables, She may inure them to taste only one kind of food, beside bread at dinner, and constantly to breakfast and sup on milk, either cold or heated, but not boiled. She may use them to sit by her at meals, and ask for nothing, but take what is given them. She need never, in they are at least nine or ten years old, let them know the taste of tea; or use any other drink at meals but water, or small beer. And they will never desire to taste either meat or drink between meals, if not accustomed thereto. If fruit, comfits, or anything of the kind be given them, let them not touch it but at meals. And never propose any of these as a reward; but teach them to look higher than this.

But herein a difficulty will arise, which it will need much resolution to conquer. Your servants, who will not understand your plan, will be continually giving little things to your children, and thereby undoing all your work. This you must prevent, if possible, by warning them when they first come into your house, and repeating the warning from time to time. If they *will* do it notwithstanding, you must turn them away. Better lose a good servant than spoil a good child.

Possibly you may have another difficulty to encounter, and one of a still more trying nature. Your mother or your husband's mother, may live with you; and you will do well to show her all possible respect. But let her on no account have the least share in the management of your children. She would end all that you had done; she would give them their own will in all things. She would humor them to the destruction of their souls, if not their bodies too. In fourscore years I have not met with one woman that knew how to manage grandchildren. My own mother, who governed her children so well, could never govern one grandchild. In every other point obey your mother. Give up your will to hers. But with regard to the management of your children, steadily keep the reins in your own hands.

21. A wise and kind parent will be equally cautious of feeding "the desire of the eyes" in her children. She will give them no pretty playthings, no glittering toys, shining buckles or buttons, fine or gay clothes; no needless ornaments of any kind; nothing that can attract the eye. Nor will she suffer any other person to give them what she will not give them herself. Anything of the kind that is offered may be either civilly refused, or

received and, laid by. If they are displeased at this, you cannot help it. Complaisance, yea, and temporal interest, must needs be set aside, when the eternal interests of your children are at stake.

Your pains will be well-requited, if you can inspire them early with a contempt of all finery; and, on the other hand, with a love and esteem for neat plainness of dress: Teaching them to associate the ideas of plainness and modesty; and those of a fine and loose woman. Likewise, instill into them, as early as possible, a fear and contempt of pomp and grandeur; an abhorrence and dread of the love of money; and a deep conviction, that riches cannot give happiness. Wean them, therefore, from all these false ends; habituate them to make God their end in all things; and inure them, in all they do, to aim at knowing, loving, and serving God.

22. Again: The generality of parents feed *anger* in their children; yea, the worst part of it; that is, revenge. The silly mother says, “What hurt my child? Give me a blow for it.” What horrid work is this! Will not the old murderer teach them this lesson fast enough? Let the Christian parent spare no pains to teach them just the contrary. Remind them of the words of our blessed Lord: “It was said of old, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil;” not by returning evil for evil. Rather than this, “if a man take away thy cloak, let him take thy coat also.” Remind them of the words of the great Apostle “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves. For it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord.”

23. The generality of parents feed and increase the natural *falsehood* of their children. How often may we hear that senseless word, “No, it was not *you*; it was not my child that did it; say, it was the cat.” What amazing folly is this! Do you feel no remorse, while you are putting a lie in the mouth of your child, before it can speak plain? And do not you think, it will make a good proficiency when it comes to years of discretion? Others teach them both dissimulation and lying, by their unreasonable severity; and yet others, by admiring and applauding their ingenious lies and cunning tricks. Let the wise parent, on the contrary, teach them to “put away all lying,” and, both in little things and great, in jest or earnest, speak the very truth from their heart. Teach them that the author of all falsehood

is the devil, who “is a liar and the father of it.” Teach them to abhor and despise, not only lying, but all equivocating, all cunning and dissimulation. Use every means to give them a love of truth, — of veracity, sincerity, and simplicity, and of openness both of spirit and behavior.

24. Most parents increase the natural tendency to injustice in their children, by conniving at their wronging each other; if not laughing at, or even applauding, their witty contrivance to cheat one another. Beware of every thing of this kind; and from their very infancy sow the seeds of justice in their hearts, and train them up in the exactest practice of it. If possible, teach them the love of justice, and that in the least things as well as the greatest. Impress upon their minds the old proverb “He that will steal a penny, will steal a pound.” Habituate them to render unto all their due, even to the uttermost farthing.

25. Many parents connive, likewise, at the *ill-nature* of their children, and thereby strengthen it. But truly affectionate parents will not indulge them in any kind or degree of *unmercifulness*. They will not suffer them to vex their brothers or sisters, either by word or deed. They will not allow them to hurt; or give pain to, anything that has life. They will not permit them to rob birds’ nests; much less to kill any thing without necessity, — not even snakes, which are as innocent as worms, or toads, which, notwithstanding their ugliness, and the ill name they lie under, have been proved over and over to be as harmless as flies. Let them extend, in its measure, the rule of doing as they would be done by, to every animal whatsoever. Ye that are truly kind parents, in the morning, in the evening, and all the day beside, press upon all your children, “to walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us;” to mind that one point, “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

SERMON XCVI.

ON OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS.

“Children, obey your parents in all things.” Colossians 3:20.

1. IT has been a subject of controversy for many years, whether there are any innate principles in the mind of man. But it is allowed on all hands, if there be any practical principles naturally implanted in the soul, “that we ought to honor our parents,” will claim this character almost before any other. It is enumerated amongst those universal principles by the most ancient authors; and is undoubtedly found, even along: most savages, in the most barbarous nations. We may trace it through all the extent of Europe and Asia, through the wilds of Africa, and the forests of America. And it is not less, but more, observable in the most civilized nations. So it was first, in the eastern: parts of the world; which were for so many ages the seat of empire, of learning, and politeness, as well as of religion. So it was afterwards in all the Grecian States, and throughout the whole Roman Empire. In this respect it is plain, they that “have not the” written “law, are at law unto themselves;” showing “the work,” the substance, “of the law” to be “written in their hearts.”

2. And wherever God has revealed his will to man, this law has been a part of that revelation. It has been herein opened afresh, considerably enlarged, and enforced, in the strongest manner. In the Jewish revelation, the notorious breakers thereof were punishable with death. And this was one of the laws which our blessed Lord did not come to destroy, but to fulfill. Accordingly he severely reprov'd the Scribes and Pharisees for making it void through their traditions, clearly showing that the obligation thereof extended to all ages. It is the substance of this which St. Paul delivers to the Ephesians; (6:1) “Children, obey your parents in the Lord,” and again

in these words, to the Colossians, “Children, obey your parents in all things.”

3. It is observable that the Apostle enforces this duty by a threefold encouragement: First. To the Ephesians he adds, “for this is right:” It is an instance of justice as well as mercy. It is no more than their due; it is what we owe to them, for the very being which we have received from them. Secondly. “This is acceptable to the Lord;” it is peculiarly pleasing to the great Father of men and angels, that we should pay honor and obedience to the fathers of our flesh. Thirdly, It is “the first commandment with promise;” the first to the performance whereof a peculiar promise is annexed; “that it may be well with the, and that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” This promise has been generally understood to include health and temporal blessings, as well as long life. And we have seen innumerable proofs, that, it belongs to the Christian as well as the Jewish dispensation: Many remarkable instances of its accomplishment occur even at this day.

But what is the meaning of these words, “Children, obey your parents in all things?” I will endeavor, by the assistance of God, First, to explain, and, Then, to apply them.

I.

1. First. I will endeavor to explain these words; and the rather, because so few people seem to understand them. Look round into the world, not the heathen but the Christian world, nays the Reformed part of it; look among those that have the Scriptures in their own tongue; and who is there that appears even to have heard of this? Here and there a child obeys the parent out of fear, or perhaps out of natural affection. But how many children can you find that obey their fathers and mothers out of a sense of duty to God? And how many parents can you find, that duly inculcate this duty upon their children? I doubt, a vast majority both of parents and children are totally ignorant of the whole affair. For the sake of these I will make it as plain as I can: But still I am thoroughly sensible, those that are not willing to be convinced will no more understand what I say, than if I was talking Greek or Hebrew.

2. You will easily observe, that by *parents* the Apostle means both fathers and mothers, as he refers us to the Fifth Commandment, which names both the one and the other. And, however human laws may vary herein, the law of God makes no difference; but lays us under the same obligation of obeying both the one and the other.

3. But before we consider how we are to obey our parents, it may be inquired, how long we are to obey them. Are children to obey only till they run alone, till they go to school, till they can read and write, or till they are as tall as their parents, or attain to years of discretion? Nay, if they obey only because they fear to be beaten, or because otherwise they cannot procure food and raiment, what avails such obedience? Those only who obey their parents when they can live without them, and when they neither hope nor fear anything from them, shall have praise from God.

4. “But is a man that is at age, or a woman that is married, under any farther obligation to obey their parents?” With regard to marriage, although it is true that a man is to leave father and mother, and to cleave unto his wife; and, by purity of reason, she is to leave father and mother, and cleave unto her husband; (in consequence of which there may be some particular cases wherein conjugal duty must take place of filial;) yet I cannot learn, either from Scripture or reason, that marriage either cancels or lessens the general obligation of filial duty. Much less does it appear, that it is either canceled or lessened by our having lived one-and-twenty years. I never understood it so in my own case. When I had lived upwards of thirty years, I looked upon myself to stand just in the same relation to my father as I did when I was ten years old. And when I was between forty and fifty, I judged myself full as much obliged to obey my mother in everything lawful, as I did when I was in my leading-strings.

5. But what is implied in, “Children, obey your parents in all things?” Certainly the First point of obedience is to do nothing: which your father or mother forbids, whether it be great or small. Nothing is more plain, than that the prohibition of a parent binds every conscientious child; that is, except the thing prohibited is clearly enjoined of God. Nor indeed is this all; the matter may be carried a little farther still: A tender parent may totally disapprove what he does not care flatly to forbid. What is the duty

of a child in this case? How far is that disapprobation to be regarded? Whether it be equivalent to a prohibition or not, a person who would have a conscience void of offense should undoubtedly keep on the safe side, and avoid what may perhaps be evil. It is surely the more excellent way, to do nothing which you know your parents disapprove. To act otherwise seems to imply a degree of disobedience, which one of a tender conscience would wish to avoid.

6. The Second thing implied in this direction is, Do every thing which your father or mother bids, be it great or small, provided it be not contrary to any command of God. Herein God has given a power to parents, which even sovereign princes have not. The King of England, for instance, is a sovereign prince; yet he has not power to bid me do the least thing, unless the law of the land requires me so to do; for he has no power but to execute the law. The will of the king is no law to the subject. But the will of the parent is a law to the child, who is bound in conscience to submit thereto, unless it be contrary to the law of God.

7. It is with admirable wisdom that the Father of spirits has given this direction, that as the strength of the parents supplies the want of strength, and the understanding of the parents that want of understanding, in their children, till they have strength and understanding of their own; so the will of the parents may guide that of their children till they have wisdom and experience to guide themselves. This, therefore, is the very first thing which children have to learn, — that they are to obey their parents, to submit to their will, in all things: And this they may be inured to, long before they understand the reason of it; and, indeed, long before they are capable of understanding any of the principles of religion. Accordingly, St. Paul directs all parents to bring up their children “in the discipline and doctrine of the Lord.” For their will may be broken by proper discipline, even in their early infancy; whereas it must be a considerable time after, before they are capable of instruction; This, therefore, is the first point of all: Bow down their wills from the very first dawn of reason; and, by habituating them to your will, prepare them for submitting to the will of their Father which is in heaven.

8. But how few children do we find, even of six or eight years old, that understand anything of this! Indeed, how should they understand it, seeing they have none to teach them. Are not their parents father as well as mother, full as ignorant of the matter as themselves? Whom do you find, even among religious people, that have the least conception of it? Have not you seen the proof of it with your own eyes? Have not you been present when a father or mother has said, “My child, do so or so?” The child, without any ceremony, answered peremptorily, “I won’t.” And the parent quietly passes it by, without any farther notice. And does he or she not see, that, by this cruel indulgence, they are training up their child, by flat rebellion against their parents, to rebellion against God? Consequently they are training him up for the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels! Did they duly consider this, they would neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, till they had taught him a better lesson, and made him thoroughly afraid ever for giving that diabolical answer again.

9. Let me reason this case a little farther with you parents that fear God. If you do fear God, how dare you suffer a child above a year old to say, “I will do” what you forbid, or, “I won’t do” what you bid, and to go unpunished? Why do not you stop him at once, that he may never dare to say so again? Have you no bowels, no compassion for your child; no regard for his salvation or destruction? Would you suffer him to curse or swear in your presence, and take no notice of it? Why, disobedience is as certain a way to damnation as cursing and swearing. Stop him, stop him at first, in the name of God. Do not; “spare the rod, and spoil the child.” If you have not the heart of a tiger, do not give up your child to his own wills that is, for the devil. Though it be part to yourself, yet pluck your offspring out of the lion’s teeth. Make them submit, that they may not perish. Break their wills, that you may save their soul.

10. I cannot tell how to enforce this point sufficiently. To fix: it upon your minds more strongly, permit me to add part of a letter on the subject, printed some years ago: —

“In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is, to conquer their will. To inform their understanding is a work of time, and must proceed by slow degrees, but the subjecting the will is a thing which

must be done at once; and the sooner the better. For by our neglecting timely correction, they contract a stubbornness, which is hardly ever to be conquered; and never without using that severity which would be as painful to us as to the children. Therefore, I call those cruel parents, who pass for kind and indulgent, who permit their children to contract habits which they know must be afterwards broken.

“I insist upon conquering the wills of children betimes; because this is the only foundation for a religious education. When this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason of its parent, till its own understanding comes to maturity.

“I cannot yet dismiss this subject. As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children, insures their after wretchedness and irreligion and whatever checks and mortifies it, promotes their future happiness and piety. This is still more evident, if we consider that religion is nothing else but the doing the will of God, and not our own; and that self-will being the grand impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness, no indulgence of it can be trivial, no denial of it unprofitable. Heaven or hell depends on this alone. So that the parent who studies to subdue it in his children, works together with God in the saving of a soul: The parent who indulges it does the devil’s work; makes religion impracticable, salvation unattainable; and does all that in him lies to damn his child, soul and body, for ever!

“This, therefore, I cannot but earnestly repeat, — break their wills betimes; begin this great work before they can run alone, before they can speak plain or perhaps speak at all. Whatever pains it cost, conquer their stubbornness; break the will, if you would not damn the child. I conjure you not to neglect, not to delay this! Therefore,

- (1.) Let a child, from a year old, be taught to fear the rod and to cry softly. In order to this,
- (2.) Let him have nothing he cries for; absolutely nothing, great or small; else you undo your own work.
- (3.) At all events, from that age, make him do as he is bid, if you whip him ten times running to effect it. Let none persuade you it is cruelty to do this; it is cruelty not to do it. Break his will now,

and his soul will live, and he will probably bless you to all eternity.”

11. On the contrary, how dreadful are the consequences of that accursed kindness which gives children their own wills, and does not bow down their necks from their infancy! It is chiefly owing to this, that so many religious parents bring up their children that have no religion at all, children that, when they are grown up, have no regard for them, perhaps set them at nought, and are ready to pick out their eyes! Why is this, but because their wills were not broken at first? — because they were not inured from their early infancy to obey their parents in all things, and to submit to their wills as to the will of God? — because they were not taught from the very first dawn of reason, that the will of their parents was, to them, the will of God, that to resist it was rebellion against God, and an inlet to all ungodliness?

II.

1. This may suffice for the explication of the text: I proceed to the application of it. And permit me, First, to apply to you that are parents, and, as such, concerned to teach your children. Do you know these things yourselves? Are you thoroughly convinced of these important truths? Have you laid them to heart? and have you put them in practice, with regard to your own children? Have you inured them to discipline, before they were capable of instruction? Have you broken their wills from their earliest infancy, and do you still continue so to do, in opposition both to nature and custom? Did you explain to them? as soon as their understanding began to open, the reasons of your proceeding thus? Did you point out to that the will of God as the sole law of every intelligent creature; and show them it is the will of God that they should obey you in all things? Do you inculcate this over and over again, till they perfectly comprehend it? O never be weary of this labor of love! and your labor will not always be in vain.

2. At least, do not teach them to disobey, by rewarding them for disobedience. Remember! you do this every time you give them anything because they cry for it. And herein they are apt scholars: If you reward them for crying, they will certainly cry again. So that there is no end,

unless you make it a sacred rule, to give them nothing which they cry for. And the shortest way to do this is, never suffer them to cry aloud. Train them up to obedience in this one instance, and you will easily bring them to obey in others. Why should you not begin today? Surely you see what is the most excellent way; best for your own soul. Why then do you disobey? Because you are a coward; because you want resolution. And doubtless it requires no small patience, more than nature ever gave. But the grace of God is sufficient for you, you can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth you. This grace is sufficient to give you diligence, as well as resolution, otherwise, laziness will be as great a hindrance as cowardice. For without much pains you cannot conquer: Nothing can be done with a slack hand; labor on; never tire lay line upon line, till patience has its perfect work.

3. But there is another hindrance that is full as hard to be conquered as either laziness or cowardice. It is called fondness, and is usually mistaken for love: But, O, how widely different from it! It is real hate; and hate of the most mischievous kind tending to destroy both body and soul in hell! O give not way to it any longer; no, not for a moment! Fight against it with your might, for the love of God for the love of your children; for the love of your own soul.

4. I have one word more to say to parents; to mothers in particular. If, in spite of all the Apostle can say, you encourage your children by your example to “adorn” themselves “with gold, or pearls, or costly apparel,” you and they must drop into the pit together. But if they do it, though you set them a better example, still it is yours, as well as their fault; for if you did not put any ornament on your little child that you would not wear yourself, (which would be utter distraction, and far more inexcusable than putting it on your own arms or head,) yet you did not inure them to obey you from their infancy, and teach them the duty of it, from at least two years old. Otherwise, they would not have dared to do anything, great or small, contrary to your will. Whenever, therefore, I see the fine-dressed daughter of a plain-dressed mother, I see at once! the mother is defective either in knowledge or religion, Either she is ignorant of her own or her child’s duty or she has not; practiced what she knows.

5. I cannot dismiss this subject yet. I am pained continually at seeing religious parents suffer their children to run into the same folly of dress, as if they had no religion at all. In God's name, why do you suffer them to vary a hair's breadth from your example? "Why, they will do it." They will! Whose fault is that? Why did not you break their will from their infancy? At least, do it now; better late than never. It should have been done before they were two years old: It may be done at eight or ten, though with far more difficulty. However, do it now, and accept that difficulty — as the just reward for your past neglect. Now, at least, carry your points whatever it costs. Be not mealy mouthed, say not, like foolish Eli, "Nay, my children it is no good report which I hear of you," instead of restraining them with a strong hand; but speak (though as calmly as possible, yet) firmly and peremptorily, "I will have it so:" and do as you say. Instill diligently into them the love of plain dress, and hatred of finery. Show them the reason of your own plainness of dress, and show it is equally reasonable for them. Bid defiance to indolence to cowardice, to foolish fondness, and, at all events, carry your point; if you love their souls, make and keep them just as plain as yourselves. And I charge you grandmothers, before God, do not hinder your daughters herein. Do not dare to give the child anything which the mother denies. Never take the part of the children against the parent; never blame her before them. If you do not strengthen her authority, as you ought to do, at least do not weaken it; but if you have either sense or piety left, help her on in the work of real kindness.

6. Permit me: now to apply myself to you, children particularly you that are the children of religious parents. Indeed, if you have no fear of God before your eyes, I have no concern with you at present; but if you have, if you really fear God, and have a desire to please him, you desire to understand all his commandments, the fifth in particular. Did you ever understand it yet? Do you now understand what is your duty to your father and mother? Do you know, at least do you consider, that by the divine appointment their will is a law to *you*? Have you ever considered the extent of that obedience to your parents which God requires? "Children, obey your parents in all things:" No exception, but of things unlawful. Have you practiced your duty in this extent? Did you ever so much as intend it?

7. Deal faithfully with your own souls. Is your conscience now clear in this matter? Do you do nothing which you know to be contrary to the will either of your father or mother? Do you never do anything (though ever so much inclined to it) which he or she forbids? Do you abstain from everything which they dislike, as far as you can in conscience? On the other hand, are you careful to do whatever a parent bids? Do you study and contrive how to please them, to make their lives as easy and pleasant as you can? Whoever you are that add this to your general care to please God in all things, blessed art thou of the Lord! “Thy days shall be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

8. But as for you who are little concerned about this matter; who do not make it a point of conscience to obey your parents in all things, but sometimes obey them, as it happens, and sometimes not; who frequently do what they forbid or disapprove, and neglect what they bid you do; suppose you awake out of sleep, that you begin to feel yourself a sinner, and begin to cry to God for mercy, is it any wonder that you find no answer, while you are under the guilt of unrepented sin? How can you expect mercy from God till you obey your parents? But suppose you have, by an uncommon miracle of mercy, tasted of the pardoning love of God, can it be expected, although you hunger and thirst after righteousness, after the perfect love of God, that you should ever attain it, ever be satisfied therewith, while you live in outward sin, in the willful transgression of a known law of God, in disobedience to your parents? Is it not rather a wonder, that he has not withdrawn his Holy Spirit from you? that he still continues to strive with you, though you continually grieve his Spirit? O grieve him no more! By the grace of God, obey them in all things from this moment! As soon as you come home, as soon as you set foot within the door, begin an entirely new course! Look upon your father and mother with new eyes; see them as representing your Father which is in heaven: Endeavor, study, rejoice to please, to help, to obey them in all things: Behave not barely as their child, but as their servant for Christ’s sake. O how will you then love one another! In a manner unknown before. God will bless you to them, and them to you: All around will feel that God is with you of a truth. Many shall see it and praise God;

and the fruit of it shall remain when both you and they are lodged in Abraham's bosom.

SERMON XCVII.

ON OBEDIENCE TO PASTORS.

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: For they watch over your souls as they that shall give account, that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: For that is unprofitable for you.”

Hebrews 13:17.

1. EXCEEDING few, not only among nominal Christians, but among truly religious men, have any clear conception of the important doctrine which is here delivered by the Apostle. Very many scarce think of it, and hardly know that there is any such direction in the Bible. And the greater part of those who know it is there, and imagine they follow it, do not understand it, but lean too much either to the right hand or to the left, to one extreme or the other. It is well known to what an extravagant height the Romanists in general carry this direction. Many of them believe, an implicit faith is due to the doctrines delivered by those that rule over them, and that implicit obedience ought to be paid to whatever commands they give. And not much less has been insisted on, by several eminent men of the Church of England: Although it is true, that the generality of Protestants are apt to run to the other extreme; allowing their Pastors no authority at all, but making them both the creatures and the servants of their congregations. And very many there are of our own Church who agree with them herein; supposing the Pastors to be altogether dependent upon the people, who, in their judgment, have a right to direct, as well as to choose their Ministers.

2. But is it not possible to find a medium between these two extremes? Is there any necessity for us to run either into one or into the other? If we set human laws out of the question, and simply attend to the oracles of God, we may certainly discover a middle path in this important matter. In order

thereto, let us carefully examine the words of the Apostle above recited. Let us consider,

- I. Who are the persons mentioned in the text: They “that rule over” us.
- II. Who are they whom the Apostle directs to “obey and submit” themselves to them.
- III. What is the meaning of this direction; in what sense are they to “obey and submit” themselves? — I shall then endeavor to make a suitable application of the whole.

I.

1. Consider we, First, Who are the persons mentioned in the text: They “that have the rule over you?” — I do not conceive that the words of the Apostle are properly translated; because this translation makes the sentence little better than tautology. It they “rule over you,” you are certainly ruled by them; so that, according to this translation, you are only enjoined to do what you do already, — to obey those whom you do obey. Now, there is another meaning of the Greek word, which seems abundantly more proper: It means to *guide*, as well as to rule. And thus, it seems, it should be taken here. The direction, then, when applied to our spiritual guides, is plain and pertinent.

2. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the seventh verse, which fixes the meaning of this. “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God.” The Apostle here shows, by the latter clause of the sentence, whom he meant in the former. Those that were “over them,” were the same persons “who spoke unto them the word of God;” that is, they were their Pastors, those who guided and fed this part of the flock of Christ.

3. But by whom are these guides to be appointed? And what are they supposed to do, in order to be entitled to the obedience which is here prescribed?

Volumes upon volumes have been wrote on that knotty question, *By whom are guides of souls to be appointed?* I do not intend here to enter at all into the dispute concerning Church government; neither to debate, whether it be advantageous or prejudicial to the interest of true religion,

that the Church and State should be blended together, as they have been ever since the time of Constantine, in every part of the Roman Empire, where Christianity has been received. Waving all these points, (which may find employment enough for men that abound in leisure,) by “them that guide you,” I mean them that do its if not by your choice, at least by your consent; them that you willingly accept of to be your guides in the way to heaven.

4. But what are they supposed to do, in order to entitle them to the obedience here prescribed?

They are supposed to go before the flock, (as is the manner of the eastern shepherds to this day,) and to guide them in all the ways of truth and holiness; they are to “nourish them with the words of eternal life;” to feed them with the “pure milk of the word:” Applying it continually “for doctrines” teaching them all the essential doctrines contained therein; — “for reproof;” warning them if they turn aside from the way, to the right hand or to the left; — “for correction;” showing them how to amend what is amiss, and guiding them back into the way of peace; — and “for instruction in righteousness;” training them up to outward holiness, “until they come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

5. They are supposed to “watch over your souls, as those that shall give account.” “As those that shall give account!” How unspeakably solemn and awful are those words! May God write them upon the heart of every guide of souls!

“They watch,” waking while others sleep, over the flock of Christ; over the souls that he has bought with a price, that he has purchased with his own blood. They have them in their hearts both by day and by night regarding neither sleep nor food in comparison of them. Even while they sleep, their heart is waking, full of concern for their beloved children. “They watch,” with deep earnestness, with uninterrupted seriousness, with unwearied care, patience, and diligence, as they that are about to give an account of every particular soul, to Him that standeth at the door, — to the Judge of quick and dead.

II.

1. We are Secondly, to consider who those are whom the Apostle directs to obey them that have the rule over them. And in order to determine this, with certainty and clearness, we shall not appeal to human institutions; but simply (as in answering the preceding question) appeal to that decision of it which we find in the oracles of God. Indeed we have hardly occasion to go one step farther than the text itself. Only it may be proper, first, to remove out of the way some popular opinions, which have been almost everywhere taken for granted, but can in nowise be proved.

2. It is usually supposed, First, that the Apostle is here directing parishioners to obey and submit themselves to the Minister of their parish. But can any one bring the least shadow of proof for this from the Holy Scripture? Where is it written, that we are bound to obey any Minister, because we live in what is called his parish? “Yes,” you say, “we are bound to obey every ordinance of man for the Lords sake.” True, in all things indifferent; but this is not so, It is exceeding far from it. It is far from being a thing indifferent to *me*, who is the guide of my soul. I dare not receive one as my guide to heaven, that is himself in the high road to hell. I dare not take a wolf for my shepherd, that has not so much as sheep’s clothing, that is a common swearer, an open drunkard, a notorious Sabbath-breaker. And such (the more is the shame, and the more the pity) are many parochial Ministers at this day.

3. “But are you not properly members of that congregation to which your parents belong?” I do not apprehend that I am; I know no scripture that obliges me to this. I owe all deference to the commands of my parents, and willingly obey them in all things lawful. But it is not lawful to call them Rabbi; that is, to believe or obey them implicitly. Every one must give an account of himself to God. Therefore every man must judge for himself; especially in a point of, so deep importance as this is, — the choice of a guide for his soul.

4. But we may bring this matter to a short issue, by recurring to the very words of the text. They that have voluntarily connected themselves with

such a Pastor as answers the description given therein; such as do, in fact, “watch over their souls, as they that shall give account;” such as do “nourish them up with the words of eternal life,” such as feed them as with the “pure milk of the word,” and constantly apply it to them “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness;” — all who have found and chosen guides of this character, of this spirit and behavior, are undoubtedly required by the Apostle to “obey and submit themselves” to them.

III.

1. But what is the meaning of this direction? This remains to be considered. In what sense, and how far, does the Apostle direct them to “obey and submit” to their spiritual guides?

If we attend to the proper sense of the two words here used by the Apostle, we may observe, that the former of them, **πειθεσθε**, (from **πειθω**, *to persuade*,) refers to the understanding; the latter **υπεικετε**, to the will and outward behavior. To begin with the former. What influence ought our spiritual guides to have over our understanding! We dare no more call our spiritual fathers, Rabbi, than the “fathers of our flesh.” We dare no more yield implicit faith to the former, than to the latter. In this sense, “one is our Master,” (or rather Teacher,) “who is in heaven.” But whatever submission, of even our understanding, is short of this, we may, nay, we ought to, yield to them.

2. To explain this a little farther. St. James uses a word which is nearly allied to the former of these: “The wisdom which is from above is, **ευπειθης**, *easy to be convinced*, or to be persuaded.” Now, if we ought to have and to show this wisdom toward all men, we ought to have it in a more eminent degree, and to show it upon every occasion, toward those that “watch over our souls.” With regard to these, above all other men, we should be “easy to be intreated” easily convinced of any truth, and easily persuaded to anything that is not sinful.

3. A word of nearly the same import with this is frequently used by St. Paul namely, **ειπεικης**. In our translation it is more than once rendered

gentle. But perhaps it might be more properly rendered, (if the word may be allowed,) *yielding*; ready to *yield*, to give up our own will, in everything that is not a point of duty. This amiable temper every real Christian enjoys, and shows in his intercourse with all men. But he shows it in a peculiar manner toward those that watch over his soul. He is not only willing to receive any instruction from them; to be convinced of anything which he did not know before; to lie open to their advice, and glad to receive admonition or reproof, but is ready to give up his own will, whenever he can do it with a clear conscience. Whatever they desire him to do, he does, if it be not forbidden in the word of God. Whatever they desire him to refrain from, he does so; if it be not enjoined in the word of God. This is implied in those words of the Apostle: "Submit yourselves to them;" yield to them; give up your own will. This is meet, and right, and your bounden duty, if they do indeed watch over your souls as they that shall give account. If you do thus "obey and submit yourselves" to them, they will give an account of you "with joy, not with groaning," as they must otherwise do; for although they should be clear of your blood, yet "that would be unprofitable to you;" yea, a prelude to eternal damnation.

4. How acceptable to God was an instance of obedience somewhat similar to this! You have a large and particular account of it in the thirty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah. "The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, Go to the house of the Rechabites, and give them wine to drink. Then I took the whole house of the Rechabites;" all the heads of their families; "and set before them pots full of wine, and said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: For Jonadab," a great man in the reign of Jehu, "the son of Rechab," from whom we are named, being the father of our family, "commanded us, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever. And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab our father, in all that he charged us." We do not know any particular reason why Jonadab gave this charge to his posterity. But as it was not sinful, they gave this strong instance of gratitude to their great benefactor. And how pleasing this was to the Father of their spirits, we learn from the words that follow: "And Jeremiah said unto the Rechabites, Because ye have obeyed the voice of Jonadab, your father, therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Jonadab shall not want a man to stand before my face for ever."

5. Now, it is certain, Christians owe full as much gratitude and obedience to those that watch over their souls as ever the house of the Rechabites owed to Jonadab the son of Rechab. And we cannot doubt, but He is as well pleased with our obedience to these, as ever he was with their obedience to Jonadab. If he was so well pleased with the gratitude and obedience of this people to their temporal benefactor, have we not all reason to believe, he is full as well pleased with the gratitude and obedience of Christians to those who derive far greater blessings to them than ever Jonadab, conveyed to his posterity?

6. It may be of use yet again to consider, in what instances it is the duty of Christians to obey and submit themselves to those that watch over their souls. Now the things which they enjoin, must be either enjoined of God, or forbidden by him, or indifferent. In things forbidden of God, we dare not obey them; for we are to obey God rather than man. In things enjoined of God, we do not properly obey *them*, but our common Father. Therefore, if we are to obey them at all, it must be in things indifferent. The sum is, it is the duty of every private Christian to obey his spiritual Pastor, by either doing or leaving undone anything of an indifferent nature; anything that is in no way determined in the word of God.

7. But how little is this understood in the Protestant world! at least in England and Ireland. Who is there, even among those that are supposed to be good Christians, who dreams there is such a duty as this? And yet there is not a more express command, either in the Old or New Testament. No words can be more clear and plain; no command more direct and positive. Therefore, certainly none who receive the Scripture as the word of God, can live in the habitual breach of this, and plead innocence. Such an instance of willful, or at least careless, disobedience must grieve the Holy Spirit of God. It cannot but hinder the grace of God from having its full effect upon the heart. It is not improbable, that this very disobedience may be one cause of the deadness of many souls; one reason of their not receiving those blessings which they seek with some degree of sincerity.

8. It remains only to make a short application of what has now been delivered.

You that read this, do you apply it to yourself? Do you examine yourself thereby? Do not *you* stop your own growth in grace, if not by willful disobedience to this command; yet by careless inattention to it; by not considering it as the importance of it deserves? If so, you defraud yourself of many blessings which you might enjoy. Or, are you of a better mind; of a more excellent spirit? Is it your fixed resolution, and your constant endeavor, “to obey them that have the rule over you in the Lord;” to submit yourself as cheerfully to your spiritual, as to your natural parents? Do you ask, “Wherein should I submit to them?” The answer has been given already: Not in things enjoined of God; not in things forbidden by him; but in things indifferent: In all that are not determined, one way or the other, by the oracles of God. It is true, this cannot be done, in some instances, without a considerable degree of self denial, when they advise you to refrain from something that is agreeable to flesh and blood. And it cannot be obeyed in other instances, without taking up your cross; without suffering some pain or inconvenience, that is not agreeable to flesh and blood. For that solemn declaration of our Lord has place here, as well as on a thousand other occasions: “Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple.” But this will not affright you, if you resolve to be not only almost, but altogether, a Christian; if you determine to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life.

9. I would now apply myself in a more particular manner to *you* who desire *me* to watch over your souls. Do you make it a point of conscience to obey me for my Master’s sake? to submit yourselves to *me* in things indifferent; things not determined in the word of God; in all things that are not enjoined, nor yet forbidden, in Scripture? Are you “easy to be entreated,” as by men in general so by me in particular? — easy to be convinced of any truth, however contrary to your former prejudices; — and easy to be persuaded to do or forbear any indifferent thing at *my* desire? You cannot but see, that all this is clearly contained in the very words of the text. And you cannot but acknowledge, that it is highly reasonable for you so to do, if I do employ all my time, all my substance, all my strength, both of body and soul, not in seeking my own honor or pleasure, but in promoting your present and eternal salvation; if I do indeed “watch over your souls as one that must give account.”

10. Do you then take my advice (I ask in the presence of God and all the world) with regard to *dress*? I published that advice above thirty years ago; I have repeated it a thousand times since. I have advised you not to be conformable to the world herein, to lay aside all needless ornaments, to avoid all expense, to be patterns of plainness to all that are round about you. Have you taken this advice? Have you all, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, laid aside all those needless ornaments which I particularly objected to? Are you all exemplarily plain in your apparel; as plain as Quakers, (so called,) or Moravians? If not, if you are still dressed like the generality of people of your own rank and fortune, you declare hereby, to all the world, that you will not obey them that are over you in the Lord. You declare, in open defiance of God and man, that you will not submit yourselves to them. Many of you carry your sins on your forehead, openly, and in the face of the sun. You harden your hearts against instruction and against conviction: You harden one another; especially those of you that were once convinced, and have now stifled your convictions. You encourage one another to stop your ears against the truth, and shut your eyes against the light; lest haply you should see that you are fighting against God, and against your own souls. If I were now called to give an account of you, it would be “with groans, and not with joy.” And sure that would be “unprofitable for you:” The loss would fall upon your own head.

11. I speak all this on supposition, (though that is a supposition not to be made,) that the Bible was silent on this head; that the Scriptures said nothing concerning *dress*, and left it to every one’s own discretion. But if all other texts were silent, this is enough: “Submit yourselves to them that are over you in the Lord.” I bind this upon your consciences, in the sight of God. Were it only in obedience to this direction, you cannot be clear before God, unless you throw aside all needless ornaments, in utter defiance of that tyrant of fools, *fashion*; unless you seek only to be adorned with good works, as men and women professing godliness.

12. Perhaps you will say, “This is only a little thing: It is a mere trifle.” I answer, If it be, you are the more inexcusable before God and man. What! will you disobey a plain commandment of God for a *mere trifle*? God

forbid! Is it a trifle to sin against God, — to set his authority at nought? Is this a little thing? Nay, remember, there can be no little sin, till we can find a little God! Meantime, be assured of one thing: The more conscientiously you obey your spiritual guides, the more powerfully will God apply the word which they speak in his name to your heart! The more plentifully will be water what is spoken with the dew of his blessing; and the more proofs will you have, it is not only they that speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaketh in them.

SERMON XCVIII.

ON VISITING THE SICK.

“I was sick, and ye visited me.” Matthew 25:36.

1. It is generally supposed, that the means of grace, and the ordinances of God, are equivalent terms. We commonly mean by that expression, those that are usually termed, works of piety; viz., hearing and reading the Scripture, receiving the Lord’s Supper, public and private prayer, and fasting. And it is certain these are the ordinary channels which convey the grace of God to the souls of men. But are they the only means of grace? Are there no other means than these, whereby God is pleased, frequently, yea, Ordinarily to convey his grace to them that either love or fear him? Surely there are works of mercy, as well as works of piety, which are real means of grace. They are more especially such to those that perform them with a single eye. And those that neglect them, do not receive the grace which otherwise they might. Yea, and they lose, by a continual neglect, the grace which they had received. Is it not hence, that many who were once strong in faith are now weak and feeble-minded? And yet they are not sensible whence that weakness comes, as they neglect none of the ordinances of God. But they might see whence it comes, were they seriously to consider St. Paul’s account of all true believers: “We are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we might walk therein.” (Ephesians 2:10.)

2. The walking herein is essentially necessary, as to the continuance of that faith whereby we are already saved by grace, so to the attainment of everlasting salvation. Of this we cannot doubt, if we seriously consider that these are the very words of the great Judge himself: “Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat:

Thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” (Matthew 25:34, etc.) “Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” If this do not convince you that the continuance in works of mercy is necessary to salvation, consider what the Judge of all says to those on the left hand: “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat: Thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: Naked, and ye clothed me not: Sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these, neither have ye done it unto me.” You see, were it for this alone, they must “depart” from God’s into everlasting punishment.”

3. Is it not strange, that this important truth should be so little understood, or, at least, should so little influence the practice of them that fear God? Suppose this representation be true, suppose the Judge of all the earth speaks right, those, and those only, that feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, relieve the stranger, visit those that are in prison, according to their power and opportunity, shall “inherit the everlasting kingdom.” And those that do not, shall “depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

4. I purpose, at present, to confine my discourse to one article of these, — visiting the sick: A plain duty, which all that are in health may practice, in a higher or lower degree; and which, nevertheless, is almost universally neglected, even by those that profess to love God. And touching this I would inquire,

- I. What is implied in visiting the sick?
- II. How is it to be performed? — And
- III. By whom?

I.

First. I would inquire, What is the nature of this duty? What is implied in “visiting the sick?”

1. By the sick, I do not mean only those that keep their bed, or that are sick in the strictest sense. Rather I would include all such as are in a state of affliction, whether of mind or body; and that, whether they are good or bad, whether they fear God or not.

2. “But is there need of visiting them in person? May we not relieve them at a distance? Does it not answer the same purpose if we send them help, as if we carry it ourselves?” Many are so circumstanced, that they cannot attend the sick in person; and where this is the real cases it is undoubtedly sufficient for them to send help, being the only expedient they can use. But this is not properly visiting the sick; it is another thing. The word which we render *visit*, in its literal acceptation, means to *look upon*. And this, you well know, cannot be done unless you are present with them. To send them assistance is, therefore, entirely a different thing from visiting them. The former, then, ought to be done, but the latter not left undone.

“But I send a physician to those that are sick; and he can do them more good than I can” He can, in one respect; he can do them more good with regard to their bodily health. But he cannot do them more good with regard to their souls, which are of infinitely greater importance. And if he could, this would not excuse *you*: His going would not fulfill *your* duty. Neither would it do the same good to *you*, unless you saw them with your own eyes. If you do not, you lose a means of grace; you lose an excellent means of increasing your thankfulness to God, who saves you from this pain and sickness, and continues your health and strength; as well as of increasing your sympathy with the afflicted, your benevolence, and all social affections.

3. One great reason why the rich, in general, have so little sympathy for the poor, is, because they so seldom visit them. Hence it is, that, according to the common observation, one part of the world does not know what the other suffers. Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know; they keep out of the way of knowing it; and then plead their voluntary ignorance as an excuse for their hardness of heart. “Indeed, sir,” said a person of large substance, “I am a very compassionate man. But, to tell you the truth, I do not know any body in the world that is in want.” How did this come to pass? Why, he took good care to keep out of their

way; and if he fell upon any of them unawares, “he passed over on the other side.”

4. How contrary to this is both the spirit and behavior of even people of the highest rank in a neighboring nation! In Paris, ladies of the first quality, yea, Princesses of the blood of the Royal Family, constantly visit the sick, particularly the patients in the Grand Hospital. And they not only take care to relieve their wants, (if they need anything more than is provided for them,) but attend on their sickbeds, dress their sores, and perform the meanest offices for them. Here is a pattern for the English, poor or rich, mean or honorable! For many years we have abundantly copied after the follies of the French; let us for once copy after their wisdom and virtue, worthy the imitation of the whole Christian world. Let not the gentlewomen, or even the Countesses, in England, be ashamed to imitate those Princesses of the blood! Here is a fashion that does honor to human nature. It began in France; but God forbid it should end there!

5. And if your delicacy will not permit you to imitate those truly honorable ladies, by abasing yourselves in the manner which they do, by performing the lowest offices for the sick, you may, however, without humbling yourselves so far, supply them with whatever they want. And you may administer help of a more excellent kind, by supplying their spiritual wants; instructing them (if they need such instruction) in the first principles of religion; endeavoring to show them the dangerous state they are in, under the wrath and curse of God, through sin; and pointing them to the “Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.” Beside this general instruction, you might have abundant opportunities of comforting those that are in pain of body, or distress of mind; you might find opportunities of strengthening the feeble-minded, quickening those that are faint and weary; and of building up those that have believed, and encouraging them to “go on to perfection.” But these things you must do in your own person; you see they cannot be done by proxy. Or suppose you could give the same relief to the sick by another, you could not reap the same advantage to yourself; you could not gain that increase in lowliness, in patience, in tenderness of spirit, in sympathy with the afflicted, which you might have gained, if you had assisted them in person. Neither would you receive the same recompense in the resurrection of the

just, when “every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor.”

II.

1. I proceed to inquire, in the Second place, How are we to visit them? In what manner may this labor of love be most effectually performed? How may we do this most to the glory of God, and to the benefit of our neighbor? But before ever you enter upon the work, you should be deeply convinced that you are by no means sufficient for it; you have neither sufficient grace, nor sufficient understanding, to perform it in the most excellent manner. And this will convince you of the necessity of applying to the Strong for strength; and of flying to the Father of Lights, the Giver of every good gift, for wisdom; ever remembering, “there is a Spirit in man that giveth wisdom, and the inspiration of the Holy One that giveth understanding.” Whenever, therefore, you are about to enter upon the work, seek his help by earnest prayer. Cry to him for the whole spirit of humility, lest if pride steal into your heart, if you ascribe anything to yourself, while you strive to save others, you destroy your own soul. Before and through the work, from the beginning to the end, let your heart wait upon him for a continual supply of meekness and gentleness, of patience and long-suffering, that you may never be angry or discouraged at whatever treatment, rough or smooth, kind or unkind, you may meet with. Be not moved with the deep ignorance of some, the dullness, the amazing stupidity of others; marvel not at their peevishness or stubbornness; at their non-improvement after all the pains that you have taken, yea, at some of them turning back to perdition, and being worse than they were before. Still your record is with the Lord, and your reward with the Most High.

2. As to the particular method of treating the sick, you need not tie yourself down to any, but may continually vary your manner of proceeding as various circumstances may require. But it may not be amiss, usually, to begin with inquiring into their outward condition. You may ask whether they have the necessaries of life; whether they have sufficient food and raiment; if the weather be cold, whether they have fuel; whether they have needful attendance; whether they have proper advice, with

regard to their bodily disorder; especially if it be of a dangerous kind. In several of these respects you may be able to give them some assistance yourself; and you may move those that are more able than you, to supply your lack of service. You might properly say in your own case, “To beg I am ashamed;” but never be ashamed to beg for the poor; yea, in this case, be an importunate beggar; do not easily take a denial. Use all the address, all the understanding, all the influence you have; at the same time trusting in Him that has the hearts of all men in his hands.

3. You will then easily discern, whether there is any good office which you can do for them with your hands. Indeed, most of the things which are needful to be done, those about them can do better than you. But in some you may have more skill, far more experience, than them; and if you have, let not delicacy or honor stand in your way. Remember His word, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me;” and think nothing too mean to do for Him. Rejoice to be abased for his sake.

4. These little labors of love will pave your way to things of greater importance. Having shown that you have a regard for their bodies, you may proceed to inquire concerning their souls. And here you have a large field before you; you have scope for exercising all the talents which God has given you; May you not begin with asking, “Have you ever considered, that God governs the world — that his providence is over all, and over *you* in particular? — Does any thing then befall you without his knowledge, — or without his designing it for your good? He knows all you suffer; he knows all your pains; he sees all your wants. He sees not only your affliction in general, but every particular circumstance of it. Is he not looking down from heaven, and disposing all these things for your profit?” You may then inquire, whether he is acquainted with the general principles of religion. And afterwards, lovingly and gently examine, whether his life has been agreeable thereto; whether he has been an outward, barefaced sinner, or has had a form of religion. See next, whether he knows anything of the power; of worshipping God “in spirit and in truth.” If he does not, endeavor to explain to him, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord;” and “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” When he begins to understand the nature of holiness, and the necessity of

the new birth, then you may press upon him “repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

5. When you find any of them begin to fear God, it will be proper to give them, one after another, some plain tracts, as the “Instructions for Christians,” “Awake, thou that sleepest,” and the “Nature and Design of Christianity.” At the next visit you may inquire, what they have read, — what they remember, — and what they understand. And then will be the time to enforce what they understand, and, if possible, impress it on their heart. Be sure to conclude every meeting with prayer. If you cannot yet pray without a form, you may use some of those composed by Mr. Spinckes, or any other pious writer; But the sooner you break through this backwardness the better. Ask of God, and he will open your mouth.

6. Together with the more important, lessons, which you endeavor to teach all the poor whom you visit, it would be a deed of charity to teach them two things more, which they are generally little acquainted with, — industry and cleanliness. It was said by: a pious man, “Cleanliness is next to godliness.” Indeed the want of it is a scandal to all religion; causing the way of truth to be evil spoken of. And without industry, we are neither fit for this world, nor for the world to come. With regard to both “whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”

III.

1. The third point to be considered is, By whom is this duty to be performed? The answer is ready: By all that desire to “inherit the kingdom” of their Father, which was “prepared for them from the foundation of the world.” For thus saith the Lord, “Come, ye blessed; — inherit. the kingdom: — for I was sick, and ye visited me.” And to those on the left hand, — “Depart, ye cursed; — for I was sick, and ye visited me not.” Does not this plainly imply, that as all who do this are “blessed,” and shall “inherit the kingdom” so all who do it not are “cursed,” and shall “depart into everlasting fire?”

2. All, therefore, who desire to escape everlasting fire, and to inherit the everlasting kingdom, are equally concerned, according to their power, to practice this important duty. It is equally incumbent on young and old,

rich and poor, men and women, according to their ability. None are so young, if they desire to save their own souls, as to be excused from assisting their neighbors. None ate so poor, (unless they want the necessities of life, but they are called to do something, more or less, at whatever time they can spare, for the relief and comfort of their afflicted fellow-sufferers.

3. But those “who are rich in this world,” who have more than the conveniences of life, are peculiarly called of God to this blessed work, and pointed out to “it by his gracious Providence.” As you are not under a necessity of working for your bread, you have your time at your own disposal. You may, therefore, allot some part of it everyday for this labor of love. If it be practicable, it is far best to have a fixed hour; (for *any time*, we say, is *no time*;) and not to employ that time in any other business, without urgent necessity. You have likewise a peculiar advantage over many, by your station in life. Being superior in rank to them, you have the more influence on that very account. Your inferiors, of course, look up to you with a kind of reverence. And the condescension which you show in visiting them, gives them a prejudice in your favor, which inclines them to hear you with attention, and willingly receive what you say. Improve this prejudice to the uttermost for the benefit of their souls, as well as their bodies. While you are eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless, see that you still keep a higher end in view, even the saving of souls from death, and that you labor to make all you say and do subservient to that great end.

4. “But have the poor themselves any part or lot in this matter? Are they any way concerned in visiting the sick? What can they give to others, who have hardly the conveniences, or perhaps necessities, of life for themselves? If they have not, yet they need not be wholly excluded from the blessing which attends the practice of this duty. Even those may remember that excellent rule, “Let our conveniences give way to our neighbor’s necessities; and our necessities give way to our neighbor’s extremities.” And few are so poor, as not to be able sometimes to give “two mites;” but if they are not, if they have no money to give, may they not give what is of more value? Yea, of more value than thousands of gold and silver. If you speak “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,” may

not the words you speak be health to the soul, and marrow to the bones? Can you give them nothing? Nay, in administering to them the grace of God, you give them more than all this world is worth. Go on, go on, thou poor disciple of a poor Master! Do as he did in the days of his flesh! Whenever thou hast an opportunity, go about doing good, and healing all that are oppressed of the devil; encouraging them to shake off his chains, and fly immediately to Him

Who sets the prisoners free, and breaks
The iron bondage from their necks.

Above all, give them your prayers. Pray with them; pray for them; and who knows but you may save their souls alive?

5. You that are old, whose feet are ready to stumble upon the dark mountains, may not you do a little more good before you go hence and are no more seen? O remember,

'Tis time to live, if you grow old
Of little life the best to make,
And manage wisely the last stake!

As you have lived many years, it may be hoped you have attained such knowledge as may be of use to others. You have certainly more knowledge of men, which is commonly learned by dear bought experience. With what strength you have left, employ the few moments you have to spare, in ministering to those who are weaker than yourselves. Your gray hairs will not fail to give you authority, and add weight to what you speak. You may frequently urge, to increase their attention,

Believe me, youth; for I am read in cares,
And groan beneath the weight of more than threescore years.

You have frequently been a sufferer yourself; perhaps you are so still. So much the more give them all the assistance you can, both with regard to their souls and bodies, before they and you go to the place whence you will not return.

6. On the other hand, you that are *young* have several advantages that are almost peculiar to yourselves. You have generally a flow of spirits, and a liveliness of temper, which, by the grace of God, make you willing to undertake, and capable of performing, many good works, at which others would be discouraged. And you have your health and strength of body, whereby you are eminently qualified to assist the sick and those that have no strength. You are able to take up and carry the crosses, which may be expected to lie in the way. Employ then your whole vigor of body and mind in ministering to your afflicted brethren. And bless God that you have them to employ in so honorable a service; like those heavenly “servants of his that do his pleasure,” by continually ministering to the heirs of salvation.

7. “But may not *women*, as well as men, bear a part in this honorable service?” Undoubtedly they may, nay, they ought; it is meet, right, and their bounden duty. Herein there is no difference; “there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus.” Indeed it has long passed for a maxim with many, that “women are only to be seen, not heard.” And accordingly many of them are brought up in such a manner as if they were only designed for agreeable playthings! But is this doing honor to the sex? or is it a real kindness to them? No; it is the deepest unkindness it is horrid cruelty it is mere Turkish barbarity. And I know not how any woman of sense and spirit can submit to it. Let all you that have in your power assert the right which the God of nature has given you. Yield not to that vile bondage any longer! You, as well as men, are rational creatures. You, like them, were made in the image of God; you are equally candidates for immortality; you too are called of God, as you have time, to “do good unto all men.” Be “not disobedient to the heavenly calling.” Whenever you have opportunity, do all the good you can, particularly to your poor, sick neighbor. And every one of *you* likewise “shall receive *your* own reward, according to *your* own labor.”

8 It is well known, that, in the primitive Church, there were women particularly appointed for this work. Indeed there was one or more such in every Christian congregation under heaven. They were then termed Deaconesses, that is, servants; servants of the Church, and of its great Master. Such was Phebe, (mentioned by St. Paul, Romans 16:1.) “a

Deaconess of the Church of Cenchrea.” It is true, most of these were women in years, and well experienced in the work of God. But were the young wholly excluded from that service? No: Neither need they be, provided they know in whom they have believed and show that they are holy of heart, by being holy in all manner of conversation. Such a Deaconess, if she answered her picture, was Mr. Law’s Miranda. Would any one object to her visiting and relieving the sick and poor, because she was a woman; nay, and a young one too? Do any of you that are young desire to tread in her steps? Have you a pleasing form, an agreeable address? So much the better, if you are wholly devoted to God. He will use these, if your eye be single, to make your words strike the deeper. And while you minister to others, how many blessings may redound into your own bosom! Hereby your natural levity may be destroyed; your fondness for trifles cured your wrong tempers corrected; your evil habits weakened, until they are rooted out; and you will be prepared to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every futile scene of life. Only be very wary, if you visit or converse with those of the other sex, lest your affections be entangled on one side or the other, and so you find a curse instead of a blessing.

9. Seeing then this is a duty to which we are called, rich and poor, young and old, male and female, (and it would be well if parents would train up their children herein, as well as in saying their prayers and going to church,) let the time past suffice; that almost all of us have neglected it, as by general consent. O what need has every one of us to say, “Lord, forgive me my sins of omission!” Well, in the name of God, let us now from this day set about it with general consent. And I pray, let it never go out of your mind! that this is a duty which you cannot perform by proxy; unless in one only case, — unless you are disabled by your own pain or weakness. In that only case, it suffices to send the relief which you would otherwise give. Begin, my dear brethren, begin now else the impression which you now feel will wear off; and, possibly, it may never return! What then will be the consequence? Instead of hearing that word, “Come, ye blessed! — For I was sick, and ye visited me;” you must hear that awful sentence, “Depart, ye cursed! — For I was sick, and ye visited me not!”

SERMON XCIX.

THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

PREACHED BEFORE THE HUMANE SOCIETY.

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Matthew 25:34.

1. REASON alone will convince every fair inquirer, that God “is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” This alone teaches him to say, “Doubtless there is a reward for the righteous;” “there is a God that judgeth the earth.” But how little information do we receive from unassisted reason touching the particulars contained in this general truth! As eye hath not seen, or ear heard, so neither could it naturally enter into our hearts to conceive the circumstances of that awful day wherein God will judge the world. No information of this kind could be given but from the great Judge himself. And what an amazing instance of condescension it is, that the Creator, the Governor, the Lord, the Judge of all, should deign to give us so clear and particular an account of that solemn transaction! If the learned Heathen acknowledged the sublimity of that account which Moses gives of the creation, what would he have said, if he had heard this account of the Son of Man coming in his glory? Here, indeed, is no labored pomp of words, no ornaments of language. This would not have suited either the Speaker or the occasion. But what inexpressible dignity of thought! See him “coming in the clouds of heaven; and all the angels with him!” See him “sitting on the throne of his glory, and all the nations gathered before him!” And shall he separate them, placing the good on his right hand, and the wicked on his left? “Then shall the King say:” — With what admirable propriety is the expression varied! “The Son of Man” comes down to judge the children of men. “The King” distributes rewards and punishments to his obedient or rebellious subjects: — “Then shall the

King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of thy Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

2. “Prepared for you from the foundation of the world:” — But does this agree with the common supposition, that God created man merely to supply the vacant thrones of the rebel angels? Does it not rather seem to imply, that he would have created man, though the angels had never fallen? inasmuch as he then prepared the kingdom for his human children, when he laid the foundation of the earth.

3. “Inherit the kingdom;” — as being “heirs of God, and joint heirs” with his beloved Son. It is your right; seeing I have purchased eternal redemption for all them that obey me: And ye did obey me in the days of your flesh. Ye “believed in the Father, and also in me.” Ye loved the Lord your God; and that love constrained you to love all mankind. Ye continued in the faith that wrought by love. Ye showed your faith by your works. “For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and in prison, and ye came unto me.”

4. But in what sense are we to understand the words that follow? “Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and gave thee meat or thirsty, and gave thee drink?” They cannot be literal understood; they cannot answer in these very words; because it is not possible they should be ignorant that God had really wrought by them. Is it not then manifest, that these words are to be taken in a figurative sense? And can they imply any more, than that all which they have done will appear as nothing to them; will, as it were, vanish away, in view of what God their Savior had done and suffered for them?

5. But “the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, In as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.” What a declaration this! worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance. May the finger of the living God write it upon all our hearts!

I would take occasion from hence, First, to make a few reflections on good works in general: Secondly, to consider in particular that institution for the promotion of which we are now assembled: find, in the Third place, to make a short application.

I.

1. And First, I would make a few reflections upon good works in general. I am not insensible, that many, even serious people, are jealous of all that is spoken upon this subject: Nay, and whenever the necessity of good works is strongly insisted on take for granted that he who speaks in this manner is but one removed from Popery. But should we, for fear of this or of any other reproach, refrain from speaking “the truth as it is in Jesus?” Should we, on any consideration, “shun to declare the whole counsel of God?” Nay, if a false prophet could utter that solemn word, how much more may the ministers of Christ, “We cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to speak either more or less!”

2. Is it not to be lamented, that any who fear God should desire us to do otherwise? and that, by speaking otherwise themselves, they should occasion the way of truth to be evil spoken of? I mean, in particular, the way of salvation by faith; which, on this very account, is despised, nay, had in abomination, by many sensible men. It is now above forty years since this grand scriptural doctrine, “By grace ye are saved through faith,” began to be openly declared by a few clergymen of the Church of England. And not long after, some who heard, but did not understand, attempted to preach the same doctrine, but miserably mangled it; wresting the Scripture, and “making void the law through faith.”

3. Some of these, in order to exalt the value of faith, have utterly deprecated good works. They speak of them as not only not necessary to salvation, but as greatly obstructive to it. They represent them as abundantly more dangerous than evil ones, to those who are seeking to save their souls. One cries aloud, “More people go to hell by praying, than by thieving.” Another screams out, “Away with your works! Have done with your works, or you cannot come to Christ!” And this unscriptural, irrational, heathenish declamation is called *preaching the gospel!*

4. But “shall not the Judge of all the earth” speak, as well as “do, right?” Will not he “be justified in his saying, and clear when he is judged?” Assuredly he will. And upon his authority we must continue to declare, that whenever you do good to any for his sake; when you feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty; when you assist the stranger, or clothe the naked; when you visit them that are sick or in prison; these are not *splendid sins*, as one marvellously calls them, but “sacrifices wherewith God is well pleased.”

5. Not that our Lord intended we should confine our beneficence to the bodies of men. He undoubtedly designed that we should be equally abundant in works of spiritual mercy. He died “to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of” *all* “good works;” zealous, above all, to “save souls from death,” and thereby “hide a multitude of sins.” And this is unquestionably included in St. Paul’s exhortation: “As we have time, let us do good unto all men;” good in every possible kind, as well as in every possible degree. But why does not our blessed Lord mention works of spiritual mercy? He could not do it with any propriety. It was not for him to say, “I was in errors and ye convinced me; I was in sin, and you brought me back to God.” And it needed not; for in mentioning some he included *all* works of mercy.

6. But may I not add one thing more? (only he that heareth, let him understand:) Good works are so far from being hindrances of our salvation; they are so far from being insignificant, from being of no account in Christianity; that, supposing them to spring from a right principle, they are the perfection of religion. They are the highest part of that spiritual building whereof Jesus Christ is the foundation. To those who attentively consider the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, it will be undeniably plain that what Saint Paul there describes as the highest of all Christian graces, is properly and directly the love of our neighbor. And to him who attentively considers the whole tenor both of the Old and New Testament, it will be equally plain, that works springing from this love are the highest part of the religion therein revealed. Of these our Lord himself says, “Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit.” Much *fruit!* Does not the very expression imply the excellency of what is so termed? Is not the tree itself for the sake of the fruit? By

bearing fruit, and by this alone, it attains the highest perfection it is capable of, and answers the end for which it was planted. Who, what is he then, that is called a Christian, and can speak lightly of good works?

II.

1. From these general reflections, I proceed to consider that institution in particular, for the promotion of which we are now assembled. And in doing this, I shall, First, observe the rise of this institution; Secondly, the success; and, Thirdly, the excellency of it: After which you will give me leave to make a short application.

(I.)

On the First head, the rise of this institution, I may be very brief, as a great part of you know it already.

1. One would wonder (as an ingenious writer observes) that such an institution as this, of so deep importance to mankind, should appear so late in the world. Have we anything wrote upon the subject, earlier than the tract published at home in the year 1637? And did not the proposal then sleep for many years? Were there any more than one or two attempts, and those not effectually pursued, till the year 1700? By what steps it has been since revived and carried into execution, we are now to inquire.

2. I cannot give you a clearer view of this, than by presenting you with a short extract from the Introduction to the Plan and Reports of the Society," published two years ago: —

“Many and indubitable are the instances of the possibility of restoring to life persons apparently struck with sudden death, whether by an apoplexy, convulsive fits, noxious vapors, strangling, or drowning. Cases of this nature have occurred in every country. But they were considered, and *neglected*, as extraordinary phenomena from which no salutary consequence could be drawn.

3. “At length, a few benevolent gentlemen in Holland conjectured, that some at least might have been saved, had proper means been used in time;

and formed themselves into a Society, in order to make a trial. Their attempts succeeded far beyond their expectations. Many were restored who must otherwise have perished. And they were, at length, enabled to extend their plan over the Seven Provinces.

Their success instigated other countries to follow their example. In the year 1768, the Magistrates of Health at Milan and Venice issued orders for the treatment of drowned persons. The city of Hamburgh appointed a similar ordinance to be read in all the churches. In the year 1769, the Empress of Germany published an edict, extending its directions and encouragements to every case that afforded a possibility of relief. In the year 1771, the Magistrates of Paris founded an institution in favor of the drowned.

4. “In the year 1773, Dr. Cogan translated the ‘Memoirs of the Society at Amsterdam,’ in order to inform our countrymen of the practicability of recovering persons apparently drowned; and Mr. Hawes uniting with him, these gentlemen proposed a plan for a similar institution in these kingdoms. They were soon enabled to form a Society for this excellent purpose. The plan is this: —

“I. The Society will publish, in the most extensive manner possible, the proper methods of treating persons in such circumstances.

“II. They will distribute a premium of two guineas among the first persons who attempt to recover any one taken out of the water as dead. And this reward will be given, even if the attempt is unsuccessful, provided it has been pursued two hours, according to the method laid down by the Society.

“III. They will distribute a premium of four guineas, where the person is restored to life.

“IV. They will give one guinea to any that admits the body into his house without delay, and furnishes the necessary accommodations.

“V. A number of medical gentlemen, living near the places where these disasters commonly happen, will give their assistance gratis.”

(II.)

Such was the rise of this admirable institution. With what success has it been attended, is the point which I purpose, in the next place, very briefly to consider.

And it must be allowed to be not only far greater than those who despised it had imagined, but greater than the most sanguine expectations of the gentlemen who were immediately engaged in it.

In the short space, from its first establishment in May, 1774, to the end of December, eight persons, seemingly dead, were restored to life.

In the year 1775, forty-seven were restored to life: thirty two of them, by the direct encouragement and assistance of the gentlemen of this Society; and the rest, by medical gentlemen and others, in consequence of their method of treatment being generally known.

In the year 1776, forty-one persons were restored to life by the assistance of this Society. And eleven cases of those who had been restored elsewhere were communicated to them.

So the number of lives preserved and restored, in two years and a half, since their first institution. amounts to one hundred and seven! Add to these, those that have been since restored, and out of two hundred and eighty-four persons, who were dead, to all appearance, no less than a hundred and fifty-seven have been restored to life! Such is the success which has attended them in so short a time. Such a blessing has the gracious providence of God, given to this infant undertaking.

(III.)

1. It remains only to show the excellency of it. And this may appear from one single consideration: This institution unites together in one all the various acts of mercy. The several works of charity mentioned above are all contained in this. It comprises all corporeal (if I may so speak) and all spiritual benefits; all the instances of kindness which can be shown either to the bodies or souls of men. To show this beyond all contradiction, there

needs no studied eloquence, no rhetorical coloring, but simply and nakedly to relate the thing as it is.

2. The thing attempted, and not only attempted, but actually performed, (so has the goodness of God prospered the labors of these lovers of mankind!) is no less, in a qualified sense, than restoring life to the dead. Is it any wonder, then, that the generality of men should at first ridicule such an undertaking? that they should imagine the persons who aimed at any such thing must be utterly out of their senses? Indeed, one of old said, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Cannot He who bestowed life at first, just as well bestow it again? But it may well be thought a thing incredible, that *man* should raise the dead; for no human power can create life. And what human power can restore it? Accordingly, when our Lord (whom the Jews at that time supposed to be a mere man) came to the house of Jairus, in order to raise his daughter from the dead, upon the first intimation of his designs "they laughed him to scorn." "The maid," said he, "is not dead, but sleepeth." "This is rather to be called sleep than death; seeing her life is not at an end; but I will quickly awaken her out of this sleep."

3. However, it is certain, she was really dead, and so beyond all power but that of the Almighty. But see what power God has now given to man! To his name be all the praise! See with what wisdom he has endued these sons of mercy! teaching them to stop the parting souls to arrest the spirit just quitting the breathless clay, and taking wing for eternity! Who hath seen such a thing? Who hath heard such things? Who hath read them in the annals of antiquity? Sons of men, "can these dry bones live?" Can this motionless heart beat again? Can this clotted blood flow any more? Can these dry, stiff vessels open to give it pleasure? Can this cold flesh resume its native warmth, or those eyes again see the sun? Surely these are such things (might one not almost say, such miracles?) as neither we, of the present generation, nor our fathers had known!

4. Consider, I entreat you, how many miracles of mercy (so to speak) are contained in one! That poor man, who was lately numbered with the dead, by the care and pains of these messengers all God, again breathes the vital air, opens his eyes, and stands up upon his feet. He is restored to his

rejoicing family, to his wife, to his (late) helpless children, that he may again by his honest labor, provide them with all the necessaries of life. See now what ye have done, ye ministers of mercy! Behold the fruit of your labor of love! We have been an husband to the widow, a father to the fatherless. And hereby ye have given meat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked:

For hungry, thirsty, and naked these little ones must have been, had not you restored him that prevents it. You have more than relieved, you have prevented, that sickness which might naturally have arisen from their want of sufficient food to eat, or raiment to put on. You have hindered those orphans from wandering up and down, not having a place where to lay their head. Nay, and very possibly you have prevented some of them from being lodged in a dreary, comfortless prison.

5. So great, so comprehensive is the mercy which you have shown to the bodies of your fellow-creatures! But why should their souls be left out of the account? How great are the benefits you have conferred on these also! The husband has now again an opportunity of assisting his wife in things of the greatest moment. He may now again strengthen her hands in God and help her to run with patience the race that is set before her. He may again join with her in instructing their children, and training them up in the way wherein they should go; who may live to be a comfort to their aged parents, and useful members of the community.

6. Nay, it may be, you have snatched the poor man himself, not only from the jaws of death, but from sinking lower than the waters, from the jaws of everlasting destruction. It cannot be doubted, but some of those whose lives you have restored, although they had been before without God in the world, will remember themselves, and not only with their lips, but in their lives, show forth his praise. It is highly probable, some of these (as *one* out of *ten lepers*); “will return and give thanks to God,” real, lasting thanks, by devotion, themselves to his honorable service.

7. It is remarkable, that several of those whom you have brought back from the margin of the grave, were intoxicated at the very time when they dropped into the water. And at that very instant (which is frequently the case) they totally lost their senses. Here therefore was no place for, no

possibility of repentance. They had not time, they had not sense, so much as to cry out, "Lord, have mercy!" So they were sinking, through the mighty waters into the pit of destruction! And these instruments of divine mercy plucked them at once out of the water, and out of the fire; by the same act, delivers them from temporal and from eternal death!

8. Nay, one poor sinner (let it never be forgotten!) was just coming down from the ship, when (overtaken by the justice and mercy of God) her foot slipped, and she fell into the river. Instantly her senses were lost, so that she could not call upon God. Yet he has not forgotten her. He sent those who delivered her from death; at least from the death of the body. And who knows but she may lay it to heart, and turn from the error of her ways? Who knows, but she may be saved from the second death, and, with her deliverers, "inherit the kingdom?"

9. One point more deserves to be particularly remarked. Many of those who have been restored to life (no less than eleven out of the fourteen that were saved in a few months) were in the number of those that are a reproach to our nation, — willful self murderers. As many of the desperate men who attempt this horrid crime are men who have had a liberal education, it is pity but they would consider those fine words? not of a poor narrow-souled Christian, but of a generous heathen, nay, a Roman! Let them calmly consider that beautiful passage: —

*Proxima deinde tenent maesti loca, qui sibi letum
Insoutes peperere manu, lucemque perosi
Projecere animas. Quam vellent aethere in alto
Nunc et palperiem, et duros perferre labores!
Fata obstant, tristiguae palus inamabilis undo
Alligat, et novies Styx interfusa coerces.*⁷

Fata obstant! But in favor of many, we see God has overruled fate. They are brought back over the unnavigable river. They do behold the upper skies. They see the light of the sun. O let them see the light of Thy countenance! And let them so live their few remaining days on earth, that they may live with Thee for ever!

III.

1. Permit me now to make a short application. But to whom shall I direct this? Are there any here who are unhappily prejudiced against that Revelation which breathes nothing but benevolence; which contains the richest display of God's love to man, that ever was made from the foundation of the world? Yet even to you, I would address a few words; for, if you are not Christians, you are men. You too are susceptible of mind impressions: You have the feelings of humanity. Has not your heart too glowed at that noble sentiment; worthy the heart and the lips; the highest Christian, —

*Homo sum: Humani nihil a me alienum puto?*⁸

Have not you also sympathized with the afflicted? How many times have you been pained at human misery? When you have beheld a scene of deep distress, has not your soul melted within you?

And now and then a sigh you stole,
And tears began to flow.

But is it easy for any one to conceive a scene of deeper distress than this? Suppose you are standing by, just when the messenger comes in, and the message is delivered, "I am sorry to tell you, but you must know it; your husband is no more!" He was making haste out of the vessel, and his foot slipped. It is true, after a time, his body was found; but there it lies, without any signs of life." In what a condition are now both the mother and the children! Perhaps, for a while, stupid, overwhelmed, silent; staring at each other; then bursting out into loud and bitter lamentation! Now is the time to help them, by assisting those who make it their business so to do. Now let nothing hinder you from improving the glorious opportunity! Restore the husband to his disconsolate wife, the father to his weeping children! It is true, you cannot do this in person; you cannot be upon the spot. But you may do it in an effectual manner by assisting those that are. You may now, by your generous contribution, send them the help which you cannot personally give. O shut not up your bowels of compassion towards them! Now open your hearts and your hands! If you have much, give plenteously; if not, give a little, with a willing mind.

2. To you who believe the Christian Revelation, I may speak in a still stronger manner. You believe, your blessed Master “left you an example, that you might tread in his steps.” Now, you know his whole life was one labor of love. You know “how he went about doing good,” and that without intermission; declaring to all, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” Is not that, then, the language of your heart? —

Thy mind throughout my life be shown,
 While, list'ning to the wretches' cry,
 The widows' and the orphans' groan,
 On mercy's wings I swiftly fly,
 The poor and helpless to relieve,
 My life, my all, for them to give!

Occasions of doing this can never be wanting; for “the poor ye have always with you.” But what a peculiar opportunity does the solemnity of this day furnish you with, of “treading in his steps,” after a manner which you did not before conceive? Did he say to the poor afflicted parent, (doubtless to the surprise of many,) “Weep not?” And did he surprise them still more, when he stopped her flowing tears, by restoring life to her dead son, and, delivering him to his mother?” Did he (not withstanding all that; “laughed him to scorn”) restore to life the daughter of Jairus? How many things of a nearly resembling sort, “if human we may liken to divine,” have been done, and continue to be done daily, by these lovers of mankind! Let every one then be ambitious of having a share in this glorious work! Let every one (in a stronger sense than Mr. Herbert meant)

Join hands with God, to make a poor man live!

By your generous assistance, be ye partakers of their work, and partakers of their joy.

3. To you I need add but one word more. Remember (what was spoken at first) the solemn declaration of Him, whose ye are, and whom ye serve, coming in the clouds of heaven! While you are promoting this comprehensive charity, which contains feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, lodging the stranger; indeed all good works in one; let those animating words be written on your hearts, and sounding in your ears:

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto ME.”

SERMON C.

ON PLEASING ALL MEN.

“Let every man please his neighbor for his good to edification.”

Romans 15:2.

1. UNDOUBTEDLY the duty here prescribed is incumbent on all mankind; at least, on every one of those to whom are entrusted the oracles of God: For it is here enjoined to every one, without exception, that names the name of Christ. And the person whom every one is commanded to please, is *his neighbor*; that is, every child of man. Only we are to remember here, what the same Apostle speaks upon a similar occasion: “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” In like manner, we are to please all men, if it be possible, as much as lieth in us. But, strictly speaking, it is not possible: It is what no man ever did, nor ever will perform. But, suppose we use our utmost diligence, be the event as it may, we fulfill our duty.

2. We may farther observe, in how admirable a manner the Apostle limits this direction; otherwise, were it pursued without any limitation, it might produce the most mischievous consequences. We are directed to please them *for their good*; not barely for the sake of pleasing them, or pleasing ourselves; much less of pleasing them to their hurt; which is so frequently done, indeed continually done, by those who do not love their neighbor as themselves. Nor is it only their temporal good, which we are to aim at in pleasing our neighbor; but, what is of infinitely greater consequence, we are to do it *for their education*; in such a manner as may conduce to their spiritual and eternal good. We are so to please them, that the pleasure may not perish in the using, but may redound to their lasting advantage; may

make them wiser and better, holier and happier. both in time and in eternity.

3. Many are the treatises and discourses which have been published on this important subject. But all of them that I have either seen or heard were miserably defective. Hardly one of them proposed the right end: One and all had some lower design in pleasing men than to save their souls, — to build them up in love and holiness. Of consequence, they were not likely to propose the right means for the attainment of that end. One celebrated tract of this kind, entitled, “The Courtier,” was published in Spain, about two hundred years ago, and translated into various languages. But it has nothing to do with edification, and is therefore quite wide of the mark. Another treatise, entitled, “The Complete Courtier,” was published in our own country, in the reign of King Charles the Second, and, as it seems by a retainer to his Court. In this there are several very sensible advices concerning our outward behavior; and many little improprieties in word or action are observed, whereby men displease others without intending it; but this author, likewise, has no view at all to the spiritual or eternal good of his neighbor. Seventy or eighty years ago, another book was printed in London, entitled, “The Art of Pleasing.” But as it was wrote in a languid manner, and continued only common trite observations it was not likely to be of use to men of understanding, and still less to men of piety.

4. But it may he asked, Has not the subject been since treated of by a writer of a very different character? Is it not exhausted by one who was himself a consummate master of the art of pleasing; and who, writing to one he tenderly loved, to a favorite son, gives him all the advice which his great understanding, improved by various learning and the experience of many years, and much converse with all sorts of men, could suggest? I mean, the late Lord Chesterfield; the general darling of all the Irish, as well as of the English nation.

5. The means of pleasing which this wise and indulgent parent continually and earnestly recommends to his darling child, and on which he, doubtless, formed both his tempers and outward conduct, —

Till death untimely stopp'd his tuneful tongue, —

were, First, *making love*, in the grossest sense, to all the married women whom he conveniently could. (Single women he advises him to refrain from, for fear of disagreeable consequences.) Secondly. Constant and careful *dissimulation*; always wearing a mask; trusting no man upon earth, so as to let him know his real thoughts; but perpetually seeming to mean what he did not mean, and seeming to be what he was not. Thirdly. Well-devised *lying* to all sorts of people; speaking what was farthest from his heart; and in particular, *flattering* men, women, and children, as the infallible way of pleasing them,

It needs no great art to show, that this is not the way to please our neighbor *for his good*, or *to edification*. I shall endeavor to show, that there is a better way of doing it; and indeed a way diametrically opposite to this. It consists,

- I. In removing hindrances out of the way; and,
- II. In using the means that directly tend to this end.

I.

1. I advise all that desire to “please their neighbor for his good to edification,” First, to remove all hindrances out of the way; or, in other words, to avoid every thing which tends to displease wise and good men, men of sound understanding and real piety. Now, cruelty, malice, envy, hatred, and revenge are displeasing to all wise and good men; to all who are endued “with a sound understanding and genuine piety.” There is likewise another temper, nearly related to these, only in a lower kind, and which is usually found in common life, wherewith men in general, are not pleased: We commonly call it ill-nature. With all possible care avoid all these; nay, and whatever bears any resemblance to them, — as sourness, sternness, sullenness, on the one hand; peevishness and fretfulness, on the other, — if ever you hope to “please your neighbor for his good to edification.”

2. Next to cruelty, malice, and similar tempers, with the words and actions that naturally spring therefrom, nothing is more disgustful, not only to persons of sense and religion, but even to the generality of men, than pride, haughtiness of spirit, and its genuine fruits, an *assuming*, *arrogant*,

overbearing behavior. Even uncommon learning, joined with shining talents, will not make amends for this; but a man of eminent endowments, if he be eminently haughty, will be despised by many, and disliked by all. Of this the famous Master of Trinity College, in Cambridge, was a remarkable instance. How few persons of his time had a stronger understanding, or deeper learning, than Dr. Bentley! And yet how few were less beloved! unless one who was little, if at all, inferior to him in sense or learning, and equally distant from humility, — the author of the “Divine Legation of Moses.” Whoever, therefore, desires to please his neighbor for his good, must take care of splitting upon this rock. Otherwise the same pride which impels him to seek the esteem of his neighbor, will infallibly hinder his attaining it.

3. Almost as disgusting to the generality of men as haughtiness itself, is a passionate temper and behavior. When of a tender disposition are afraid even to converse with persons of this spirit; and others are not fond of their acquaintance; as frequently (perhaps when they expected nothing less) meeting with shocks, which if they bear for the present, yet they do not willingly put themselves in the way of meeting with again. Hence passionate men have seldom many friends; at least, not for any length of time. Crowds, indeed, may attend them for a season, especially when it may promote their interest. But they are usually disgusted one after another, and fall off like leaves in autumn. If, therefore, you desire lastingly to please your neighbor for his good, by all possible means avoid violent passion.

4. Yea, and if you desire to please, even on this account, take that advice of the Apostle, “Put away all lying.” It is the remark of an ingenious author, that, of all vices, *lying* never yet found an apologist; any that would openly plead in its favor, whatever his private sentiments might be. But it should be remembered, Mr. Addison went to a better world before Lord Chesterfield’s Letters were published. Perhaps his apology for it was the debt that ever was or can be made for so bad a cause. But, after all, the labor he has bestowed upon it; “has only semblance of worth, not substance.” It has no solidity in it; it is nothing better than a shining phantom. And as lying can never be commendable or innocent, so neither can it be pleasing; at least when it is stripped of its disguise, and appears

in its own shape. Consequently, it ought to be carefully avoided by all those who wish to please their neighbor for his good to edification.

5. “But is not flattery,” a man may say, “one species of lying? And has not this been allowed in all ages to be the sure means of pleasing? Has not that observation been confirmed by numberless experiments, —

Obsequium amicos, vertus odium parit?
Flattery creates friends, plain-dealing enemies?

Has not a late witty writer, in his ‘Sentimental Journal,’ related some striking instances of this?” I answer, It is true: Flattery is pleasing, for a while, and that not only to weak minds, as the desire of praise, whether deserved or undeserved, is planted in every child of man. But it is pleasing only for a while. As soon as the mask drops off; as soon as it appears that the speaker meant nothing by his soft words, we are pleased no longer. Every man’s own experience teaches him this. And we all know, that if a man continues to flatter, after his insincerity is discovered, it is disgusting, not agreeable. Therefore, even this fashionable way of lying is to be avoided, by all that are desirous of pleasing their neighbor to his lasting advantage.

6. Nay, whoever desires to do this must remember, that not only lying, in every species of it, but even dissimulation, (which is not the same with lying though nearly related to it,) is displeasing to men of understanding, though they have not religion. Terence represents even an old Heathen, when it was imputed to him as answering with indignation, *Simulare non est meum*: Dissimulation is no part of my character.” Guile, subtlety, cunning, the whole art of deceiving, by whatever terms it is expressed, is not accounted an accomplishment by wise men, but is, indeed, an abomination to them. And even those who practice it most, who are the greatest artificers of fraud, are not pleased with it in other men, neither are fond of conversing with those that practice it on themselves. Yea, the greatest deceivers are greatly displeased those that play their own arts back upon them.

II.

Now, if cruelty, malice, envy, hatred, revenge, ill-nature, if pride and haughtiness, if irrational anger, if lying and dissimulation, together with rule, subtlety, and cunning, are all and every one displeasing, to all men, especially to wise and good men, we may easily gather from hence what is the sure way to please them for their good to edification. Only we are to remember, that there are those in every time and place whom we must not expect to please. We must not, therefore, be surprised, when we meet with men who are not to be pleased, any way. It is now, as it was of old when our Lord himself complained, "Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation?" They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and saying to each other, we have piped unto you, but ye have not danced: We have mourned unto you but ye have not wept." But leaving these forward ones to themselves, we may reasonably hope to please others, by a careful and steady observation of the few directions following.

1. First. Let *love* not visit you as a transient guest, but be the constant temper of your soul. See that your heart be filled at all times, and on all occasions, with real, undissembled benevolence; not to those only that love *you*, but to every soul of man. Let it pant in your heart; let it sparkle in your eyes; let it shine on all your actions. Whenever you open your lips, let it be with love; and let there be in your tongue the law of kindness. Your word will then distill as the rain, and as the dew upon the tender herb. Be not straitened or limited in your affection, but let it embrace every child of man. Every one that is born of a woman has a claim to your goodwill. You owe this, not to some, but to all. And let all men know that you desire both their temporal and eternal happiness, as sincerely as you do your own.

2. Secondly. If you would please your neighbor for his good, study to be *lowly* in heart. Be little and vile in your own eyes, in honor preferring others before yourself, be deeply sensible of your own weaknesses, follies, and imperfections; as well as of the sin remaining in your heart, and cleaving to all your words and actions. And let this spirit appear in all you speak or do. "Be clothed with humility." Reject with horror that favorite maxim of the old Heathen, sprung from the bottomless pit, *Tanti eris aliis, quanti tibi fueris*: "The more you value yourself, the more others will value

you.” Not so; on the contrary, both God and man “resist the proud:” And, as “God giveth grace to the humble,” so humility, not pride, recommends us to the esteem and favor of men, especially those that fear God.

3. If you desire to please your neighbor for his good to edification, you should, Thirdly, labor and pray that you may be *meek* as well as lowly in heart. Labor to be of a calm, dispassionate temper; gentle towards all men; and let the gentleness of your disposition appear in the whole tenor of your conversation. Let all your words and all your actions be regulated thereby. Remember, likewise, that advice of St. Peter: As an addition to your gentleness, be merciful; “be courteous;” be pitiful, be tenderly compassionate to all that are in distress; to all that are under any affliction of mind, body, or estate. Let

The various scenes of human woe
Excite our softest sympathy.

Weep with them that weep. If you can do no more, at least mix your tears with theirs; and give them healing words, such as may calm their minds, and mitigate their sorrows. But if you can, if you are able to give them actual assistance, let it not be wanting. Be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame, a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless. This will greatly tend to conciliate the affection, and to give a profitable pleasure, not only to those who are immediate objects of your compassion, but to others likewise that “see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

4. And while you are pitiful to the afflicted, see that you are *courteous* toward all men. It matters not, in this respect, whether they are high or low, rich or poor, superior or inferior to you. No, not even whether good or bad, whether they fear God or not. Indeed, the *mode* of showing your courtesy may vary, as Christian prudence will direct, but the thing itself is due to all; the lowest and the worst have a claim to our courtesy. It may either be inward or outward; either a temper, or a mode of behavior: Such a mode of behavior as naturally springs from courtesy of heart. Is this the same with good breeding, or politeness? (which seems to be only a high degree of good breeding:) Nay, good breeding is chiefly the fruit of

education; but education cannot give courtesy of heart. Mr. Addison's well known definition of politeness seems rather to be a definition of this: "A constant desire of pleasing all men, appearing through the whole conversation." Now, this may subsist, even in a high degree, where there has been no advantage of education. I have seen as real courtesy in an Irish cabin, as could be found in St. James, or the Louvre.

5. Shall we endeavor to go a little deeper, to search the foundation of this matter? What is the source of that desire to please, which we term courtesy? Let us look attentively into our heart, and we shall soon find an answer. The same Apostle that teaches us to *be courteous*, teaches us to *honor all men*; and his Master teaches me to love all men. Join these together, and what will be the effect? A poor wretch cries to me for an alms: I look, and see him covered with dirt and rags. But through these I see one that has an immortal spirit, made to know, and love, and dwell with God to eternity. I honor him for the Creator's sake. I see, through all these rags, that he is purpled over with the blood of Christ. I love him for the sake of his Redeemer. The courtesy, therefore which I feel and show toward him is a mixture of the honor and love which I bear to the offspring of God; the purchase of his Son's blood, and the candidate for immortality. This courtesy let us feel and show toward all men; and we shall please all men to their edification.

6. Once more. Take all proper opportunities of *declaring* to others the *affection* which you really feel for them. This may be done with such an air, and in such a manner, as is not liable to the imputation of flattery: And experience shows, that honest men are pleased by this, full as much as knaves are by flattery. Those who are persuaded that your expressions of goodwill toward them are the language of your heart, will be as well satisfied with them, as with the strongest encomiums which you could pass upon them. You may judge them by yourselves, by what you feel in your own breast. You like to be honored; but had you not rather be beloved?

7. Permit me to add one advice more. If you would please all men for their good, at all events speak to all men the very truth from your heart. When you speak, open the window of your breast, let your words be the very

picture of your heart. In all company, and on all occasions, be a man of veracity: Nay, be not content with bare veracity; but “in simplicity and godly sincerity have all your conversation in the world,” as “an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.”

8. To sum up all in one word: If you would please men please God! Let truth and love possess your whole soul. Let them be the springs of all your affections, passions, tempers; the rule of all your thoughts. Let them inspire all your discourse; continually seasoned with that salt, and “meet to minister grace to the hearers.” Let all your actions be wrought in love. Never “let mercy or truth forsake thee: Bind them about thy neck.” Let them be open and conspicuous to all; and “write them on the table of thy heart.” “So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.”

SERMON CI.

THE DUTY OF CONSTANT COMMUNION.

THE following Discourse was written above five-and-fifty years ago, for the use of my pupils at Oxford. I have added very little, but retrenched much; as I then used more words than I do now. But, I thank God, I have not yet seen cause to alter my sentiments in any point which is therein delivered. 788. J. W.

“Do this in remembrance of me.” Luke 22:19.

IT is no wonder that men who have no fear of God should never think of doing this. But it is strange that it should be neglected by any that do fear God, and desire to save their souls; and yet nothing is more common. One reason why many neglect it is, they are so much afraid of “eating and drinking unworthily,” that they never think how much greater the danger is when they do not eat or drink it at all. That I may do what I can to bring these well-meaning men to a more just way of thinking, I shall,

- I. Show that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord’s Supper as often as he can; and,
- II. Answer some objections.

I.

I am to show that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord’s Supper as often as he can.

I. The First reason why it is the duty of every Christian so to do is, because it is a plain command of Christ. That this is his command, appears from the words of the text, “Do this in remembrance of me:” By which, as the Apostles were obliged to bless, break, and give the bread to all that joined with them in these holy things; so were all Christians obliged to receive those signs of Christ’s body and blood. Here, therefore, the bread and wine are commanded to be received, in remembrance of his death, to

the end of the world. Observe, too, that this command was given by our Lord when he was just laying down his life for our sakes. They are, therefore, as it were, his dying words to all his followers.

2. A Second reason why every Christian should do this as often as he can, is, because the benefits of doing it are so great to all that do it in obedience to him; viz., the forgiveness of our past sins, the present strengthening and refreshing of our souls. In this world we are never free from temptations. Whatever way of life we are in, whatever our condition be, whether we are sick or well, in trouble or at ease, the enemies of our souls are watching to lead us into sin. And too often they prevail over us. Now, when we are convinced of having sinned against God, what surer way have we of procuring pardon from him, than the “showing forth the Lord’s death;” and beseeching him, for the sake of his Son’s sufferings, to blot out all our sins?

3. The grace of God given herein confirms to us the pardon of our sins and enables us to leave them. As our bodies are strengthened by bread and wine, so are our souls by these tokens of the body and the blood of Christ. This is the food of our souls: This gives strength to perform our duty, and leads us on to perfection. If, therefore, we have any regard for the plain command of Christ, if we desire the pardon of our sins, if we wish for strength to believe, to love and obey God, then we should neglect no opportunity of receiving the Lord’s Supper; then we must never turn our backs on the feast which our Lord has prepared for us. We must neglect no occasion, which the good providence of God affords us, for this purpose. This is the true rule: So often are we to receive as God gives us opportunity. Whoever, therefore, does not receive, but goes from the holy table, when all things are prepared, either does not understand his duty, or does not care for the dying command of his Savior, the forgiveness of his sins, the strengthening of his soul, and the refreshing it with the hope of glory.

4. Let every one, therefore, who has either any desire to please God, or any love of his own soul, obey God, and consult the good of his own soul, by communicating every time he can; like the first Christians, with whom the Christian Sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord’s day service. And

for several centuries they received it almost everyday: Four times a week always, and every Saint's day beside. Accordingly, those that joined in the prayers of the faithful never failed to partake of the blessed sacrament. What opinion they had of any who turned his back upon it, we may learn from that ancient canon. "If any believer join in the prayers of the faithful, and go away without receiving the Lord's Supper, let him be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the Church of God."

5. In order to understand the nature of the Lord's Supper, it would be useful carefully to read over those passages in the Gospel, and in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which speak of the institution of it. Hence we learn that the design of this sacrament is, the continual remembrance of the death of Christ, by eating bread and drinking wine, which are the outward signs of the inward grace, the body and blood of Christ.

6. It is highly expedient for those who purpose to receive this, whenever their time will permit, to prepare themselves for this solemn ordinance by self-examination and prayer. But this is not absolutely necessary. And when we have not time for it, we should see that we have the habitual preparation which is absolutely necessary, and can never be dispensed with on any account or any occasion whatever. This is, First, a full *purpose* of heart to keep all the commandments of God; and, Secondly, a sincere *desire* to receive all his promises.

I.

I am, in the Second place, to answer the common objections against constantly receiving the Lord's Supper.

1. I say *constantly* receiving; for as to the phrase of *frequent* communion, it is absurd to the last degree. If it means anything less than constant, it means more than can be proved to be the duty of any man. For if we are not obliged to communicate constantly, by what argument can it be proved that we are obliged to communicate frequently? yea, more than once a year, or once in seven years, or once before we die? Every argument brought for this, either proves that we ought to do it constantly, or proves

nothing at all. Therefore, that indeterminate, unmeaning way of speaking ought to be laid aside by all men of understanding.

2. In order to prove that it is our duty to communicate constantly, we may observe that the holy communion is to be considered either,

- (1.) As a command of God; or,
- (2.) As a mercy to man.

First. As a command of God. God our Mediator and Governor, from whom we have received our life and all things, on whose will it depends whether we shall be perfectly happy or perfectly miserable from this moment to eternity, declares to us that all who obey his commands shall be eternally happy; all who do not, shall be eternally miserable. Now, one of these commands is, "Do this in remembrance of me." I ask then, Why do you not do this, when you can do it if you will? When you have an opportunity before you, why do not you obey the command of God?

3. Perhaps you will say, "God does not command me to do this *as often as I can*:" That is, the words, "as often as you can," are not added in this particular place. What then? Are we not to obey every command of God as often as we can? Are not all the promises of God made to those, and those only, who "give all diligence;" that is, to those who do all they can to obey his commandments? Our power is the one rule of our duty. Whatever we can do, that we ought. With respect either to this or any other command, he that, when he may obey it if he will, does not, will have no place in the kingdom of heaven.

4. And this great truth, that we are obliged to keep every command as far as we can, is clearly proved from the absurdity of the contrary opinion; for were we to allow that we are not obliged to obey every commandment of God as often as we can, we have no argument left to prove that any man is bound to obey any command at any time. For instance: Should I ask a man why he does not obey one of the plainest commands of God, why, for instance, he does not help his parents; he might answer, "I will not do it now; but I will at another time." When that time comes, put him in mind of God's command again; and he will say, "I will obey it some time or other." Nor is it possible ever to prove that he ought to do it now,

unless by proving that he ought to do it as often as he can; and therefore he ought to do it now, because he can if he will.

5. Consider the Lord's Supper, Secondly, as a mercy from God to man. As God, whose mercy is over all his works, and particularly over the children of men, knew there was but one way for man to be happy like himself; namely, by being like him in holiness; as he knew we could do nothing towards this of ourselves, he has given us certain means of obtaining his help. One of these is the Lord's Supper, which, of his infinite mercy, he hath given for this very end; that through this means we may be assisted to attain those blessings which he hath prepared for us; that we may obtain holiness on earth, and everlasting glory in heaven.

I ask, then, Why do you not accept of his mercy as often as ever you can? God now offers you his blessing; — why do you refuse it? You have now an opportunity of receiving his mercy; — why do you not receive it? You are weak: — why do not you seize every opportunity of increasing your strength? In a word: Considering this as a command of God, he that does not communicate as often as he can has no piety; considering it as a mercy, he that does not communicate as often as he can has no wisdom.

6. These two considerations will yield a full answer to all the common objections which have been made against constant communion indeed to all that ever were or can be made. In truth, nothing can be objected against it, but upon supposition that, this particular time, either the communion would be no mercy, or I am not commanded to receive it. Nay, should we grant it would be no mercy, that is not enough; for still the other reason would hold: Whether it does you any good or none, you are to obey the command of God.

7. However, let us see the particular excuses which men commonly make for not obeying it. The most common is, "I am unworthy; and 'he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.' Therefore I dare not communicate, lest I should eat and drink my own damnation."

The case is this: God offers you one of the greatest mercies, On this side heaven, and commands you to accept it. Why do not you accept this mercy, in obedience to his command? You say, "I am unworthy to receive it." And what then? You are unworthy to receive any mercy from God. But is that a reason for refusing all mercy? God offers you a pardon for all your sins. You are unworthy of it, it is sure, and he knows it; but since, he is pleased to offer it nevertheless, will not you accept it? He offers to deliver your soul from death: You are unworthy to live; but will you therefore refuse life? He offers to endue your soul with new strength; because you are unworthy of it, will you deny to take it? What can God himself do for us farther, if we refuse his mercy because we are unworthy of it?

8. But suppose this were no mercy to us; (to suppose which is indeed giving God the lie; saying, that is not good for man which he purposely ordered for his good;) still I ask, Why do not you obey God's command? He says, "Do this." Why do you not? You answer, "am unworthy to do it." What! unworthy to obey God? unworthy to do what God bids you do? unworthy to obey God's command? What do you mean by this? that those who are unworthy to obey God ought not to obey him? Who told you so? If he were even "an angel from heaven, let him be accursed." If you think God himself has told you by St. Paul, let us hear his words. They are these: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself."

Why, this is quite another thing. Here is not a word said of being unworthy to eat and drink. Indeed he does speak of eating and drinking unworthily; but that is quite a different thing; so he has told us himself. In this very chapter we are told that by eating and drinking unworthily is meant, taking the holy sacrament in such a rude and disorderly way, that one was "hungry, and another drunken." But what is that to *you*? Is there any danger of *your* doing so, — of your eating and drinking *thus unworthily*? However unworthily you are to communicate, there is no fear of your communicating thus. Therefore, whatever the punishment is, of doing it thus unworthily, it does not concern *you*. You have no more reason from this text to disobey God, than if there was no such text in the Bible. If you speak of "eating and drinking unworthily" in the sense Saint

Paul uses the words, you may as well say, “I dare not communicate, *for fear the church should fall,*” as “for fear I should *eat and drink unworthily.*”

9. If then you fear bringing *damnation* on yourself by this, you fear where no fear is. Fear it not, for eating and drinking unworthily; for that, in St. Paul’s sense, ye cannot do. But I will tell you for what you shall fear damnation; — for not eating and drinking at all; for not obeying your Maker and Redeemer; for disobeying his plain command; for thus setting at nought both his mercy and authority. Fear ye this; for hear what his Apostle saith: “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.” (James 2:10)

10. And see then how weak the objection is, “I dare not receive, it because⁹ I am unworthy.” Nor is it any stronger, though the reason why you think yourself unworthy is, that you have lately fallen into sin. It is true, our Church forbids those; “who have done any grievous crime” to receive it without repentance. But all that follows from this is, that we should repent before we come; not that we should neglect to come at all.

To say, therefore, that “a man may turn his back upon the altar because he has lately fallen into sin, that he may impose this penance upon himself,” is talking without any warrant from, Scripture. For where does the Bible teach to atone for breaking one commandment of God by breaking another? What advice is this, — “Commit a new act of disobedience, and God will more easily forgive the past!”

II.

Others there are who, to excuse their disobedience, plead that they are unworthy in another sense: that they “cannot live up to it; they cannot pretend to lead so holy a life as constantly communicating would oblige them to do.” Put this into plain words. I ask, Why do not you accept the mercy which God commands you to accept? You answer, “Because I cannot live up to the profession I must make when I receive it.” Than it is plain you ought never to receive it at all. For it is no more lawful to promise once what you know you cannot perform, than to promise it a thousand times. You know too, that it is one and the same promise,

whether you make it every year or everyday. You promise to do just as much, whether you promise ever so often or ever so seldom.

If, therefore, you cannot live up to the profession they make who communicate once a week, neither can you come up to the profession you make who communicate once a year. But cannot you indeed? Then it had been good for you that you had never been born. For all that you profess at the Lord's table, you must both profess and keep, or you cannot be saved. For you profess nothing there but this, — that you will diligently keep his commandments. And cannot you keep up to this profession? Then you cannot enter into life.

12. Think then what you say, before you say you cannot live up to what is required of constant communicants. This is no more than is required of any communicants; yea, of every one that has a soul to be saved. So that to say, you cannot live up to this, is neither better nor worse than renouncing Christianity. It is, in effect, renouncing your baptism, wherein you solemnly promised to keep all his commandments. You now fly from that profession. You willfully break one of his commandments, and, to excuse yourself, say, you cannot keep his commandments: Then you cannot expect to receive the promises, which are made only to those that keep them.

13. What has been said on this pretense against constant communion, is applicable to those who say the same thing in other words: "We dare not do it, because it requires so perfect an obedience afterwards as we cannot promise to perform." Nay, it requires neither more nor less perfect obedience than you promised in your baptism. You then undertook to keep the commandments of God by his help; and you promise no more when you communicate.

14. A Second objection which is often made against constant communion, is, the having so much business as will not allow time for such a preparation as is necessary thereto. I answer, All the preparation that is absolutely necessary is contained in those words: "Repent you truly of your sins past; have faith in Christ our Savior;" (and observe, that word is not taken in its highest sense;) "amend your lives, and be in charity with

all men; so shall ye be meet partakers of these holy mysteries.” All who are thus prepared may draw near without fear, and receive the sacrament to their comfort. Now, what business can hinder you from being thus prepared? — from repenting of your past sins; from believing that Christ died to save sinners; from amending your lives, and being in charity with all men? No business can hinder you from this, unless it be such as hinders you from being in a state of salvation: If you resolve and design to follow Christ, you are fit to approach the Lord’s table. If you do not design this, you are only fit for the table and company of devils.

15. No business, therefore, can hinder any man from having that preparation which alone is necessary, unless it be such as unprepares him for heaven, as puts him out of a state of salvation. Indeed every prudent man will, when he has time, examine himself before he receives the Lord’s Supper, whether he repents him truly of his former sins; whether he believes the promises of God; whether he fully designs to walk in His ways, and be in charity with all men. In this, and in private prayer, he will doubtless spend all the time he conveniently can. But what is this to you who have not time? What excuse is this for not obeying God? He commands you to come, and prepare yourself by prayer, if you have time; if you have not, however, come. Make not reverence to God’s command a pretense for breaking it. Do not rebel against him for fear of offending him. Whatever you do or leave undone besides, be sure to do what God bids you do. Examining yourself, and using private prayer, especially before the Lord’s Supper, is good; but, behold, “to obey is better than” self-examination; “and to hearken,” than the prayer of an angel.

16. A Third objection against constant communion is, that it abates our reverence for the sacrament. Suppose it did: What then? Will you thence conclude that you are not to receive it constantly? This does not follow. God commands you, “Do this.” You may do it now, but will not, and, to excuse yourself, say, “If I do it so often, it will abate the reverence with which I do it now.” Suppose it did; has God ever told you, that when the obeying his command abates your reverence to it, then you may disobey it? If he has, you are guiltless; if not, what; you say is just nothing to the purpose. The law is clear. Either show that the Lawgiver makes this exception, or you are guilty before him.

17. Reverence for the sacrament may be of two sorts: Either such as is owing purely to the newness of the thing, such as men naturally have for anything they are not used to; or such as is owing to our faith, or to the love or fear of God. Now, the former of these is not properly a religious reverence, but purely natural. And this sort of reverence for the Lord's Supper, the constantly receiving of it must lessen. But it will not lessen the true religious reverence, but rather confirm and increase it.

18. A Fourth objection is, "I have communicated constantly so long, but I have not found the benefit I expected." This has been the case with many well-meaning persons, and therefore deserves to be particularly considered. And consider this: First, whatever God commands us to do, we are to do because he commands, whether we feel any benefit thereby or no. Now, God commands, "Do this in remembrance of me." This, therefore, we are to do because he commands, whether we find present benefit thereby or not. But undoubtedly we shall find benefit sooner or later, though perhaps insensibly. We shall be insensibly strengthened, made more fit for the service of God, and more constant in it. At least, we are kept from falling back, and preserved from many sins and temptations: And surely this should be enough to make us receive this food as often as we can; though we do not presently feel the happy effects of it, as some have done, and we ourselves may when God sees best.

19. But suppose a man has often been at the sacrament, and yet received no benefit. Was it not his own fault? Either he was not rightly prepared, willing to obey all the commands and to receive all the promises of God, or he did not receive it aright, trusting in God. Only see that you are duly prepared for it, and the oftener you come to the Lord's table, the greater benefit you will find there.

20. A Fifth objection which some have made against constant communion is, that "the Church enjoins it only three times a year." The words of the Church are, "Note, that every parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in the year." To this I answer, First, What, if the Church had not enjoined it at all; is it not enough that God enjoins it? We obey the Church only for God's sake. And shall we not obey God himself? If, then,

you receive three times a year because the Church commands it, receive every time you can because God commands it. Else your doing the one will be so far from excusing you for not doing the other, that your own practice will prove your folly and sin, and leave you without excuse. But, Secondly, we cannot conclude from these words, that the Church excuses him who receives only thrice a year. The plain sense of them is, that he who does not receive thrice at least, shall be cast out of the Church: but they by no means excuse him who communicates no oftener. This never was the judgment of our Church: On the contrary, she takes all possible care that the sacrament be duly administered, wherever the Common Prayer is read, every Sunday and holiday in the year.

The Church gives a particular direction with regard to those that are in Holy Orders: “In all cathedral and collegiate Churches and Colleges, where there are many Priests and Deacons, they shall all receive the communion with the Priest every Sunday at the least.”

21. It has been shown, First, that if we consider the Lord’s Supper as a command of Christ, no man can have any pretense to Christian piety, who does not receive it (not once a month but) as often as he can. Secondly, that if we consider the institution of it, as a mercy to ourselves, no man who does not receive it as often as he can has any pretense to Christian prudence. Thirdly, that none of the objections usually made, can be any excuse for that man who does not, at every opportunity, obey this command and accept this mercy.

22. It has been particularly shown, First, that unworthiness is no excuse; because though in one sense we are all unworthy, yet none of us need be afraid of being unworthy in St. Paul’s sense of “eating and drinking unworthily.” Secondly, that the not having time enough for preparation can be no excuse; since the only preparation which is absolutely necessary, is that which no business can hinder; nor indeed anything on earth, unless so far as it hinders our being in a state of salvation. Thirdly, that its abating our reverence is no excuse; since he who gave the command, “Do this,” nowhere adds, is unless it abates your reverence. “Fourthly, that our not profiting by it is no excuse; since it is our own fault, in neglecting that necessary preparation which is in our own power.

Lastly, that the judgment of our own Church is quite in favor of constant communion. If those who have hitherto neglected it on any of these pretenses, will lay these things to heart, they will by the grace of God, come to a better mind, and never more forsake their own mercies

SERMON CII.

OF FORMER TIMES.

“Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.”

Ecclesiastes 7:10.

1. IT is not easy to discern any connection between this text and the context; between these words and either those that go before, or those that follow after. It seems to be a detached, independent sentence, like very many in the Proverbs of Solomon: And, like them, it contains a weighty truth, which deserves a serious consideration. Is not the purport of the question this? It is not wise to inquire into the cause of a supposition, unless the supposition itself be not only true, but clearly proved so to be. Therefore, it is not wise to inquire into the cause of this supposition, that; “the former days were better than these,” because, common as it is, it was never yet proved, nor indeed ever can be.

2. Perhaps there are few suppositions which have passed more currently in the world than this, — that the former days were better than these; and that in several respects. It is generally supposed, that we now live in the dregs of time, when the world is, as it were, grown old; and, consequently, that everything in it is in a declining state. It is supposed, in particular, that men were, some ages ago, of a far taller stature than now; that they likewise had far greater abilities, and enjoyed a deeper and stronger understanding; in consequence of which their writings of every kind are far preferable to those of later times. Above all, it is supposed that the former generations of men excelled the present in virtue; that mankind in every age, and in every nation, have degenerated more and more; so that, at length, they have fallen from the golden into the iron age, and now justice is fled from the earth.

3. Before we consider the truth of these suppositions, let us inquire into the rise of them. And as to the general supposition, that the world was once in a far more excellent state than it is, may we not easily believe that this arose (as did all the fabulous accounts of the golden age) from some confused traditions concerning our first parents and their paradisiacal state? To this refer many of the fragments of ancient writings, which men of learning have gleaned up. Therefore, we may allow that there is some truth in the supposition; seeing it is certain, the days which Adam and Eve spent in Paradise were far better than any which have been spent by their descendants, or ever will be, till Christ returns to reign upon earth.

4. But whence could that supposition arise, that men were formerly of a larger stature than they are now? This has been a generally prevailing opinion almost in all nations and in all ages. Hence, nearly two thousand years ago, the well known line of Virgil: —

Qualia nunc hominum producit corpora tellus. ¹⁰

Hence, nearly a thousand years before him, Homer tells us of one of his heroes throwing a stone which hardly ten men could lift, — **οἱοι νῦν βροτοῖ**, — *such as men are now*. We allow, indeed, there have been giants in all ages, in various parts of the world. Whether the Antediluvians mentioned in Genesis were such or not (which many have questioned,) we cannot doubt but of the King of Bashan was such, as well as Goliath of Gath. Such also were many of the children (or descendants) of Anak. But it does not appear that in any age or nation men in general were larger than they are now. We are very sure they were not for many centuries past, by the tombs and coffins that have been discovered, which are exactly of the same size with those that are now in use. And in the catacombs at Rome, the niches for the dead bodies which were hewn in the rock sixteen hundred years ago, are none of them above six feet in length, and some a little under. Above all, the Pyramids of Egypt (that of King Cheops in particular) have, beyond all reasonable doubt, remained at least three thousand years. Yet none of the mummies (embalmed bodies) brought therefrom are above five feet ten inches long.

5. But how then came this supposition to prevail so long and so generally in the world? I know not but it may be accounted for from hence: Great and little are relative terms; and all men judge of greatness and littleness by comparing things with themselves. Therefore it is not strange, if we think men are smaller now than they were when we were children. I remember a remarkable instance of this, in my own case: After having left it seven years, I had a great desire to see the school where I was brought up. When I was there, I wondered that the boys were so much smaller than they used to be when I was at school. "Many of my school-fellows, ten years ago, were taller by the head than me; and few of them that are at school now reach up to my shoulders." Very true: But what was the reason of this? Indeed a very plain one: It was not because they were smaller, but because I was bigger than I was ten years before. I verily believe this is the cause, why men in general suppose the human race do decrease in stature. They remember the time when most of those round about them were both taller and bigger than themselves. Yea, and all men have done the same in their successive generations. Is it any wonder then, that all should have run into the same mistake, when it has been transmitted unawares from father to son, and probably will be to the end of time?

6. But there is likewise a general supposition, that the understanding of man and all his mental abilities, were of a larger size in the ancient days than they are now; and that the ancient inhabitants of the earth had far greater talents than the present. Men of eminent learning have been of this mind, and have contended for it with the utmost vehemence. It is granted that many of the ancient writers, both philosophers, poets, and historians, will not easily be excelled, if equaled, by those of later ages. We may instance in Homer and Virgil, as poets; Thucydides and Livy, as historians. But this, mean time, is to be remarked concerning most of these writers; that each of them spent his whole life in composing and polishing one book. What wonder then if they were exquisitely finished, when so much labor was bestowed upon them? To doubt whether any man in Europe, or in the world, has taken so much pains in finishing any treatise: Otherwise it might possibly have equaled, if not excelled, any that went before.

7. But that the generality of men were not one jot wiser in ancient times, than they are at the present time, we may easily gather from the most authentic records. One of the most ancient nations concerning whom we have any certain account is the Egyptian. And what conception can we have of their understanding and learning when we reflect upon the objects of their worship? These were not only the vilest of animals, as dogs and cats, but the leeks and onions that grew in their own gardens. Indeed, we lately had a great man (whose manner was to treat with the foulest abuse all that dared to differ from him: I do not mean Dr. Johnson, — he was a mere courtier, compared to Mr. Hutchinson) who scurrilously abused all those who are so void of common sense as to believe any such thing concerning them. He peremptorily affirms, (but without condescending to give us any proof,) that the ancient inhabitants of Egypt had a deep hidden meaning in all this. Let him believe it who can. I cannot believe it on any man's bare assertion. I believe they had no deeper meaning in worshipping cats than our schoolboys have in baiting them. And I apprehend, the common Egyptians were just as wise three thousand years ago as the common ploughmen in England and Wales are at this day. I suppose their natural understanding, like their stature, was on level with ours; and their learning, their acquired knowledge, many degrees inferior to that of persons of the same rank, either in France, Holland, or Germany.

8. However, did not the people of former times greatly excel us in virtue? This is the point of greatest importance; — the rest are but trifles in comparison of it. Now, is it not universally allowed, that every age grows worse and worse? Was it not observed by the old heathen poet, almost two thousand years ago, —

*Aelas parentum pejor avis tulit
Nos nequiores, mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosiore?*

That is, in plain prose, “The age of our parents was more vicious than that of our grandfathers; our age is more vicious than that of our fathers; we are worse than our fathers were, and our children will be worse than us.”

9. It is certain this has been the common cry from generation to generation. And if it is not true, whence should it arise? How can we account for it?

Perhaps another remark of the same poet may help us to an answer. May it not be extracted from the general character which he gives of old men?

*Difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti
Se puero, censor, castigatque minorum.* ¹¹

Is it not the common practice of the old men to praise the past and condemn the present time? And this may probably operate much farther than one would at first imagine. When those that have more experience than us, and therefore we are apt to think more wisdoms are almost continually harping upon this, the degeneracy of the world; those who are accustomed from their infancy to hear how much better the world was formerly than it is now, (and so it really seemed to them when they were young, and just come into the world, and when the cheerfulness of youth gave a pleasing air to all that was round about them,) the idea of the world's being worse and worse would naturally grow up with them. And so it will be, till we, in our turn, grow peevish, fretful, discontented, and full of melancholy complaints, "How wicked the world is grown! How much better it was when we were young, in the golden days that we can remember!"

10. But let us endeavor, without prejudice or prepossession, to take a view of the whole affair. And, upon cool and impartial consideration, it will appear that the former days were not better than these; yea, on the contrary, that these are, in many respects, beyond comparison better than them. It will clearly appear, that as the stature of men was nearly the same from the beginning of the world, so the understanding of men, in similar circumstances, has been much the same, from the time of God's bringing a flood upon the earth unto the present hour. We have no reason to believe, that the uncivilized nations of Africa, America, or the South-Sea Islands had ever a better understanding, or were in a less barbarous state than they are now. Neither, on the other hand, have we any sufficient proof, that the natural understandings of men in the most civilized countries, — Babylon, Persia, Greece, or Italy, — were stronger, or more improved, than those of the Germans, French, or English, now alive. Nay, have we not reason to believe, that, by means of better instruments, we have attained that knowledge of nature which few, if any, of the ancients ever attained? So

that, in this respect, the advantage (and not a little one) is clearly on our side: And we ought to acknowledge, with deep thankfulness to the Giver of every good gift, that the former days were not to be compared to these wherein we live.

11. But the principal inquiry still remains: Were not “the former days better than these,” with regard to virtue? or, to speak more properly, religion? This deserves a full consideration.

By religion I mean the love of God and man filling the heart and governing the life. The sure effect of this is, the uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth. This is the very essence of it; the height and depth of religion, detached from this or that opinion, and from all particular modes of worship. And I would calmly inquire, Which of the former times were better than these, with regard to this? to the religion experienced and practiced by Archbishop Fenelon, in France; Bishop Ken, in England; and Bishop Bedell, in Ireland?

12. We need not extend our inquiry beyond the period when life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel. And it is allowed, that the days immediately succeeding the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost were better even in this respect, even with regard to religion, than any which have succeeded them. But setting aside this short age of golden days, I must repeat the question, Which of the former days were better than the present, in every known part of the habitable world?

13. Was the former part of this century better, either in these islands or any part of the continent? I know no reason at all to affirm this. I believe every part of Europe was full as void of religion in the reign of Queen Anne as it is at this day. It is true, luxury increases to a high degree in every part of Europe: And so does the scandal of England, profaneness, in every part of the kingdom. But it is also true, that the most infernal of all vices, cruelty, does as swiftly decrease. And such instances of it as, in times past, continually occurred, are now very seldom heard of. Even in war, that savage barbarity which was everywhere practiced has been discontinued for many years.

14. Was the last century more religious than this? In the former part of it, there was much of the form of religion; and some undoubtedly experienced the power thereof. But how soon did the fine gold become dim! How soon was it so mingled with worldly design, and with a total contempt both of truth, justice, and mercy, as brought that scandal upon all religion which is hardly removed to this day! Was there more true religion in the preceding century, — the age of the Reformation? There was doubtless, in many countries, a considerable reformation of religious opinions; yea, and modes of worship, which were much changed for the better, both in Germany and several other places. But it is well known that Luther himself complained with his dying breath, “The people that are called by my name (though I wish they were called by the name of Christ) are reformed as to their opinions and modes of worship; but their tempers and lives are the same they were before.” Even then both justice and mercy were so shamelessly trodden under foot, that an eminent writer computes the number of those that were slaughtered, during those religious contests, to have been no less than forty millions, within the compass of forty years!

15. We may step back above a thousand years from this, without finding any better time. No historian gives us the least intimation of any such, till we come to the age of Constantine the Great. Of this period several writers have given us most magnificent accounts. Yea, one eminent author, no less a man than Dr. Newton, the late Bishop of Bristol, has been at no small pains to show, that the conversion of Constantine to Christianity, and the emoluments which he bestowed upon the Church with an unsparing hand, were the event which is signified in the Revelation by “the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven!”

16. But I cannot, in anywise, subscribe to the Bishop’s opinion in this matter. So far from it, that I have been long convinced, from the whole tenor of ancient history, that this very event, Constantine’s calling himself a Christian, and pouring that flood of wealth and honor on the Christian Church, the Clergy in particular, was productive of more evil to the Church than all the ten persecutions put together. From the time that power, riches, and honor of all kinds were heaped upon the Christians, vice of all kinds came in like a flood, both on the Clergy and laity. From the time that the Church and State, the kingdoms of Christ and of the

world, were so strangely and unnaturally blended together, Christianity and Heathenism were so thoroughly incorporated with each other, that they will hardly ever be divided till Christ comes to reign upon earth. So that, instead of fancying that the glory of the New Jerusalem covered the earth at that period, we have terrible proof that it was then, and has ever since been, covered with the smoke of the bottomless pit.

17. “However, were not the days antecedent to this, — those of the third century, — better beyond all comparison than any that followed them?” This has been almost universally believed. Few doubt but, in the age before Constantine, the Christian Church was in its glory, worshipping God in the beauty of holiness. But was it so indeed? What says St. Cyprian, who lived in the midst of that century; a witness above all exception, and one that sealed the truth with his blood? What account does he give of what he saw with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears? Such a one as would almost make one imagine, he was painting to the life, not the ancient Church of Carthage, but the modern Church of Rome. According to his account, such abominations even then prevailed over all orders of men, that it was not strange God poured out his fury upon them in blood, by the grievous persecutions which followed.

18. Yea, and before this, even in the first century, even in the apostolic age, what account does St. John give of several of the Churches which he himself had planted in Asia? How little were those congregations better than many in Europe at this day! Nay, forty or fifty years before that, within thirty years of the descent of the Holy Ghost, were there not such abominations in the Church of Corinth as were “not even named among the Heathens.” So early did the “mystery of iniquity” begin to work in the Christian Church! So little reason have we to appeal to “the former days,” as though they were “better than these!”

19. To affirm this, therefore, as commonly as it is done, is not only contrary to truth, but is an instance of black ingratitude to God, and a grievous affront to his blessed Spirit. For whoever makes a fair and candid inquiry, will easily perceive that true religion has in nowise decreased, but greatly increased in the present century. To instance in one capital branch of religion, the love of our neighbor. Is not persecution well-nigh vanished

from the face of the earth? In what age did Christians of every denomination show such forbearance to each other? When before was such lenity shown by governors toward their respective subjects? not only in Great Britain and Ireland, but in France and Germany; yea, every part of Europe? Nothing like this has been seen since the time of Constantine; no, not since the time of the Apostles.

20. If it be said, “Why, this is the fruit of the general infidelity, the Deism which has over-spread all Europe,” I answer, Whatever be the cause, we have reason greatly to rejoice in the effect: And if the all-wise God has brought so great and universal a good out of this dreadful evil, so much the more should we magnify his astonishing power, wisdom, and goodness herein. Indeed, so far as we can judge, this was the most direct way whereby nominal Christians could be prepared, first, for tolerating, and, afterwards, for receiving, real Christianity. While the governors were themselves unacquainted with it, nothing but this could induce them to suffer it. O the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; causing a total disregard for all religion, to pave the way for the revival of the only religion which was worthy of God! I am not assured whether this be the case or no in France and Germany; but it is so beyond all contradiction in North America: The total indifference of the government there, whether there be any religion or none, leaves room for the propagation of true, scriptural religion, without the least let or hindrance.

21. But, above all this, while luxury and profaneness have been increasing on the one hand, on the other, benevolence and compassion toward all the forms of human woe have increased in a manner not known before, from the earliest ages of the world. In proof of this, we see more hospitals, infirmaries, and other places of public charity have been erected, at least in and near London, within this century, than in five hundred years before. And suppose this has been owing in part to vanity, desire of praise; yet have we cause to bless God, that so much good has sprung even from this imperfect motive.

22. I cannot forbear mentioning one instance more of the goodness of God to us in the present age. He has lifted up his standard in our islands, both against luxury, profaneness, and vice of every kind. He caused, near fifty

years ago, as it were, a grain of mustard seed to be sown near London; and it has now grown and put forth great branches, reaching from sea to sea. Two or three poor people met together, in order to help each other to be real Christians. They increased to hundreds, to thousands, to myriads, still pursuing their one point, real religion; the love of God and man ruling all their tempers, and words, and actions. Now I will be bold to say, such an event as this, considered in all its circumstances, has not been seen upon earth before, since the time that St. John went to Abraham's bosom.

23. Shall we now say, "The former days were better than these?" God forbid we should be so unwise and so unthankful! Nay, rather let us praise him all the day long; for he hath dealt bountifully with us. No "former time," since the Apostles left the earth, has been better than the present. None has been comparable to it in several respects. We are not born out of due time, but in the day of his power, — a day of glorious salvation, wherein he is hastening to renew the whole race of mankind in righteousness and true holiness. How bright hath the Sun of Righteousness already shone on various parts of the earth! And how many gracious showers has he already poured down upon his inheritance! How many precious souls has he already gathered into his garner, as ripe shocks of corn! May we be always ready to follow them; crying in our hearts "Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!"

SERMON CIII.

WHAT IS MAN?

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man?”

Psalm 8:3, 4.

How often has it been observed, that the Book of Psalms is a rich treasury of devotion, which the wisdom of God has provided to supply the wants of his children in all generations! In all ages the Psalms have been of singular use to those that loved or feared God; not only to the pious Israelites, but to the children of God in all nations. And this book has been of sovereign use to the Church of God, not only while it was in its state of infancy, (so beautifully described by St. Paul in the former part of the fourth chapter to the Galatians,) but also since, in the fullness of time, “life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel.” The Christians in every age and nation have availed themselves of this divine treasure, which has richly supplied the wants, not only of “babes in Christ,” of those who were just setting out in the ways of God, but of those also who had made good progress therein; yea, of such as were swiftly advancing toward “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

The subject of this psalm is beautifully proposed in the beginning of it: “O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth; who hast set thy glory above the heavens!” It celebrates the glorious wisdom and love of God, as the Creator and Governor of all things. It is not an improbable conjecture, that David wrote this psalm in a bright star-light night, while he observed the moon also “walking in her brightness;” that while he surveyed

This fair half-round, the ample azure sky,
 Terribly large, and beautifully bright,
 With stars unnumber'd, and unmeasured light, —

he broke out, from the fullness of his heart, into the nature exultation,
 “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the
 stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man?” How is it possible that the
 Creator of these, the innumerable armies of heaven and earth, should have
 any regard to this speck of creation, whose time “passeth away like a
 shadow?”

Thy frame but dust, thy stature but a span,
 A moment thy duration, foolish man!

“What is man?” I would consider this,

First, with regard to his magnitude; and,
 Secondly, with regard to his duration.

I.

1. Consider we, First, What is man, with regard to his magnitude? And, in
 this respect, what is any one individual, compared to all the inhabitants of
 Great Britain? He shrinks into nothing in the comparison. How
 inconceivably little is one compared to eight or ten millions of people! Is
 he not

Lost like a drop in the unbounded main?

2. But what are all the inhabitants of Great Britain, compared to all the
 inhabitants of the earth? These have frequently been supposed to amount
 to about four hundred millions. But will this computation be allowed to be
 just, by those who maintain China alone to contain fifty-eight millions? If
 it be true, that this one empire contains little less than sixty millions, we
 may easily suppose that the inhabitants of the whole terraqueous globe
 amount to four thousand millions of inhabitants, rather than four hundred.
 And what is any single individual, in comparison of this number?

3. But what is the magnitude of the earth itself, compared to that of the
 solar system? including, beside that vast body, the sun, so immensely
 larger than the earth, the whole train of primary and secondary planets;

several of which (I mean, of the secondary planets, suppose the satellites or moons of Jupiter and Saturn) are abundantly larger than the whole earth?

4. And yet, what is the whole quantity of matter contained in the sun, and all those primary and secondary planets, with all the spaces comprised in the solar system, in comparison of that which is pervaded by those amazing bodies, the comets? Who but the Creator himself can “tell the number of these, and call them all by their names?” Yet what is even the orbit of a comet, and the space contained therein, to the space which is occupied by the fixed stars; which are at so immense a distance from the earth, that they appear, when they are viewed through the largest telescope, just as they do to the naked eye?

5. Whether the bounds of the creation do or do not extend beyond the region of the fixed stars, who can tell? Only the morning-stars, who sang together when the foundations thereof were laid. But that it is finite, that the bounds of it are fixed, we have no reason to doubt. We cannot doubt, but when the Son of God had finished all the work which he created and made, he said,

These be thy bounds,
This be thy just circumference, O world!

But what is man to this?

6. We may take one step, and only one step, farther still: What is the space of the whole creation, what is all finite space that is, or can be conceived, in comparison of infinite? What is it but a point, a cipher, compared to that which is filled by Him that is All in all? Think of this, and then ask, “What is man?”

7. What is man, that the great God who filleth heaven and earth, “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,” should stoop so inconceivably low as to “be mindful of him?” Would not reason suggest to us, that so diminutive a creature would be overlooked by him in the immensity of his works? especially when we consider,

II.

Secondly, What is man, with regard to his duration?

1. The days of man, since the last reduction of human life, which seems to have taken place in the time of Moses, (and not improbably was revealed to the man of God at the time that he made this declaration,) “are threescore years and ten.” This is the general standard which God hath now appointed. “And if men be so strong,” perhaps one in a hundred, “that they come to fourscore years, yet then is their strength but labor and sorrow: So soon passeth it away, and we are gone!”

2. Now, what a poor pittance of duration is this, compared to the life of Methuselah! “And Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty and nine years.” But what are these nine hundred and sixty and nine years to the duration of an angel, which began “or ever the mountains were brought forth,” or the foundations of the earth were laid? And what is the duration which has passed since the creation of angels, to that which passed before they were created, to unbeginning eternity? — to that half of eternity (if one may so speak) which had then elapsed? And what are threescore years and ten to this?

3. Indeed, what proportion can there possibly be between any finite and infinite duration? What proportion is there between a thousand or ten thousand years, or ten thousand times ten thousand ages, and eternity? I know not that the inexpressible disproportion between any conceivable part of time and eternity can be illustrated in a more striking manner than it is in the well known passage of St. Cyprian: “Suppose there was a ball of sand as large as the globe of earth, and suppose one grain of this were to be annihilated in a thousand years; yet that whole space of time wherein this ball would be annihilating, at the rate of one grain in a thousand years, would bear less, yea, unspeakably, infinitely less, proportion to eternity, than a single grain of sand would bear to that whole mass.” What, then, are the seventy years of human life, in comparison of eternity. In what terms can the proportion between these be expressed? It is nothing, yea, infinitely less than nothing!

4. If, then, we add to the littleness of man the inexpressible shortness of his duration, is it any wonder that a man of reflection should sometimes feel a kind of fear, lest the great, eternal, infinite Governor of the universe should disregard so diminutive a creature as man? — a creature so every way inconsiderable, when compared either with immensity or eternity; Did not both these reflections glance through, if not dwell upon, the mind of the royal Psalmist? Thus, in contemplation of the former, he breaks out into the strong words of the text: “When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, What is man, that thou shouldest be mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou shouldest regard him?” He is, indeed, (to use St. Augustine’s words,) *alique portio creaturae tuae*, “some portion of thy creation;” but *quantula portio*, “how amazingly small a portion!” How utterly beneath thy notice! It seems to be in contemplation of the latter, that he cries out in the hundred and forty-fourth Psalm, “Lord, what is man, that thou hast such respect unto him or the son of man, that thou shouldest so regard him?” “Man is like a thing of nought.” Why? “His time passeth away like a shadow.” In this, although in a very few places,) the new translation of the Psalms — that bound up in our Bibles — is perhaps more proper than the old — that which we have in the Common Prayer Book. It runs thus: “Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him; or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?” According to the former translation, David seems to be amazed that the eternal God, considering the littleness of man, should have so much respect unto him, and should so much regard him: But in the latter, he seems to wonder, seeing the life of man “passeth away like a shadow,” that God should take any knowledge of him at all, or make any account of him.

5. And it is natural for us to make the same reflection, and to entertain the same fear. But how may we prevent this uneasy reflection, and effectually cure this fear? First. By considering what David does not appear to have taken at all into his account; namely, that the body is not the man; that man is not only a house of clay, but an immortal spirit; a spirit made in the image of God; an incorruptible picture of the God of glory; a spirit that is of infinitely more value than the whole earth; of more value than the sun, moon, and stars, put together, yea, than the whole material creation. Consider that the spirit of man is not only of a higher order, of a more

excellent nature, than any part of the visible world, but also more durable; not liable either to dissolution or decay. We know all the things “which are seen are temporal;” — of a changing, transient nature; — but the things which are not seen” (such as is the soul of man in particular,) “are eternal.” “They shall perish,” but the soul remaineth. “They all shall wax old as a garment;” but when heaven and earth shall pass away, the soul shall not pass away.

6. Consider, Secondly, that declaration which the Father of spirits hath made to us by the Prophet Hosea: “I am God, and not man: Therefore my compassions fail not.” As if he had said, “If I were only a man, or an angel, or any finite being, my knowledge might admit of bounds, and my mercy might be limited. But ‘my thoughts are not as your thoughts,’ and my mercy is not as your mercy. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts;’ and ‘my mercy,’ my compassion, my ways of showing it, ‘higher than your ways.’”

7. That no shadow of fear might remain, no possibility of doubting; to show what manner of regard the great eternal God bears to little, short-lived man, but especially to his immortal part; God gave his Son, “his only Son, to the end that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” See how God loved the world! The Son of God, that was “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God,” in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal, “emptied himself, took upon him the form of a servant; and, being found in fashion as a man, was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” And all this he suffered not for himself, but “for us men and for our salvation.” “He bore” all “our sins in his own body upon the tree,” that; “by his stripes we” might be; “healed.” After this demonstration of his love, is it possible to doubt any longer of God’s tender regard for man; even though he was “dead in trespasses and sins?” Even when he saw us in our sins and in our blood, he said unto us. “Live! Let us then fear no more! Let us doubt no more!” “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not with him freely give us all things?”

8. “Nay,” says the philosopher, “if God so loved the world, did he not love a thousand other worlds, as well as he did this: It is now allowed that

there are thousands, if not millions, of worlds, besides this in which we live. And can any reasonable man believe that the Creator of all these, many of which are probably as large, yea, far larger than ours, would show such astonishingly greater regard to one than to all the rest?" I answer, Suppose there were millions of worlds, yet God may see, in the abyss of his infinite wisdom, reasons that do not appear to us, why he saw good to show this mercy to ours, in preference to thousands or millions of other worlds.

9. I speak this even upon the common supposition of the plurality of worlds, — a very favorite notion with all those who deny the Christian Revelation, and for this reason, because it affords them a foundation for so plausible an objection to it. But the more I consider that supposition, the more I doubt of it: In so much that, if it were allowed by all the philosophers in Europe, still I could not allow it without stronger proof than any I have met with yet.

10. "Nay, but is not the argument of the great Huygens sufficient to put it beyond all doubt? — 'When we view,' says that able astronomer, 'the moon through a good telescope, we clearly discover rivers and mountains on her spotted globe. Now, where rivers are, there are doubtless plants and vegetables of various kinds: And where vegetables are, there are undoubtedly animals; yea, rational ones, as on earth. It follows, then, that the moon has its inhabitants, and probably near akin to ours. But if our moon is inhabited, we may easily suppose, so are all the secondary planets; and, in particular, all the satellites or moons of Jupiter and Saturn. And if the secondary planets are inhabited, why not the primary? Why should we doubt it of Jupiter and Saturn themselves, as well as Mars, Venus, and Mercury?'"

11. But do not you know, that Mr. Huygens himself, before he died, doubted of this whole hypothesis? For upon further observation he found reason to believe that the moon has no atmosphere. He observed, that in a total eclipse of the sun, on the removal of the shade from any part of the earth, the sun immediately shines bright upon it; whereas if the moon had an atmosphere, the solar light, while it shone through that atmosphere, would appear dim and dusky. Thus, after an eclipse of the moon, first a

dusky light appears on that part of it from which the shadow of the earth removes, while that light passes through the atmosphere of the earth. Hence it appears that the moon has no atmosphere. Consequently, it has no clouds, no rain, no springs, no rivers; and therefore no plants or animals. But there is no proof or probability that the moon is inhabited; neither have we any proof that the other planets are. Consequently, the foundation being removed, the whole fabric falls to the ground.

12. But; you will say, “Suppose this argument fails, we may infer the same conclusion, the plurality of worlds, from the unbounded wisdom, and power, and goodness of the Creator. It was full as easy to him to create thousands or millions of worlds as one. Can any one then believe that he would exert all his power and wisdom in creating a single world? What proportion is there between this speck of creation, and the Great God that filleth heaven and earth, while

“We know, the power of his almighty hand
Could form another world from every sand?”

13. To this boasted proof, this *argumentum palmarium* of the learned infidels, I answer, Do you expect to find any proportion between finite and infinite? Suppose God had created a thousand more worlds than there are grains of sand in the universe; what proportion would all these together bear up the infinite Creator? Still, in comparison of Him, they would be, not a thousand times, but infinitely, less than a mite compared to the universe. Have done, then, with this childish prattle about the proportion of creatures to their Creator; and leave it to the all-wise God to create what and when he pleases. For who, besides himself, “hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor?”

14. Suffice it then for us to know this plain and comfortable truth, — that the almighty Creator hath shown that regard to this poor little creature of a day, which he hath not shown even to the inhabitants of heaven “who kept not their first estate.” He hath given us his Son, his only Son, both to live and to die for us! O let us live unto him, that we may die unto him, and live with him for ever!

SERMON CIV.

ON ATTENDING THE CHURCH SERVICE.

“The sin of the young men was very great.” 1 Samuel 2:17.

1. THE corruption, not only of the heathen world, but likewise of them that were called Christians, has been matter of sorrow and lamentation to pious men, almost from the time of the Apostles. And hence, as early as the second century, within a hundred years of St. John’s removal from the earth, men who were afraid of being partakers of other men’s sins, thought it their duty to separate from them. Hence, in every age, many have retired from the world, lest they should be stained with the pollutions of it. In the third century man carried this so far as to run into deserts and turn hermits. But in the following age this took another turn. Instead of turning hermits, they turned monks. Religious houses now began to be built in every Christian country; and religious communities were established, both of men and women, who were entirely secluded from the rest of mankind; Having no intercourse with their nearest relations, nor with any but such as were confined, generally for life, within the same walls.

2. This spirit of literally renouncing the world, by retiring into religious houses, did not so generally prevail after the Reformation. Nay, in Protestant countries, houses of this kind were totally suppressed. But still too many serious persons (chiefly incited thereto by those that are commonly called “mystic writers”) were eager to seclude themselves from the world, and run into solitude; supposing this to be the best, if not the only, way of escaping the pollution that is in the world.

3. One thing which powerfully inclined them to separate from the several Churches, or religious societies, to which they had belonged, even from their infancy, was the belief that no good was to be expected from the

ministration of unholy men. “What!” said they, “can we think that a holy God will bless the ministry of wicked men? Can we imagine that they who are themselves strangers to the grace of God will manifest that grace to others? Is it to be supposed that God ever did, or ever will work by the children of the devil? And if this cannot be supposed, ought we not to ‘come out from among them and be separate?’”

4. For more than twenty years this never entered into the thoughts of those that were called Methodists. But as more and more who had been brought up dissenters joined with them, they brought in more and more prejudice against the Church. In process of time, various circumstances concurred to increase and to confirm it. Many had forgotten that we were all at our first setting out determined members of the Established Church. Yea, it was one of our original rules, that every member of our society should attend the church and sacrament, unless he had been bred among Christians of any other denomination.

5. In order, therefore, to prevent others from being puzzled and perplexed, as so many have been already, it is necessary, in the highest degree, to consider this matter thoroughly; calmly to inquire, whether God ever did bless the ministry of ungodly men, and whether he does so at this hour. Here is a plain matter of fact: If God never did bless it, we ought to separate from the Church; at least where we have reason to believe that he Minister is an unholy man: If he ever did bless it, and does so still, then we ought to continue therein.

6. Nineteen years ago, we considered this question in our public Conference at Leeds, — Whether the Methodists ought to separate from the Church; and, after a long and candid inquiry, it was determined, *nemine contradicente*, that it was not expedient for them to separate. The reasons were set down at large, and they stand equally good at this day.

7. In order to put this matter beyond all possible dispute, I have chosen to speak from these words, which give a fair occasion of observing what the dealings of God in his Church have been, even from so early a period: For it is generally allowed that Eli lived at least a thousand years before our Lord came into the world. In the verses preceding the text we read, (verses

1-2, etc.,) “Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord.” They were wicked to an uncommon degree. Their profane violence, with respect to the sacrifices, is related with all its shocking circumstances in the following verses. But (what was a greater abomination still) “they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” (Verse 29.) On both these accounts, “the sin of the young men was very great; and men abhorred the offering of the Lord.”

8. May I be permitted to make a little digression, in order to correct a mistranslation in the twenty-fifth verse? In our translation it runs thus: “They hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.” Ought it not rather to be rendered, “Therefore the Lord was about to slay them?” As if he had said, “The Lord would not suffer their horrid and stubborn wickedness to escape unpunished; but because of that wickedness, he slew them both in one day, by the hand of the Philistines.” They did not sin (as might be imagined from the common translation) because God had determined to slay them; but God therefore determined to slay them because they had thus sinned.

9. But, to return: Their sin was the more inexcusable because they could not be ignorant of that dreadful consequence thereof, that, by reason of their enormous wickedness, “men abhorred the offering of the Lord.” Many of the people were so deeply offended, that if they did not wholly refrain from the public worship, yet they attended it with pain; abhorring the Priests, while they honored the sacrifice.

10. And have we any proof that the Priests who succeeded them were more holy than them, than Hophni and Phinehas not only till God permitted ten of the tribes to be separated from their brethren, and from the worship he had appointed; but even till Judah, as well as Israel, for the wickedness of the Priests, as well as the people, were carried into captivity?

11. What manner of men they were about the time of the Babylonish captivity, we learn from various passages in the prophecy of Jeremiah: From which it manifestly appears, that people and Priests wallowed in all manner of vices. And how little they were amended, after they were

brought back into their own land, we may gather from those terrible words in the Prophecy of Malachi: “And now, O ye Priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my Name, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will send even a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: Yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.” (Malachi 2:1-3.)

12. Such were the Priests of God in their several generations, till he brought the great HIGH PRIEST into the world! And what manner of men were they during the time that he ministered upon earth? A large and particular account of their character we have in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew; and a worse character it would be difficult to find in all the oracles of God. But may it not be said, “Our Lord does not there direct his discourse to the Priests, but to the Scribes and Pharisees?” He does but this is the same thing. For the Scribes were what we now term Divines, — the public teachers of the people. And many, if not most, of the Priests, especially all the strictest sort of them, were Pharisees; so that in giving the character of the Scribes and Pharisees, he gives that of the Priests also.

13. Soon after the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, in the infancy of the Christian Church, there was indeed a glorious change. “Great grace was then upon them all,” Ministers as well as people. “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.” But how short a time did this continue! How soon did the fine gold become dim! Long before even the apostolic age expired, St. Paul himself had ground to complain, that some of his fellow laborers had forsaken him, having “loved the present world,” And not long after, St. John reproved divers of the angels, that is, the ministers, of the Churches in Asia, because, even in that early period, their “works were not found perfect before God.”

14. ‘Thus did “the mystery of iniquity” begin to “work,” in the Ministers as well as the people, even before the end of the apostolic age. But how much more powerfully did it work, as soon as those master-builders, the Apostles, were taken out of the way! Both Ministers and people were

then farther and farther removed from the hope of the gospel. In so much that when St. Cyprian, about an hundred and fifty years after the death of St. John, describes the spirit and behavior both of laity and Clergy that were round about him, one would be ready to suppose he was giving us a description of the present Clergy and laity of Europe. But the corruption which had been creeping in drop by drop, during the second and third century, in the beginning of the fourth, when Constantine called himself a Christian, poured in upon the Church with a full tide. And whoever reads the history of the Church, from the time of Constantine to the Reformation, will easily observe that all the abominations of the heathen world, and, in the following, ages, of the Mahometans, overflowed every part of it. And in every nation and city the Clergy were not a whit more innocent than the laity.

15. "But was there not a very considerable change in the body of the Clergy, as well as the laity, at the time of the glorious Reformation from Popery?" Undoubtedly there was; and they were not only reformed from very many erroneous opinions, and from numberless superstitious and idolatrous modes of worship, till then prevailing over the Western Church, but they were also exceedingly reformed with respect to their lives and tempers. More of the ancient, scriptural Christianity was to be found, almost in every part of Europe. Yet notwithstanding this, all the works of the devil, all ungodliness and unrighteousness, sin of every kind, continued to prevail, both over Clergy and laity, in all parts of Christendom. Even those Clergymen who most warmly contended about the externals of religion were very little concerned for the life and power of it; for piety, justice, mercy, and truth.

16. However, it must be allowed, that ever since the Reformation, and particularly in the present century, the behavior of the Clergy in general is greatly altered for the better. And should it be granted, that, in so many parts of the Romish Church, they are nearly the same as they were before, it must be granted likewise, that most of the Protestant Clergy are far different from what they were. They have not only more learning of the most valuable kind, but abundantly much more religion: In so much that the English and Irish Clergy are generally allowed to be not inferior to any in Europe, for piety, as well as for knowledge.

17. And all this being allowed, what lack they yet? Can anything be laid to their charge? I wish calmly and candidly to consider this point, in the fear and in the presence of God. I am far from desiring to aggravate the defects of my brethren, or to paint them in the strongest colors. Far be it from me to treat others as I have been treated myself; to return evil for evil, or railing for railing. But, to speak the naked truth, (not; with anger or contempt, as too many have done,) I acknowledge that many, if not most, of those that were appointed to minister in holy things, with whom it has been my lot to converse in almost every part of England or Ireland, for forty or fifty years last past, have not been eminent either for knowledge or piety. It has been loudly affirmed, that most of those persons now in connection with me, who believe it their duty to call sinners to repentance, having been taken immediately from low trades, — tailors, shoemakers, and the like, — are a set of poor, stupid, illiterate men, that scarce know their right hand from their left: Yet I cannot but say, that I would sooner cut off my right hand, than suffer one of them to speak a word in any of our chapels, if I had not reasonable proof that he had more knowledge in the Holy Scriptures, more knowledge of himself, more knowledge of God and of the things of God, than nine in ten of the Clergymen I have conversed with, either at the Universities or elsewhere.

18. In the meantime, I gladly allow that this charge does not concern the whole body of the Clergy. Undoubtedly there are many Clergymen in these kingdoms, that are not only free from outward sin, but men of eminent learning; and, what is infinitely more, deeply acquainted with God. But still I am constrained to confess, that the far greater part of those Ministers I have conversed with for above half a century, have not been holy men, not devoted to God, not deeply acquainted either with God or themselves, It could not be said that they set their “affections on things above, not on things of the earth;” or that their desire, and the business of their lives, was, to save their own souls and those that heard them.

19. I have taken this unpleasing view of a melancholy scene, — of the character of those who have been appointed of God to be shepherds of souls for so many ages, — in order to determine this question: “Ought the children of God to refrain from his ordinances because they that administer

them are unholy men?" a question with which many serious persons have been exceedingly perplexed. "Ought we not," say they, "to refrain from the ministrations of ungodly men? For is it possible that we should receive any good from the hands of those that know not God? Can we suppose, that the grace of God was ever conveyed to men by the servants of the devil?"

What saith the Scripture? Let us keep close to this, and we shall not be misled. We have seen there what manner of men most of these have been who have ministered in holy things for many ages. Two or three thousand years ago, we read, "The sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord." But was this a sufficient reason for the Israelites to refrain from their administrations? It is true, they "abhorred the offerings of the Lord" on their account; and yet they constantly attended them. And do you suppose that Samuel, holy as he was, ever advised them to do otherwise? Were not the Priests, and public teachers, equally strangers to God, from this time to that of the Babylonish captivity? Undoubtedly they were. But did Isaiah, or any of the Prophets, exhort them, for that cause, to forsake the ordinances of God? Were they not equally ungodly from the time of the Babylonish captivity, to the coming of Christ? How clearly does this appear, were there no other proof; from the Prophecies of Jeremiah and Malachi! Yet did either Malachi, or Jeremiah, or any other of the Prophets, exhort the people to separate themselves from these ungodly men?

20. But, to bring the matter nearer to ourselves: Never were any Priests, or public teachers, more corrupt, more totally estranged from God, than those in the days of our blessed Lord. Were they not mere whited walls? Were not those that were the best of them painted sepulchers; full of pride, lust, envy, covetousness, of all ungodliness and unrighteousness? Is not this the account which our Lord himself, who knew what was in man, gives of them? But did he therefore refrain from that public service which was performed by these very men, or did he direct his Apostles so to do? Nay, just the contrary: In consequence of which, as he constantly attended them himself, so likewise did his disciples.

21. There is another circumstance in our Lord's conduct, which is worthy of our peculiar consideration. He calls to him the twelve, and sends them forth, two by two, to preach the gospel. (Mark 6:7.) And as they do not go the warfare at their own cost, the very "devils were subject unto them." Now, one of these was, Judas Iscariot. And did our Lord know that "he had a devil?" St. John expressly tells us he did. Yet he was coupled with another of the Apostles, and joined with them all in the same communion: Neither have we any reason to doubt but God blessed the labor of all his twelve ambassadors. But why did our Lord send *him* among them? Undoubtedly for our instruction: For a standing, unanswerable proof, that, he "sendeth by whom he will send;" that he can and doth I send salvation to men even by those who will not accept of it, themselves.

22. Our Lord gives us farther instruction upon this head: In Matthew 23:1-3, we have those very remarkable words, "Then Jesus spoke to the multitude, and his disciples, saying, The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' chair: All things, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, observe and do but do not according to their works: For they say, and do not." Of these very men, he gives the blackest character in the following verses. Yet is he so far from forbidding either the multitude, or his own disciples, to attend their ministrations, that he expressly commands them so to do, even in those words, "All things whatsoever they bid you observe, observe and do." These words imply a command to hear them: For how could they observe and do what they bid them, if they did not hear it? I pray consider this, ye that say of the successors of these ungodly men, "They say, and do not; therefore, we ought not to hear them." You see, your Master draws no such inference; nay, the direct contrary. O be not wiser than your Master! Follow his advice, and do not reason against it!

23. But how shall we reconcile this with the direction given by St. Paul to the Corinthians? "If any that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, with such an one no not to eat." (1 Corinthians 5:11.) How is it reconcilable with that direction in his Second Epistle, (6:17) "Come out from the midst of them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing?" I answer, The former passage has no relation at all to the present question. It does not concern

Ministers, good or bad. The plain meaning of it is, Have no intimacy with any that is called a Christian, and lives in any open sin; — a weighty exhortation, which should be much attended to by all the children of God. As little does the other passage refer to Ministers or teachers of any kind. In this the Apostle is exhorting the children of God to break off all intercourse with the children of the devil. The words literally are, “Go out from the midst of them. and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing;” intimating that they could not continue united with them, without being more or less partakers of their sins. We may therefore boldly affirm, that neither St. Paul, nor any other of the inspired writers, ever advised holy men to separate from the Church wherein they were, because the Ministers were unholy.

24. Nevertheless, it is true, that many pious Christians, as was observed before, did separate themselves from the Church, some even in the second, and many more in the third, century. Some of these retired into the desert, and lived altogether alone; others built themselves houses, afterwards termed convents, and only secluded themselves from the rest of the world. But what was the fruit of this separation? The same that might easily be foreseen. It increased and confirmed, in an astonishing degree, the total corruption of the Church. The salt which was thus heaped up in a corner had effectually lost its savor. The light which was put under a bushel no longer shone before men. In consequence of this, ungodliness and unrighteousness reigned without control. The world, being given up into the hands of the devil, wrought all his works with greediness; and gross darkness, joined with all manner of wickedness, covered the whole earth.

25. “But if all this wickedness was not a sufficient reason for separating from a corrupt Church, why did Calvin and Luther, with their followers, separate from the Church of Rome?” I answer. They did not properly separate from it; but were violently thrust out of it. They were not suffered to continue therein, upon any other terms than subscribing to all the errors of that Church, and joining in all their superstition and idolatry. Therefore this separation lay at *their* door. With us it was not a matter of choice, but of necessity: And if such necessity was now laid upon us, we ought to separate from any Church under heaven.

26. There were not the same reasons why various bodies of men should afterwards separate from the Church of England. No sinful terms of communion were imposed upon them; neither are at this day. Most of them separated, either because of some opinions, or some modes of worship, which they did not approve of. Few of them assigned the unholiness either of the Clergy or laity as the cause of their separation. And if any did so, it did not appear that they themselves were a jot better than those they separated from.

27. But the grand reason which many give for separating from the Church, namely, that the Ministers are unholy men, is founded on this assertion: That the ministration of evil men can do no good that we may call the sacraments means of grace; but men who do not receive the grace of God themselves cannot convey that grace to others. So that we can never expect to receive the blessing of God through the servants of the devil.

This argument is extremely plausible, and is indeed the strongest that can be urged. Yet before you allow it to be conclusive, you should consider a few things.

28. Consider, First, Did the Jewish sacraments convey no saving grace to the hearers, because they were administered by unholy men? If so, none of the Israelites were saved from the time of Eli to the coming of Christ. For their Priests were not a whit; better than ours, if they were not much worse. But who will dare to affirm this? Which is no less, in effect, than to affirm, that all the children of Israel went to hell for eleven or twelve hundred years together!

29. Did the ordinances, administered in the time of our blessed Lord, convey no grace to those that attended them? Surely then the Holy Ghost would not have commended Zacharias and Elizabeth for walking in these ordinances! If the ministrations of wicked men did no good, would our Lord have commanded his followers (so far from forbidding them) to attend those of the Scribes and Pharisees? Observe, again, the remarkable words: (Matthew 23:1, etc. :) “Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat,” — are your appointed teachers; — “all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you

observe, that observe and do.” Now, what were these Scribes and Pharisees? Were they not the vilest of men? Yet these very men he commands them to hear. This command is plainly implied in those words, “Whatsoever they command you to observe, that observe and do.” For unless they heard what they said, they could not do it.

30. Consider, a little farther, the dreadful consequences of affirming that wicked Ministers do no good; that the ordinances administered by them do not convey saving grace to those that attend them. If it be so, then well-nigh all the Christians from the time of the Apostles to that of the Reformation are perished! For what manner of men were well-nigh all the Clergy during all those centuries? Consult the history of the Church in every age, and you will find more and more proofs of their corruption. It is true, they have not been so openly abandoned since; but ever since that happy period there has been a considerable change for the better in the Clergy as well as the laity. But still there is reason to fear that even those who now minister in holy things, who are outwardly devoted to God for that purpose, (yea, and in Protestant as well as Romish countries,) are nevertheless far more devoted to the world, to riches, honor, or pleasure, (a few comparatively excepted,) than they are to God: So that in truth they are as far from Christian holiness as earth is from heaven. If then no grace is conveyed by the ministry of wicked men, in what a case is the Christian world! How hath God forgotten to be gracious! How hath he forsaken his own inheritance! O think not so! Rather say with our own Church, (though in direct opposition to the Church of Rome, which maintains, “If the Priest does not minister with a *pure intention*,” which no wicked man can do, “then the sacrament is no sacrament at all,”) the unworthiness of the Minister doth not hinder the efficacy of God’s ordinance. The reason is plain, because the efficacy is derived, not from him that administers, but from Him that ordains it. He does not, will not suffer his grace to be intercepted, though the messenger will not receive it himself.

31. Another consequence would follow from the supposition that no grace is conveyed by wicked Ministers; namely, that a conscientious person cannot be a member of any national Church in the world. For wherever he is, it is great odds whether a holy Minister be stationed there; and if there

be not, it is mere lost labor to worship in that congregation. But, blessed be God, this is not the case; we know by our own happy experience, and by the experience of thousands, that the word of the Lord is not bound, though uttered by an unholy Minister; and the sacraments are not dry breasts, whether he that administers be holy or unholy.

32. Consider one more consequence of this supposition, should it ever be generally received. Were all men to separate from those Churches where the Minister was an unholy man, (as they ought to do, if the grace of God never did nor could attend his ministry,) what confusion, what tumults, what commotions would this occasion throughout Christendom! What evil-surmisings, heart-burning, jealousies, envyings, must everywhere arise! What censuring, tale bearing, strife, contention! Neither would it stop here; but from evil words the contending parties would soon proceed to evil deeds; and rivers of blood would soon be shed, to the utter scandal of Mahometans and Heathens.

33. Let us not then trouble and embroil ourselves and our neighbors with unprofitable disputations, but all agree to spread, to the uttermost of our power, the quiet and peaceable gospel of Christ. Let us make the best of whatever ministry the Providence of God has assigned us. Near fifty years ago, a great and good man, Dr. Potter, then Archbishop of Canterbury, gave me an advice for which I have ever since had occasion to bless God: "If you desire to be extensively useful, do not spend your time and strength in contending for or against such things as are of a disputable nature; but in testifying against open notorious vice, and in promoting real, essential holiness." Let us keep to this: Leaving a thousand disputable points to those that have no better business than to toss the ball of controversy to and fro, let us keep close to our point. Let us bear a faithful testimony, in our several stations, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness and with all our might recommend that inward and outward holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord!"

SERMON CV.

ON CONSCIENCE.

“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.”

2 Corinthians 1:12.

1. How few words are there in the world more common than this, Conscience! It is in almost every one’s mouth. And one would thence be apt to conclude, that no word can be found which is more generally understood. But it may be doubted whether this is the case or no; although numberless treatises have been written upon it. For it is certain, a great part of those writers have rather puzzled the cause than cleared it; that they have usually “darkened counsel by uttering words without knowledge.”

2. The best treatise on the subject which I remember to have seen is translated from the French of Mons. Placette, which describes in a clear and rational manner the nature and offices of conscience. But though it was published near a hundred years ago, it is in very few hands; and indeed a great part of those that have read it complain of the length of it. An octavo volume of several hundred pages, upon so plain a subject, was likely to prove a trial of patience to most persons of understanding. It seems, therefore, there is still wanting a discourse upon the subject, short, as well as clear. This, by the assistance of God, I will endeavor to supply, by showing, First, the nature of conscience; and, Then, the several sorts of it; after which, I shall conclude with a few important directions.

I.

1. And, First, I am to show the nature of conscience. This a very pious man in the last century (in his sermon on Universal Conscientiousness)

describes in the following manner: — “This word, which literally signifies, *knowing with another*, excellently sets forth the scriptural notion of it. So Job: (16:19:) ‘My witness is in heaven.’ And so the Apostle: (Romans 9:1:) ‘I say the truth; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.’ In both places it is as if he had said, ‘God witnesseth with my conscience. Conscience is placed in the middle, under God, and above man. It is a kind of silent reasoning of the mind, whereby those things which are judged to be right are approved of with pleasure; but those which are judged evil are disapproved of with uneasiness.’” This is a tribunal in the breast of men, to accuse sinners, and excuse them that do well.

2. To view it in a somewhat different light: Conscience, as well as the Latin word from which it is taken, and the Greek word, *συνειδησεως*, necessarily imply, the *knowledge of two or more things together*. Suppose the knowledge of our words and actions, and at the same time of their goodness or badness; if it be not rather the faculty whereby we know at once our actions and the quality of them.

3. Conscience, then, is that faculty whereby we are at once conscious of our own thoughts, words, and actions; and of their merit or demerit, of their being good or bad; and, consequently, deserving either praise or censure. And some pleasure generally attends the former sentence; some uneasiness the latter: But this varies exceedingly, according to education and a thousand other circumstances.

4. Can it be denied that something of this is found in every man born into the world? And does it not appear as soon as the understanding opens, as soon as reason begins to dawn? Does not every one then begin to know that there is a difference between good and evil; how imperfect so ever the various circumstances of this sense of good and evil may be? Does not every man, for instance, know, unless blinded by the prejudices of education, (like the inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope,) that it is good to honor his parents? Do not all men, however uneducated as barbarous, allow, it is right to do to others as we would have them do to us? And are not all who know this condemned in their own mind when they do anything contrary thereto? as, on the other hand, when they act suitable thereto, they have the approbation of their own conscience?

5. This faculty seems to be what is usually meant by those who speak of natural conscience; an expression frequently found in some of our best authors, but yet not strictly just. For though in one sense it may be termed natural, because it is found in all men; yet, properly speaking, it is not natural, but a supernatural gift of God; above all his natural endowments. No; it is not nature, but the Son of God, that is “the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.” So that we may say to every human creature, “He,” not nature, “hath showed thee, O man, what is good.” And it is his Spirit who giveth thee an inward check, who causeth thee to feel uneasy, when thou walkest in any instance contrary to the light which he hath given thee.

6. It may give a peculiar force to that beautiful passage to consider by whom and on what occasion the words were uttered. The persons speaking are Balak the King of Moab; and Balaam, then under divine impressions (it seems, then “not far from the kingdom of God,” although he afterwards so foully revolted): Probably Balak too, at that time, experienced something of the same influence. This occasioned his consulting with, or asking counsel of Balaam, — his proposing the question to which Balaam gives so full an answer: (Micah 6:5, etc.): “O my people,” saith the Prophet in the name of God, “remember what Balak the King of Moab consulted,” (it seems, in the fullness of his heart,) “and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him. “Therewith,” saith he, “shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression? the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (This the kings of Moab had actually done, on occasions of deep distress; a remarkable account of which is recorded in the third chapter of the Second Book of Kings.) To this Balaam makes that noble reply, (being doubtless, then taught of God,) “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

7. To take a more distinct view of conscience, it appears to have a threefold office: First. It is a witness, — testifying what we have done, in

thought, or word, or action. Secondly. It is a judge, — passing sentence on what we have done, that it is good or evil. And, Thirdly, it, in some sort, executes the sentence, by occasioning a degree of complacency in him that does well, and a degree of uneasiness in him that does evil.

8. Professor Hutcheson, late of Glasgow, places conscience in a different light. In his “Essay on the Passions,” he observes, that we have several senses, or natural avenues of pleasure and pain, besides the five external *senses*. One of these he terms *the public sense*; whereby we are naturally pained at the misery of a fellow creature, and pleased at his deliverance from it. And every man, says he, has a moral sense, whereby he approves of benevolence and disapproves of cruelty. Yea, he is uneasy when he himself has done a cruel action, and pleased when he has done a generous one.

9. All this is, in some sense, undoubtedly true. But it is not true, that either *the public* or the *moral sense* (both of which are included in the term conscience) is now natural to man. Whatever may have been the case at first, while man was in a state of innocence, both the one and the other is now a branch of that supernatural gift of God which we usually style, preventing grace. But the Professor does not at all agree with this. He sets God wholly out of the question. God has nothing to do with his scheme of virtue, from the beginning to the end. So that, to say the truth, his scheme of virtue is Atheism all over. This is refinement indeed! Many have excluded God out of the world: He excludes him even out of religion!

10. But do we not mistake him? Do we take his meaning right? That it may be plain enough, that no man may mistake him, he proposes this question: “What, if a man in doing a virtuous, that is, a generous action, in helping a fellow-creature, has an eye to God, either as commanding, or as promising to reward it? Then,” says he, “so far as he has an eye to God, the virtue of the action is lost. Whatever actions spring from an eye to the recommence of reward have no virtue, no moral goodness, in them.” Alas! was this man called a Christian? How unjustly was he slandered with that assertion! Even Dr. Taylor, though he does not allow Christ to be God, yet does not scruple to term him, “A person of consummate *virtue*.” But the Professor cannot allow him any virtue at all!

11. But to return. What is conscience, in the Christian sense? It is that faculty of the soul which, by the assistance of the grace of God, sees at one and the same time,

- (1.) Our own tempers and lives, — the real nature and quality of our thoughts, words, and actions;
- (2.) The rule whereby we are to be directed; and,
- (3.) The agreement or disagreement therewith. To express this a little more largely: Conscience implies, First, the faculty a man has of knowing himself; of discerning, both in general and in particular, his own tempers, thoughts, words, and actions.

But this it is not possible for him to do, without the assistance of the Spirit of God. Otherwise, self-love, and, indeed, every other irregular passion, would disguise and wholly conceal him from himself. It implies, Secondly, a knowledge of the rule whereby he is to be directed in every particular; which is no other than the written word of God. Conscience implies, Thirdly, a knowledge that all his thoughts, and words, and actions are conformable to that rule. In all the offices of conscience, the “unction of the Holy One” is indispensably needful. Without this, neither could we clearly discern our lives or tempers; nor could we judge of the rule whereby we are to walk, or of our conformity or disconformity to it.

12. This is properly the account of a good conscience; which may be in other terms expressed thus: A divine consciousness of walking in all things according to the written word of God. It seems, indeed, that there can be no conscience which has not a regard to God. If you say, “Yes, there certainly may be a consciousness of having done right or wrong, without any reference to him;” I answer, This I cannot grant: I doubt whether the very words, right and wrong, according to the Christian system, do not imply, in the very idea of them, agreement and disagreement to the will and word of God. If so, there is no such thing as conscience in a Christian, if we leave God out of the question.

13. In order to the very existence of a good conscience, as well as to the continuance of it, the continued influence of the Spirit of God is absolutely needful. Accordingly, the Apostle John declares to the believers of all ages,

“Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things:” All things that are needful to your having a “conscience void of offense toward God and toward man.” So he adds, “Ye have no need that any one should teach you,” otherwise “than as that anointing teacheth you.” That anointing clearly teacheth us those three things, — First, the true meaning of God’s word; Secondly, our own tempers and lives; bringing all our thoughts, words, and actions, to remembrance, and, Thirdly, the agreement of all with the commandments of God.

14. Proceed we now to consider, in the Second place, the several sorts of conscience. A good conscience has been spoken of already. This St. Paul expresses various ways. In one place he simply terms it, a “good conscience toward God;” in another, “a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man.” But he speaks still more largely in the text:

“Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity,” with a single eye, “and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.” Meantime he observes, that this was done, “not by fleshly wisdom,” — commonly called prudence, — (this never did, nor ever can produce such an elect,) “but by the grace of God;” which alone is sufficient to work this in any child of man.

15. Nearly allied to this (if it be not the same placed in another view, or a particular branch of it) is a tender conscience. One of a tender conscience is exact in observing any deviation from the word of God, whether in thought, or word, or work; and immediately feels remorse and self-condemnation for it. And the constant cry of his soul is,

O that my tender soul may fly
The first abhorr’d approach of ill,
Quick as the apple of an eye
The slightest touch of sin to feel!

16. But sometimes this excellent quality, tenderness of conscience, is carried to an extreme. We find some who fear where no fear is; who are continually condemning themselves without cause; imagining some things to be sinful, which the Scripture nowhere condemns; and supposing other things to be their duty, which the Scripture nowhere enjoins. This is

properly termed a scrupulous conscience, and is a sore evil. It is highly expedient to yield to it as little as possible; rather it is a matter of earnest prayer, that you may be delivered from this sore evil, and may recover a sound mind; to which nothing would contribute more, than the converse of a pious and judicious friend.

17. But the extreme which is opposite to this is far more dangerous. A hardened conscience is a thousand times more dangerous than a scrupulous one: That can violate a plain command of God, without any self-condemnation; either doing what he has expressly forbidden, or neglecting what he has expressly commanded; and yet without any remorse; yea, perhaps glorying in this very hardness of heart! Many instances of this deplorable stupidity we meet with at this day; and even among people that suppose themselves to have no small share of religion. A person is doing something which the Scripture clearly forbids. You ask, "How do you dare to do this?" and are answered with perfect unconcern, "O, my heart does not condemn me." I reply, "So much the worse. I would to God it did! You would then be in a safer state than you are now. It is a dreadful thing to be condemned by the word of God, and yet not to be condemned by your own heart!" If we can break the least of the known commands of God, without any self-condemnation, it is plain that the God of this world hath hardened our hearts. If we do not soon recover from this, we shall be "past feeling," and our consciences (as St. Paul speaks) will be "seared as with a hot iron."

18. I have now only to add a few important directions. The first great point is this: Suppose we have a tender conscience, how shall we preserve it? I believe there is only one possible way of doing this, which is, to obey it. Every act of disobedience tends to blind and deaden it; to put out its eyes, that it may not see the good and the acceptable will of God; and to deaden the heart, that it may not feel self-condemnation when we act in opposition to it. And, on the contrary, every act of obedience gives to the conscience a sharper and stronger sight, and a quicker feeling of whatever offends the glorious majesty of God. Therefore, if you desire to have your conscience always quick to discern, and faithful to accuse or excuse you, if you would preserve it always sensible and tender, be sure to obey it at all events; continually listen to its admonitions, and steadily follow them.

Whatever it directs you to do, according to the word of God, do; however grievous to flesh and blood. Whatever it forbids, if the prohibition be grounded on the word of God, see you do it not; however pleasing it may be to flesh and blood. The one or the other may frequently be the case. What God forbids may be pleasing to our evil nature: There you are called to deny yourself, or you deny your Master. What he enjoins may be painful to nature: There take up your cross. So true is our Lord's word: "Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple."

19. I cannot conclude this discourse better, than with an extract from Dr. Annesley's sermon on "Universal Conscientiousness." ¹²

"Be persuaded to practice the following directions, and your conscience will continue right: —

1. "Take heed of every sin; count no sin small; and obey every command with your might. Watch against the first rising of sin, and beware of the borders of sin. Shun the very appearance of evil. Venture not upon temptations or occasions of sin.

2. "Consider yourself as living under God's eye: Live as in the sensible presence of the jealous God. Remember, all things are naked and open before him! You cannot deceive him; for he is infinite wisdom: You cannot fly from him; for he is every where: You cannot bribe him; for he is righteousness itself! Speak as knowing God hears you: Walk as knowing God besets you on every side. The Lord is with you while you are with him; that is, you shall enjoy his favorable presence while you live in his awful presence.

3. "Be serious and frequent in the examination of your heart and life. There are some duties like those parts of the body, the want of which may be supplied by other parts; but the want of these nothing can supply. Every evening review your carriage through the day; what you have done or thought that was unbecoming your character; whether your heart has been instant upon religion, and indifferent to the world. Have a special care of two portions of time; namely, morning and evening; the morning to

forethink what you have to do, and the evening to examine whether you have done what you ought.

4. “Let every action have reference to your whole life, and not to a part only. Let all your subordinate ends be suitable to the great end of your living. ‘Exercise yourself unto godliness.’ Be as diligent in religion, as thou wouldest have thy children that go to school be in learning. Let thy whole life be a preparation for heaven, like the preparation of wrestlers for the combat.

5. “Do not venture on sin because Christ hath purchased a pardon; that is a most horrible abuse of Christ. For this very reason there was no sacrifice under the law for any willful sin; lest people should think they knew the price of sins, as those do who deal in Popish indulgences.

6. “Be nothing in your own eyes: For what is it, alas! that we have to be proud of? Our very conception was sinful, our birth painful, our life toilsome, our death we know not what! But all this is nothing to the state of our soul. If we know this, what excuse have we for pride?

7. “Consult duty, not events. We have nothing to do but to mind our duty. All speculations that tend not to holiness are among your superfluities; but forebodings of what may befall you in doing your duty may be reckoned among your sins; and to venture upon sin to avoid danger is to sink the ship for fear of pirates. O how quiet, as well as holy, would our lives be, had we learned that single lesson, — to be careful for nothing, but to do our duty, and leave all consequences to God! What madness for silly dust to prescribe to infinite wisdom! to let go our work, and meddle with God’s! He hath managed the concerns of the world, and of every individual person in it, without giving cause of complaint to any, for above these five thousand years. And does he now need *your* counsel? Nay, it is *your* business to mind your own duty.

8. “What advice you would give another, take yourself: The worst of men are apt enough to lay burdens on others, which if they would take on themselves they would be rare Christians.

9. “Do nothing on which you cannot pray for a blessing. Every action of a Christian that is good, is sanctified by the word and prayer. It becomes not a Christian to do anything so trivial, that he cannot pray over it. And if he would but bestow a serious ejaculation on every occurrent action, such a prayer would cut off all things sinful, and encourage all things lawful.

10. “Think, and speak, and do what you are persuaded Christ himself would do in your case, were he on earth. It becomes a Christian, rather to be an example, than to follow one. But by imitating Christ, you become an example to all, who was, and is, and ever will be, our absolute pattern. O Christians, how did Christ pray, and redeem time for prayer! How did Christ preach, out of whose mouth proceeded no other but gracious words? What time did Christ spend in impertinent discourse? How did Christ go up and down, doing good to men, and what was pleasing to God? Beloved, I commend to you these four memorials:

- (1.) Mind duty:
- (2.) What is the duty of another in your case, is your own:
- (3.) Do not meddle with anything, if you cannot say, The blessing of the Lord be upon it:
- (4.) Above all, sooner forget your Christian name, than forget to eye Christ!

Whatever treatment you meet with from the world, remember him and follow his steps, ‘who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.’”

SERMON CVI.

ON FAITH.

“Without faith it is impossible to please him.” Hebrews 11:6.

1. **B**UT what is Faith? It is a divine “evidence and conviction of things not seen;” of things which are not seen now, whether they are visible or invisible in their own nature. Particularly, it is a divine evidence and conviction of God, and of the things of God. This is the most comprehensive definition of faith that ever was or can be given; as including every species of faith, from the lowest to the highest. And yet I do not remember any eminent writer that has given a full and clear account of the several sorts of it, among all the verbose and tedious treatises which have been published upon the subject.

2. Something indeed of a similar kind has been written by that great and good man, Mr. Fletcher, in his “Treatise on the various Dispensations of the Grace of God.” Herein he observes, that there are four dispensations that are distinguished from each other by the degree of light which God vouchsafes to them that are under each. A small degree of light is given to those that are under the heathen dispensation. These generally believed, “that there was a God, and that he was a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” But a far more considerable degree of light was vouchsafed to the Jewish nation; inasmuch as to them “were entrusted” the grand means of light, “the oracles of God.” Hence many of these had clear and exalted views of the nature and attributes of God; of their duty to God and man; yea, and of the great promise made to our first parents, and transmitted by them to their posterity, that “the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.”

3. But above both the heathen and Jewish dispensation was that of John the Baptist. To him a still clearer light was given; and he was himself “a

burning and a shining light." To him it was given to "behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Accordingly our Lord himself affirms, that "of all which had been born of Women," there had not till that time arisen "a greater than John the Baptist." But nevertheless he informs us, "He that is least in the Kingdom of God," the Christian dispensation, "is greater than he." By one that is under the Christian dispensation, Mr. Fletcher means one that has received the Spirit of adoption; that has the Spirit of God witnessing "with his spirit, that he is a child of God."

In order to explain this still farther, I will endeavor, by the help of God, First, To point out the several sorts of faith: And, Secondly, to draw some practical inferences.

I.

In the First place, I will endeavor to point out the several sorts of faith. It would be easy, either to reduce these to a smaller number, or to divide them into a greater. But it does not appear that this would answer any valuable purpose.

1. The lowest sort of faith, if it be any faith at all, is that of a Materialist, — a man who, like the late Lord Kames, believes there is nothing but matter in the universe. I say, if it be any faith at all; for, properly speaking, it is not. It is not "an evidence or conviction of God," for they do not believe there is any; neither is it "a conviction of things not seen," for they deny the existence of such. Or if, for decency's sake, they allow there is a God, yet they suppose even him to be material. For one of their maxims is, *Jupiter est quodeunque vides*. "Whatever you see, is God." *Whatever you see!* A visible, tangible God! Excellent divinity! Exquisite nonsense!

2. The Second sort of faith, if you allow a Materialist to have any, is the faith of a Deist. I mean, one who believes there is, a God, distinct from matter; but does not believe the Bible. Of these we may observe two sorts. One sort are mere beasts in human shape, wholly under the power of the basest passions, and having "a downright appetite to mix with mud." Other Deists are, in most respects, rational creatures, though unhappily prejudiced against Christianity: Most of these believe the being and

attributes of God, they believe that God made and governs the world; and that the soul does not die with the body, but will remain for ever in a state of happiness or misery.

3. The next sort of faith is the faith of Heathens, with which I join that of Mahometans. I cannot but prefer this before the faith of the Deists; because, though it embraces nearly the same objects, yet they are rather to be pitied than blamed for the narrowness of their faith. And their not believing the whole truth, is not owing to want of sincerity, but merely to want of light. When one asked Chicali, an old Indian Chief, “Why do not you red men know as much as us white men?” he readily answered, “Because you have the great Word, and we have not.”

4. It cannot be doubted, but this plea will avail for millions of modern Heathens. Inasmuch as to them little is given, of them little will be required. As to the ancient Heathens, millions of them likewise were savages. No more therefore will be expected of them, than the living up to the light they had. But many of them, especially in the civilized nations, we have great reason to hope, although they lived among Heathens, yet were quite of another spirit; being taught of God, by his inward voice, all the essentials of true religion. Yea, and so was that Mahometan, and Arabian, who, a century or two ago, wrote the *Life of Hai Ebn Yokdan*. The story seems to be feigned; but it contains all the principles of pure religion and undefiled.

5. But, in general, we may surely place the faith of a Jew above that of a Heathen or Mahometan. By Jewish faith, I mean, the faith of those who lived between the giving of the law and the coming of Christ. These, that is, those that were serious and sincere among them, believed all that is written in the Old Testament. In particular, they believed that, in the fullness of time, the Messiah would appear, “to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness.”

6. It is not so easy to pass any judgment concerning the faith of our modern Jews. It is plain, “the veil is still upon their hearts” when Moses and the Prophets are read. The God of this world still hardens their hearts, and still blinds their eyes, “lest at any time the light of the glorious gospel”

should break in upon them. So that we may say of this people, as the Holy Ghost said to their forefathers, “The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” (Acts 28:27.) Yet it is not our part to pass sentence upon them, but to save them to their own Master.

7. I need not dwell upon the faith of John the Baptist, any more than the dispensation which he was under; because these, as Mr. Fletcher well describes them, were peculiar to himself. Setting him aside, the faith of the Roman Catholics, in general, seems to be above that of the ancient Jews. If most of these are volunteers in faith, believing more than God has revealed, it cannot be denied that they believe all which God has revealed, as necessary to salvation. In this we rejoice on their behalf: We are glad that none of those new Articles, which they added, at the Council of Trent, “to the faith once delivered to the saints,” does so materially contradict any of the ancient Articles, as to render them of no effect.

8. The faith of the Protestants, in general, embraces only those truths as necessary to salvation, which are clearly revealed in the oracles of God. Whatever is plainly declared in the Old and New Testament is the object of their faith. They believe neither more nor less than what is manifestly contained in, and provable by, the Holy Scriptures. The word of God is “a lantern to their feet, and a light in all their paths.” They dare not, on any pretense, go from it, to the right hand or to the left. The written word is the whole and sole rule of their faith, as well as practice. They believe whatsoever God has declared, and profess to do whatsoever he hath commanded. This is the proper faith of Protestants: By this they will abide, and no other.

9. Hitherto faith has been considered chiefly as an evidence and conviction of such or such truths. And this is the sense wherein it is taken at this day in every part of the Christian world. But, in the mean time, let it be carefully observed, (for eternity depends upon it,) that neither the faith of a Roman Catholic, nor that of a Protestant, if it contains no more than this, no more than the embracing such and such truths, will avail any more

before God, than the faith of a Mahometan or a Heathen; yea, of a Deist or Materialist. For can this “faith save him?” Can it save any man either from sin or from hell? No more than it could save Judas Iscariot: No more than it could save the devil and his angels; all of whom are convinced that every tittle of Holy Scripture is true.

10. But what is the faith which is properly saving; which brings eternal salvation to all those that keep it to the end? It is such a divine conviction of God, and the things of God, as, even in its infant state, enables every one that possesses it to “fear God and work righteousness.” And whosoever, in every nation, believes thus far, the Apostle declares, is it accepted of him.” He actually is, at that very moment, in a state of acceptance. But he is at present only a servant of God, not properly a *son*. Meantime, let it be well observed, that “the wrath of God” no longer “abideth on him.”

11. Indeed, nearly fifty years ago, when the Preachers, commonly called Methodists, began to preach that grand scriptural doctrine, salvation by faith, they were not sufficiently apprised of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand, that even one “who feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.” In consequence of this, they were apt to make sad the hearts of those whom God had not made sad. For they frequently asked those who feared God, “Do you know that your sins are forgiven?” And upon their answering, “No,” immediately replied, “Then you are a child of the devil.” No; that does not follow. It might have been said, (and it is all that can be said with propriety,) “Hitherto you are only a *servant*, you are not a *child* of God. You have already great reason to praise God that he has called you to his honorable service. Fear not. Continue crying unto him, ‘and you shall see greater things than these.’”

12. And, indeed, unless the servants of God halt by the way, they will receive the adoption of sons. They will receive the *faith* of the children of God, by his *revealing* his only begotten Son in their hearts. Thus, the faith of a child is, properly and directly, a divine conviction, whereby every child of God is enabled to testify, “The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” And

whosoever hath this, the Spirit of God witnesseth with his spirit, that he is a child of God. So the Apostle writes to the Galatians: “Ye are the sons of God by faith. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;” that is, giving you a childlike confidence in him, together. With a kind affection toward him. This then it is, that (if St. Paul was taught of God, and wrote at, he was moved by the Holy Ghost) properly constitutes the difference between a servant of God, and a child of God. “He that believeth,” as a child of God, “hath the witness in himself.” This the servant hath not. Yet let no man discourage him; rather, lovingly exhort him to expect it every moment.

13. It is easy to observe, that all the sorts of faith which we can conceive are reducible to one or other of the preceding. But let us covet the best gifts, and follow the most excellent way. There is no reason why you should be satisfied with the faith of a Materialist, a Heathen, or a Deist, nor, indeed, with that of a servant. I do not know that God requires it at your hands. Indeed, if you have received this, you ought not to cast it away; you ought not in anywise to undervalue it; but to be truly thankful for it. Yet, in the mean time, beware how you rest here: Press on till you receive the Spirit of adoption: Rest not, till that Spirit clearly witnesses with your spirit, that you are a child of God.

II. I proceed, in the Second place, to draw a few inferences from the preceding observations.

1. And I would, First, infer, in how dreadful a state, if there be a God, is a Materialist! one who denies not only the “Lord that bought him,” but also the Lord that made him. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” But it is impossible he should have any faith at all; — any conviction of any invisible world; for he believes there is no such thing; — any conviction of the being of a God; for a material God is no God at all. For you cannot possibly suppose the sun or skies to be God, any more than you can suppose a God of wood or stone. And, farther, whosoever believes all things to be mere matter must, of course, believe that all things are governed by dire necessity! — necessity that is as inexorable as the winds; as ruthless as the rocks; as merciless as the waves that dash upon them, or the poor shipwrecked mariners! Who then shall help thee, thou

poor desolate wretch, when thou art most in need of help? Winds, and seas, and rocks, and storms! Such are the best helpers which the Materialists can hope for!

2. Almost equally desperate is the case of the poor Deist, how learned, yea, how moral, so ever he be. For you, likewise, though you may not advert to it, are really “without God in the world.” See your religion, the “Religion of Nature, delineated” by the ingenious Mr. Wollaston; whom I remember to have seen when I was at school, attending the public service at the Charter-house chapel. Does he found his religion upon God? Nothing less. He founds it upon truth, abstract truth. But does he not by that expression mean God? No; he sets him out of the question, and builds a beautiful castle in the air, without being beholden either to Him or His word. See your smooth-tongued orator of Glasgow, one of the most pleasing writers of the age! Has he any more to do with God, on his system, than Mr. Wollaston? Does he deduce his “Idea of Virtue” from him, as the Father of Lights, the Source of all good? Just the contrary. He not only plans his whole theory without taking the least notice of God, but toward the close of it proposes that question, “Does the having an eye to God in an action enhance the virtue of it?” He answers, “No, it is so far from this, that if in doing a virtuous, that is, a benevolent, action, a man mingles a desire to please God, the more there is of this desire, the less virtue there is in that action.” Never before did I meet with either Jew, Turk, or Heathen who so flatly renounced God as this Christian Professor!

3. But with Heathens, Mahometans, and Jews we have at present nothing to do; only we may wish that their lives did not shame many of us that are called Christians. We have not much more to do with the members of the Church of Rome. But we cannot doubt, that many of them, like the excellent Archbishop of Cambray, still retain (notwithstanding many mistakes) that faith that worketh by love. And how many of the Protestants enjoy this, whether members of the Church of England, or of other congregations? We have reason to believe a considerable number, both of one and the other, (and, blessed be God, an increasing number,) in every part of the land.

4. Once more, I exhort you that fear God and work righteousness, you that are servants of God, First, flee from all sin, as from the face of a serpent; being

Quick as the apple of an eye,
The slightest touch of sin to feel;

and to work righteousness, to the utmost of the power you now have; to abound in works both of piety and mercy: And, Secondly, continually to cry to God, that he would reveal his Son in your hearts, to the intent you may be no more *servants* but sons; having his love shed abroad in your hearts and walking in “the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

5. I exhort you, Lastly, who already feel the Spirit of God witnessing with your spirit that you are the children of God, follow the advice of the Apostle: Walk in all the good works whereunto ye are created in Christ Jesus. And then, “leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,” go on to perfection. Yea, and when ye have attained a measure of perfect love, when God has circumcised your hearts, and enabled you to love him with all your heart and with all your soul, think not of resting there. That is impossible. You cannot stand still; you must either rise or fall; rise higher or fall lower. Therefore the voice of God to the children of Israel, to the children of God, is, “Go forward!” “Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forward unto those that are before, press on to the mark, for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus!”

SERMON CVII.

ON GOD'S VINEYARD.

“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”

Isaiah 5:4.

THE *vineyard of the Lord*, taking the word in its widest sense, may include the whole world. All the inhabitants of the earth may, in some sense, be called “the vineyard of the Lord:” “who hath made all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth; that they might seek the Lord, if haply they may feel after him, and find him.” But, in a narrower sense, the vineyard of the Lord may mean the Christian world; that is, all that name the name of Christ, and profess to obey his word. In a still narrower sense, it may be understood of what is termed the reformed part of the Christian Church. In the narrowest of all, one may, by that phrase, “the vineyard of the Lord,” mean, the body of people commonly called Methodists. In this sense I understand it now, meaning thereby that society only which began at Oxford in the year 1729, and remain united at this day. Understanding the word in this sense, I repeat the question which God proposes to the Prophet: “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”

What could God have done more in this his vineyard, (suppose he had designed it should put forth great branches and spread over the earth,) which he hath not done in it,

- I. With regard to doctrine?
- II. With regard to spiritual helps?
- III. With regard to discipline? And,
- IV. With regard to outward protection?

These things being considered, I would then briefly inquire, “Wherefore, when he looked it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”

I.

1. First. What could have been done in this his vineyard, which God hath not done in it? What could have been done more, with regard to doctrine? From the very beginning, from the time that four young men united together, each of them was *homo unius libri*, — “a man of one book.” God taught them all, to make his “word a lantern unto their feet, and a light in all their paths.” They had one, and only one, rule of judgment, with regard to all their tempers, words, and actions; namely, the oracles of God. They were one and all determined to be Bible Christians. They were continually reproached for this very thing; some terming them, in derision, Bible bigots, others, Bible moths, feeding, they said, upon the Bible, as moths do upon cloth. And indeed, unto this day, it is their constant endeavor to think and speak as the oracles of God.

2. It is true, a learned man, Dr. Trapp, soon after their setting out, gave a very different account of them. “When I saw,” said the Doctor, “these two books, ‘The Treatise on Christian Perfection,’ and ‘The Serious Call to a Holy Life,’ I thought, These books will certainly do mischief. And so it proved; for presently after up sprung the Methodists. So he (Mr. Law) was their parent.” Although this was not entirely true, yet there was some truth in it. All the Methodists carefully read these books, and were greatly profited thereby. Yet they did by no means spring from them, but from the Holy Scriptures; being “born again,” as St. Peter speaks, “by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”

3. Another learned man, the late Bishop Warburton, roundly affirms, that “they were the offspring of Mr. Law and Count Zinzendorf together.” But this was a greater mistake still. For they had met together several years before they had the least acquaintance with Count Zinzendorf, or even knew there was such a person in the world. And when they did know him, although they esteemed him very highly in love, yet they did not; dare to follow him one step farther than they were warranted by the Scripture.

4. The book which, next to the Holy Scripture, was of the greatest use to them, in settling their judgment as to the grand point of justification by faith, was the book of Homilies. They were never clearly convinced that we are justified by faith alone, till they carefully consulted these, and compared them with the sacred writings, particularly St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. And no Minister of the Church can, with any decency, oppose these, seeing at his ordination he subscribed to them, in subscribing the thirty-sixth Article of the Church.

5. It has been frequently observed, that very few were clear in their judgment both with regard to justification and sanctification. Many who have spoken and written admirably well concerning justification, had no clear conception, nay, were totally ignorant, of the doctrine of sanctification. Who has wrote more ably than Martin Luther on justification by faith alone? And who was more ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification, or more confused in his conceptions of it? In order to be thoroughly convinced of this, of his total ignorance with regard to sanctification, there needs no more than to read over, without prejudice, his celebrated comment on the Epistle to the Galatians. On the other hand, how many writers of the Romish Church (as Francis Sales and Juan de Castaniza, in particular) have wrote strongly and scripturally on sanctification, who, nevertheless, were entirely unacquainted with the nature of justification! in so much that the whole body of their Divines at the Council of Trent, in their *Catechismus ad Parochos*, (Catechism which every parish Priest is to teach his people,) totally confound sanctification and justification together. But it has pleased God to give the Methodists a full and clear knowledge of each, and the wide difference between them.

6. They know, indeed, that at the same time a man is justified, sanctification properly begins. For when he is justified, he is "born again," "born from above," "born of the Spirit;" which, although it is not (as some suppose) the whole process of sanctification, is doubtless the gate of it. Of this, likewise, God has given them a full view. They know, the new birth implies as great a change in the soul, in him that is "born of the Spirit," as was wrought in his body when he was born of a woman. Not an outward change only, as from drunkenness to sobriety, from robbery or theft to honesty; (this is the poor, dry, miserable conceit of those that

know nothing of real religion,) but an inward change from all unholy, to all holy tempers, — from pride to humility, from passionateness to meekness, from peevishness and discontent to patience and resignation; in a word, from an earthly, sensual, devilish mind, to the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

7. It is true, a late very eminent author, in his strange; “Treatise on Regeneration,” proceeds entirely on the supposition, that it is the whole gradual progress of sanctification. No, it is only the threshold of sanctification, the first entrance upon it. And as, in the natural birth, a man is born at once, and then grows larger and stronger by degrees; so in the spiritual birth, a man is born at once, and then gradually increases in spiritual stature and strength. The new birth, therefore, is the first point of sanctification, which may increase more and more unto the perfect day.

8. It is, then, a great blessing given to this people, that as they do not think or speak of justification so as to supersede sanctification, so neither do they think or speak of sanctification so as to supersede justification. They take care to keep each in its own place, laying equal stress on one and the other. They know God has joined these together, and it is not for man to put them asunder: Therefore they maintain, with equal zeal and diligence, the doctrine of free, full, present justification, on the one hand, and of entire sanctification both of heart and life, on the other; being as tenacious of inward holiness as any Mystic, and of outward, as any Pharisee.

9. Who then is a Christian, according to the light which God hath vouchsafed to this people? He that, being “justified by faith, hath peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” and, at the same time, is “born again,” “born from above,” “born of the Spirit;” inwardly changed from the image of the devil, to that “image of God wherein he was created:” He that finds the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him, and whom this love sweetly constrains to love his neighbor, every man, as himself: He that has learned of his Lord to be meek and lowly in heart, and in every state to be content: He in whom is that whole mind, all those tempers, which were also in Christ Jesus: He that abstains from all appearance of evil in his actions, and that offends not with his tongue: He that walks in all the commandments of God, and

in all his ordinances, blameless: He that, in all his intercourse with men, does to others as he would they should do to him; and in his whole life and conversation, whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he doeth, doeth all to the glory of God.

Now, what could God have done more for this his vineyard, which he hath not done in it, with regard to doctrine? We are to inquire,

II.

Secondly, What could have been done which he hath not done in it, with regard to spiritual helps?

1. Let us consider this matter from the very beginning. Two young Clergymen, not very remarkable any way, of middle age, having a tolerable measure of health, though rather weak than strong, began, about fifty years ago, to call sinners to repentance. This they did, for a time, in many of the churches in and about London. But two difficulties arose:

First. The churches were so crowded, that many of the parishioners could not get in.

Secondly. They preached new doctrines, — that we are saved by faith, and that, “without holiness no man could see the Lord.”

For one or other of these reasons, they were not long suffered to preach in the churches. They then preached in Moorfields, Kennington-Common, and in many other public places. The fruit of their preaching quickly appeared. Many sinners were changed both in heart and life. But it seemed, this could not continue long, for every one clearly saw, these Preachers would quickly wear themselves out, and no clergyman dared to assist them. But soon one and another, though not ordained, offered to assist them God gave a signal blessing to their word. Many sinners were thoroughly convinced of sin, and many truly converted to God. Their assistants increased, both in number, and in the success of their labors. Some of them were learned: some unlearned most of them were young; a few middle-aged: Some of them were weak; some, on the contrary, of remarkably strong understanding. But it pleased God to own them all; so that more and more brands were plucked out of the burning.

2. It may be observed, that these Clergymen, all this time, had no plan at all. They only went hither and thither, wherever they had a prospect of saving souls from death. But when more and more asked, “What must I do to be saved?” they were desired to meet all together. Twelve came the first Thursday night; forty the next; soon after, a hundred. And they continued to increase, till, three or four and twenty years ago, the London Society amounted to about 2,800.

3. “But how should this multitude of people be kept together? And how should it be known whether they walked worthy of their profession?” They were providentially led, when they were thinking on another thing, namely, paving the public debt, to divide all the people into little companies, or classes, according to their places of abode, and appoint one person in each class to see all the rest weekly. By this means it was quickly discovered if any of them lived in any known sin. If they did, they were first admonished; and, when judged incorrigible, excluded from the society.

4. This division of the people, and exclusion of those that walked disorderly, without any respect of persons, were helps which few other communities had. To these, as the societies increased, was soon added another. The stewards of the societies in each district were desired to meet the Preachers once a quarter, in some central place, to give an account of the spiritual and temporal state of their several societies. The use of these quarterly meetings was soon found to be exceeding great; in consideration of which, they were gradually spread to all the societies in the kingdom.

5. In order to increase the union between the Preachers, as well as that of the people, they were desired to meet all together in London; and, some time after, a select number of them. Afterwards, for more convenience, they met at London, Bristol, and Leeds, alternately. They spent a few days together in this General Conference, in considering what might most conduce to the general good. The result was immediately signified to all their brethren. And they soon found, that what St. Paul observes of the whole Church, may be, in a measure, applied to every part of it: “The whole body being fitly framed together and compacted by that which

every joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:16.)

6. That this may be the more effectually done, they have another excellent help, in the constant change of Preachers; it being their rule, that no Preacher shall remain in the same circuit more than two years together, and few of them more than one year. Some, indeed, have imagined that this was a hindrance to the work of God: But long experience, in every part of the kingdom, proves the contrary. This has always shown that the people profit less by any one person than by a variety of Preachers; while they

Used the gifts on each bestow'd,
Temper'd by the art of God.

7. Together with these helps, which are peculiar to their own society, they have all those which are enjoyed in common by the other members of the Church of England. Indeed, they have been long pressed to separate from it; to which they have had temptations of every kind. But they cannot, they dare not, they will not, separate from it, while they can remain therein with a clear conscience. It is true, if any sinful terms of communion were imposed upon them, then they would be constrained to separate; but as this is not the case at present, we rejoice to continue therein.

8. What then could God have done more for his vineyard, which he hath not done in it, with regard to spiritual helps? He has hardly dealt so with any other people in the Christian world. If it be said, “He could have made them a separate people, like the Moravian Brethren;” I answer, This would have been a direct contradiction to his whole design in raising them up; namely, to spread scriptural religion throughout the land, among people of every denomination, leaving every one to hold his own opinions, and to follow his own mode of worship. This could only be done effectually, by leaving these things as they were, and endeavoring to leaven the whole nation with that “faith that worketh by love.”

III.

1. Such are the spiritual helps which God has bestowed on this his vineyard with no sparing hand. Discipline might be inserted among these;

but we may as well speak of it under a separate head. It is certain that in this respect, the Methodists are a highly favored people. Nothing can be more simple, nothing more rational, than the Methodist discipline: It is entirely founded on common sense, particularly applying the general rules of Scripture. Any person determined to save his soul may be united (this is the only condition required) with them. But this desire must be evidenced by three marks: Avoiding all known sin; doing good after his power; and, attending all the ordinances of God. He is then placed in such a class as is convenient for him, where he spends about an hour in a week. And, the next quarter, if nothing is objected to him, he is admitted into the society: And therein he may continue as long as he continues to meet his brethren, and walks according to his profession.

2. Their public service is at five in the morning, and six or seven in the evening, that their temporal business may not be hindered. Only on Sunday it begins between nine and ten, and concludes with the Lord's Supper. On Sunday evening the society meets; but care is taken to dismiss them early, that all the heads of families may have time to instruct their several households. Once a quarter, the principal Preacher in every circuit examines every member of the societies therein. By this means, if the behavior of any one is blamable, which is frequently to be expected in so numerous a body of people, it is easily discovered, and either the offense or the offender removed in time.

3. Whenever it is needful to exclude any disorderly member out of the society, it is done in the most quiet and inoffensive manner; only by not renewing his ticket at the quarterly visitation. But in some cases, where the offense is great, and there is danger of public scandal, it is judged necessary to declare, when all the members are present, "A. B. is no longer a member of our society." Now, what can be more rational or more scriptural than this simple discipline; attended, from the beginning to the end, with no trouble, expense, or delay?

IV.

1. But was it possible, that all these things should be done without a flood of opposition? The prince of this world was not dead, nor asleep; and would he not fight, that his kingdom might not be delivered up? If the

word of the Apostle be found true, in all ages and nations, “All they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;” if this be true, with regard to every individual Christian, how much more with regard to bodies of men visibly united together with the avowed design to overthrow his kingdom! And what could withstand the persecution he would not fail to stir up against a poor, defenseless, despised people, without any visible help, without money, without power, without friends.

2. In truth, the God of this world was not asleep. Neither was he idle. He *did* fight, and that with all his power, that his kingdom might not be delivered up. He “brought forth all his hosts to war.” First. He stirred up the beasts of the people. They roared like lions, they encompassed the little and defenseless on every side. And the storm rose higher and higher, till deliverance came in a way that none expected. God stirred up the heart of our late gracious Sovereign to give such orders to his Magistrates as, being put in execution, effectually quelled the madness of the people. It was about the same time that a great man applied personally to His Majesty, begging that he would please to “take a course to stop these run-about Preachers.” His Majesty, looking sternly upon him, answered without ceremony, like a King, “I tell you, while I sit on the throne, no man shall be persecuted for conscience’ sake.”

3. But in defiance of this, several who bore His Majesty’s commission have persecuted them from time to time; and that under color of law; availing themselves of what is called the Conventicle Act: One in particular, in Kent, who, some years since, took upon him to fine one of the Preachers and several of his hearers. But they thought it their duty to appeal to His Majesty’s Court of Kings Bench. The cause was given for the plaintiffs; who have ever since been permitted to worship God according to their own conscience.

4. I believe this is a thing wholly without precedent. I find no other instance of it, in any age of the Church, from the day of Pentecost to this day. Every opinion, right and wrong, has been tolerated, almost in every age and nation. Every mode of worship has been tolerated, however superstitious or absurd. But I do not know that true, vital, scriptural religion was ever tolerated before. For this the people called Methodists

have abundant reason to praise God. In their favor he hath wrought a new thing in the earth: He hath stilled the enemy and the avenger. This then they must ascribe unto Him, the Author of their outward as well as inward peace.

V.

1. What indeed could God have done more for this his vineyard, which he hath not done in it? This having been largely showed, we may now proceed to that strong and tender expostulation: “After all that I had done, might I not have looked for the most excellent grapes? Wherefore, then, brought it forth wild grapes? Might I not have expected a general increase of faith and love, of righteousness and true holiness; yea, and of the fruit of the Spirit, — love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, temperance?” Was it not reasonable to expect that these fruits could have overspread his whole Church? Truly, when I saw what God had done among his people between forty and fifty years ago; when I saw them warm in their first love, magnifying the Lord, and rejoicing in God their Savior; I could expect nothing less than that all these would have lived like angels here below; that they would have walked as continually seeing Him that is invisible; having constant communion with the Father and the Son; living in eternity, and walking in eternity. I looked to see “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people,” in the whole tenor of their conversation; “showing forth His praise, who had called them into his marvellous light.”

2. But, instead of this, it brought forth wild grapes, — fruit of a quite contrary nature. It brought forth error in ten thousand shapes, turning many of the simple out of the way. It brought forth enthusiasm, imaginary inspiration, ascribing to the all-wise God all the wild, absurd, self-inconsistent dreams of a heated imagination. It brought forth pride, robbing the Giver of every good gift of the honor due to his name. It brought forth prejudice, evil surmising, censoriousness, judging and condemning one another; — all totally subversive of that brotherly love which is the very badge of the Christian profession; without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God. It brought forth anger, hatred, malice, revenge, and every evil word and work; — all direful fruits, not of the Holy Spirit, but of the bottomless pit!

3. It brought forth likewise in many, particularly those that are increased in goods, that grand poison of souls, the love of the world; and that in all its branches: “The desire of the flesh;” that is, the seeking happiness in the pleasures of sense; — “the desire of the eyes,” that is, seeking happiness in dress, or any of the pleasures of imagination; — and “the pride of life that is, seeking happiness in the praise of men; or in that which ministers to all these, laying up treasures on earth. It brought forth self-indulgence of every kind, delicacy, effeminacy, softness; but not softness of the right kind, that melts at human woe. It brought such base, groveling affections, such deep earthly mindedness, as that of the poor Heathens, which occasioned the lamentation of their own Poet over them, — *O Curvae in terras animae et caelestium inanes!* — “O souls bowed down to earth, and void of God!”

4. O ye that have riches in possession, once more hear the word of the Lord! Ye that are rich in this world, that have food to eat, and raiment to put on, and something over, are you clear of the curse of loving the world? Are you sensible of your danger? Do you feel, “How hardly will they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven?” Do you continue unburned in the midst of the fire? Are you untouched with the love of the world? Are you clear from the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life? Do you “put a knife to your throat,” when you sit down to meat, lest your table should be a snare to you? Is not your belly your God? Is not eating and drinking, or any other pleasure of sense, the greatest pleasure you enjoy? Do not you seek happiness in dress, furniture, pictures, gardens, or anything else that pleases the eye? Do not you grow soft and delicate; unable to bear cold, heat, the wind or the rain, as you did when you were poor? Are you not increasing in goods, laying up treasures on earth; instead of restoring to God in the poor, not so much, or so much, but all that you can spare? Surely, “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!”

5. But why will ye still bring forth wild grapes? What excuse can ye make? Hath God been wanting on *his* part? Have you not been warned over and over? Have ye not been fed with “the sincere milk of the word?” Hath not

the whole word of God been delivered to you, and without any mixture of error? Were not the fundamental doctrines both of free, full, present justification delivered to you, as well as sanctification, both gradual and instantaneous? Was not every branch both of inward and outward holiness clearly opened, and earnestly applied; and that by Preachers of every kind, young and old, learned and unlearned? But it is well if some of you did not despise the helps which God had prepared for you. Perhaps you would hear none but Clergymen; or, at least, none but men of learning. Will you not then give God leave to choose his own messengers? to send by whom he will send? It is well if this bad wisdom was not one cause of your bringing forth wild grapes!

6. Was not another cause of it your despising that excellent help, union with a Christian society? Have you not read, “How can one be warm alone?” and, “Woe be unto him that is alone when he falleth?” But you have companions enough. Perhaps more than enough; more than are helpful to your son. But have you enough that are athirst for God, and that labor to make you so? Have you companions enough that watch over your soul, as they that must give account; and that freely and faithfully warn you, if you take any false step, or are in danger of doing so? I fear you have few of these companions, or else you would bring forth better fruit!

7. If you are a member of the society, do you make a full use of your privilege? Do you never fail to meet your class; and that not as matter of form, but expecting that when you are met together in his name, your Lord will be in the midst of you? Are you truly thankful for the amazing liberty of conscience which is vouchsafed to you and your brethren; such as never was enjoyed before by persons in your circumstances? And are you thankful to the Giver of every good gift for the general spread of true religion? Surely, you can never praise God enough for all these blessings, so plentifully showered down upon you, till you praise him with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven!

SERMON CVIII.

ON RICHES.

“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 God.”

Matthew 19:24.

1. IN the preceding verses we have an account of a young man who came running to our Lord, and kneeling down, not in hypocrisy, but in deep earnestness of soul, and said unto him, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” “All the commandments,” saith he, “I have kept from my youth: What lack I yet?” Probably he had kept them in the literal sense; yet he still loved the world. And He who knew what was in man knew that, in this particular case, (for this is by no means a general rule,) he could not be healed of that desperate disease, but by a desperate remedy. Therefore he answered, “Go and sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor; and come and follow me. But when he heard this, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” So all the fair blossoms withered away! For he would not lay up treasure in heaven at so high a price! Jesus, observing this, “looked round about, and said unto his disciples,” (Mark 10:23, etc.,) “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 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 God! And they were astonished out of measure, and said among themselves, Who then can be saved,” — if it be so difficult for rich men to be saved, who have so many and so great advantages, who are free from the cares of this world, and a thousand difficulties to which the poor are continually exposed?

2. It has indeed been supposed, he partly retracts what he had said concerning the difficulty of rich men’s being saved, by what is added in the tenth chapter of St. Mark. For after he had said, (verse 23,) “How hardly

shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" when "the disciples were astonished at his words, Jesus answered again," and said unto them, "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" (Verse 24.) But observe,

(1.) Our Lord did not mean hereby to retract what he had said before.

So far from it, that he immediately confirms it by that awful declaration, "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 God."

Observe,

(2.) Both one of these sentences and the other assert the very same thing. Yet it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for those that have riches not to trust in them.

3. Perceiving their astonishment at this hard saying, "Jesus, looking upon them," (undoubtedly with an air of inexpressible tenderness, to prevent their thinking the case of the rich desperate,) "saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: For with God all things are possible."

4. I apprehend, by a rich man here is meant, not only a man that has immense treasures, one that has heaped up gold as dust, and silver as the sand of the sea; but any one that possesses more than the necessaries and conveniences of life. One that has food and raiment sufficient for himself and his family, and something over, is rich. By the kingdom of God, or of heaven, (exactly equivalent terms,) I believe is meant, not the kingdom of glory, (although that will, without question, follow,) But the kingdom of heaven, that is, true religion, upon earth. The meaning then of our Lord's assertion is this, — that it is absolutely impossible, unless by that power to which all things are possible, that a rich man should be a Christian, to have the mind that was in Christ, and to walk as Christ walked: Such are the hindrances to holiness, as well as the temptations to sin, which surround him on every side.

I.

First. Such are the hindrances to holiness which surround him on every side. To enumerate all these would require a large volume: I would only touch upon a few of them.

1. The root of all religion is faith, without which it is impossible to please God. Now, whether you take this in its general acceptance, for an “evidence of things not seen,” of the invisible and the eternal world, of God and the things of God, how natural a tendency have riches to darken this evidence, to prevent your attention to God and the things of God, and to things invisible and eternal! And if you take it in another sense, for a confidence; what a tendency have riches to destroy this; to make you trust, either for happiness or defense, in them, not “in the living God!” Or if you take faith, in the proper Christian sense, as a divine confidence in a pardoning God; what a deadly, what an almost insuperable, hindrance to this faith are riches! What! Can a wealthy, and consequently an honorable, man come to God as having nothing to pay? Can he lay all his greatness by, and come as a sinner, a mere sinner, the vilest of sinners; as on a level with those that feed the dogs of his flock; with that “beggar who lies at his gate full of sores?” Impossible; unless by the same power that made the heavens and the earth. Yet without doing this, he cannot, in any sense, “enter into the kingdom of God.”

2. What a hindrance are riches to the very first fruit of faith, — namely, the love of God! “If any man love the world,” says the Apostle, “the love of the Father is not in him.” But how is it possible for a man not to love the world who is surrounded with all its allurements? How can it be that he should then hear the still small voice which says, “My son, give me thy heart?” What power, less than almighty, can send the rich man an answer to that prayer, —

Keep me dead to all below,
Only Christ resolved to know;
Firm, and disengaged, and free,
Seeking all my bliss in Thee!

3. Riches are equally a hindrance to the loving our neighbor as ourselves; that is, to the loving all mankind as Christ loved us. A rich man may indeed love them that are of his own party, or his own opinion. He may love them that love him: “Do not even Heathens,” baptized or unbaptized, “the same?” But he cannot have pure, disinterested goodwill to every child of man. This can only spring from the love of God, which his great possessions expelled from his soul.

4. From the love of God, and from no other fountain, true humility likewise flows. Therefore, so far as they hinder the love of God, riches must hinder humility likewise. They hinder this also in the rich, by cutting them off from that freedom of conversation whereby they might be made sensible of their defects, and come so a true knowledge of themselves. But how seldom do they meet with a faithful friend; with one that can and will deal plainly with them! And without this we are likely to grow gray in our faults; yea, to die “with all our imperfections on our head.”

5. Neither can meekness subsist without humility; for “of pride” naturally “cometh contention.” Our Lord accordingly directs us to learn of Him at the same time “to be meek and lowly in heart.” Riches therefore are as great a hindrance to meekness as they are to humility. In preventing lowliness of mind, they of consequence prevent meekness; which increases in the same proportion as we sink in our own esteem; and, on the contrary, necessarily decreases as we think more highly of ourselves.

6. There is another Christian temper which is nearly allied to meekness and humility; but it has hardly a name. St. Paul terms it **επιεικεια**. Perhaps, till we find a better name, we may call it *yieldingness*, a readiness to submit to others, to give up our own will. This seems to be the quality which St. James ascribes to “the wisdom from above,” when he styles it **ευπειθης** — which we render, *easy to be entreated; easy to be convinced* of what is true; *easy to be persuaded*. But how rarely is this amiable temper to be found in a wealthy man! I do not know that I have found such a prodigy ten times in above threescore and ten years!

7. And how uncommon a thing is it to find patience in those that have large possessions! unless when there is a counterbalance of long and severe affliction, with which God is frequently pleased to visit those he loves, as an antidote to their riches. This is not uncommon: He often sends pain, and sickness, and great crosses, to them that have great possessions. By these means, “patience has its perfect work,” till they are “perfect and entire, lacking nothing,”

II.

Such are some of the hindrances to holiness which surround the rich on every side. We may now observe, on the other side, what a temptation riches are to all unholy tempers.

1. And, First, how great is the temptation to Atheism which naturally flows from riches; even to an entire forgetfulness of God, as if there was no such Being in the universe. This is at present usually termed dissipation, — a pretty name, affixed by the great vulgar to an utter disregard for God, and indeed for the whole invisible world. And how is the rich man surrounded with all manner of temptations to continual dissipation! Yes, how is the art of dissipation studied among the rich and great! As Prior keenly says, —

Cards are dealt, and dice are brought,
Happy effects of human wit,
That Alma may herself forget.

Say rather, that mortals may their God forget; that they may keep him utterly out of their thoughts, who, though he sitteth on the circle of the heavens, yet is “about their bed, and about their path, and spieth out all their ways.” Call this wit, if you please; but is it wisdom? O no! It is far, very far from it thou fool! Dost thou imagine, because thou dost not see God, that God doth not see thee? Laugh on; play on, sing on; dance on: But “for all these things God will bring thee to judgment!”

2. From Atheism there is an easy transition to idolatry; from the worship of no God to the worship of false gods: And, in fact, he that does not love God (which is his proper, and his only proper worship) will surely love some of the works of his hands; will love the creature, if not the Creator. But to how many species of idolatry is every rich man exposed! What continual and almost insuperable temptations is he under to “love the world!” and that in all its branches, — “the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life.” What innumerable temptations will he find to gratify the “desire of the flesh.” Understand this right. It does not refer to one only, but all the outward senses. It is equal idolatry to seek our happiness in gratifying any or all of these. But there is the greatest danger lest men should seek it in gratifying their taste; in a moderate

sensuality, in a regular kind of Epicurism, not in gluttony or drunkenness: Far be that from them! They do not disorder the body; they only keep the soul dead, — dead to God and all true religion.

3. The rich are equally surrounded with temptations from the “desire of the eyes;” that is, the seeking happiness in gratifying the imagination, the pleasures of which the eyes chiefly minister. The objects that give pleasure to the imagination are grand, or beautiful, or new. Indeed, all rich men have not a taste for grand objects; but they have for new and beautiful things, especially for new; the desire of novelty being as natural to men as the desire of meat and drink. Now, how numerous are the temptations to this kind of idolatry, which naturally springs from riches! How strongly and continually are they solicited to seek happiness (if not in grand, yet) in beautiful houses, in elegant furniture, in curious pictures, in delightful gardens! perhaps in that trifle of all trifles, — rich or gay apparel! Yea, in every new thing, little or great, which fashion, the mistress of fools, recommends. How are rich men, of a more elevated turn of mind, tempted to seek happiness, as their various tastes lead, in poetry, history, music, philosophy, or curious arts and sciences! Now, although it is certain all these have their use, and therefore may be innocently pursued, yet the seeking happiness in any of them, instead of God, is manifest idolatry; and therefore, were it only on this account, that riches furnish him with the means of indulging all these desires, it might well be asked, “Is not the life of a rich man, above all others, a temptation upon earth?”

4. What temptation, likewise, must every rich man have to seek happiness in “the pride of life!” I do not conceive the Apostle to mean thereby pomp, or state, or equipage; so much as “the honor that cometh of men,” whether it be deserved or not. A rich man is sure to meet with this: It is a snare he cannot escape. The whole city of London uses the words rich and good as equivalent terms. “Yes,” say they, “he is a good man; he is worth a hundred thousand pounds.” And indeed everywhere, “if thou doest well unto thyself,” if thou increasest in goods, “men will speak well of thee.” All the world is agreed.

A thousand pound supplies
The want of twenty thousand qualities.

And who can bear general applause without being puffed up, — without being insensibly induced to think of himself “more highly than he ought to think?”

5. How is it possible that a rich man should escape pride, were it only on this account, — that his situation necessarily occasions praise to flow in upon him from every quarter? For praise is generally poison to the soul; and the more pleasing, the more fatal; particularly when it is undeserved: So that well might our Poet say, —

Parent of evil, bane of honest deeds,
Pernicious flattery! thy destructive seeds.
In an ill hour, and by a fatal hand,
Sadly diffused o'er virtue's glory land,
With rising pride amid the corn appear,
And check the hope and promise of the year!

And not only praise, whether deserved or undeserved, but every thing about him tends to inspire and increase pride. His noble house, his elegant furniture, his well chosen pictures, his fine horses, his equipage, his very dress, yea, even “the embroidery plastered on his tail,” — all these will be matter of commendation to some or other of his guests, and so have an almost irresistible tendency to make him think himself a better man than those who have not these advantages.

6. How naturally, likewise, do riches feed and increase the self-will which is born in every child of man! as not only his domestic servants and immediate dependents are governed implicitly by his will, finding their account therein; but also most of his neighbors and acquaintance study to oblige him in all things: So his will being continually indulged, will of course be continually strengthened; till at length he will be ill able to submit to the will either of God or men.

7. Such a tendency have riches to beget and nourish every temper that is contrary to the love of God. And they have equal tendency to feed every passion and temper that is contrary to the love of our neighbor: Contempt, for instance, particularly of inferiors, than which nothing is more contrary to love: — Resentment of any real or supposed offense; perhaps even revenge, although God claims this as his own peculiar prerogative: — At

least anger; for it immediately rises in the mind of a rich man, “What! to use me thus! Nay, but he shall soon know better: I am now able to do myself justice!”

8. Nearly related to anger, if not rather a species of it, are fretfulness and peevishness. But are the rich more assaulted by these than the poor? All experience shows that they are. One remarkable instance I was a witness of many years ago: — A gentleman of large fortune, while we were seriously conversing, ordered a servant to throw some coals on the fire: A puff of smoke came out: He threw himself back in his chair, and cried out, “O Mr. Wesley, these are the crosses which I meet with everyday!” I could not help asking, “Pray, Sir John, are these the heaviest crosses you meet with?” Surely these crosses would not have fretted him so much, if he had had fifty, instead of five thousand, pounds a year!

9. But it would not be strange, if rich men were in general void of all good dispositions, and an easy prey to all evil ones; since so few of them pay any regard to that solemn declaration of our Lord, without observing which we cannot be his disciples: “And he said unto them all,” — the whole multitude, not unto his Apostles only, — “If any man will come after me,” — will be a real Christian, — “let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23.) O how hard a saying is this to those that are “at ease in the midst of their possessions!” Yet the Scripture cannot be broken. Therefore, unless a man do “deny himself, every pleasure which does not prepare him for taking pleasure in God, is and take up his cross daily,” — obey every command of God, however grievous to flesh and blood, — he cannot be a disciple of Christ, he cannot “enter into the kingdom of God.”

10. Touching this important point, of denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily, let us appeal to matter of fact; let us appeal to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. How many rich men are there among the Methodists (observe, there was not one, when they were first joined together) who actually do “deny themselves and take up their cross daily?” who resolutely abstain from every pleasure, either of sense or imagination, unless they know by experience that it prepares them for taking pleasure in God? Who declines no cross, no labor or pain, which lies

in the way of his duty? Who of you that are now rich, deny yourselves just as you did when you were poor? Who as willingly endure labor or pain now, as you did when you were not worth five pounds? Come to particulars. Do you fast now as often as you did then? Do you rise as early in the morning? Do you endure cold or heat, wind or rain, as cheerfully as ever? See one reason among many, why so few increase in goods, without decreasing in grace! Because they no longer deny themselves and take up their daily cross. They no longer, alas! endure hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ!

11. “Go to now, ye rich men! Weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you;” that must come upon you in a few days, unless prevented by a deep and entire change! “The canker of your gold and silver, will be “a testimony against you,” and will “eat your flesh as fire!” O how pitiable is your condition! And who is able to help you? You need more plain dealing than any men in the world, and you meet Witness. For how few dare speak as plain to you, as they would do to one of your servants! No man living, that either hopes to gain anything by your favor, or fears to lose anything by your displeasure. O that God would give me acceptable words, and cause them to sink deep into your hearts! Many of you have known me long, well-nigh from your infancy: You have frequently helped me, when I stood in need. May I not say, you loved me? But now the time of our parting is at hand: My feet are just stumbling upon the dark mountains. I would leave! one word with you before I go hence; and you may remember it when I am no more seen.

12. O let your heart be whole with God! Seek your happiness in him and him alone. Beware that you cleave not to the dust! “This earth is not your place.” See that you use this world as not abusing it; lose the world, and enjoy God. Sit as loose to all things here below, as if you were a poor beggar. Be a good steward of the manifold gifts of God; that when you are called to give an account of your stewardship, he may say, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!”

SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

THIRD SERIES.

CONSISTING OF EIGHTEEN DISCOURSES

WHICH WERE WRITTEN FOR INSERTION IN THE ARMENIAN
MAGAZINE, BUT WHICH WERE NEVER REVISED BY MR.
WESLEY AFTER THEIR PUBLICATION.

SERMON CIX.

WHAT IS MAN?

“*What is man?*” Psalm 8:4.

1. **N**AY, what am I? With God's assistance, I would consider myself. Here is a curious machine, “fearfully and wonderfully made” It is a little portion of *earth*, the particles of which cohering, I know not how, lengthen into innumerable fibers, a thousand times finer than hairs. These, crossing each other in all directions, are strangely wrought into membranes; and these membranes are as strangely wrought into arteries, veins, nerves, and glands; all of which contain various fluids, constantly circulating through the whole machine.

2. In order to the continuance of this circulation, a considerable quantity of air is necessary. And this is continually taken into the habit, by an engine fitted for that very purpose. But as a particle of ethereal *fire* is connected with every particle of air, (and a particle of water too,) so both air, water, and fire are received into the lungs together; where the fire is separated from the air and water, both of which are continually thrown out; while the fire, extracted from them, is received into, and mingled with, the blood. Thus the human body is composed of all the four elements, duly proportioned and mixed together; the last of which constitutes the vital flame, whence flows the animal heat.

3. Let me consider this yet a little farther. Is not the primary use of the lungs to administer fire to the body, which is continually extracted from the air by that curious fire-pump? By inspiration it takes in the air, water, and fire together. In its numerous cells, (commonly called air-vessels,) it detaches the fire from the air and water. This then mixes with the blood; as

every air-vessel has a blood-vessel connected with it: And as soon as the fire is extracted from it, the air and water are thrown out by expiration.

4. Without this spring of life, this vital fire, there could be no circulation of the blood; consequently, no motion of any of the fluids, of the nervous fluid in particular (if it be not rather, as is highly probable, this very fire we are speaking of). Therefore there could not be any sensation, nor any muscular motion. I say, there could be no circulation; for the cause usually assigned for this, namely, the force of the heart, is altogether inadequate to the supposed effect. No one supposes the force of the heart, in a strong man, to be more than equal to the weight of three thousand pounds. Whereas it would require a force equal to the weight of a hundred thousand pounds, to propel the blood from the heart through all the arteries. This can only be effected by the ethereal fire contained in the blood itself; assisted by the elastic force of the arteries through which it circulates.

5. But beside this strange compound of the four elements, — earth, water, air, and fire, — I find something in me of a quite different nature, nothing akin to any of these. I find something in me that *thinks*; which neither earth, water, air, fire, nor any mixture of them, can possibly do: Something which sees, and hears, and smells, and tastes, and feels; all which are so many modes of thinking. It goes farther: Having perceived objects by any of these senses, it forms inward ideas of them. It *judges* confirming them; it sees whether they agree or disagree with each other. It *reasons* concerning them; that is, infers one proposition from another. It reflects upon its own operations; it is endued with imagination and memory; and any of its operations, judgment in particular, may be subdivided into many others.

6. But by what means shall I learn in what part of my body this thinking principle is lodged? Some eminent men have affirmed, that it is “all in all, and all in every part.” But I learn nothing from this: They seem to be words that have no determinate meaning. Let us then appeal, in the best manner we can, to our own experience. From this I learn, that this thinking principle is not lodged in my hands, or feet, or legs, or arms. It is not lodged in the trunk of my body. Any one may be assured of this by a little reflection. I cannot conceive that it is situated in my bones, or in any part

of my flesh. So far as I can judge, it seems to be situated in some part of my head: but neither in the pineal gland, or in any part of the brain, I am not able to determine.

7. But farther: This inward principle, wherever it is lodged, is capable, not only of thinking, but likewise of love, hatred, joy, sorrow, desire, fear, hope, etc., and a whole train of other inward emotions, which are commonly called passions or affections. They are styled, by a general appellation, the will; and are mixed and diversified a thousand ways. And they seem to be the only spring of action in that inward principle I call the soul.

8. But what is my soul? It is an important question, and not easy to be resolved.

Hear'st thou submissive, but a lowly birth,
Some separate particles of finer earth?
A plain effect which nature must beget,
As motion dictates, and as atoms meet?

I cannot in anywise believe this. My reason recoils at it. I cannot reconcile myself to the thought, that the soul is either earth, water, or fire; or a composition of all of them put together; were it only for this plain reason: — All these, whether separate or compounded in any possible way, are purely passive still. None of them has the least power of self-motion; none of them can move itself. “But,” says one, “does not that ship move?” Yes; but not of itself, it is moved by the water on which it swims. “But then the water moves.” True; but the water is moved by the wind, the current of air. “But the air moves.” It is moved by the ethereal fire, which is attached to every particle of it; and this fire itself is moved by the almighty Spirit, the source of all the motion in the universe. But my soul has from Him an inward principle of motion, whereby it governs at pleasure every part of the body.

9. It governs every motion of the body; only with this exception, which is a marvellous instance of the wise and gracious providence of the great Creator: There are some motions of the body, which are absolutely needful for the continuance of life; such as the dilation and contraction of the

lungs, the systole and diastole of the heart, the pulsation of the arteries, and the circulation of the blood. These are not governed by me at pleasure: They do not wait the direction of my will. And it is well they do not. It is highly proper, that all the vital motions should be involuntary; going on, whether we advert to them or not. Were it otherwise, grievous inconveniences might follow. A man might put an end to his own life whenever he pleased, by suspending the motion of his heart, or of his lungs; or he might lose his life by mere inattention, — by not remembering, not adverting to, the circulation of his blood. But these vital motions being excepted, I direct the motion of my whole body. By a single act of my will, I put my head, eyes, hands, or any part of my body into motion: Although I no more comprehend how I do this, than I can comprehend how the “THREE that bear record in heaven are ONE.”

10. But what am I? Unquestionably I am something distinct from my body. It seems evident that my body is not necessarily included therein. For when my body dies, I shall not die: I shall exist as really as I did before. And I cannot but believe, this self-moving, thinking principle, with all its passions and affections, will continue to exist, although the body be moldered into dust. Indeed at present this body is so intimately connected with the soul, that I seem to consist of both. In my present state of existence, I undoubtedly consist both of soul and body: And so I shall again, after the resurrection, to all eternity.

11. I am conscious to myself of one more property, commonly called liberty. This is very frequently confounded with the will; but is of a very different nature. Neither is it a property of the will, but a distinct property of the soul; capable of being exerted with regard to all the faculties of the soul, as well as all the motions of the body. It is a power of self-determination; which although it does not extend to all our thoughts and imaginations, yet extends to our words and actions in general, and not with many exceptions. I am full as certain of this, that I am free, with respect to these, to speak or not to speak, to act or, not to act, to do this or the contrary, as I am of my own existence. I have not only what is termed, a “liberty of contradiction,” — a power to do or not to do; but what is termed, a “liberty of contrariety,” — a power to act one way, or the contrary. To deny this would be to deny the constant experience of all

human kind. Every one feels that he has an inherent power to move this or that part of his body, to move it or not, and to move this way or the contrary, just as he pleases. I can, as I choose, (and so can every one that is born of a woman,) open or shut my eyes; speak, or be silent; rise, or sit down; stretch out my hand, or draw it in; and use any of my limbs according, to my pleasure, as well as my whole body. And although I have not an absolute power over my own mind, because of the corruption of my own nature; yet, through the grace of God assisting me, I have a power to choose and do good, as well as evil. I am free to choose whom I will serve; and if I choose the better part, to continue therein even unto death.

12. But tell me, freighted nature, what is death?
 Blood only stopp'd, and interrupted breath?
 The utmost limit of a narrow span?
 And end of motion, which with life began?

Death is properly the separation of the soul from the body. Of this we are certain. But we are not certain (at least in many cases) of the time when this separation is made. Is it when respiration ceases? according to the well known maxim, *Nullus spiritus, nulla vita*: "Where there is no breath, there is no life." Nay, we cannot absolutely affirm this: For many instances have been known, of those whose breath was totally lost, and yet their lives have been recovered. Is it when the heart no longer beats, or when the circulation of the blood ceases? Not so. For the heart may beat anew; and the circulation of the blood, after it is quite interrupted, may begin again. Is the soul separated from the body, which the whole body is stiff and cold as a piece of ice? But there have been several instances lately, of persons who were thus cold and stiff, and had no symptoms of life remaining, who, nevertheless, upon proper application, recovered both life and health. Therefore we can say no more, than that death is the separation of the soul and body; but in many cases God only can tell the moment of that separation.

13. But what we are much more concerned to know, and deeply to consider, is, the end of life. For what end is life bestowed upon the children of men? Why were we sent into the world? For one sole end, and for no other, to prepare for eternity. For this alone we live. For this, and no other purpose, is our life either given or continued. It pleased the

all-wise God, at the season which he saw best, to arise in the greatness of his strength, and create the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein. Having prepared all things for him, He “created man in his own image, after his own likeness.” And what was the end of his creation? It was one, and no other, — that he might know, and love, and enjoy, and serve his great Creator to all eternity.

14. But “man, being in honor, continued not,” but became lower than even the beasts that perish. He willfully and openly rebelled against God, and cast off his allegiance to the Majesty of heaven. Hereby he instantly lost both the favor of God, and the image of God wherein he was created. As he was then incapable of obtaining happiness by the old, God established a new covenant with man; the terms of which were no longer, “Do this and live,” but, “Believe, and thou shalt be saved.” But still the end of man is one and the same; only it stands on another foundation. For the plain tenor of it is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God hath given to be the propitiation for thy sins, and thou shalt be saved;” first, from the guilt of sin, having redemption through his blood; then from the power, which shall have no more dominion over thee; and then from the root of it, into the whole image of God. And being restored both to the favor and image of God, thou shalt know, love, and serve him to all eternity. So that still the end of his life, the life of every man born into the world, is to know, love, and serve his great Creator.

15. And let it be observed, as this is the end, so it is the whole and sole end, for which every man upon the face of the earth, for which every one of you, were brought into the world, and endued with a living soul. Remember! You were born for nothing else. You live for nothing else. Your life is continued to you upon earth, for no other purpose than this, that you may know, love, and serve God on earth, and enjoy him to all eternity. Consider! You were not created to please your senses, to gratify your imagination, to gain money, or the praise of men; to seek happiness in any created good, in anything under the sun. All this is “waiting in a vain shadow;” is leading a restless, miserable life, in order to a miserable eternity. On the contrary, you were created for this, and for no other purpose, by seeking and finding happiness in God on earth, to secure the glory of God in heaven. Therefore, let your heart continually say, “This

one thing I do," — having one thing in view, remembering why I was born, and why I am continued in life, — "I press on to the mark." I aim at the one end of my being, God; even at "God in Christ reconciling the world to himself." He shall be my God for ever and ever, and my guide even unto death.

BRADFORD, May 2, 1788.

SERMON CX.

ON THE DISCOVERIES OF FAITH.

“Now faith is the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1.

1. FOR many ages it has been allowed by sensible men, *Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuit prius in sensu*: That is, “There is nothing in the understanding which was not first perceived by some of the senses.” All the knowledge which we naturally have is originally derived from our senses. And therefore those who want any sense, cannot have the least knowledge or idea of the objects of that sense; as they that never had sight, have not the least knowledge or conception of light or colors. Some indeed have, of late years, endeavored to prove that we have innate ideas, not derived from any of the senses, but coeval with the understanding. But this point has been now thoroughly discussed by men of the most eminent sense and learning; and it is agreed by all impartial persons, that although some things are so plain and obvious, that we can very hardly avoid knowing them as soon as we come to the use of our understanding; yet the knowledge even of those is not innate, but derived from some of our senses.

2 But there is a great difference between our senses, considered as the avenues of our knowledge. Some of them have a very narrow sphere of action; some a more extensive one. By *feeling* we discern only those objects that touch some part of our body; and, consequently, this sense extends only to a small number of objects. Our senses of *taste* and *smell* (which some count species of *feeling*) extend to fewer still. But, on the other hand, our nobler sense of *hearing* has an exceeding wide sphere of action; especially in the case of loud sounds, as thunder, the roaring of the sea, or the discharge of cannon: the last of which sounds has been frequently heard at the distance of near a hundred miles. Yet the space to

which the sense of *hearing* itself extends is small, compared to that through which the *sight* extends. The *sight* takes in at one view, not only the most unbounded prospects on earth, but also the moon and the other planets, the sun, yea, the fixed stars; though at such an immeasurable distance, that they appear no larger through our finest telescopes than they do to the naked eye.

3. But still none of our senses, no, not the sight itself, can reach beyond the bounds of this visible world. They supply us with such knowledge of the material world as answers all the purposes of life. But as this was the design for which they were given, beyond this they cannot go. They furnish us with no information at all concerning the invisible world.

4. But the wise and gracious Governor of the worlds, both visible and invisible, has prepared a remedy for this defect. He hath appointed *faith* to supply the defect of sense; to take us up where sense sets us down, and help us over the great gulf. Its office begins where that of sense ends. Sense is an evidence of things that are seen; of the visible, the material world, and the several parts of it. Faith, on the other hand is the “evidence of things not seen;” of the invisible world; of all those invisible things which are revealed in the oracles of God. But indeed they reveal nothing, they are a mere dead letter, if they are “not mixed with faith in those that hear them.”

5. In particular, faith is an evidence to me of the existence of that unseen thing, my own soul. Without this I should be in utter uncertainty concerning it. I should be constrained to ask that melancholy question: —

Hearst thou submissive, but a lowly birth,
Some separate particles of finer earth?

But by faith I know it is an immortal spirit, made in the image of God; in his natural and moral image; “an incorruptible picture of the God of glory.” By the same evidence I know that I am now fallen short of the glorious image of God; yea, that I, as well as all mankind, am “dead in trespasses and sins;” So utterly dead, that “in me dwelleth no good thing;” that I am inclined to all evil, and totally unable to quicken my own soul.

6. By faith I know that, besides the souls of men, there are other orders of spirits; yea, I believe that

Millions of creatures walk the earth
Unseen whether we wake, or if we sleep.

These I term angels; and I believe part of them are holy and happy, and the other part wicked and miserable. I believe the former of these, the good angels, are continually sent of God “to minister to the heirs of salvation;” who will be “equal to angels” by and by, although they are now a little inferior to them. I believe the latter, the evil angels, called in Scripture, devils, united under one head, (termed in Scripture, Satan; emphatically the enemy, the adversary, both of God and man,) either range the upper regions; whence they are called “princes of the power of the air;” or, like him, walk about the earth as “roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour.”

7. But I know by faith that, above all these, is the Lord Jehovah; He that is, that was, and that is to come; that is God from everlasting, and world without end; He that filleth heaven and earth; He that is infinite in power, in wisdom, in justice, in mercy, and holiness; He that created all things, visible and invisible, by the breath of his mouth, and still upholds them all, preserves them in being, “by the word of his power;” and that governs all things that are in heaven above, in earth beneath, and under the earth. By faith I know, “there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and that these Three are One;” that the Word, God the Son, “was made flesh,” lived and died for our salvation, rose again, ascended into heaven, and now sitteth on the right hand of the Father. By faith I know that the Holy Spirit is the giver of all spiritual life; of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; of holiness and happiness, by the restoration of that image of God wherein we are created. Of all these things, faith is the evidence, the sole evidence, to the children of men.

8. And as the information which we receive from our senses does not extend to the invisible world, so neither does it extend to (what is nearly

related thereto) the eternal world. In spite of all the instruction which either the sight or any of the senses can afford,

The vast, the' unbounded prospect lies before us;
But clouds, alas! and darkness rest upon it.

Sense does not let in one ray of light, to discover “the secrets of the illimitable deep.” This, the eternal world, commences at death, the death of every individual person. The moment the breath of man goeth forth, he is an inhabitant of eternity. Just then time vanishes away “like as a dream when one awaketh.” And here again faith supplies the place of sense, and gives us a view of things to come: At once it draws aside the veil which hangs between mortal and immortal beings. Faith discovers to us the souls of the righteous, immediately received by the holy angels, and carried by those ministering spirits into Abraham’s bosom; into the delights of paradise, the garden of God, where the light of his countenance perpetually shines; where he converses, not only with his former relations, friends, and fellow soldiers, but with the saints of all nations and all ages, with the glorious dead of ancient days, with the noble army of martyrs, the Apostles, the Prophets, the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: Yea, above all this, he shall be with Christ, in all manner that he could not be while he remained in the body.

9. It discovers, likewise, the souls of unholy men; seized the moment they depart from the quivering lips, by those ministers of vengeance, the evil angels, and dragged away to their own place. It is true, this is not the nethermost hell: They are not to be tormented there “before the time;” before the end of the world, when every one will receive his just recompense of reward. Till then they will probably be employed by their bad master in advancing his infernal kingdom, and in doing all the mischief that lies in their power, to the poor, feeble children of men. But still, wherever they seek rest, they will find none. They carry with them their own hell, in the worm that never dieth; in a consciousness of guilt, and of the wrath of God, which continually drinks up their spirits; in diabolical, infernal tempers, which are essential misery; and in what they cannot shake off; no, not for an hour, any more than they can shake off their own

being, — that “fearful looking for of fiery indignation, which will devour God’s adversaries.”

10. Moreover, faith opens another scene in the eternal world; namely, the coming of our Lord in the clouds of heaven, to “judge both the quick and the dead.” It enables us to see the “great white throne coming down from heaven, and Him that sitteth thereon, from whose face the heavens and the earth flee away, and there is found no place for them.” We see “the dead, tall and great, stand before God.” We see “the books opened, and the dead judged, according to the things that are written in the books.” We see the earth and the sea giving up their dead, and hell (that is, the invisible world) giving up the dead that were therein, and every one judged according to his works.

11. By faith we are also shown the immediate consequences of the general judgment. We see the execution of that happy sentence pronounced upon those on the right hand, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” After which the holy angels tune their harps, and sing, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, that the heirs of glory may come in!” And then shall they drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at Gods right hand for ever more. We see, likewise, the execution of that dreadful sentence, pronounced upon those on the left hand, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” And then shall the ministers of divine vengeance plunge them into “the lake of fire burning with brimstone; where they have no rest day or night, but the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.”

12. But beside the invisible and the eternal world, which are not seen, which are discoverable only by faith, there is a whole system of things which are not seen, which cannot be discerned by any of our outward senses. I mean, the spiritual world, understanding thereby the kingdom of God in the soul of man. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard this; neither can it enter into the heart of man to conceive the things of” this interior kingdom, unless God revealed them by his Spirit. The Holy Spirit prepares us for his inward kingdom, by removing the veil from our heart, and enabling us to know ourselves as we are known of him; by

“convincing us of sin,” of our evil nature, our evil tempers, and our evil words and actions; all of which cannot but partake of the corruption of the heart from which they spring. He then convinces us of the desert of our sins; so that our mouth is stopped, and we are constrained to plead guilty before God. At the same time, we “receive the spirit of bondage unto fear;” fear of the wrath of God, fear of the punishment which we have deserved; and, above all, fear of death, lest it should consign us over to eternal death. Souls that are thus convinced feel they are so fast in prison, that they cannot get forth. They feel themselves at once altogether sinful, altogether guilty, and altogether helpless. But all this conviction implies a species of faith; being; an evidence of things not seen;” nor indeed possible to be seen or known, till God reveals them unto us.

13. But still let it be carefully observed, (for it is a point of no small importance,) that this faith is only the faith of a servant, and not the faith of a son. Because this is a point which many do not clearly understand, I will endeavor to make it a little plainer. The faith of a servant implies a divine evidence of the invisible and the eternal world; yea, and an evidence of the spiritual world, so far as it can exist without living experience. Whoever has attained this, the faith of a servant, “feareth God, and escheweth evil;” or, as it is expressed by St. Peter, “feareth God, and worketh righteousness.” In consequence of which he is, in a degree, as the Apostle observes, “accepted with Him.” Elsewhere he is described in those words: “He that feareth God, and keepeth his commandments.” Even one who has gone thus far in religion, who obeys God out of fear, is not in anywise to be despised; seeing “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Nevertheless, he should be exhorted not to stop there; not to rest till he attains the adoption of sons; till he obeys him out of love, which is the privilege of all the children of God.

14. Exhort him to press on, by all possible means, till he passes “from faith to faith;” from the faith of a servant to the faith of a *son*; from the spirit of bondage unto fear, to the spirit of childlike love: He will then have “Christ revealed in his heart,” enabling him to testify, “The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*,” — the proper voice of a child of God. He will then be “born of God;” inwardly changed by the mighty power of God, from “an

earthly, sensual, devilish” mind, to the “mind which was in Christ Jesus.” He will experience what St. Paul means by those remarkable words to the Galatians, “Ye are the sons of God by faith; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” “He that believeth,” as a son, (as St. John observes,) “hath the witness in himself.” “The Spirit itself witnesses with his spirit, that he is a child of God.” “The love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is “given unto him.”

15. But many doubts and fears may still remain, even in a child of God, while he is weak in faith; while he is in the number of those whom St. Paul terms “babes in Christ.” But when his faith is strengthened, when he receives faith’s abiding impression, realizing thing, to come; when he has received the abiding witness of the Spirit, doubts and fears vanish away. He then enjoys the plerophory, or “full assurance, of faith;” excluding all doubt, and all “fear that hath torment.” To those whom he styles *young men*, St. John says, “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” These, the Apostle observes in the other verse, had “the word of God abiding in them.” It may not improbably mean the pardoning word, the word which spake all their sins forgiven; in consequence of which, they have the consciousness of the divine favor without any intermission.

16. To these more especially we may apply the exhortation of the Apostle Paul: “Leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ,” namely, repentance and faith, “Let us go on unto perfection.” But in what sense are we to leave those principles? Not absolutely for us are to retain both one and the other, the knowledge of ourselves, and the knowledge of God, unto our lives’ end: But only comparatively; not fixing, as we did at first, our whole attention upon them; thinking and talking, perpetually of nothing else, but either repentance or faith. But what is the perfection here spoken of? It is not only a deliverance from doubts and fears, but from sin, from all inward as well as outward sin; from evil desires, and evil tempers, as well as from evil words and works. Yea, and it is not only a negative blessing, a deliverance from all evil dispositions, implied in that expression, “I will circumcise thy heart,” but a positive one likewise, even

the planting all good dispositions in their place, clearly implied in that other expression, “To love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul.”

17. These are they to whom the Apostle John gives the venerable title of *Fathers*, who “have known him that is from the beginning,” the eternal Three-One God. One of these expresses himself thus: “I bear about with me an experimental verity and a plenitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity.” And those who are fathers in Christ, generally, though I believe not always, enjoy the plerophory, or “full assurance, of hope;” having no more doubt of reigning with him in glory, than if they already saw him coming in the clouds of heaven. But this does not prevent their continually increasing in the knowledge and love of God. While they “rejoice ever more, pray without ceasing, and in everything, give thanks,” they pray in particular, that they may never cease to watch, to deny themselves, to take up their cross daily, to fight the good fight of faith, and against the world, the devil, and their own manifold infirmities; till they are able to “comprehend, with all saints, what is the length, and breadth, and height, and depth, and to know that love of Christ which passeth knowledge;” yea, to “be filled with all the fullness of God.”

YARM, June 11, 1788.

SERMON CXI.

ON THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

“Do not I fill Heaven and earth? saith the Lord.” Jeremiah 23:24.

1. How strongly and beautifully do these words express the omnipresence of God! And can there be, in the whole compass of nature, a more sublime subject? Can there be any more worthy the consideration of every rational creature? Is there any more necessary to be considered, and to be understood, so far as our poor faculties will admit? How many excellent purposes may it answer! What deep instruction may it convey to all the children of men; and more directly to the children of God!

2. How is it then that so little has been wrote on so sublime and useful a subject? It is true, that some of our most eminent writers have occasionally touched upon it, and have several strong and beautiful reflections, which were naturally suggested by it. But which of them has published a regular treatise, or so much as a sermon, upon the head? Perhaps many were conscious of their inability to do justice to so vast a subject. It is possible, there may some such lie hid in the voluminous writings of the last century. But if they are hid, even in their own country, if they are buried in oblivion, it is the same, for any use they are of, as if they had never been wrote.

3. What seems to be wanting still, for general use, is a plain discourse on the omnipresence or ubiquity of God. First, in some manner explaining and proving that glorious truth, “God is in this and every place;” and Then, applying it to the consciences of all thinking men, in a few practical inferences.

I.

1. Accordingly, I will endeavor, by the assistance of his Spirit, First, a little to explain the omnipresence of God; to show how we are to understand this glorious truth, "God is in this and every place." The Psalmist, you may remember, speaks strongly and beautifully upon it, in the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm; observing, in the most exact order, First, "God is in this place;" and Then, "God is in every place." He observes, First, "thou art about my bed, and about my path, and spiest out all my ways." (Verse 3.) "Thou hast fashioned me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me;" (Verse 5:) Although the *manner* thereof he could not explain; *how* it was he could not tell. "Such knowledge," says he, "is too wonderful for me: I cannot attain unto it." (Verse 6.) He next observes, in the most lively and affecting manner, that God is in every place. "Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit or whither shall I go from thy presence? If I climb up into heaven, thou art there: If I go down to hell, thou art there also." (Verses 7, 8.) If I could ascend, speaking after the manner of men, to the highest part of the universe, or could I descend to the lowest point, thou art alike present both in one and the other. "If I should take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there thy hand would lead me," — thy power and thy presence would be before me, — "and thy right hand hold me;" seeing thou art equally in the length and breadth, and in the height and depth, of the universe. Indeed, thy presence and knowledge not only reach the utmost bounds of creation; but

Thine omnipresent sight,
Even to the pathless realms extends
Of uncreated night.

In a word, there is no point of space, whether within or without the bounds of creation, where God is not.

2. Indeed, this subject is far too vast to be comprehended by the narrow limits of human understanding. We can only say, The great God, the eternal, the almighty Spirit, is as unbounded in his presence, as in his duration and power. In condescension, indeed, to our weak understanding, he is said to dwell in heaven: but, strictly speaking, the heaven of heavens

cannot contain him; but he is in every part of his dominion. The universal God dwelleth in universal space: So that we may say,

Hail, FATHER! whose creating call
 Unnumber'd worlds attend!
 JEHOVAH, comprehending all,
 Whom none can comprehend!

3. If we may dare attempt the illustration, this a little farther: What is the space occupied by a grain of sand, compared to that space which is occupied by the starry heavens? It is as a cipher; it is nothing; it vanishes away in the comparison. What; is it, then, to the whole expanse of space, to which the whole creation is infinitely less than a grain of sand? And yet this space, to which the whole creation bears no proportion at all, is infinitely less, in comparison of the great God, than a grain of sand, yea, a millionth part of it, bears to that whole space.

II.

1. This seems to be the plain meaning of those solemn words, which God speaks of himself: "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" And these sufficiently prove his omnipresence; which may be farther proved from this consideration: God acts everywhere, and, therefore, is everywhere; for it is an utter impossibility that any being, created or uncreated, should work where it is not. God acts in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, throughout the whole compass of his creation; by sustaining all things, without which everything would in an instant sink into its primitive nothing; by governing all, every moment superintending everything that he has made; strongly and sweetly influencing all, and yet without destroying the liberty of his rational creatures. The very Heathens acknowledged that the great God governs the large and conspicuous parts of the universe; that he regulates the motions of the heavenly bodies, of the sun, moon, and stars; that he is

Mens agitan molem, et magno se corpore miscens:

The all-informing soul,
That fits, pervades, and actuates the whole.

But they had no conception of his having a regard to the least things as well as the greatest; of his presiding over all that he has made, and governing atoms as well as worlds. This we could not have known, unless it had pleased God to reveal it unto us himself. Had he not himself told us so, we should not have dared to think that “not a sparrow falleth to the ground, without the will of our Father which is in heaven;” and much less affirm, that “even the very hairs of our head are all numbered!”

2. This comfortable truth, that “God filleth heaven and earth,” we learn also from the Psalm above recited: “If I climb up into heaven, thou art there; if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there thy hand shall lead me.” The plain meaning is, If I remove to any distance whatever, thou art there; thou still besettest me, and layest thine hand upon me. Let me flee to any conceivable or inconceivable distance; above, beneath, or on any side; it makes no difference; thou art still equally there: In thee I still; “live, and move, and have my being.”

3. And where no creature is, still God is there. The presence or absence of any or all creatures makes no difference with regard to him. He is equally in all, or without all. Many have been the disputes among philosophers, whether there be any such thing as empty space in the universe; and it is now generally supposed that all space is full. Perhaps it cannot be proved that all space is filled with matter. But the Heathen himself will bear us witness, *Joris omnia plena*: “All things are full of God.” Yea, and whatever space exists beyond the bounds of creation, (for creation must have bounds, seeing, nothing is boundless, nothing, can be, but the great Creator,) even that space cannot exclude Him who fills the heaven and, the earth.

4. Just equivalent to this is the expression of the Apostle. (Ephesians 1:23, not, as some have strangely supposed, concerning the Church, but

concerning the Head of it:) “The fullness of him that filleth all in all;” *παντα εν παντι* literally translated, *all things in all things*; — the strongest expression of universality which can possibly be conceived. It necessarily includes the least and the greatest of all things that exist. So that if any expression could be stronger, it would be stronger than even that — the “filling heaven and earth.”

5. Indeed, this very expression, “Do not I fill heaven and earth;” (the question being equal to the strongest affirmation,) implies the clearest assertion of God’s being present everywhere, and filling all space; for it is well known, the Hebrew phrase, “heaven and earth,” includes the whole universe; the whole extent of space, created or uncreated, and all that is therein.

6. Nay, and we cannot believe the omnipotence of God, unless we believe his omnipresence; for, seeing, as was observed before, nothing can act where it is not, — if there were any space where God was not present, he would not be able to do anything there. Therefore, to deny the omnipresence of God implies, likewise, the denial of his omnipotence. To set bounds to the one is undoubtedly to set bounds to the other also.

7. Indeed, wherever we suppose him not to be, there we suppose all his attributes to be in vain. He cannot exercise there either his justice or mercy, either his power or wisdom. In that extra-mundane space, (so to speak,) where we suppose God not to be present, we must, of course, suppose him to have no duration; but as it is supposed to be beyond the bounds of the creation, so it is beyond the bounds of the Creator’s power. Such is the blasphemous absurdity which is implied in this supposition!

8. But to all that is or can be said of the omnipresence of God, the world has one grand objection: They cannot see him. And this is really at the root of all their other objections. This our blessed Lord observed long ago: “Whom the world cannot receive, because they see him not.” But is it not easy to reply, “Can you see the wind?” You cannot. But do you therefore deny its existence, or its presence? You say, “No; for I can perceive it by my other senses.” But by which of your senses do you perceive your soul? Surely you do not deny either the existence or the presence of this!

And yet it is not the object of your sight, or of any of your other senses. Suffice it then to consider that God is a Spirit, as is your soul also. Consequently, “him no man hath seen, or can see,” with eyes of flesh and blood.

III.

1. But allowing that God is here, as in every place; that he is “about our bed, and about our path;” that he “besets us behind and before, and lays his hand upon us;” what inference should we draw from hence? What use should we make of this awful consideration? Is it not meet and right to humble ourselves before the eyes of his Majesty? Should we not labor continually to acknowledge his presence, “with reverence and godly fear?” not indeed with the fear of devils, that believe and tremble, but with the fear of angels; with something similar to that which is felt by the inhabitants of heaven, when

Dark with excessive bright his skirts appear,
Yet dazzle heaven, that brightest seraphim
Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes.

2. Secondly. If you believe that God is about your bed, and about your path, and spieth out all your ways, then take care not to do the least thing, not to speak the least word, not to indulge the least thought, which you have reason to think would offend him. Suppose a messenger of God, an angel, to be now standing at your right hand, and fixing his eyes upon you, would you not take care to abstain from every word or action that you knew would offend him? Yea, suppose one of your mortal fellow-servants, suppose only a holy man, stood by you, would not you be extremely cautious how you conducted yourself, both in word and action? How much more cautious ought you to be, when you know that not a holy man, not an angel of God, but God himself, the Holy One “that inhabiteth eternity,” is inspecting your heart, your tongue, your hand, every moment; and that he himself will surely bring you into judgment for all you think, and speak, and act under the sun!

3. In particular: If there is not a word in your tongue, not a syllable you speak, but he “knoweth it altogether,” how exact should you be in “setting a watch before your mouth, and in keeping the door of your lips!” How wary does it behoove you to be in all your conversation; being forewarned by your Judge, that “by your words you shall be justified, or by your words you shall be condemned!” How cautious, lest “any corrupt communication,” any uncharitable, yea, or unprofitable, discourse, Should “proceed out of your mouth;” instead of “that which is good to the use of edifying, and meet to minister grace to the hearers!”

4. Yea, if God sees our hearts, as well as our hands, and in all places; if he understandeth our thoughts, long before they are clothed with words, how earnestly should we urge that petition, “Search me, O Lord, and prove me; try out my reins and my heart; look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” Yea, how needful is it to work together with him, in “keeping our hearts with all diligence,” till he hath “cast down imaginations,” evil reasonings, “and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ!”

5. On the other hand, if you are already listed under the great Captain of your salvation, seeing you are continually under the eye of your Captain, how zealous and active should you be to “fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life,” “to endure hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ,” to use all diligence, to “war a good warfare,” and to do whatever is acceptable in his sight! How studious should you be to approve all your ways to his all-seeing eyes; that he may say to your hearts, what he will proclaim aloud in the great assembly of men and angels, “Well done, good and faithful servants!”

6. In order to attain these glorious ends, spare no pains to preserve always a deep, a continual, a lively, and a joyful sense of his gracious presence. Never forget his comprehensive word to the great father of the faithful: “I am the Almighty” (rather the All-sufficient) “God; walk before me, and be thou perfect!” Cheerfully expect that He, before whom you stand, will ever guide you with his eye, will support you by his guardian hand, will keep you from all evil, and, “when you have suffered a while, will make

you perfect, will establish, strengthen, and settle you,” and then;
“preserve you unblamable unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

PORTSMOUTH, August 12, 1788.

SERMON CXII.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

“If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Luke 16:31

1. How strange a paradox is this! How contrary to the common apprehension of men! Who is so confirmed in unbelief as not to think, “If one came to me from the dead, I should be effectually persuaded to repent!” But this passage affords us a more strange saying: (Verse 13:) “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” “No! Why not? Why cannot we serve both?” will a true servant of mammon say. Accordingly, the Pharisees, who supposed they served God, and did cordially serve mammon, *derided him*: **Εξεμυκτηριζον** A word expressive of the deepest contempt. But he said, (verse 15,) “Ye are they who justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: And that which is highly esteemed among men, is (very commonly) an abomination before God:” A terrible proof of which our Lord subjoins in the remaining part of the chapter.

2. But is the subsequent account merely a parable, or a real history? It has been believed by many, and roundly asserted, to be a mere parable, because of one or two circumstances therein, which are not easy to be accounted for. In particular, it is hard to conceive, how a person in hell could hold conversation with one in paradise. But, admitting we cannot account for this, will it overbalance an express assertion of our Lord: “There was,” says our Lord, “a certain rich man.” Was there not? Did such a man never exist? “And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus.” Was there, or was there not? Is it not bold enough, positively to deny what our blessed Lord positively affirms? Therefore, we cannot reasonably doubt, but the whole narration, with all its circumstances, is exactly true. And

Theophylact (one of the ancient commentators on the Scriptures) observes upon the text, that, “according to the tradition of the Jews, Lazarus lived at Jerusalem.”

I purpose, with God’s assistance, First, to explain this history: Secondly, to apply it; and, Thirdly, to prove the truth of that weighty sentence with which it is concluded, namely, “If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

I.

1. And, First, I will endeavor, with Gods assistance, to explain this history. “There was a certain rich man;” and, doubtless, on that very account, highly esteemed among men, — “who was clothed in purple and fine linen;” and, consequently, esteemed the more highly, both as appearing suitably to his fortune, and as an encourager of trade; — “and fared sumptuously everyday.” Here was another reason for his being highly esteemed, — his hospitality and generosity, — both by those who frequently sat at his table, and the tradesmen that furnished it.

2. “And there was a certain beggar;” one in the lowest line of human infamy; “named Lazarus,” according to the Greek termination; in Hebrew, Eleazer. From his name we may gather, that he was of no mean family, although this branch of it was, at present, so reduced. It is probable he was well known in the city; and it was no scandal to him to be named. — “Who was laid at his gate;” although no pleasing spectacle; so that one might wonder he was suffered to lie there; — “full of sores;” of running ulcers; — “and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table.” So the complicated affliction of poverty, pain, and want of bread, lay upon him at once! But it does not appear that any creature took the least notice of the despicable wretch! Only “the dogs came and licked his sores:” All the comfort which this world afforded him!

3. But see the change! “The beggar died:” Here ended poverty and pain: — “And was carried by angels,” nobler servants than any that attended the rich man; — “into Abraham’s bosom:” — So the Jews commonly termed what our blessed Lord styles paradise; the place “where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest;” the receptacle of holy

souls, from death to the resurrection. It is, indeed, very generally supposed, that the souls of good men, as soon as they are discharged from the body, go directly to heaven; but this opinion has not the least foundation in the oracles of God: On the contrary, our Lord says to Mary, after the resurrection, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father" in heaven. But he had been in paradise, according to his promise to the penitent thief: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Hence, it is plain, that paradise is not heaven. It is indeed (if ye may be allowed the expression) the antechamber of heaven, where the souls of the righteous remain till, after the general judgment, they are received into glory.

4. But see the scene change again! "The rich man also died." — What! must rich men also die? Must they fall "like one of the people?" Is there no help? A rich man in London, some years ago, when the physician told him he must die, gnashed his teeth, and clenched his fist, and cried out vehemently, "God, God, I won't die!" But he died with the very words; in his mouth. — "And was buried;" doubtless, with pomp enough, suitably to his quality; although we do not find that there was then, in all the world, that exquisite instance of human folly, that senseless, cruel mockery of a poor putrefying carcass, what we term *lying in state*!

5. "And in hell he lifted up his eyes." — O, what a change! How is the mighty fallen! But the word which is here rendered *hell* does not always mean the place of the damned. It is, literally, the *invisible world*; and is of very wide extent, including the receptacle of separate spirits, whether good or bad. But here it evidently means, that region of Hades where the souls of wicked men reside, as appears from the following words, "Being in torment;" — "in order, - say some, "to atone for the sins committed while in the body, as well as to purify the soul from all its inherent sin." Just so, the eminent heathen poet, near two thousand years ago: —

Necesse est

Multa diu concreta modis inolescere miris,

Ergo exercentur paenis——

———Aliae panduntur inanes

Suspensae ad ventos: Aliis sub gurgite vasto

*Infectun cluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni.*¹³

See the near resemblance between the ancient and the modern purgatory! Only in the ancient, the heathen purgatory, both fire, water, and air, were employed in expiating sin, and purifying the soul; whereas, in the mystic purgatory, fire alone is supposed sufficient both to purge and expiate. Vain hope! No suffering, but that of Christ, has any power to expiate sin; and no fire, but that of love, can purify the soul either in time or in eternity.

6. “He seeth Abraham afar off.” — Far, indeed! as far as from hell to paradise! Perhaps, “ten-fold the length of this terrene.” But how could this be? I cannot tell: but it is by no means incredible. For who knows “how far an angel sees” or a spirit divested of flesh and blood? — “And Lazarus in his bosom.” It is well known that, in the ancient feasts among the Jews, as well as the Romans, the guests did not sit down at the table, as it is now the custom to do, but lay on couches, each having a pillow at his left side, on which he supported his elbow; and he that sat next him, on the right side, was said to lie in his bosom. It was in this sense that the Apostle John lay in his Master’s bosom. Accordingly, the expression of Lazarus lying in Abraham’s bosom implies that he was in the highest place of honor and happiness.

7. “And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me” — Thou fool! what can Abraham do? What can any creature, yea, all the creation do, to break the bars of the bottomless pit? Whoever would escape from the place of torment, let him cry to God, the Father of mercy! nay, but the time is past! Justice now takes place, and rejoices over mercy! — “And send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame!” How exceeding modest a request is this! He does not say, “That he may take me out of this flame.” He does not ask, “That he may bring me a cup of water, or as much as he might hold in the palm of his hand,” but barely, “That he may dip” were it but

“the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue.” No! It cannot be! No mercy can enter within the shades of hell!

8. “But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. “Perhaps these words may supply us with an answer to an important question: How came this rich man to be in hell? It does not appear that he was a wicked man, in the common sense of the word; that he was a drunkard, a common swearer, a Sabbath-breaker, or that he lived in any known sin. It is probable he was a Pharisee; and as such was, in all the outward parts of religion, blameless. How then did he come into the place of torment?” If there was no other reason to be assigned, there is a sufficient one implied in those words, (“he that hath ears to hear, let him hear!”) “Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things;” — the things which thou hadst chosen for thy happiness. Thou hadst set thy affections on things beneath: And thou hadst thy reward: Thou didst receive the portion which thou hadst chosen, and canst have no portion above. “And likewise Lazarus evil things.” Not his evil things; for he did not choose them. But they were chosen for him by the wise providence of God: And; “now he is comforted, while thou art tormented.”

9. “But, beside all this, there is a great gulf fixed:” — A great chasm, a vast vacuity. Can any tell us what this is? What is the nature, what are the bounds, of it? Nay none of the children of men; none but an inhabitant of the invisible world. — “So that they who would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” Undoubtedly a disembodied spirit could pass through any space whatever. But the will of God, determining that none should go across that gulf, is a bound which no creature can pass.

10. Then he said, “I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.” (Verses 27, 28.) Two entirely different motives have been assigned for this extraordinary request. Some ascribe it wholly to self-love, to a fear of the bitter reproaches which, he might easily suppose, his brethren could pour upon

him, if, in consequence of his example, and perhaps advice, they came to the same place of torment. Others have imputed it to a nobler motive. They suppose, as the misery of the wicked will not be complete till the day of judgment, so neither will their wickedness. Consequently, they believe that, till that time, they may retain some sparks of natural affection; and they, not improbably, imagine that this may have occasioned his desire to prevent their sharing his own torment.

11. "Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them." (Verse 29.) "And he said, Nay, rather Abraham; but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent." Who would not be of the same opinion? Alight not any one reasonably suppose that a message solemnly delivered by one that came from the dead must have an irresistible force? Who would not think, "I myself could not possibly withstand such a preacher of repentance?"

II.

This, I conceive to be the meaning of the words. I will now endeavor, with the help of God, to apply them. And I beseech you, brethren, while I am doing this, "to suffer the word of exhortation." The more closely these things are applied to your souls, the more ye may profit thereby.

1. "There was a certain rich man:" — and it is no more sinful to be rich than to be poor. But it is dangerous beyond expression. Therefore, I remind all of you that are of this number, that have the conveniences of life, and something over that ye walk upon slippery ground. Ye continually tread on snares and deaths. Ye are every moment on the verge of hell! "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for you to enter into the kingdom of heaven." — "Who was clothed in purple and fine linen." And some may have a plea for this. Our Lord mentions them that "dwell in kings' houses," as wearing gorgeous, that is, splendid, apparel, and does not blame them for it. But certainly this is no plea for any that do not dwell in kings' houses. Let all of them, therefore, beware how they follow his example who is "lifting up his eyes in hell!" Let us follow the advice of the Apostle, being "adorned with good works, and with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

2. "He fared sumptuously everyday. — Reconcile thus with religion who can. I know how plausibly the prophets of smooth things can talk in favor of hospitality; of making our friends welcome; of keeping a handsome table, to do honor to religion; of promoting trade, and the like. But God is not mocked: He will not be put off with such pretenses as these. Whoever thou art that sharest in the sin of this rich man, were of no other than "faring sumptuously everyday," thou shalt as surely be a sharer in his punishment, except thou repent, as if thou were already crying for a drop of water to cool thy tongue!

3. "And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table." (Verses 20, 21.) But it seems both the rich man and his guests were too *religious* to relieve *common beggars*! — a sin of which pious Mr. H. earnestly warns his readers; and an admonition of the same kind I have read on the gate of the good city of Winchester. I wish the gentlemen who placed it there had seen a little circumstance which occurred some years since. At Epworth, in Lincolnshire, the town where I was born, a beggar came to a house in the market-place, and begged a morsel of bread, saying she was very hungry. The master bid her *begone, for a lazy jade*. She called at a second, and begged a little small beer, saying she was very thirsty. She had much the same answer. At a third door she begged a little water; saying she was very faint. But this man also was too conscientious to encourage common beggars. The boys seeing a ragged creature turned from door to door, began to pelt her with snow-balls. She looked up, lay down, and died! Would you wish to be the man who refused that poor wretch a morsel of bread, or a cup of water? — "More over the dogs came and licked his sores:" Being more compassionate than their master. — "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." Hear this, all ye that are poor in this world. Ye that, many times, have not food to eat, or raiment to put on; ye that have not a place where to lay your head, unless it be a cold garret, or a foul and damp cellar! Ye are now reduced to "solicit the cold hand of charity." Yet lift up your load; it shall not always be thus. I love you, I pity you, I admire you, when "in patience ye possess your souls." Yet I cannot help you. But there is One that can, — the Father of the fatherless, and the Husband of the widow. "The poor crieth unto the Lord; and he

heareth him, and delivereth him out of all his troubles.” Yet a little while, if ye truly turn to him, his angels shall carry you into Abraham’s bosom. There ye shall “hunger no more, and thirst no more;” ye shall feel no more sorrow or pain; but “the Lamb shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and lead you forth beside fountains of living waters.”

4. But see, the scene is changed! “The rich man also died.” What! in spite of his riches? Probably sooner than he desired. For how just is that word, “O death, how bitter art thou to a man that is at rest in the midst of his possessions!” However, if that would be a comfort, he “was buried.” But how little did it signify, whether he was laid under a lofty monument, or among

Graves with bending osier bound,
That nameless heave the crumbled ground!

And what followed? “In hell he lifted up his eyes.” This, it is certain, ye need not do. God does not require it of you: “He willeth not that any should perish. Ye cannot, unless by your own willful choice, — intruding into those regions of woe, which God did not prepare for *you*, but for “the devil and his angels.”

5. See the scene change again! “He seeth Abraham afar off; and Lazarus in his bosom.” And he knew him; although, perhaps, he had only cast a glance at him while he “lay at his gates.” Is any of you in doubt whether we shall know one another in the other world? Here your doubts may receive a full solution. If a soul in hell new Lazarus in paradise, as far off as he was, certainly those that are together in paradise will perfectly know each other.

6. “And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy upon me!” — I do not remember, in all the Bible, any prayer made to a saint, but this. And if we observe who made it, — a man in hell, — and with what success, we shall hardly wish to follow the precedent. O let us cry for mercy to God, not to man! And it is our wisdom to cry now, while we are in the land of mercy; otherwise it will be too late! — “I am tormented in this flame!” Tormented, observe, not purified! Vain hope, that fire can

purify a spirit! As well might you expect water to cleanse the soul, as fire. God forbid that you or I should make the trial!

7. And “Abraham said, Son, remember” — Mark, how Abraham accosts a damned spirit: And shall we behave with less tenderness to any of the children of God, “because they are not of our opinion?” — “Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.” O, beware it be not your case! Are not the things of the world “thy good things?” — the chief object of thy desire and pursuit? Are they not thy chief joy? If so, thou art in a very dangerous state; in the very condition which Dives was in upon earth! Do not then dream that all is well, because thou art; “highly esteemed among men;” because thou doest no harm, or doest much good, or attendest all the ordinances of God. What is all this, if thy soul cleaves to the dust; if thy heart is in the world; if thou lovest the creature more than the Creator?

8. Slow striking are the next words! “Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they who would pass from us to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” This was the text which occasioned the epitaph on a right honorable infidel and gamester: —

Here lies a dicer: long in doubt
If death could kill the soul, or not:
Here ends his doubtfulness; at last
Convinced; — but, ah! the die is cast!

But blessed be God, your die is not cast yet. You are not past the great gulf, but have it still in your power to choose whether you will be attended by angels or fiends when your soul quits its earthly mansion. Now stretch out your hand to eternal life or eternal death! And God says, “Be it unto them even as thou wilt!”

9. Being repulsed in this, he makes another request: “I pray thee, send him to my father’s house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify to them.” It is not impossible that other unhappy spirits may wish well to the relations they have left behind them. But this is the accepted time for them, as well as for us. Let us then address them ourselves; and let us beg

our living friends to give us all the help they can, without waiting for assistance from the inhabitants of another world. Let us earnestly exhort them to use the helps they have; to “hear Moses and the Prophets.” We are indeed apt to think, like that unhappy spirit, “If one went to them from the dead, they will repent.” “But Abraham said, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

III.

1. I am, in the Third place, to prove the truth of this weighty sentence; which I will do, First, briefly, and then more at large.

And, First, to express the matter briefly: It is certain that no human spirit, while it is in the body, can persuade another to repent; can work in him an entire change, both of heart and life; a change from universal wickedness, to universal holiness. And suppose that spirit discharged from the body, it is no more able to do this than it was before: No power less than that which created it at first can create any soul anew. No angel, much less any human spirit, whether in the body or out of the body, can bring one soul “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” It might very possibly fright him to death, or to the belief of any speculative truth; but it could not frighten him into spiritual life. God alone can raise those that are “dead in trespasses and sins.”

2. In order to prove more at large, that if men “hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be” effectually “persuaded” to repent, “though one rose from the dead,” I will propose a case of this kind, with all the advantages that can be conceived. Suppose, then, one that does not “hear Moses and the Prophets,” that does not believe the Scripture to be of God, to be fast asleep in his bed, and suddenly to awake while the clock was just striking one. He is surprised to observe the chamber as light as if it were noon-day. He looks up, and sees one whom he perfectly knew standing at his bed-side. Though a little surprised at first, he quickly recollects himself, and has the courage to ask, “Are not you my friend, who died at such a time?” He answers, “I am. I am come from God, with a message to you. You have often wished you could see one risen from the dead; and said, then you could repent. You have your wish; and I am

ordered to inform you, you are seeking death in the error of your life. If you die in the state you are in now, you will die eternally. I warn you in His name, that the Scriptures are the real word of God; that from the moment you die, you will be remarkably happy, or unspeakably miserable; that you cannot be happy hereafter, unless you are holy here; which cannot be, unless you are born again. Receive this call from God! Eternity is at hand. Repent, and believe the Gospel!" Having spoken these words, he vanishes away; and the room is dark as it was before.

3. One may easily believe, it would be impossible for him not to be convinced for the present. He would sleep no more that night; and would, as soon as possible, tell his family what he had seen and heard. Not content with this, he would be impatient to tell it to his former companions. And, probably, observing the earnestness with which he spoke, they would not then contradict him. They would say to each other, "Give him time to cool; then he will be a reasonable man again."

4. Now, it is constantly found, that impressions made on the memory gradually decay; that they grow weaker and weaker in process of time, and the traces of them fainter and fainter. So it must be in this case; which his companions observing, would not fail to seize the opportunity. They would speak to this effect: "It was a strange account you gave us some time since; the more so, because we know you to be a sensible man, and not inclined to enthusiasm. But, perhaps, you have not fully considered, how difficult it is, in some cases, to distinguish our dreams from our waking thoughts. Has any one yet been able to find out an infallible criterion between them? Is it not then possible, that you may have been asleep when this lively impression was made on your mind?" When he had been brought to think, *possibly* it might be a dream; they would soon persuade him, *probably* it was so and not long after, to believe, it *certainly* was a dream. So little would it avail, that one came from the dead!

5. It could not be expected to be otherwise. For what was the effect which was wrought upon him?

(1.) He was exceedingly frightened:

(2.) This fright made way for a deeper conviction of the truth then declared: But

- (3.) his heart was not changed. None but the Almighty could effect this. Therefore
- (4.) the bias of his soul was still set the wrong way; he still loved the world, and, consequently, wished that the Scripture was not true. How easily then, as the fright wore off would he again believe what he wished!

The conclusion then is plain and undeniable. If men “hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded” to repent and believe the gospel, “though one rose from the dead.”

6. We may add one consideration more, which brings the matter to a full issue. Before, or about the same time that Lazarus was carried into Abraham’s bosom, another Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was actually raised from the dead. But were even those who believed the fact persuaded to repent? So, far from it, that “they took counsel to kill Lazarus,” as well as his Master! Away then with the fond imagination, that those who “hear not Moses and the Prophets, would be persuaded, though one rose from the dead!”

7. From the whole we may draw this general conclusion. That standing revelation is the best means of rational conviction; far preferable to any of those extraordinary means which some imagine would be more effectual. It is therefore our wisdom to avail ourselves of this; to make full use of it; so that it may be a lantern to our feet, and a light in all our paths. Let us take care that our whole heart and life be conformable thereto; that it be the constant rule of all our tempers, all our words, and all our actions. So shall we preserve in all things the testimony of a good conscience toward God; and when our course is finished, we too shall be “carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom.”

BIRMINGHAM, March 25, 1788.

SERMON CXIII.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WALKING BY SIGHT, AND WALKING BY FAITH.

“We walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7.

1. How short is this description of real Christians! And yet how exceeding full! It comprehends, it sums up, the whole experience of those that are truly such, from the time they are born of God till they remove into Abraham’s bosom. For, who are the we that are here spoken of? All that are true Christian Believers. I say *Christian*, not *Jewish, believers*. All that are not only *servants*, but *children*, of God. All that have “the Spirit of adoption, crying in their hearts, Abba, Father.” All that have “the Spirit of God witnessing with their spirits, that they are the sons of God.”

2. All these, and these alone, can say, “We walk by faith, and not by sight.” But before we can possibly “walk by faith,” we must *live* by faith, and not by sight. And to all real Christians our Lord saith, “Because I live, ye live also:” We live a life which the world, whether learned or unlearned, “know not of.” “You that,” like the world, “were dead in trespasses and sins, hath he quickened,” and made alive; given you new senses, — spiritual senses, — “senses exercised to discern spiritual good and evil.”

3. In order thoroughly to understand this important truth, it may be proper to consider the whole matter. All the children of men that are not born of God “walk by sight,” having no higher principle. By *sight*, that is, by *sense*; a part being put for the whole; the sight for all the senses; the rather, because it is more noble and more extensive than any, or all the rest. There are but few objects which we can discern by the three inferior senses of taste, smell, and feeling; and none of these can take any cognizance of its object, unless it be brought into a direct contact with it. Hearing, it is true, has a larger sphere of action, and gives us some

knowledge of things that are distant. But how small is that distance, suppose it were fifty or a hundred miles, compared to that between the earth and the sun! And what is even this in comparison of the distance of the sun and moon and the fixed stars! Yet the sight continually takes knowledge of objects even at this amazing distance.

4. By sight we take knowledge of the visible world, from the surface of the earth to the region of the fixed stars. But what is the world visible to us, but “a speck of creation,” compared to the whole universe? to the invisible world? — that part of the creation which we cannot see at all, by reason of its distance; in the place of which, through the imperfection of our senses, we are presented with an universal blank.

5. But beside these innumerable objects which we cannot see by reason of their distance, have we not sufficient ground to believe that; there are innumerable others of too delicate a nature to be discerned by any of our senses? Do not all men of unprejudiced reason allow the same thing, (the small number of Materialists, or Atheists, I cannot term *men of reason*,) that there is an invisible world, naturally such, as well as a visible one? But which of our senses is fine enough to take the least knowledge of this? We can no more perceive any part of this by our sight, than by our feeling. Should we allow, with the ancient poet, that

Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep;

should we allow, that the great Spirit. the Father of all, filleth both heaven and earth; yet is the finest of our senses utterly incapable of perceiving either Him or them.

6. All our external senses are evidently adapted to this external, visible world. They are designed to serve us only while we sojourn here, — while we dwell in these houses of clay. They have nothing to do with the invisible world; they are not adapted to it. And they can take no more cognizance of the eternal, than of the invisible world: although we are as fully assured of the existence of this, as of anything in the present world. We cannot think death puts a period to our being, The body indeed returns

to dust; but the soul, being of a nobler nature, is not affected thereby. There is, therefore, an eternal world, of what kind so ever it be. But how shall we attain the knowledge of this? What will teach us to draw aside the veil “that hangs ‘twixt mortal and immortal being?” We all know, “the vast, the unbounded prospect lies before us;” but we are constrained to add, “Yet clouds, alas! and darkness rest upon it.”

7. The most excellent of our senses, it is undeniably plain, can give us no assistance herein. And what can our boasted reason do? It is now universally allowed, *Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuit prius in sensu*: “Nothing is in the understanding, which was not first perceived by some of the senses.” Consequently, the understanding, having here nothing to work upon, can afford us no help at all. So that, in spite of all the information we can gain, either from sense or reason, both the invisible and eternal world are unknown to all that “walk by sight.”

8. But is there no help? Must they remain in total darkness concerning the invisible and the eternal world? We cannot affirm this: Even the Heathens did not all remain in total darkness concerning them. Some few rays of light have, in all ages and nations, gleamed through the shade. Some light they derived from various fountains touching the invisible world. “The heavens declared the glory of God,” though not to their outward sight: “The firmament showed,” to the eyes of their understanding, the existence of their Maker. From the creation they inferred the being of a Creator, powerful and wise, just and merciful. And hence they concluded, there must be an eternal world, a future state, to commence after the present; wherein the justice of God in punishing wicked men, and his mercy in rewarding the righteous, will be openly and undeniably displayed in the sight of all intelligent creatures.

9. We may likewise reasonably suppose, that some traces of knowledge, both with regard to the invisible and the eternal world, were delivered down from Noah and his children, both to their immediate and remote descendants. And however these were obscured or disguised by the addition of numberless fables, yet something of truth was still mingled with them, and these streaks of light prevented utter darkness. Add to this, that God never, in any age or nation, “left himself” quite “without a

witness” in the hearts of men; but while he “gave them rain and fruitful seasons,” imparted some imperfect knowledge of the Giver. “He is the true Light that” still, in some degree, “enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.”

10. But all these lights put together availed no farther than to produce a taint twilight. It gave them, even the most enlightened of them, no *ελεγχος*, no *demonstration*, no *demonstrative conviction*, either of the invisible or of the eternal world. Our philosophical poet justly terms Socrates, “The wisest of all moral men;” that is, of all that were not favored with Divine Revelation. Yet what evidence had he of another world when he addressed those that had condemned him to death? — “And now, O ye judges, ye are going to live, and I am going, to die. “Which of these is best, God knows; but I suppose no man does.” Alas! What a confession is this! Is this all the evidence that poor dying Socrates had either of an invisible or an eternal world? And yet even this is preferable to the light of the great and good Emperor Adrian. Remember, ye modern Heathens, and copy after his pathetic address to his parting soul. For fear I should puzzle you with Latin, I give it you in Prior’s fine translation: —

Poor, little, pretty, fluttering thing,
 Must we no longer live together?
 And dost thou prune thy trembling wing,
 To take thy flight, thou know’st not whither?
 Thy pleasing vein, thy humorous folly,
 Lies all neglected, all forgot!
 And pensive, wavering, melancholy,
 Thou hop’st and fear’st, thou know’st not what.

11. “Thou know’st not what!” True, there was no knowledge of what was to be hoped or feared after death, till “the Sun of Righteousness” arose to dispel all their vain conjectures, and “brought life and immortality,” that is, immortal life, “to light, through the Gospel.” Then (and not till then, unless in some rare instances) God revealed, unveiled the invisible world. He then revealed himself to the children of men. “The Father revealed the Son” in their hearts; and the Son revealed the Father. He that of old time “commanded light to shine out of darkness shined in their hearts, and

enlightened them with the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

12. It is where sense can be of no farther use, that faith comes in to our help; it is the grand *desideratum*; it does what none of the senses can; no, not with all the helps that art hath invented. All our instruments, however improved by the skill and labor of so many succeeding ages, do not enable us to make the least discovery of these unknown regions. They barely serve the occasions for which they were formed in the present visible world.

13. How different is the case, how vast the pre-eminence, of them that; walk by faith! “God, having is opened the eyes of their understanding,” pours divine light into their soul; whereby they are enabled to “see Him that is invisible,” to see God and the things of God. What their “eye had not seen, nor their ear heard, neither had it entered into their heart to conceive,” God from time to time reveals to them by the “unction of the Holy One, which teacheth them of all things.” Having “entered into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,” by that “new and living way,” and being joined unto; “the general assembly and church of the first-born, and unto God the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant,” — each of these can say, “I live not, but Christ liveth in me;” I now live that life which “is hid with Christ in God;” “and when Christ, who is my life, shall appear, then I shall likewise appear with him in glory.”

14. They that live by faith, *walk by faith*. But what is implied in this? They regulate all their judgments concerning good and evil, not with reference to visible and temporal things, but to things invisible and eternal. They think visible things to be of small value, because they pass away like a dream; but, on the contrary, they account invisible things to be of high value, because they will never pass away. Whatever is invisible is eternal; the things that are not seen, do not perish. So the Apostle: “The things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal.” Therefore, they that “walk by faith” do not desire the “things which are seen;” neither are they the object of their pursuit. They “set their affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” They seek only the things which are “where Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God.” Because they

know, “the things that are seen are temporal,” passing away like a shadow, therefore they “look not at them,” they desire them not; they account them as nothing; but “they look at the things which are not seen, that are eternal,” that never pass away. By these they term their judgments of all things. They judge them to be good or evil, as they promote or hinder their welfare, not in time, lost in eternity. They weigh whatever occurs in this balance: “What influence has it on my eternal state?” They regulate all their tempers and passions, all their desires, joys, and fears, by this standard. They regulate all their thoughts and designs, all their words and actions, so as to prepare them for that invisible and eternal world to which they are shortly going. They do not dwell but only sojourn here; not looking upon earth as their home, but only

Traveling through Immanuel’s ground,
To fairer worlds on high.

15. Brethren, are you of this number, who are now here before God? Do you see “Him that is invisible?” Have you faith, living faith, the faith of a child? Can you say, “The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me?” Do you “walk by faith?” Observe the question. I do not ask, whether you curse, or swear, or profane the Sabbath, or live in any outward sin. I do not ask, whether you do good, more or less; or attend all the ordinances of God. But, suppose you are blameless in all these respects, I ask, in the name of God by what standard do you judge of the value of things? by the visible or the invisible world? Bring the matter to an issue in a single instance. Which do you judge best, — that your son should be a pious cobbler, or a profane Lord? Which appears to you most eligible, — that your daughter should be a child of God, and walk on foot, or a child of the devil, and ride in a coach and six? When the question is concerning marrying your daughter, if you consider her body more than her soul, take knowledge of yourself: You are in the way to hell, and not to heaven; for you walk by sight, and not by faith. Do not ask, whether you live in any outward sin or neglect; but, do you seek, in the general tenor of your life, “the things that are above,” or the things that are below? Do you “set your affection on things above,” or on “things of the earth?” If on the latter, you are as surely in the way of destruction, as a thief or a common drunkard. My dear friends, let every

man every woman among you, deal honestly with yourselves. Ask your own heart, “What am I seeking day by day? What am I desiring? What am I pursuing? earth or heaven? the things that are seen, or the things that are not seen?” That is your object. God or the world? As the Lord liveth, if the world is your object, still all your religion is vain.

16. See then, my dear brethren, that from this time, at least, ye choose the better part. Let your judgment of all the things round about you be according to the real value of things, with reference to the invisible and eternal world. See that ye judge every thing fit to be pursued or shunned, according to the influence it will have on your eternal state. See that your affections, your desire, your joy, your hope, be set, not on transient objects, not on things that fly as a shadow, that pass away like a dream; but on those that are incapable of change, that are incorruptible and fade not away; those that remain the same, when heaven and earth “flee away, and there is no place found for them.” See that in all you think, speak, or do, the eye of your soul be single, fixed on “Him that is invisible,” and “the glories that shall be revealed.” Then shall “your whole body be full of light:” Your whole soul shall enjoy the light of God’s countenance: and you shall continually see the light of the glorious love of God “in the face of Jesus Christ.”

17 See in particular, that all your “desire be unto him, and unto the remembrance of his name.” Beware of “foolish and hurtful desires;” such as arise from any visible or temporal thing. All these St. John warns us of; under that general term, “love of the world.” It is not so much to the men of the world, as to the children of God, he gives that important direction: “Love not the world, neither the things of the world.” Give no place to the “desire of the flesh,” — the gratification of the outward senses, whether of the taste, or any other. Give no place to “the desire of the eye,” — the internal sense, or imagination, — by gratifying it, either by grand things, or beautiful, or uncommon. Give no place to the “pride of life,” — the desire of wealth, of pomp, or of the honor that cometh of men. St. John confirms this advice, by a consideration parallel to that observation which St. Paul had made to the Corinthians: “For the world and the fashion of it passeth away.” “The fashion of it” — all worldly objects, business, pleasures, cares, whatever now attracts our regard or attention — “passeth away,”

— is in the very act of passing, and will return no more. Therefore desire none of these fleeting things, but that, glory which “abideth for ever.”

18. Observe well: This is religion, and this alone; this alone is true Christian religion; not this or that opinion, or system of opinions, be they ever so true, ever so scriptural. It is true, this is commonly called faith. But those who suppose it to be religion are given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie, and if they suppose it to be a sure passport to heaven are in the high road to hell. Observe well: Religion is not *harmlessness*: which a careful observer of mankind properly terms hellish harmlessness, as it sends thousands to the bottomless pit. It is not *mortality*; excellent as that is, when it is built on a right foundation, — loving faith; but when otherwise, it is of no value in the sight of God. It is not *formality*, — the most exact observance of all the ordinances of God. This, too, unless it be built on the right foundation, is no more pleasing to God, than “the cutting off a dog’s neck.” No: Religion is no less than living in eternity, and walking in eternity; and hereby walking in the love of God and man, in lowliness, meekness, and resignation. This, and this alone, is that “life which is hid with Christ in God.” He alone who experiences this “dwells in God, and God in him.” This alone is setting the crown upon Christ’s head, and doing his “will on earth as it is done in heaven.”

19. It will easily be observed, that this is the very thing that men of the world call enthusiasm, — a word just fit for their purpose, because no man can tell either the meaning or even the derivation of it. If it has any determinate sense, it means a species of religious madness. Hence, when you speak your experience, they immediately cry out, “Much religion hath made thee mad.” And all that you experience, either of the invisible or of the eternal world, they suppose to be only the waking dreams of a heated imagination. It cannot be otherwise, when men born blind take upon them to reason concerning light and colors. They will readily pronounce those to be insane who affirm the existence of those things where of they have no conception.

20. From all that has been said, it may be seen, with the utmost clearness, what is the nature of that fashionable thing called *dissipation*. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! It is the very quintessence of Atheism; it is

artificial, added to natural, ungodliness. It is the art of forgetting God, of being altogether “without God in the world;” the art of excluding him, if not out of the world he has created, yet out of the minds of all his intelligent creatures. It is a total studied inattention, to the whole invisible and eternal world; more especially to death, the gate of eternity, and to the important consequences of death, — heaven and hell!

21. This is the real nature of *dissipation*. And is it so harmless a thing as it is usually thought? It is one of the choicest instruments of destroying immortal spirits that was ever forged in the magazines of hell. It has been the means of plunging myriads of souls, that might have enjoyed the glory of God, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. It blots out all religion at one stroke, and levels man with the beasts that perish. All ye that fear God, flee from dissipation! Dread and abhor the very name of it! Labor to have God in all your thoughts, to have eternity ever in your eye, “Look” continually, “not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen.” Let your hearts be fixed there, where “Christ sitteth at the right hand of God!” that whensoever he calleth you, “an entrance maybe ministered unto you abundantly into his everlasting kingdom!”

LONDON, December 30th, 1788.

SERMON CXIV.

THE UNITY OF THE DIVINE BEING.

“There is one God.” Mark 12:2.

1. **AND** as there is one God, so there is one religion and one happiness for all men. God never intended there should be any more; and it is not possible there should. Indeed, in another sense, as the Apostle observes “there are gods many, and lords many.” All the heathen nations and their gods, and many whole shoals of them. And generally, the more polished they were, the more gods they heaped up to themselves. But to us, to all that are favored with the Christian Revelation, “there is but one God:” who declares of himself, “Is there any God beside me? There is none; I know not any.”

2. But who can search out this God to perfection? None of the creatures that he has made. Only some of his attributes he hath been pleased to reveal to us in his word. Hence we learn that God is an eternal Being. “His goings forth are from everlasting,” and will continue to everlasting. As he ever was, so he ever will be; as there was no beginning of his existence, so there will be no end. This is universally allowed to be contained in his very name, Jehovah; which the Apostle John, accordingly renders, “He that was, and that is, and that is to come.” Perhaps it would be as proper to say, “He is from everlasting to everlasting.”

3. Nearly allied to the eternity of God, is his omnipresence. As he exists through infinite duration, so he cannot but exist through infinite space; according to his own question, equivalent, to the strongest assertion, — “Do not I fill heaven and earth? Saith the Lord;” (heaven and earth, in the Hebrew idiom, implying the whole universe;) which, therefore, according to his own declaration, is filled with his presence.

4. This one, eternal, omnipresent Being is likewise all-perfect. He has, from eternity to eternity, all the perfections and infinitely more than it ever did or ever can enter into the heart of man to conceive; yea, infinitely more than the angels in heaven can conceive: These perfections we usually term, the attributes of God.

5. And he is omnipotent, as well as omnipresent; there can be no more bounds to his power, than to his presence. He “hath a mighty arm; strong is his hand, and high is his right hand.” He doeth whatsoever pleaseth him, in the heavens, the earth, the sea, and in all deep places. With men we know many things are impossible, but not with God: With him “all things are possible.” Whensoever he willeth, to do is present with him.

6. The omniscience of God is a clear and necessary consequence of his omnipresence. If he is present in every part of the universe, he cannot but know whatever is, or is done there; according to the word of St. James, “Known unto God are all his works,” and the works of every creature, “from the beginning” of the world; or rather, as the phrase literally implies, “from eternity.” His eyes are not only “over all the earth, beholding the evil and the good;” but likewise over the whole creation, yea, and the paths of uncreated night. Is there any difference between his knowledge and his wisdom? If there be, is not his knowledge the more general term, (at least, according to our weak conceptions.) and his wisdom a particular branch of it; namely, the knowing the end of every thing that exists, and the means of applying it to that end.

7. Holiness is another of the attributes of the almighty, all wise God. He is infinitely distant from every touch of evil. He “is light; and in him is no darkness at all.” He is a God of unblemished justice and truth; but above all is his mercy. This we may easily learn from that beautiful passage in the thirty-third and fourth chapters of Exodus: “And Moses said, I beseech thee show me thy glory. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and proclaimed the name of the Lord, — The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”

8. This God is a Spirit; not having such a body, such parts or passions, as men have. It was the opinion both of the ancient Jews and the ancient Christians, that He alone is a pure Spirit, totally separate from all matter; whereas they supposed all other spirits, even the highest angels, even cherubim and seraphim, to dwell in material vehicles, though of an exceeding light and subtle substance. At that point of duration which the infinite wisdom of God saw to be most proper, for reasons which lie hid in the abyss of his own understanding, not to be fathomed by any finite mind, God “called into being all that is;” created the heavens and the earth, together with all that they contain. “All things were created by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” He created man, in particular, after his own image, to be “a picture of his own eternity.” When he had raised man from the dust of the earth, he breathed into him an immortal spirit. Hence he is peculiarly called “The Father of our spirits;” yea, “The Father of the spirits of all flesh.”

9. He “made all things” as the wise man observes, “for himself,” “for his glory thy were created.” Not “as if he needed anything;” seeing “he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” He made all things to be happy. He made man to be happy in Himself: He is the proper center of spirits; for whom every created spirit was made. So true is that well known saying of the ancient Fathers: *Fecisti nos ad te; et irrequietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.* “Thou hast made us for thyself; and our heart cannot rest, till it resteth in thee.”

10. This observation gives us a clear answer to that question in the Assembly’s Catechism: “For what end did God create man?” The answer is, “To glorify and enjoy him for ever.” This is undoubtedly true; but is it quite clear, especially to men of ordinary capacities? Do the generality of common people understand that expression, “To glorify God?” No; no more than they understand Greek. And it is altogether above the capacity of children; to whom we can scarce ever speak plain enough. Now, is not this the very principle that should be inculcated upon every human creature. — “You are made to be happy in God,” as soon as ever reason dawns.” Should not every parent, as soon as a Child begins to talk, or to run alone, say something, of this kind: “See! what is that which shines so over your head? That we call the sun. See, how bright it is! Feel how it

warms you! It makes the grass to spring, and everything to grow. But God made the sun. The sun could not shine, nor warn, nor do any good without him." In this plain and familiar way a wise parent might many lines in a day, say something of God; particularly insisting, "He made you; and he made you to be happy in him; and nothing else can make you happy." We cannot press this too soon. If you say, "Nay, but they cannot understand you when they are so young;" I answer, No; nor when they are fifty years old, unless God opens their understanding: And can he not do this at any age?

11. Indeed, this should be pressed on every human creature, young and old, the more earnestly and diligently, because so exceeding few, even of those that are called Christians, seem to know anything about it. Many indeed think of being happy with God in heaven; but the being happy in God on earth never entered into their thoughts. The less so, because from the time they come into the world, they are surrounded with idols. Such, in turns, are all "the things that are seen," (whereas God is not seen,) which all promise an happiness independent: of God. Indeed, it is true that,

Upright both in heart and will
 We by our God were made;
 But we turn'd from good to ill,
 And o'er the creatures stray'd;

Multiplied our wandering thought,
 Which first was fix'd on God alone;
 In ten thousand objects sought
 The bliss we lost in one.

12. These idols, these rivals of God, are innumerable; but they may be nearly reduced to three parts. First. Objects of sense; such as gratify one or more of our outward sense" These excite the first kind of is love of the world," which St. John terms, "the desire of the flesh." Secondly. Objects of the imagination; things that gratify our fancy, by their grandeur, beauty, or novelty. All these make us fair promises of happiness, and thereby prevent our seeking it in God. This the Apostle terms, "the desire of the eyes;" whereby, chiefly, the imagination is gratified. They are, Thirdly.

what St. John calls, “the pride of life.” He seems to mean honor, wealth, and whatever directly tends to engender pride.

13. But suppose we were guarded against all these, are there not other idols which we have need to be apprehensive of; and idols, therefore, the more dangerous, because we suspect no danger from them? For is there any danger to be feared from our friends and relations; from the mutual endearments of husbands and wives, or of parents and children? Ought we not to bear a very tender affection to them? Ought we not to love them only less than God? Yea, and is there not a tender affection due to those whom God has made profitable to our souls? Are we not commanded to “esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake?” All this is unquestionably true; and this very thing makes the difficulty. Who is sufficient for this?— to go far enough herein, and no farther? to love them enough, and not too much? Can we love a wife, a child, a friend, well enough, without if loving the creature more than the Creator? Who is able to follow the caution which St. Paul gives to the Christians at Thessalonica? (1 Thessalonians 4:5.)

14. I wish that weighty passage (so strangely disguised in our translation) were duly considered: “Let every one of you know how to possess his vesse,” his wife, “in sanctification and honor;” so as neither to dishonor God nor himself; nor to obstruct, but further, holiness. St. Paul goes on, **ἐπιθυμίας**, which we render, “Not in the lust of concupiscence,” (What is this? It gives the English reader no conception at all. **Παθος** means any *violent* or *impetuous affection*. **Επιθυμία** is *desire*. By the two words the Apostle undoubtedly means vehement and impetuous affections,) — “as the Gentiles who know not God,” and so may naturally seek happiness in a creature.

15. If, by the grace of God, we have avoided or forsaken all these idols, there is still one more dangerous than all the rest; that is, religion. It will easily be conceived, I mean false religion; that: is, any religion which does not imply the giving the heart to God. Such is, First, a religion of opinions; or what is called orthodoxy. Into this snare fall thousands of those who profess to hold “salvation by faith;” indeed, all of those who, by faith, mean only a system of Arminian or Calvinian opinions. Such is, Secondly,

a religion of forms; of barely outward worship, how constantly so ever performed; yea, though we attend the Church Service everyday, and the Lord's Supper every Sunday. Such is, Thirdly, a religion of works; of seeking the favor of God by doing good to men. Such is, lastly, a religion of Atheism; that is, every religion whereof God is not laid for the foundation. In a word, a religion wherein "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," is not the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last point.

16. True religion is right tempers towards God and man. It is, in two words, gratitude and benevolence; gratitude to our Creator and supreme Benefactor, and benevolence to our fellow-creatures. In other words, it is the loving God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.

17. It is in consequence of our knowing God loves us, that we love him, and love our neighbor as ourselves. Gratitude towards our Creator cannot but produce benevolence to our fellow-creatures. The love of Christ constrains us, not only to be harmless, to do no ill to our neighbor, but to be useful, to be "zealous of good works;" "as we have time, to do good unto all men;" and to be patterns to all of true, genuine morality; of justice, mercy, and truth. This is religion, and this is happiness; the happiness for which we were made. This begins when we begin to know God, by the teaching of his own Spirit. As soon as the Father of spirits reveals his Son in our hearts, and the Son reveals his Father, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts; then, and not till then, we are happy. We are happy, first, in the consciousness of his favor, which indeed is better than life itself; next, in the constant communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; then, in all the heavenly tempers which he hath wrought in us by his Spirit; again, in the testimony of his Spirit, that all our works please him; and, lastly, in the testimony of our own spirits, that "in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world." Standing fast in this liberty from sin and sorrow, wherewith Christ hath made them free, real Christians "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks." And their happiness still increases as they "grow up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

18. But how little is this religion experienced, or even thought of, in the Christian world! On the contrary, what reason have we to take up the lamentation of a dying saint, (Mr. Haliburton; of St. Andrew's, in Scotland,) "O Sirs, I am afraid a kind of *rational* religion is more and more prevailing amongst us; a religion that has nothing of Christ belonging to it; nay, that has not only nothing of Christ, but nothing of God in it!" And indeed how generally does this prevail, not only among professed infidels, but also among those who call themselves Christians; who profess to believe the Bible to be the word of God! Thus our own countryman, Mr. Wollaston, in that elaborate work, "The Religion of Nature Delineated," presents us with a complete system of religion, without anything of God about it; without being beholden, in any degree, to either the Jewish or Christian revelation. Thus Monsieur Burlomachi, of Geneva, in his curious "Treatise on the Law of Nature," does not make any more use of the Bible than if he had never seen it. And thus the late Professor Hurcheson, of Glasgow, (a stranger writer than either of the other,) is so far from grounding virtue on either the fear or the love of God, that he quite shuts God out of the question; not scrupling to declare, in express terms, that in regard to God is *inconsistent with virtue*; insomuch that, if in doing a beneficent action you expect God to reward it, the virtue of the action is lost: It is then not a virtuous but a selfish action.

19. Perhaps, indeed, there are not many who carry the matter to so great a length. But how great is the number of those who, allowing religion to consist of two branches, — our duty to God, and our duty to our neighbor, — entirely forget the first part and put the second part for the whole, — for the entire duty of man! Thus almost all men of letters, both in England, France, Germany, yea, and all the civilized countries of Europe, extol *humanity* to the skies, as the very essence of religion. To this the great triumvirate, Rousseau, Voltaire, and David Hume, have contributed all their labors, sparing no pains to establish a religion which should stand on its own foundation, independent on any revelation whatever; yea, not supposing even the being of a God. So leaving Him, if he has any being, to himself, they have found out both a religion and a happiness which have no relation at all to God, nor any dependence upon him.

20. It is no wonder that this religion should grow fashionable, and spread far and wide in the world. But call it *humanity*, *virtue*, *morality*, or what you please, it is neither better nor worse than Atheism. Men hereby willfully and designedly put asunder what God has joined, — the duties of the First and the Second table. It is separating the love of our neighbor from the love of God. It is a plausible way of thrusting God out of the world he has made. They can do the business without him; and so either drop him entirely, not considering him at all, or suppose that since

He gave things their beginning,
And set this whirligig a-spinning,

he has not concerned himself with these trifles, but let every thing take its own course.

21. On the contrary, we have the fullest evidence that the eternal, omnipresent, almighty, all-wise Spirit, as he created all things, so he continually superintends whatever he has created. He governs all, not only to the bounds of creation, but through the utmost extent of space; and not only through the short time that is measured by the earth and sun, but from everlasting to everlasting. We know that as all nature, so all religion, and all happiness, depend on him; and we know that whoever teach to seek happiness without him are monsters, and the pests of society.

22. But after all the vain attempts of learned or unlearned men, it will be found, as there is but one God, so there is but one happiness, and one religion. And both of these center in God. Both by Scripture and by experience we know that an unholy, and therefore an unhappy, man, seeking rest, but finding none, is sooner or later convinced that sin is the ground of his misery; and cries out of the deep to Him that is able to save, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” It is not long before he finds; “redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins.” Then “the Father reveals his Son” in his heart; and he calls Jesus, Lord, by the Holy Ghost.” And then the love of God is “shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit which is given unto him.” From this principle springs real, disinterested benevolence to all mankind; making him humble, meek, gentle to all men, easy to be entreated, — to be convinced of what is right, and persuaded to what is good, inviolably patient, with a thankful

acquiescence in every step of his adorable providence. This is religion, even the whole mind which was also in Christ Jesus. And has any man the insolence or the stupidity to deny that this is happiness; yea, that it

Yields more of happiness below
Than victors in a triumph know?

23. There can be no doubt but from this love to God and man a suitable conversation will follow. His “communication,” that is, discourse, will “be always in grace, seasoned with salt, and meet to minister grace to the hearers.” He will always “open his mouth with wisdom, and there will be in his tongue the law of kindness.” Hence his affectionate words will; “distill as the dew, and as the rain upon the tender herb.” And men will know it is not he only that speaks, but the Spirit of the Father that speaketh in him. His actions will spring from the same source with his words; even from the abundance of a loving heart. And while all these aim at the glory of God, and tend to this one point, whatever he does, he may truly say, —

End of my every action thou,
In all things thee I see:
Accept my hallow'd labor now,
I do it as to thee!

24. He to whom this character belongs, and he alone, is a Christian. To him the one, eternal, omnipresent, all-perfect Spirit, is the “Alpha and Omega, the first and the last” not his Creator only, but his Sustainer, his Preserver, his Governor; yea, his Father, his Savior, Sanctifier, and Comforter. This God is his God, and his All, in time and in eternity. It is the benevolence springing from this root which is pure and undefiled religion. But if it be built on any other foundation, as it is of no avail in the sight of God, so it brings no real, solid, permanent happiness to man, but leaves him still a poor, dry, indigent, and dissatisfied creature.

25. Let all therefore that desire to please God condescend to be taught of God, and take care to walk in that path which God himself hath appointed. Beware of taking half of this religion for the whole; but take both parts of it together. And see that you begin where God himself begins: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Is not this the first,

our Lord himself being the Judge, as well as the great, commandment? First, therefore, see that ye love God, next, your neighbor, — every child of man. From this fountain let every temper, every affection, every passion flow. So shall that “mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Let all your thoughts, words, and action, spring from this! So shall you “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.”

DUBLIN, April 9, 1789.

SERMON CXV.

THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE. ¹⁴

“No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”

Hebrews 5:4.

1. THERE are exceeding few texts of Holy Scripture which have been more frequently urged than this against laymen that are neither Priests nor Deacons, and yet take upon them to preach. Many have asked, “How dare any ‘take this honor to himself, unless he be called of God, as was Aaron?’” And a pious and sensible Clergyman some years ago published a sermon on these words, wherein he endeavors to show that it is not enough to be inwardly called of God to preach, as many imagine themselves to be, unless they are outwardly called by men sent of God for that purpose, as Aaron was called of God by Moses.

2. But there is one grievous flaw in this argument, as often as it has been urged. “Called of God as was Aaron!” But, Aaron did not preach at all: He was not called to it either by God or man. Aaron was called to minister in holy things, — to offer up prayers and sacrifices; to execute the office of a Priest. But he was never called to be a Preacher.

3 In ancient times the office of a priest and that of a Preacher were known to be entirely distinct. And so every one will be convinced that impartially traces the matter from the beginning. From Adam to Noah, it is allowed by all that the first-born in every family was of course the Priest in that family, by virtue of his primogeniture. But this gave him no right to be a preacher, or (in the scriptural language) a Prophet. This office not infrequently belongs to the youngest branch of the family. For in this respect God always asserted his *right* to send by whom he *would* send.

4. From the time of Noah to that of Moses, the same observation may be made. The eldest of the family was the Priest, but any other might be the

prophet. This, the office of priest, we find Esau inherited by virtue of his birth right, till he profanely sold it to Jacob for a mess of pottage. And this it was which he could never recover, “though he sought it carefully with tears.”

5. Indeed, in the time of Moses, a very considerable change was made with regard to the priesthood. God then appointed that, instead of the first-born in every house, a whole tribe should be dedicated to him; and that all that afterwards ministered unto him as Priests should be of that tribe. Thus Aaron was of the tribe of Levi. And so likewise was Moses. But he was not a priest, though he was the greatest Prophet that ever lived, before God brought his first-begotten into the world. Meantime, not many of the Levites were Prophets. And if any were, it was a mere accidental thing. They were not such, as being of that tribe. Many, if not most, of the Prophets (as we are informed by the ancient Jewish writers) were of the tribe of Simeon. And some were of the tribe of Benjamin or Judah, and probably of other tribes also.

6. But we have reason to believe there were, in every age, two sorts of Prophets. The extraordinary, such as Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many others, on whom the Holy Ghost came in an extraordinary manner. Such was Amos in particular, who saith of himself, (7:14, 15,) “I was no Prophet, neither a Prophet’s son; but I was an herdsman: And the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.” The ordinary were those who were educated in “the schools of the Prophets,” one of which was at Ramah, over which Samuel presided. (1 Samuel 19:18.) These were trained up to instruct the people, and were the ordinary Preachers in their synagogues. In the New Testament they are usually termed Scribes, or **νομικοι**, “expounders of the law.” But few, if any, of them were Priests. These were all along a different order.

7. Many learned men have shown at large that our Lord himself, and all his Apostles, built the Christian Church as nearly as possible on the plan of the Jewish. So the great High Priest of our profession sent Apostles and Evangelists to proclaim glad tidings to all the world; and then Pastors, Preachers, and Teachers, to build up in the faith the congregations that should be founded. But I do not find that ever the office of an Evangelist

was the same with that of a Pastor, frequently called a Bishop. He presided over the flock, and administered the sacraments: The former assisted him, and preached the word, either in one or more congregations. I cannot prove from any part of the New Testament, or from any author of the three first centuries, that the office of an Evangelist gave any man a right to act as a Pastor or Bishop. I believe these offices were, considered as quite distinct from each other till the time of Constantine.

8. Indeed, in that evil hour, when Constantine the Great called himself a Christian, and poured in honor and wealth upon the Christians, the case was widely altered. It soon grew common for one man to take the whole charge of a congregation in order to engross the whole pay. Hence the same person acted as Priest and Prophet, as Pastor and Evangelist. And this gradually spread more and more throughout the whole Christian Church. Yet even at this day, although the same person usually discharges both those offices, yet the office of an Evangelist or teacher does not imply that of a Pastor, to whom peculiarly belongs the administration of the sacraments; neither among the Presbyterians, nor in the Church of England, nor even, among the Roman Catholics. All Presbyterian Churches, it is well known, that of Scotland in particular, license men to preach before they are ordained, throughout that whole kingdom; and it is never understood that this appointment to preach gives them any right to administer the sacraments. Likewise in our own Church, persons may be authorized to preach, yea, may be Doctors of Divinity, (as was Dr. Alwood at Oxford, when I resided there,) who are not ordained at all, and consequently have no right to administer the Lord's Supper. Yea, even in the Church of Rome itself, if a lay-brother believes he is called to go a mission, as it is termed, he is sent out, though neither Priest nor Deacon, to execute that office, and not the other.

9. But may it not be thought, that the case now before us is different from all these? Undoubtedly in many respects it is. Such a phenomenon has now appeared, as has not appeared in the Christian world before, at least, not for many ages. Two young men sowed the word of God, not only in the churches, but likewise literally "by the high-way side;" and indeed in every place where they saw an open door, where sinners had ears to hear. They were members of the Church of England, and had no design of

separating from it. And they advised all that were of it to continue therein, although they joined the Methodist society; for this did not imply leaving their former congregation, but only leaving their sins. The Churchmen might go to church still; the Presbyterian, Anabaptist, Quaker, might still retain their own opinions; and attend their own congregations. The having a real desire to flee from the wrath to come was the only condition required of them. Whosoever, therefore, “feared God and worked righteousness” was qualified for this society.

10. Not long after, a young man, Thomas Maxfield, offered himself to serve them as a son in the gospel. And then another, Thomas Richards, and a little after a third, Thomas Westell. Let it be well observed on what terms we received these, viz., as Prophets, not as Priests. We received them wholly and solely to preach, not to administer sacraments. And those who imagine these offices to be inseparably joined are totally ignorant of the constitution of the whole Jewish as well as Christian Church. Neither the Romish, nor the English, nor the Presbyterian Churches ever accounted them so. Otherwise we should never have accepted the service, either of Mr. Maxfield, Richards, or Westell.

11. In 1744, all the Methodist Preachers had their first Conference. But none of them dreamed, that the being called to preach gave them any right to administer sacraments. And when that question was proposed, “In what light are we to consider ourselves?” it was answered, “As *extraordinary messengers*, raised up to provoke the *ordinary* ones to jealousy.” In order hereto, one of our first rules was, given to each Preacher, “You are to do *that part* of the work which we appoint.” But *what work*, was this? Did we ever appoint you to administer sacraments; to exercise the priestly office? Such a design never entered into our mind; it was the farthest from our thoughts: And if any Preacher had taken such a step, we should have looked upon it as a palpable breach of this rule, and consequently as a recantation of our connection.

12. For, supposing (what I utterly deny) that the receiving you as a Preacher, at the same time gave an authority to administer the sacraments; yet it gave you no other authority than to do it, or anything else, *where I appoint*. But where did I appoint you to do this? Nowhere at all.

Therefore, by this very rule you are excluded from doing it. And in doing it, you renounce the first principle of Methodism, which was wholly and solely to preach the gospel.

13. It was several years after our society was formed, before any attempt of this kind was made. The first was, I apprehend, at Norwich. One of our Preachers there yielded to the importunity of a few of the people, and baptized their children. But as soon as it was known, he was informed it must not be, unless he designed to leave our Connection. He promised to do it no more; and I suppose he kept his promise.

14. Now, as long as the Methodists keep to this plan, they cannot separate from the Church. And this is our peculiar glory. It is new upon the earth. Revolve all the histories of the Church, from the earliest ages, and you will find, whenever there was a great work of God in any particular city, or nation, the subjects of that work soon said to their neighbors, "Stand by yourselves, for we are holier than you!" As soon as ever they separated themselves, either they retired into deserts, or they built religious houses; or at least formed parties, into which none was admitted but such as subscribed both to their judgment and practice. But with the Methodists it is quite otherwise: They are not a sect or party; they do not separate from the religious community to which they at first belonged; they are still members of the Church; — such they desire to live and to die. And I believe, one reason why God is pleased to continue my life so long is, to confirm them in their present purpose, not to separate from the Church.

15 But, notwithstanding this, many warm men say, "Nay, but you *do* separate from the Church." Others are equally warm, because they say I *do not*. I will nakedly declare the thing as it is.

I hold all the doctrines of the Church of England. I love her liturgy I approve her plan of discipline, and only wish it could be put in execution. I do not knowingly vary from any rule of the Church, unless in those few instances, where I judge, and as far as I judge, there is an absolute necessity. For instance,

- (1.) As few clergymen open their churches to me, I am under the necessity of preaching abroad.
- (2.) As I know no forms that will suit all occasions, I am often under a necessity of praying extempore.
- (3.) In order to build up the flock of Christ in faith and love, I am under a necessity of uniting them together, and of dividing them into little companies, that they may provoke one another to love and good works.
- (4.) That my fellow-laborers and I may more effectually assist each other, to save our own souls and those that hear us, I judge it necessary to meet the preachers, or at least, the greater part of them, once a year.
- (5.) In these Conferences we fix the stations of all the Preachers for the ensuing year.

But all this is not separating from the Church. So far from it, that, whenever I have opportunity, I attend the Church service myself, and advise all our societies so to do.

16. Nevertheless, as the generality even of religious people, who do not understand my motives of acting, and who on the one hand bear me profess that I will not separate from the Church, and on the other that I do vary from it in these instances, they will naturally think I am inconsistent with myself. And they cannot but think so, unless they observe my two principles: The one, that I dare not separate from the Church, that I believe it would be a sin so to do; the other, that I believe it would be a sin not to vary from it in the points above mentioned. I say, put these two principles together, First, I will not separate from the Church; yet, Secondly, in cases of necessity, I will vary from it, (both of which I have constantly and openly avowed for upwards of fifty years,) and inconsistency vanishes away. I have been true to my profession from 1730 to this day.

17. "But is it not contrary to your profession to permit Service in Dublin at Church hours? For what necessity is there for this? or what good end does it answer?" I believe it answers several good ends, which could not so well be answered any other way. The First is, (strange as it may sound,) to *prevent a separation* from the Church. Many of our society were

totally separated from the Church; they never attended it at all. But now they duly attend the Church every first Sunday in the month.” “But had they not better attend it every week?” Yes; but who can persuade them to it? I cannot. I have strove to do it twenty or thirty years, but in vain. The Second is, the weaning them from attending Dissenting Meetings, which many of them attended constantly, but have now wholly left. The Third is, the constantly hearing that sound doctrine which is able to save their souls.

18. I wish all of you who are vulgarly termed Methodists would seriously consider what has been said. And particularly you whom God hath commissioned to call sinners to repentance. It does by no means follow from hence, that ye are commissioned to baptize, or to administer the Lord’s Supper, were never dreamed of this, for ten or twenty years after ye began to preach. Ye did not then, like Kerah, Dathan, and Abinam “seek the priesthood also.” We knew, “no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” O contain yourselves within your own bounds; be content with preaching the gospel; “do the work of evangelists;” proclaim to all the world the lovingkindness of God our Savior; declare to all, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand: Repent ye, and believe the gospel!” I earnestly advise you, abide in your place; keep your own station. Ye were, fifty years ago, those of you that were then Methodist Preachers, *extraordinary messengers* of God, not going in your own will, but *thrust out*, not to supersede, but to “provoke to jealousy,” the ordinary messengers. In God’s name, stop there! Both by your preaching and example provoke them to love and to good works. Ye are a new phenomenon in the earth, — a body of people who, being of no sect or party, are friends to all parties, and endeavor to forward all in heart religion, in the knowledge and love of God and man. Ye yourselves were at first called in the Church of England; and though ye have and will have a thousand temptations to leave it, and set up for yourselves, regard them not; be Church of England men still; do not cast away the peculiar glory which God hath put upon you, and frustrate the design of Providence, the very end for which God raised you up.

19. I would add a few words to those serious people who are not connected with the Methodists; many of whom are of our own Church,

the Church of England. And why should ye be displeased with us? We do you no harm; we do not design or desire to offend you in anything; we hold your doctrines; we observe your rules, more than do most of the people in the kingdom. Some of you are Clergymen. And why should ye, of all men, be displeased with us? We neither attack your character, nor your revenue; we honor you for “your work’s sake!” If we see some things which we do not approve of, we do not publish them; we rather cast a mantle over them, and hide what we cannot commend. When ye treat us unkindly or unjustly, we suffer it. “Being reviled, we bless;” we do not return railing for railing. O let not *your* hand be upon us!

20. Ye that are rich in this world, count us not your enemies because we tell you the truth, and, it may be, in a fuller and stronger manner than any others will or dare do. Ye have therefore need of us, inexpressible need. Ye cannot buy such friends at any price. All your gold and silver cannot purchase such. Make use of us while ye may. If it be possible, never be without some of those who will speak the truth from their heart.

Otherwise, ye may grow gray in your sins; ye may say to your souls, “Peace, peace!” while there is no peace. Ye may sleep on, and dream ye are in the way to heaven, till ye awake in everlasting fire.

21. But whether ye will hear, or whether ye will forbear, we, by the grace of God, hold on our way; being ourselves still members of the Church of England, as we were from the beginning, but receiving all that love God in every Church, as our brother, and sister, and mother. And in order to their union with us, we require no unity in opinions, or in modes of worship, but barely that they “fear God and work righteousness,” as was observed. Now, this is utterly a new thing, unheard of in any other Christian community. In what Church or congregation beside, throughout the Christian world, can members be admitted upon these terms, without any other conditions? Point any such out, whoever can: I know none in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America! This is the glory of the Methodists, and of them alone! They are themselves no particular sect or party; but, they receive those, of all parties, who “endeavor to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God.”

SERMON CXVI.

CAUSES OF THE INEFFICACY OF CHRISTIANITY.

“Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? May then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”

Jeremiah 8:22.

1. THIS question, as here proposed by the Prophet, relates only to a particular people, — the children of Israel. But I would here consider it in a general sense, with relation to all mankind. I would seriously inquire, Why has Christianity done so little good in the world? Is it not the balm, the outward means, which the great Physician has given to men, to restore their spiritual health? Why then is it not restored? You say, Because of the deep and universal corruption of human nature. Most true; but here is the very difficulty. Was it not intended, by our all-wise and almighty Creator, to be the remedy for that corruption? A universal remedy, for a universal evil? But it has not answered this intention; it never did; it does not answer it at this day. The disease still remains in its full strength: Wickedness of every kind; vice, inward and outward, in all its forms, still overspreads the face of the earth.

2. O Lord God, “righteous art thou! Yet let us plead with thee.” How is this? Hast thou forgotten the world thou hast made; which thou hast created for thy own glory? Canst thou despise the work of thy own hands, the purchase of thy Son’s blood? Thou hast given medicine to heal our sickness; yet our sickness is not healed. Yet darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness the people; yea,

Darkness such as devils feel,
Issuing from the pit of hell.

3. What a mystery is this, that Christianity should have done so little good in the world! Can any account of this be given? Can any reasons be assigned for it? Does it not seem that one reason it has done so little good is this, — because it is so little known? Certainly it can do no good where it is not known. But it is not known at this day to the far greater part of the inhabitants of the earth. In the last century, our ingenious and laborious countryman, Mr. Brerewood, traveled over great part of the known world on purpose to inquire, so far as was possible, what proportion the Christians bear to the Heathens and Mahometans. And, according to his computation, (probably the most accurate which has yet been made,) I suppose mankind to be divided into thirty parts, nineteen parts of these are still open Heathens, having no more knowledge of Christianity than the beasts that perish. And we may add to these the numerous nations which have been discovered in the present century. Add to these such as profess the Mahometan religion, and utterly scorn Christianity; and twenty-five parts out of thirty of mankind are not so much as nominally Christians. So then five parts of mankind out of six are totally ignorant of Christianity. It is, therefore, no wonder that five in six of mankind, perhaps nine in ten, have no advantage from it.

4. But why is it that so little advantage is derived from it to the Christian world? Are Christians any better than other men? Are they better than Mahometans or Heathens? To say the truth, it is well if they are not worse; worse than either Mahometans or Heathens. In many respects they are abundantly worse; that then they are not properly Christians. The generality of these, though they bear the Christian name, do not know what Christianity is. They no more understand it than they do Greek or Hebrew; therefore they can be no better for it. What do the Christians, so called, of the Eastern Church, dispersed throughout the Turkish dominions, know of genuine Christianity? those of the Morea, of Circassia, Mongrelia, Georgia? Are they not the very dregs of mankind? And have we reason to think that those of the Southern Church, those inhabiting Abyssinia, have any more conception than they, of “worshipping God in spirit and in truth?” Look we nearer home. See the Northern Churches; those that are under the Patriarch of Moscow. How exceedingly little do they know either of outward or inward Christianity! How many thousands, yea, myriads, of those poor savages know nothing

of Christianity but the name! How little more do they know than the heathen Tartars on the one hand, or the heathen Chinese on the other!

5. But is not Christianity well known, at least, to all the inhabitants of the western world? a great part of which is eminently termed Christendom, or the land of Christians. Part of these are still members of the Church of Rome; part are termed Protestants. As to the former, Portuguese, Spaniards Italians, French, Germans, what do the bulk of them know of scriptural Christianity? Having had frequent opportunity of conversing with many of these, both at home and abroad, I am bold to affirm, that they are in general totally ignorant, both as to the theory and practice of Christianity; so that they are “perishing” by thousands “for lack of knowledge,” — for want of knowing the very first principles of Christianity.

6. “But surely this cannot be the case of the Protestants in France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland; much less in Denmark and Sweden.” Indeed I hope it is not altogether. I am persuaded, there are among them many knowing Christians; but I fear we must not think that one in ten, if one in fifty, is of this number; certainly not, if we may form a judgment of them by those we find in Great Britain and Ireland. Let us see how matters stand at our own door. Do the people of England, in general, (not the highest or the lowest; for these usually know nothing of the matter; but people of the middle rank,) understand Christianity? Do they conceive what it is? Can they give an intelligible account, either of the speculative or practical part of it? What know they of the very first principles of it? — of the natural and moral attributes of God; of his particular providence; of the redemption of man; of the offices of Christ; of the operations of the Holy Ghost; of justification; of the new birth; of inward and outward sanctification? Speak of any of these things to the first ten persons you are in company with, and will you not find nine out of the ten ignorant of the whole affair? And are not most of the inhabitants of the Scotch Highlands full as ignorant as these; yea, and the common people in Ireland? (I mean the Protestants, of whom alone we are now speaking.) Make a fair inquiry, not only in the country cabins, but in the cities of Cork, Waterford, Limerick; yea, in Dublin itself. How few know what Christianity means! How small a number will you find that have any

conception of the analogy of faith! of the connected chain of scripture truths, and their relation to each other, — namely, the natural corruption of man; justification by faith; the new birth; inward and outward holiness. It must be acknowledged by all competent judges, who converse freely with their neighbors in these kingdoms, that a vast majority of them know no more of these things than they do of Hebrew or Arabic. And what good can Christianity do to these, who are so totally ignorant of it?

7. However, in some parts, both of England and Ireland, scriptural Christianity is well known; especially in London, Bristol, Dublin, and almost all the large and populous cities and towns of both kingdoms. In these, every branch of Christianity is openly and largely declared; and thousands upon thousands continually hear and receive “the truth as it is in Jesus.” Why is it then, that even in these parts Christianity has had so little effect? Why are the generality of the people, in all these places, Heathens still? no better than the Heathens of Africa or America, either in their tempers or in their lives? Now, how is this to be accounted for? I conceive, thus: It was a common saying among the Christians in the primitive Church, “The soul and the body make a man; the spirit and discipline make a Christian;” implying, that none could be real Christians, without the help of Christian discipline. But if this be so, is it any wonder that we find so few Christians; for where is Christian discipline? In what part of England (to go no farther) is Christian discipline added to Christian doctrine? Now, whatever doctrine is preached, where there is not discipline, it cannot have its full effect upon the hearers.

8. To bring the matter closer still. Is not scriptural Christianity preached and generally known among the people commonly called Methodists? Impartial persons allow it is. And have they not Christian discipline too, in all the essential branches of it, regularly and constantly exercised? Let those who think any essential part of it is wanting, point it out, and it shall not be wanting long. Why then are not these altogether Christians, who have both Christian doctrine and Christian discipline? Why is not the spiritual health of the people called Methodists recovered? Why is not all that “mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus?” Why have we not learned of him our very first lesson, to be meek and lowly of heart? to say with him, in all circumstances of life, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt? I

come not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me?" Why are not we "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to us;" — dead to the "desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life?" Why do not all of us live "the life that is hid with Christ in God?" O why do not we, that have all possible helps, is walk as Christ also walked?" Hath he not left us an example that we might tread in his steps? But do we regard either his example or precept? To instance only in one point: Who regards those solemn words, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth?" Of the three rules which are laid down on this head, in the sermon on "The Mammon of Unrighteousness," you may find many that observe the First rule, namely, "Gain all you can. You may find a few that observe the Second, "Save all you can." But how many have you found that observe the Third rule, "Give all you can?" Have you reason to believe that five hundred of these are to be found among fifty thousand Methodists? And yet nothing can be more plain, than that all who observe the two first rules without the third, will be two-fold more the children of hell than ever they were before.

9. O that God would enable me once more, before I go hence and am no more seen, to lift up my voice like a trumpet to those who *gain* and *save* all they can, but do not *give* all they can! Ye are the men, some of the chief men, who continually grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and in a great measure stop his gracious influence from descending on our assemblies. Many of your brethren, beloved of God, have not food to eat; they have not raiment to put on; they have not a place where to lay their head. And why are they thus distressed? Because *you* impiously, unjustly, and cruelly detain from them what your Master and theirs lodges in *your* hands on purpose to supply *their* wants! See that poor member of Christ, pinched with hunger, shivering with cold, half naked! Meantime you have plenty of this world's goods, — of meat, drink, and apparel. In the name of God, what are you doing? So you neither fear God, nor regard man? Why do you not deal your bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with a garment? Have you laid out in your own costly apparel what would have answered both these intentions? Did God command you so to do? Does he commend you for so doing? Did he entrust you with *his* (not *your*) goods for this end? And does he now say, "Servant of God, well done?" you well know he does not. This idle expense has no approbation, either from God, or your

own conscience. But you say you can afford it! O be ashamed to take such miserable nonsense into your mouths! Never more utter such stupid cant; such palpable absurdity! Can any steward *afford* to be an arrant knave? to waste his Lord's goods? Can any servant *afford* to lay out his Master's money, any otherwise than his Master appoints him? So far from it, that whoever does this ought to be excluded from a Christian society.

10. "But is it possible to supply all the poor in our society with the necessaries of life?" It *was* possible once to do this, in a larger society than this. In the first Church at Jerusalem "there was not any among them that lacked; but distribution was made to every one according as he had need." And we have full proof that it may be so still. It is so among the people called Quakers. Yea, and among the Moravians, so called. And why should it not be so with *us*. "Because they are ten times richer than we." Perhaps fifty times: And yet we are able enough, if we were equally willing, to do this.

A gentleman (a Methodist) told me some years since, "I shall leave forty thousand pounds among my children." Now, suppose he had left them but twenty thousand, and given the other twenty thousand to God and the poor, would God have said to him, "Thou fool?" And this would have set all the society far above want.

11. But I will not talk of giving to God, or leaving, half your fortune. You might think this to be too high a price for heaven. I will come to lower terms. Are there not a few among you that could give a hundred pounds, perhaps some that could give a thousand, and yet leave your children as much as would help them to work out their own salvation? With two thousand pounds, and not much less, we could supply the present wants of all our poor, and put them in a way of supplying their own wants for the time to come. Now, suppose this could be done, are we clear before God while it is not done? Is not the neglect of it one cause why so many are still sick and weak among you; and that both in soul and in body? that they still grieve the Holy Spirit, by preferring the fashions of the world to the commands of God? And I many times doubt whether we Preachers are not, in some measure, partakers of their sin. I am in doubt whether it is not a kind of partiality. I doubt whether it is not a great sin to keep them in

our society. May it not hurt their souls, by encouraging them to persevere in walking contrary to the Bible? And may it not, in some measure, intercept the salutary influences of the blessed Spirit upon the whole community?

12. I am distressed. I know not what to do. I see what I might have done once. I might have said peremptorily and expressly, “Here I am: I and my Bible. I will not, I dare not, vary from this book, either in great things or small. I have no power to dispense with one jot or tittle of what is contained therein. I am determined to be a Bible Christian, not almost, but altogether. Who will meet me on this ground? Join me on this, or not at all.” With regard to dress, in particular, I might have been as firm (and I now see it would have been far better) as either the people called Quakers, or the Moravian brethren: — I might have said, “This is our manner of dress, which we know is both scriptural and rational. If you join with us, you are to dress as we do; but you need not join us, unless you please.” But, alas! the time is now past; and what I can do now, I cannot tell.

13. But to return to the main question. Why has Christianity done so little good, even among us? among the Methodists, — among them that hear and receive the whole Christian doctrine, and that have Christian discipline added thereto, in the most essential parts of it? Plainly, because we have forgot, or at least not duly attended to, those solemn words of our Lord, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” It was the remark of a holy man, several years ago, “Never was there before a people in the Christian Church, who had so much of the power of God among them, with so little self-denial.” Indeed the work of God does go on, and in a surprising manner, notwithstanding this capital defect; but it cannot go on in the same degree as it otherwise would; neither can the word of God have its full effect, unless the hearers of it “deny themselves, and take up their cross daily.”

14. It would be easy to show, in how many respects the Methodists, in general, are deplorably wanting in the practice of Christian self-denial; from which, indeed, they have been continually freighted by the silly outcries of the Antinomians. To instance only in one: While we were at Oxford, the rule of every Methodist was, (unless in case of sickness,) to

fast every Wednesday and Friday in the year, in imitation of the Primitive Church; for which they had the highest reverence. Now this practice of the Primitive Church is universally allowed. “Who does not know,” says Epiphanius, an ancient writer, “that the fasts of the fourth and sixth days of the week” (Wednesday and Friday) “are observed by the Christians throughout the whole world!” So they were by the Methodists for several years; by them all, without any exception; but afterwards, some in London carried this to excess, and fasted so as to impair their health. It was not long before others made this a pretense for not fasting at all. And I fear there are now thousand; of Methodists, so called, both in England and Ireland, who, following, the same bad example, have entirely left off fasting; who are so far from fasting twice in the week, (as all the stricter Pharisees did,) that they do not fast twice in the month. Yea, are there not some of you who do not fast one day from the beginning of the year to the end? But what excuse can there be for this? I do not say for those that call themselves members of the Church of England; but for any who profess to believe the Scripture to be the word of God. Since, according to this, the man that never fasts is no more in the way to heaven, that the man that never prays.

15. But can any one deny that the members of the Church of Scotland fast constantly; particularly on their sacramental occasions? In some parishes they return only once a year; but in others, suppose in large cities, they occur twice, or even thrice, a year. Now, it is well known there is always a fast-day in the week preceding the administration of the Lord’s Supper. But, occasionally looking into a book of accounts in one of their vestries, I observed so much set down *for the dinners* of the Ministers on the fast-day; and I am informed there is the same article in them all. And is there any doubt but the people fast just as their Ministers do? But what a farce is this! What a miserable burlesque upon a plain Christian duty! O that the General Assembly would have regard to the honor of their nation! Let them roll away from it this shameful reproaches by either enforcing the duty, or removing that article from their books. Let it never appear there any more! Let it vanish away for ever.

16. But why is self-denial in general so little practiced at present among the Methodists? Why is so exceedingly little of it to be found even in the

oldest and largest societies? The more I observe and consider things, the more clearly it appears that is the cause of this in London, in Bristol, in Birmingham, in Manchester, in Leeds, in Dublin, in Cork. The Methodists grow more and more self-indulgent, because they *grow rich*. Although many of them are still deplorably poor; (“tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon!”) yet many others, in the space of twenty, thirty, or forty years, are twenty, thirty, yea, a hundred times richer than they were when they first entered the society. And it is an observation which admits of few exceptions, that nine in ten of these decreased in grace, in the same proportion as they increased in wealth. Indeed, according to the natural tendency of riches, we cannot expect it to be otherwise.

17. But how astonishing a thing is this! How can we understand it? Does it not seem (and yet this cannot be) that Christianity, true scriptural Christianity, has a tendency, in process of time, to undermine and destroy itself? For wherever true Christianity spreads, it must cause diligence and frugality, which, in the natural course of things, must beget riches! and riches naturally beget pride, love of the world, and every temper that is destructive of Christianity. Now, if there be no way to prevent this, Christianity is inconsistent with itself, and, of consequence, cannot stand, cannot continue long among any people; since, wherever it generally prevails, it saps its own foundation.

18. But is there no way to prevent this? — to continue Christianity among a people? Allowing that diligence and frugality must produce riches, is there no means to hinder riches from destroying the religion of those that possess them? I can see only one possible way; find out another who can. Do you gain all you can, and save all you can? Then you must, in the nature of things, grow rich. then if you have any desire to escape the damnation of hell, *give* all you can; otherwise I can have no more hope of your salvation, than of that of Judas Iscariot.

19. I call God to record upon my soul, that I advise no more than I practice. I do, blessed be God, gain, and have, and give all I can. And so, I trust in God, I shall do, while the breath of God is in my nostrils. But

what then I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of
Jesus my Lord! Still,

I give up every plea beside —
Lord I am damn'd! but thou hast died!

DUBLIN, July 2, 1789.

SERMON CXVII.

ON KNOWING CHRIST AFTER THE FLESH.

“Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: Yea, though we did know Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.”

2 Corinthians 5:16.

1. I HAVE long desired to see something clearly and intelligibly wrote on these words. This is doubtless a point of no small importance; it enters deeply into the nature of religion; and yet what treatise have we in the English language. Which is written upon it? Possibly there may be such; but none of them has come to my notice; no, not so much as a single sermon.

2. This is here introduced by the Apostle in a very solemn manner. The words, literally translated, run thus: “He died for all, that; they who live,” all who live upon the earth, “might not henceforth,” from the moment they know him, “live unto themselves,” seek their own honor, or profit, or pleasure, “but unto him,” in righteousness and true holiness. (Verse 15.) “So that we from this time,” we that know him by faith, “know no one,” either the rest of the Apostles, or you, or any other person, “after the flesh.” This uncommon expression, on which the whole doctrine depends, seems to mean, We regard no man according to his former state, — his country, riches, power, or wisdom. We consider all men only in their spiritual state, and as they stand related to a better world. Yea, if we have known even Christ after the flesh, (which undoubtedly they had done, beholding and loving him as a man, With a natural affection,) yet now we know him so no more. We no more know him as a man, by his face, shape, voice, or manner of conversation. We no more think of him as a man, or love him under that character.

3. The meaning, then, of this strongly figurative expression appears to be no other than this: From the time that we are created anew in Christ Jesus, we do not think, or speak, or act with regard to our blessed Lord as a mere man. We do not now use any expression with relation to Christ which may not be applied to him, not only as he is man, but as he is “God over all, blessed for ever.”

4. Perhaps, in order to place this in a clearer light, and at the same time to guard against dangerous errors, it may be well to instance in some of those that in the most plain and palpable manner “know Christ after the flesh.” We may rank among the first of these, the Socinians; those who flatly “deny the Lord that bought them;” who not only do not allow him to be the supreme God, but deny him to be any God at all. I believe the most eminent of these that has appeared in England, at least in the present century, was a man of great learning, and uncommon abilities, Dr. John Taylor, for many years Pastor at Norwich, afterwards President at the Academy at Warrington. Yet it cannot be denied, that he treats our Lord with great civility; he gives him very good words; he terms him “a very worthy personage;” yea, “a man of consummate virtue.”

5. Next to these are the Arians. But I would not be thought to place these in the same rank. With the Socinians. There is a considerable difference between them. For, whereas the former deny Christ to be any God at all, the latter do not; they only deny him to be the great God. They willingly allow, nay, contend, that he is a little God. But this is attended with a peculiar inconvenience. It totally destroys the unity of the Godhead. For, if there be a great God, and a little God, there must be two Gods. But waving this, and keeping to the point before us all who speak of Christ as inferior to the Father, though it be ever so little, do undoubtedly “know him after the flesh;” not as “the brightness of the Father’s glory, the express image of his person; as upholding,” bearing up, “all things,” both in heaven and earth, “by the word of his power,” — the same powerful word whereby of old time he called them all into being.

6. There are some of these who have been bold to claim that great and good man, Dr. Watts, as one of their own opinion; and in order to prove him so, they have quoted that fine soliloquy which is published in his posthumous

works. Yet impartial men will not allow their claim without stronger proof than has yet appeared. But if he is clear of this charge, he is not equally clear of “knowing Christ after the flesh” in another sense, I was not aware of this, but read all his works with almost equal admiration, when a person of deep piety as well as judgment was occasionally remarking that some of the hymns printed in his *Horae Lyricae*, dedicated to Divine Love, were (as he phrased it) “*too amorous*, and fitter to be addressed by a lover to his fellow-mortal, than by a sinner to the most high God.” I doubt whether there are not some other writers who, though they believe the Godhead of Christ, yet speak in the same unguarded manner.

7. Can we affirm that the Hymns published by a late great man (whose memory I love and esteem) are free from this fault? Are they not full of expressions which strongly savor of “knowing Christ after the flesh?” yea, and in a more gross manner, than anything which was ever before published in the English tongue? What pity is it, that those coarse expressions should appear in many truly spiritual hymns! How often, in the midst of excellent verses, are lines inserted which disgrace those that precede and follow! Why should not all the compositions in that book be not only as poetical, but likewise as rational and as scriptural, as many of them are acknowledged to be?

8. It was between fifty and sixty years ago that, by the gracious providence of God, my brother and I, in our voyage to America, became acquainted with the (so called) Moravian Brethren; we quickly took knowledge what spirit they were of; six-and-twenty of them being in the same ship with us. We not only contracted much esteem, but a strong affection, for them. Everyday we conversed with them, and consulted them on all occasions. I translated many of their hymns, for the use of our own congregations. Indeed, as I durst not implicitly follow any man, I did not take all that lay before me, but selected those which I judged to be most scriptural, and most suitable to sound experience. Yet I am not sure, that I have taken sufficient care to pare off every improper word or expression, — every one that may seem to border on a familiarity which does not so well suit the mouth of a worm of the earth, when addressing himself to the God of heaven. I have indeed particularly endeavored, in all the hymns which are addressed to our blessed Lord, to avoid every

fondling expression, and to speak as to the most high God; to him that is “in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal.”

9. Some will probably think that I have been over-scrupulous with regard to one particular word, which I never use myself either in verse or prose, in praying or preaching, though it is very frequently used by modern Divines, both of the Romish and Reformed Churches. It is the word *dear*. Many of these frequently say, both in preaching, in prayer, and in giving thanks “Dear Lord,” or “Dear Savior;” and my brother used the same in many of his hymns, even as long as he lived. But may I not ask, Is not this using too much familiarity with the great Lord of heaven and earth? Is there any scripture, any passage either in the Old or New Testament, which justifies this manner of speaking? Does any of the inspired writers make use of it, even in the poetical scriptures? Perhaps some would answer, “Yes; the Apostle Paul uses it. He says, “God’s dear Son.” I reply, First, This does not reach the case; for the word which we render *dear*, is not here addressed *to Christ* at all, but only spoken of *him*. Therefore it is no precedent for, or justification of our addressing it to him. I reply, Secondly, it is not the same word. Translated literally, the sentence runs, not his dear Son, but the Son of his love, or his beloved Son. Therefore I still doubt whether any of the inspired writers ever address the word either to the Father or the Son. Hence I cannot but advise all lovers of the Bible, if they use the expression at all, to use it very sparingly, seeing the Scripture affords neither command nor precedent for it. And surely “if any man speak,” either in preaching or prayer, he should “speak as the oracles of God.”

10. Do we not frequently use this unscriptural expression, concerning our blessed Lord, in private conversation also? And are we not then especially apt to speak of him as a mere man? Particularly when we are describing his sufferings, how easily do we slide into this! We do well to be cautious in this matter. Here is not room for indulging a warm imagination. I have sometimes almost scrupled singing, (even in the midst of my brother’s excellent hymn,) “That dear disfigured face,” or that glowing expression, “Drop thy warm blood upon my heart,” lest it should seem to imply the forgetting I am speaking of “the Man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.

Although he so “humbled himself as to take upon him the form of a servant, to be found in fashion as a man;” yea, though he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;” yet let it ever be remembered, that he “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” And let our hearts still cry out, “Thou art exceedingly glorious; thou art clothed with majesty and honor.”

11. Perhaps some may be afraid lest the refraining from these warm expressions, or even gently checking them, should check the fervor of our devotion. It is very possible it may check, or even prevent, some kind of fervor which has passed for devotion. Possibly it may prevent loud shouting, horrid, unnatural screaming, repeating the same words twenty or thirty times, jumping two or three feet high, and throwing about the arms or legs, both of men and women, in a manner shocking not only to religion, but to common decency; but it never will check, much less prevent, true scriptural devotion. It will rather enliven the prayer that is properly addressed to Him, who, though he was very man yet was very God; who, though he was born of a woman, to redeem man, yet was “God from everlasting, and world without end.”

12. And let it not be thought, that the “knowing Christ after the flesh, the considering him as a mere man, and, in consequence, using such language in public as well as private as is suitable to those conceptions of him, is a thing of a purely indifferent nature, or, however, of no great moment. On the contrary, the using this improper familiarity with God our Creator, our Redeemer, our Governor, is naturally productive of very evil fruits; and that not only in those that speak, but also to those that hear them. It has a direct tendency to abate that tender reverence due to the Lord their Governor. It insensibly damps

That speechless awe which dares not move,
And all the silent heaven of love.

It is impossible we should accustom ourselves to this odious and indecent familiarity with our Maker, while we preserve in our minds a lively sense of what is painted so strongly in those solemn lines: —

Dark with excessive bright his skirts appears
 Yet dazzle heaven, that brightest seraphim,
 Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes.

13. Now, would not every sober Christian sincerely desire constantly to experience such a love to his Redeemer (seeing he is God as well as man) as is mixed with angelic fear? Is it not this very temper which good Dr. Watts so well expresses in those lines:

Thy mercy never shall remove
 From men of heart sincere;
 Thou savest the souls whose humble love
 Is join'd with holy fear?

14. Not that I would recommend a cold, dead, formal prayer, out of which both love and desire, hope and fear, are excluded. Such seems to have been “the calm and undisturbed method of prayer,” so strongly recommended by the late Bishop Hoadly, which occasioned for some years so violent a contest in the religious world. Is it not probable, that the well-meaning Bishop had met with some of the Mystics or Quietists; (such as Madam Guion, or the Archbishop of Cambray;) and that, having no experience of these things, he patched together a theory of his own, as nearly resembling theirs as he could? But if is certain, nothing is farther from apathy than real scriptural devotion. It excites, exercises, and gives full scope to all our nobler passions; and excludes none but those that are wild, irrational, and beneath the dignity of man.

15. But how then can we account for this, that so many holy men, men of truly elevated affections, not excepting pious Kempis himself; have so frequently used this manner of speaking, these *fondling* kinds of expression; since we cannot doubt but they are truly pious men? It is allowed they were; but we do not allow that their judgment was equal to their piety. And hence it was that their really good affections a little exceeded the bounds of reason, and led them into a manner of speaking, not authorized by the oracles of God. And surely these are the true standard, both of our affections and our language. But did ever any of the holy men of old speak thus, either in the Old or in the New Testament? Did Daniel, the “man greatly beloved,” ever thus express himself to God?

Or did “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” and also doubtless loved his Master with the strongest affection, leave us an example of addressing him thus even when he was on the verge of glory? Even then his concluding words were not *fond*, but solemn, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

16. The sum of all is, we are to “honor the Son even as we honor the Father.” We are to pay him the same worship as we pay to the Father. We are to love him with all our heart and soul; and to consecrate all we have and are, all we think, speak, and do, to the ‘THREE-ONE GOD, Father, Son, and Spirit, world without end!

PLYMOUTH-DOCK, August 15, 1789.

SERMON CXVIII.

ON A SINGLE EYE.

“If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. Therefore, if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

Matthew 6:22, 23.

1. “**S**IMPLICITY and purity,” says a devout man, “are the two wings that lift the soul up to heaven: Simplicity, which is in the intention; and purity, which is in the affections.” The former of these, that great and good man, Bishop Taylor, recommends with much earnestness, in the beginning of his excellent book, “Rules of Holy Living and Dying.” He sets out with insisting upon this, as the very first point in true religion, and warns us, that, without this, all our endeavors after it will be vain and ineffectual. The same truth, that strong and elegant writer, Mr. Law, earnestly presses in his “Serious Call To a Devout Life, — a treatise which will hardly be excelled, if it be equaled, in the English tongue, either for beauty of expression, or for justness and depth of thought. And who can censure any follower of Christ, for laying ever so great stress on this point, that considers the manner wherein our Master recommends it, in the words above recited?

2. Let us attentively consider this whole passage, as it may be literally translated. “The eye is the lamp of the body:” And what the eye is to the body, the intention is to the soul. We may observe, with what exact propriety our Lord places simplicity of intention between worldly desires and worldly cares; either of which directly tend to destroy it. It follows, “If thine eye be single,” singly fixed upon God, “thy whole body,” that is, all thy soul, “shall be full of light,” — shall be filled with holiness and happiness. “But if thine eye be evil,” — not single, aiming at any other object, seeking anything beneath the sun, — “thy whole body shall be full

of darkness. And if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" how remote, not only from all real knowledge, but from all real holiness and happiness!

3. Considering these things, we may well cry out, "How great a thing is it to be a Christian; to be a real, inward, scriptural Christian, conformed in heart and life to the will of God! Who is sufficient for these things?" None, unless he be born of God. I do not wonder that one of the most sensible Deists should say, "I think the Bible is the finest book I ever read in my life; yet I have an insuperable objection to it: It is too good. It lays down such a plan of life, such a scheme of doctrine and practice, as is far too excellent for weak, silly men to aim at, or attempt to copy after." All this is most true, upon any other than the scriptural hypothesis. But this being allowed, all the difficulty vanishes into air. For if "all things are possible with God, then all things are possible to him that believeth."

4. "But let us consider, First, the former part of our Lord's declaration, — "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light;" Secondly, the latter part, — "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness;" and, Thirdly the dreadful state of those whose eye is not single, — "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

I.

1. And, First, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." If thine eye be single; if God be in all thy thoughts; if thou art constantly aiming at Him that is invisible; if it be thy intention in all things, small and great, in all thy conversation, to please God, to do, not thy own will, but the will of Him that sent thee into the world; if thou canst say, not to any creature, but to Him that made thee for himself, "I view thee, Lord and God of my desires;" — then the promise will certainly take place: "Thy whole body shall be full of light;" thy whole soul shall be filled with the light of heaven, — with the glory of the Lord resting upon thee. In all thy actions and conversation, thou shalt have not only the testimony of a good conscience toward God, but likewise of his Spirit, bearing witness with thy spirit, that all thy ways are acceptable to him.

2. When thy whole soul is full of this light, thou wilt be able (according to St. Paul's direction to the Thessalonians) to "rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks." For who can be constantly sensible of the loving presence of God without "rejoicing evermore?" Who can have the loving eye of his soul perpetually fixed upon God, but he will "pray without ceasing?" For his "heart is unto God without a voice, and his silence speaketh unto him." Who can be sensible that this loving Father is well pleased with all he does and suffers, but he will be constrained "in everything to give thanks?" knowing that all things "work together for good."

3. Thus shall "his whole body be full of light." The light of knowledge is, doubtless, one thing here intended; arising from "the unction of the Holy One, which abideth with him, and teacheth him of all things," — all the things which it is now necessary for him to know in order to please God. Hereby, he will have a clear knowledge of the divine will in every circumstance of life. Not without the means, but in the use of all those means which God has furnished him with. And, walking in this light, he cannot but "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." He will continually advance in all holiness, and in the whole image of God.

II.

1. Our Lord observes, Secondly, "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." If it be evil, that is, not single, (for the eye which is not single is evil,) "thy whole body shall be full of darkness." It is certain there can be no medium between a single eye and an evil eye; for whenever we are not aiming at God, we are seeking happiness in some creature: And this, whatever that creature may be, is no less than if idolatry. It is all one, whether we aim at the pleasures of sense, the pleasures of the imagination, the praise of men, or riches, all which St. John comprises under that general expression, "the love of the world." The eye is evil if we aim at any of these, or indeed at anything under the sun. So far as you aim at any of these, indeed, at anything beneath God, your whole soul, and the whole course of your life, will be full of darkness. Ignorance of yourselves, ignorance of your real interest, ignorance of your relation to God, will surround you with impenetrable clouds, with darkness that may be felt. And so long as the eye of your soul rests upon

all or any of these, those will continue to surround your soul, and cover it with utter darkness.

2. With how many instances of this melancholy truth, — that these whose eye is not single are totally ignorant of the nature of true religion, — are we surrounded on every side! How many, even of good sort of people, of them whose lives are innocent, are as ignorant of themselves, of God, and of worshipping him in spirit and in truth, as either Mahometans or Heathens! And yet they are not any way defective in natural understanding: And some of them have improved their natural abilities by a liberal education, whereby they have laid in a considerable stock of deep and various learning. Yet how totally ignorant are they of God and of the things of God! How unacquainted both with the invisible and the eternal world! O why do they continue in this deplorable ignorance? It is the plain effect of this, — their eye is not single. They do not aim at God; he is not in all their thoughts. They do not desire or think of heaven; therefore, they sink deep as hell.

3. For this reason they are as far from holiness as they are from valuable knowledge. It is because their eye is not single, that they are such strangers to vital religion. Let them be ever so accomplished in other respects; let them be ever so learned, ever so well versed in every branch of polite literature; yea, ever so courteous, so humane; yet if their eye is not singly fixed on God, they can know nothing of scriptural religion. They do not even know what Christian holiness means; what is the entrance of it, the new birth, with all the circumstances attending it: They know no more of this, than do the beasts of the field. Do they repent and believe the Gospel? How much less are they “renewed in the spirit of their minds,” in the image of him that created them? As they have not the least experience of this, so they have not the least conception of it. Were you to name such a thing, you might expect to hear, “Much religion hath made thee mad:” So destitute are they, whatever accomplishments they have beside, of the only religion which avails with God.

4. And till their eye is single, they are as far remote from happiness as from holiness. They may now and then have agreeable dreams, from

Wealth, honor, pleasure, or what else
This short-enduring world can give:

But none of these can satisfy the appetite of an immortal soul. Nay, all of them together cannot give rest, which is the lowest ingredient of happiness to a never dying spirit, which God created for the enjoyment of himself. The hungry soul, like the busy bee, wanders from flower to flower; but it goes off from each, with an abortive hope, and a deluded expectation. Every creature cries, (some with a loud and others with a secret voice,) "Happiness is not in *me*." The height and the depth proclaim to an attentive ear, "The Creator hath not implanted in me a capacity of giving happiness: Therefore, with all thy skill and pains, thou canst not extract it from me." And indeed the more pains any of the children of men take to extract it from any earthly object, the greater will their chagrin be, — the more secure their disappointment.

5. "But although the vulgar herd of mankind can find no happiness; although it cannot be found in the empty pleasures of the world; may it not be found in learning, even by him that has not a single eye? Surely

Content of spirit must from science flow;
For 'tis a godlike attribute to know."

By no means. On the contrary, it has been the observation of all ages, that the men who possessed the greatest learning were the most dissatisfied of all men. This occasioned a person of eminent learning to declare, "A fool may find a kind of paradise upon earth," (although this is a grand mistake,) "but a wise man can find none." These are the most discontented, the most impatient, of men. Indeed, learning naturally effects this: "Knowledge," as the Apostle observes, "puffeth up." But where pride is, happiness is not; they are utterly inconsistent with each other. So much ground there is for that melancholy reflection, wherever true religion is not, —

Avails it then, O Reason! to be wise?
To see this mournful sight with quicker eyes?
To know with more distinction to complain,
And have superior sense in feeling pain?

III.

1. It remains to consider, in the third place, our Lord's important question: "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" The plain meaning is, if that principle which ought to give light to thy whole soul, as the eye does to the body; to direct thy understanding, passions, affections, tempers, — all thy thoughts, words, and actions; if it his principle itself be darkened, — be set wrong, and put darkness for light how great must that darkness be! how terrible its effects!

2. In order to see this in a stronger point of view, let us consider it in a few particular instances. Begin with one of no small importance. Here is a father choosing an employment for his son. If his eye be not single; if he do not singly aim at the glory of God in the salvation of his soul; if it be not his one consideration, what calling is likely to secure him the highest place in heaven; not the largest share of earthly treasure, or the highest preferment in the Church; — the light which is in him is manifestly darkness. And O how great is that darkness! The mistake which he is in, is not a little one, but inexpressibly great. What! do not you prefer his being a cobbler on earth, and a glorious saint in heaven, before his being a Lord on earth, and a damned spirit in hell? If not, how great, unutterably great, is the darkness that covers your soul! What a fool, what a dolt, what a madman is he, how stupid beyond all expression, who judges a palace upon earth to be preferable to a throne in heaven! How unspeakably is his understanding darkened, who, to gain for his child the honor that cometh of men, will entail upon him everlasting shame in the company of the devil and his angels!

3. I cannot dismiss this subject yet, as it is of the utmost importance. How great is the darkness of that execrable wretch (I can give him no better title; be he rich or poor) who will sell his own child to the devil, who will barter her own eternal happiness for any quantity of gold or silver! What a monster would any man be accounted, who devoured the flesh of his own offspring! And is he not as great a monster who, by his own act and deed, gives her to be devoured by that roaring lion? as he certainly does (so far as is in his power) who marries her to an ungodly man. "But he is rich; but he has ten thousand pounds!" What, if it were a hundred thousand? The more the worse; the less probability will she have of escaping the

damnation of hell. With what face wilt thou look upon her, when she tells thee in the realms below, is Thou hast plunged me into this place of torment. Hadst thou given me to a good man, however poor, I might have not been in Abraham's bosom. But, O! what have riches profited me? They have sunk both me and thee into hell!"

4. Are any of you that are called Methodists thus merciful to your children? seeking to *marry them well?* (as the *cant* phrase is;) that is, to sell them to some purchaser that has much money, but little or no religion? Is then the light that is in you also darkness? Are ye, too, regarding God less than mammals? Are ye also without understanding? Have ye profited no more by all ye have heard? Man, woman, think what you are about! Dare *you* also sell your child to the devil? You undoubtedly do this (as far as in you lies) when you marry a son or a daughter to a child of the devil; though it be one that wallows in gold and silver. O take warning in time! Beware of the gilded bait! Death and hell are his beneath. Prefer grace before gold and precious stones; glory in heaven, to riches on earth! If you do not, you are worse than the very Canaanites. They only made their children pass "through the fire" to Moloch. You make yours, *pass into the fire* that never shall be quenched, and to stay in it for ever! O how great is the darkness that causes you, after you have done this, to "wipe your mouth, and say you have done no evil!"

5. Let us consider another case, not far distant from this. Suppose a young man, having finished his studies at the University, is desirous to minister in holy things, and, accordingly, enters into orders. What is his intention in this? What is the end he proposes to himself? If his eye be single, his one design is to save his own soul, and them that hear him; to bring as many sinners as he possibly can out of darkness into marvellous light. If, on the other hand, his eye be not single, if he aim at ease, honor, money, or preferment; the world may account him a wise man, but God says unto him, "Thou fool!" And while the light that is in him is thus darkness, "how great is that darkness!" What folly is comparable to his folly! — one peculiarly dedicated to the God of heaven, to "mind earthly things!" A worldly Clergyman is a fool above all fools, a madman above all madmen! Such vile, infamous wretches as these are the real "ground of the contempt of the Clergy." Indolent Clergymen, pleasure-taking Clergymen, money

loving Clergymen, praise-loving Clergymen, preferment seeking Clergymen, — these are the wretches that cause the order in general to be contemned. These are the pests of the Christian world; the grand nuisance of mankind; a stink in the nostrils of God! Such as these were they who made St. Chrysostom to say, “Hell is paved with the souls of Christian Priests.”

6. Take another case. Suppose a young woman, of an independent fortune, to be addressed at the same time by a man of wealth without religion, and a man of religion without wealth; in other words, by a rich child of the devil, and a poor child of God. What shall we say, if, other circumstances being equal, she prefer the rich man to the good man? It is plain, her eye is not single; therefore her foolish heart is darkened; and how great is that darkness which makes her judge gold and silver a greater recommendation than holiness! which makes a child of the devil, with money, appear more amiable to her than a child of God, without it! What words can sufficiently express the inexcusable folly of such a choice? What a laughingstock (unless she severely repent) will she be to all the devils in hell, when her wealthy companion has dragged her down to his own place of torment!

7. Are there any of you that are present before God who are concerned in any of these matters? Give me leave, with “great plainness of speech,” to apply to your consciences “in the sight of God.” You whom God hath entrusted with sons or daughters, is your eye single in choosing partners for them? What qualifications do you seek in your sons and daughters in law? — religion or riches? Which is your first consideration? Are you not of the old Heathen’s mind,

*Quaerenda pecunia primum,
virtus post nummos?*

Seek money first: Let virtue then be sought.

Bring the matter to a point. Which will you prefer? a rich Heathen, or a pious Christian? — a child of the devil, with an estate; or the child of God, without it? — a Lord or gentleman, with the devil in his heart; (he does not hide it, his speech betrayeth him;) or a tradesman, who, you have reason to believe, has Christ dwelling in his heart? O how great is that darkness

which makes you prefer a child of the devil to a child of God! Which causes you to prefer the poor trash of worldly wealth, which flies as a shadow, to the riches of eternal glory!

8. I call upon you more especially who are called Methodists. In the sight of the great God, upwards of fifty years I have ministered unto you, I have been your servant for Christ's sake. During this time I have given you many solemn warnings on this head. I now give you one more, perhaps the last. Dare any of you, in choosing your calling or situation, eye the things on earth, rather than the things above? In choosing a profession, or a companion for life, for your child, do you look at earth or heaven? And can you deliberately prefer, either for yourself or your offspring, a child of the devil with money, to a child of God without it? Why, the very Heathens cry out,

O curvae in terras animae, et caelestium inanes!

O souls, bow'd down to earth, strangers to heaven!

Repent, repent of your vile earthly-mindedness: Renounce the title of Christians, or prefer, both in your own case and the case of your children, grace to money, and heaven to earth! For the time to come, at least, let "your eye be single," that your "whole body may be full of light!"

BRISTOL, September 25, 1789.

SERMON CXIX.

ON WORLDLY FOLLY.

“But God said unto him, thou fool!” Luke 12:20

BUT one of these fools is commonly wiser in his own eyes “than seven men that can render a reason.” If it were possible for a Christian, for one that has the mind which was in Christ, to despise any one, he would cordially despise those who suppose “they are the men, and wisdom shall die with them.” You may see one of these, painted to the life, in the verses preceding the text. “The ground of a certain rich man,” says our blessed Lord, “brought forth plenteously.” (Verses 16, etc.) “And he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do? for I have no room where to bestow my fruits. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool!” I propose, by the assistance of God,

- I. To open and explain these few full words; and,
- II. To apply them to your conscience.

I.

1. To open and explain them. A little before, our Lord had been giving a solemn caution to one who spoke to him about dividing his inheritance. “Beware of covetousness; for the life of a man,” that is, the happiness of it, “does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesseth.” To prove and illustrate this weighty truth, our Lord relates this remarkable story. It is not improbable, it was one that had lately occurred, and that was fresh in the memory of some that were present. “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plenteously.” The riches of the ancients consisted chiefly in the fruits of the earth. “And he said within himself,

What shall I do?" The very language of want and distress! The voice of one that is afflicted, and groaning under his burden. What shalt thou do? Why, are not those at the door whom God hath appointed to receive what thou canst spare? What shalt thou do? Why, *disperse* abroad, and give to the poor. Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Be a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow. Freely thou hast received; freely give. O no! He is wiser than this comes to; he knows better than so.

2. "And he said, This will I do;" — without asking God's leave, or thinking about Him any more than if there were no God in heaven or on earth; — "I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my goods and all my fruits. *My* fruits! They are as much thine as the clouds that fly over thy head! As much as the winds that blow around thee; which, doubtless, thou canst hold in thy fists! "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years!" "Soul, thou hast much goods!" Are then corn, and wine, and oil, the goods of an immortal spirit? "Laid up for many years!" Who told thee so? Believe him not; he was a liar from the beginning. He could not prolong thy life, if he would. (God alone is the giver of life and death.) And he would not, if he could; but would immediately drag thee to his own sad abode. "Soul, take thy ease; eat, drink, and be merry!" How replete with folly and madness is every part of this wonderful soliloquy! "Eat and drink?" Will thy spirit then eat and drink? Yea, but not of earthly food. Thou wilt soon eat livid flame, and drink of the lake of fire burning with brimstone. But wilt thou then drink and be merry? Nay, there will be no mirth in those horrid shades; those caverns will resound with no music, "but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth!"

3. But while he was applauding his own wisdom, "God said unto him, Thou fool! This night shall thy soul be required of thee. And then whose shall those things be which thou hast prepared?"

4. Let us consider his words a little more attentively. He said within himself, "What shall I do?" And is not the answer ready? Do good. Do all the good thou canst. Let thy plenty supply thy neighbor's wants; and thou wilt never want something to do. Canst thou find none that need the necessaries of life, that are pinched with cold or hunger; none that have not

raiment to put on, or a place where to lay their head; none that are wasted with pining sickness; none that are languishing in prison? If you duly considered our Lord's words, "The poor have you always with you," you would no more ask, "What shall I do?"

5. How different was the purpose of this poor madman! "I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my goods." You may just as well bury them in the earth, or cast them into the sea. This will just as well answer the end for which God entrusted thee with them.

6. But let us examine a little farther the remaining part of his resolution. "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry." What, are these the goods of a never-dying spirit? As well may thy body feed on the fleeting breeze, as thy soul on earthly fruits. Excellent counsel then to such a spirit, to eat and drink! to a spirit made equal to angels, made an incorruptible picture of the God of glory, to feed not on corruptible things, but on the fruit of the tree of life, which grows in the midst of the paradise of God.

7. It is no marvel, then, that God should say unto him, "Thou fool!" For this terrible reason, were there no other: "This night shall thy soul be required of thee!"

And art thou born to die,
to lay this body down?
And must thy trembling spirit fly
Into a land unknown?

— A land of deepest made,
Unpierced by human thought;
The dreary regions of the dead,
Where all things are forgot?

"And whose then shall all the things be which thou hast provided?"

II.

1. The Second thing which I proposed was, to apply these considerations; which, it is certain, are some of the most important that can enter into the heart of man. In one sense, indeed, they have been applied already; for

what has been said has been all application. But I wish every one who reads or hears these words, directly to apply them to his own soul.

2. Does it not concern every one that hears, — “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully,” — to inquire, “Was this ever the case with *me*? Have I now, or have I ever heretofore had, more worldly goods given than I wanted? And what were my thoughts upon the occasion? Did I say in my heart, What shall I do? Was I distressed by my abundance? Did I think, ‘I have much goods laid up for many years?’” Many years! Alas! What is thy life, if protracted to its utmost span? Is it not a vapor, that just appeareth, and vanisheth away? Say not, then, I will pull down my barns; but say to God, in the secret of thy heart, “‘Lord, save, or I perish!’ See, my riches increase; let me not set my heart upon them! Thou seest I stand upon slippery ground; do thou undertake for me!

Uphold me, Savior, or I fall!
 O reach me forth thy gracious hand!
 Only for help on thee I call,
 Only by faith in thee I stand.

See, Lord, how greatly my substance increases! Nothing less than thy almighty power can prevent my setting my heart upon it, and being crushed lower than the grave!”

3. “I ask thee, O Lord, ‘What shall I do?’” First of all, endeavor to be deeply sensible of thy danger; and make it matter of earnest and constant prayer, that thou mayest never lose that sense of it. Pray that thou mayest always feel thyself standing on the brink of a precipice. Meantime, let the language of thy heart be, “Having more means, I will do more good, by the grace of God, than ever I did before. All the additional goods which it hath pleased God to put into my hands, I am resolved to lay out, with all diligence, in additional works of mercy. And hereby I shall ‘lay up for myself a sure foundation, that I may attain eternal life.’”

4. Thou no longer talkest of *thy* goods, or *thy* fruits, knowing they are not thine, but God’s. The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof: He is the Proprietor of heaven and earth. He cannot divest himself of his glory; he must be the Lord, the possessor, of all that is. Only he hath left a

portion of his goods in thy hands, for such uses as he has specified. How long he will be pleased to lodge them with thee, thou dost not yet know; perhaps only till tomorrow, or tonight. Therefore talk not, think not, of many years. Knowest thou not, that thou art a creature of a day, that is crushed before the moth; that the breath which is in thy nostrils may be taken away at a moment's warning; that it may be resumed by him that gave it, at a time thou thinkest not of it? How knowest thou but, the next time thou liest down on thy bed, thou mayest hear, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee?"

5. Is not thy life as unstable as a cloud; fluctuating as a bubble on the water? It fleeth as it were a shadow. and never continueth in one stay. "Many years!" Who is sure of one day? And is it not an instance both of the wisdom and goodness of God, that he holds thy breath in his own hand, and deals it out from moment to moment; that thou mayest always remember, to "live each day as if it were the last?" And after the few days thou shalt have spent under the sun, how soon will it be said,

A heap of dust is all remains of thee;
'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be!

6. Consider, again, the exquisite folly of that saying, "Soul, thou hast much goods." Are, then, the products of the earth food for a heaven-born spirit? Is there any composition of earth and water, yea, though air and fire be added thereto, which can feed those beings of a higher order? What similitude is there between those ethereal spirits, and these base-born clods of earth? Examine the rest of this wise soliloquy and see how it will apply to yourself. "Soul, take thy ease!" O vain hope! Can ease to a spirit spring out of the ground? Suppose the soil were ever so improved, can it yield such a harvest? "Eat, drink, and be merry!" What! can thy soul eat and drink? Yea,

Manna such as angels eat,
Pure delights for spirits fit.

But these do not grow on earthly ground; they are only found in the Paradise of God.

7. But suppose the voice which commands life and death pronounce, “This night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose are all those things thou hast provided?” Alas, they are not thine! Thou hast no longer any part or lot in any of the things that are under the sun. Thou hast then no more share in any of these things of earth, than if the earth and the works of it were burned up. Naked thou camest out of thy mother’s womb, and naked shalt thou return. Thou hast heaped up many things; but for what end? To leave them all behind thee! Poor shade! Thou art now stripped of all: Not even hope is left.

8. Observe the remark which our Lord has left upon the whole occurrence: “*So is every one who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God,*” — such a fool, such an egregious madman, as it is beyond the power of language to express! However wise he may be in his own eyes, and perhaps in those of his neighbor, he is in reality the greatest fool under heaven, who heapeth up things from which he must soon be separated for ever: And whoever is seeking happiness in the things that perish is laying up treasure for himself. This is absolutely inconsistent with *being* “rich” (or rather, *growing*) “toward God;” with obeying that scriptural command, — “My son, give me thy heart.” He who is a child of God can truly say,

All my riches are above;
All my treasure is thy love:

He can testify, “All my desire is unto thee, and. to the remembrance of thy name!”

9. Let every one who readeth these words, narrowly search his own heart. Where hast thou laid up thy treasure hitherto? Where art thou laying it up now? Art thou laboring to be rich toward God, or to lay up earthly goods? which takes up the greater part of thy thoughts? Thou that art careful for outward things, diligent in doing good, and exact in outward duties, — beware of covetousness; of decent, honorable love of money; and of a desire to lay up treasures on earth. Lay up treasures in heaven! A few days hence, thou wilt step into a land of darkness; where earthly fruits will be of no avail; where thou wilt not be capable of eating and drinking, or gratifying any of thy senses. What benefit wilt thou then receive from

all thou hast laid up in this world? What satisfaction in all which thou hast treasured up, — all thou hast left behind thee? Left behind thee! What! couldst thou then take nothing with thee into the everlasting habitations? Nay then, lay up treasure, before thou go hence, which fadeth not away.

BALHAM, February 19, 1790.

SERMON CXX.

ON THE WEDDING GARMENT.

“How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?”

Matthew 22:12.

1. IN the verses preceding the text we read, “After these things, Jesus spake to them again in parables, and said, A certain king made a supper for his son. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw one who had not on a wedding garment. And He saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

2. Upon this parable one of our most celebrated expositors comments in the following manner: — “The design of this parable is to set forth that gracious supply made by God to men in and by the preaching of the gospel. To invite them to this, God sent forth his servants, the Prophets and Apostles.” — And on these words, — “Why camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?” he proceeds thus: “The punishment of whom ought not to discourage us, or make us turn our hacks upon the holy ordinances.” Certainly it ought not; but nothing of this kind can be inferred from this parable, which has no reference to the ordinances, any more than to baptism and marriage. And probably we should never have imagined it, but that the word *supper* occurred therein.

3. However, most of the English annotators have fallen into the same mistake with Mr. Burkitt. And so have thousands of their readers. Yet a mistake it certainly is; and such a mistake as has not any shadow of foundation in the text. It is true, indeed, that none ought to approach the

Lord's table without habitual, at least, if not actual, preparation; that is, a firm purpose to keep all the commandments of God, and a sincere desire to receive all his promises. But that obligation cannot be inferred from this text, though it may from many other passages of Scripture. But there is no need of multiplying texts; one is as good as a thousand: There needs no more to induce any man of a tender conscience to communicate at all opportunities, than that single commandment of our Lord, "Do this in remembrance of me."

4. But, whatever preparation is necessary in order to our being worthy partakers of the Lord's Supper, it has no relation at all to the "wedding garment" mentioned in this parable. It cannot: For that commemoration of his death was not then ordained. It relates wholly to the proceedings of our Lord, when he comes in the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and the dead; and to the qualifications which will then be necessary to their inheriting "the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world."

5. Many excellent men, who are thoroughly apprised of this, — who are convinced, the wedding garment here mentioned is not to be understood of any qualification for the Lord's Supper, but of the qualification for glory, — interpret it of the righteousness of Christ; "which," say they, "is the sole qualification for heaven; this being the only righteousness wherein any man can stand in the day of the Lord. For who," they ask, "will they dare to appear before the great God, save in the righteousness of his well beloved Son? Shall we not then at least, if not before, find the need of having a better righteousness than our own? And what other can that be than the righteousness of God our Savior?" The late pious and ingenious Mr. Hervey descants largely upon this; particularly in his elaborate "Dialogues between Theron and Aspasio."

6. Another elegant writer, now I trust with God, speaks strongly to the same effect, in the preface to his comment on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: "We certainly," says he, "shall need a better righteousness than our own, wherein to stand at the bar of God in the day of judgment:" I do not understand the expression. Is it scriptural? Do we read it in the Bible, either in the Old Testament or the New? I doubt it is an unscriptural,

awkward phrase, which has no determinate meaning. If you mean by that odd, uncouth question, “In whose righteousness are you to stand at the last day?” — *for whose sake*, or *by whose merit*, do you expect to enter into the glory of God? I answer, without the least hesitation, For the sake of Jesus Christ the Righteous. It is through his merits alone that all believers are saved; that is, justified — saved from the guilt, — sanctified — saved from the nature, of sin; and glorified — taken into heaven.

7. It may be worth our while to spend a few more words on this important point. Is it possible to devise a more unintelligible expression than this; — “In what righteousness are we to stand before God at the last day?” Why do you not speak plainly, and say, “*For whose sake* do you look to be saved?” Any plain peasant would then readily answer; For the sake of Jesus Christ.” But all those dark, ambiguous phrases tend only to puzzle the cause, and open a way for unwary hearers to slide into Antinomianism.

8. Is there any expression similar to this of the “wedding garment” to be found in Holy Scripture? In the Revelation we find mention made of “linen, white and clean, which is the righteousness of the saints.” And this, too, many vehemently contend, means the righteousness of Christ. But how then are we to reconcile this with that passage in the seventh chapter, “They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb?” Will they say, “The righteousness of Christ was washed and made white in the blood of Christ?” Away with such Antinomian jargon! Is not the plain meaning this: — It was from the atoning blood that the very righteousness of the saints derived its value and acceptableness with God?

9. In the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation, at the ninth verse, there is an expression which comes much nearer to this: — “The wedding supper of the Lamb.” There is a near resemblance between this and the marriage supper mentioned in the parable. Yet they are not altogether the same: There is a clear difference between them. The supper mentioned in the parable belongs to the Church Militant; that mentioned in the Revelation, to the Church Triumphant: The one, to the kingdom of God on earth; the other, to the kingdom of God in heaven. Accordingly, in the former, there may be found those who have not a “wedding garment.” But there will be

none such to be found in the latter: No, not “in that great multitude which no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” They will all be “kings and priests unto God, and shall reign with him for ever and ever.”

10. Does not that expression, “the righteousness of the saints,” point out what is the “wedding garment” in the parable? It is the “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” The righteousness of Christ is doubtless necessary for any soul that enters into glory: But so is personal holiness too, for every child of man. But it is highly needful to be observed, that they are necessary in different respects. The former is necessary to *entitle* us to heaven; the latter to *qualify* us for it. Without the righteousness of Christ we could have no *claim* to glory; without holiness we could have *fitness* for it. By the former we become members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. By the latter “we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

11. From the very time that the Son of God delivered this weighty truth to the children of men, — that all who had not the “wedding garment” would be “cast into outer darkness, where are weeping and gnashing of teeth,” — the enemy of souls has been laboring to obscure it, that they might still seek death in the error of their life: and many ways has he tried to disguise the holiness without which we cannot be saved. How many things have been palmed, even upon the Christian world, in the place of this! Some of these are utterly contrary thereto, and subversive of it. Some were noways connected with or related to it; but useless and insignificant trifles. Others might be deemed to be some part of it, but by no means the whole. It may be of use to enumerate some of them, lest ye should be ignorant of Satan’s devices.

12. Of the first sort, things prescribed as Christian holiness although flatly contrary thereto, is idolatry. How has this, in various shapes, been taught, and is to this day, as essential to holiness! How diligently is it now circulated in a great part of the Christian Church! Some of their idols are silver and gold, or wood and stone, “graven by art, and man’s device;” some, men of like passions with themselves, particularly the apostles of

our Lord, and the Virgin Mary. To these they add numberless saints of their own creation, with no small company of angels.

13. Another thing as directly contrary to the whole tenor of true religion, is, what is diligently taught in many parts of the Christian Church; I mean the spirit of persecution; of persecuting their brethren even unto death; so that the earth has been often covered with blood by those who were called Christians, in order to “make their calling and election sure.” It is true, many, even in the Church of Rome, who were taught this horrid doctrine, now seem to be ashamed of it. But have the heads of that community as openly and explicitly renounced that capital doctrine of devils, as they avowed it in the Council of Constance, and practiced it for many ages? Till they have done this, they will be chargeable with the blood of Jerome of Prague, basely murdered, and of many thousands, both in the sight of God and man.

14. Let it not be said, “This does not concern us Protestants: We think and let think. We abhor the spirit of persecution; and maintain, as an indisputable truth, that every rational creature has a right to worship God as he is persuaded in his own mind.” But are we true to our own principles? So far, that we do not use fire and faggot. We do not persecute unto blood those that do not subscribe to our opinions. Blessed be God, the laws of our country do not allow of this; but is there no such thing to be found in England as domestic persecution? The saying or doing anything unkind to another for following his own conscience is a species of persecution. Now, are we all clear of this? Is there no husband who, in this sense, persecutes his wife? who uses her unkindly, in word or deed, for worshipping God after her own conscience? Do no parents thus persecute their children? no masters or mistresses, their servants? If they do this, and think they do God service therein, they must not cast the first stone at the Roman Catholics.

15. When things of an indifferent nature are represented as necessary to salvation, it is a folly of the same kind, though not of the same magnitude. Indeed, it is not a little sin to represent trifle: as necessary to salvation; such as going of pilgrimages or anything that is not expressly enjoined in the Holy Scripture. Among these we may undoubtedly rank orthodoxy, or

right opinions. We know, indeed, that wrong opinions in religion naturally lead to wrong tempers, or wrong practices; and that, consequently, it is our bounded duty to pray that we may have a right judgment in all things. But still a man may judge as accurately as the devil, and yet be as wicked as he.

16. Something more excusable are they who imagine holiness to consist in things that are only a part of it; (that is, when they are connected with the rest; otherwise they are no part of it at all;) suppose in doing no harm. And how exceeding common is this! How many take holiness and harmlessness to mean one and the same thing! whereas were a man as harmless as a post, he might be as far from holiness as heaven from earth. Suppose a man, therefore, to be exactly honest, to pay every one his own, to cheat no man, to wrong no man, to hurt no man, to be just in all his dealings; suppose a woman to be uniformly modest and virtuous in all her words and actions; suppose the one and the other to be steady practicers of morality, that is, of justice, mercy, and truth; yet all this, though it is good as far as it goes, is but a part of Christian holiness. Yea, suppose a person of this amiable character to do much good wherever he is; to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, relieve the stranger, the sick, the prisoner; yea, and to save many souls from death; it is possible he may still fall far short of that holiness without which he cannot see the Lord.

17. What, then, is that holiness which is the true “wedding garment,” the only qualification for glory? “In Christ Jesus,” (that is, according to the Christian institution, whatever be the case of the heathen world,) “neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but a new creation,” — the renewal of the soul “in the image of God wherein it was created.” In “Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.” It first, through the energy of God, worketh love to God and all man kind; and, by this love, every holy and heavenly temper, — in particular, lowliness, meekness, gentleness, temperance, and long-suffering) It is neither circumcision,” — the attending on all the Christian ordinances, “ — nor uncircumcision,” — the fulfilling of all heathen morality, — but “the keeping: the commandments of God; particularly those, — “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all

thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself:” In a word, holiness is the having “the mind that was in Christ,” and the “walking as Christ walked.”

18. Such has been my judgment for these threescore years, without any material alteration. Only! about fifty years ago I had a clearer view than before of justification by faith; and in this, from that very hour? I never varied, no, not an hair’s breadth. Nevertheless, an ingenious man has publicly accused me of a thousand variations. I pray God, not to lay this to his charge! I am now on the borders of the grave; but, by the grace of God, I still witness the same confession. Indeed, some have supposed, that when I began to declare, “By grace ye are saved through faith,” I retracted what I had before maintained: “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” But it is an entire mistake: These scriptures well consist with each other; the meaning of the former being plainly this, — By faith we are saved from sin, and made holy. The imagination, that faith *supersedes* holiness, is the marrow of Antinomianism.

19. The sum of all is this: The God of love is willing to save all the souls that he has made. This he has proclaimed to them in his word, together with the terms of salvation, revealed by the Son of his love, who gave his own life that they that believe in him might have everlasting life. And for these he has prepared a kingdom, from the foundation of the world. But he will not force them to accept of it; he leaves them in the hands of their own counsel; he saith “Behold, I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: Choose life, that ye may live.” Choose holiness, by my grace; which is the way, the only way, to everlasting life. He cries aloud,” Be holy, and be happy; happy in this world, and happy in the world to come.” “Holiness becometh his house for ever!” This is the wedding garment of all that are called to “the marriage of the Lamb.” Clothed in this, they will not be found naked: “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” But as to all those who appear in the last day without the wedding garment, the Judge will say, “Cast them into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!”

MADELEY, March 26, 1790.

SERMON CXXI.

HUMAN LIFE A DREAM

“Even like as a dream when one awaketh; so shalt thou make their image to vanish out of the city.”

Psalm 73:20.

1. ANY one that considers the foregoing verses, will easily observe that the Psalmist is speaking directly of the wicked that prosper in their wickedness. It is very common for these utterly to forget that they are creatures of a day; to live as if they were never to die; as if their present state was to endure for ever; or, at least, as if they were indisputably sure that they “had much goods laid up for many years:” So that they might safely say, “Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” But how miserable a mistake is this! How often does God say to such a one, “Thou fool this night shall thy soul be required of thee!” Well then may it be said of them, “O, how suddenly do they consume!” — perish, and come to a fearful end. Yea, “even like as a dream when one awaketh; so shalt thou make their image to vanish out of the city.”

2. But I would at present carry this thought farther; I would consider it in a general sense, and show how near a resemblance there is between human life and a dream. An ancient poet carries the comparison farther still, when he styles life, “the dream of a shadow.” And so does Cowley, when he cries out,

O life, thou nothing’s younger brother!
So like, that we mistake the one for the’ other!

But, setting these and all other flights of poetry aside, I would seriously inquire, wherein this resemblance lies; wherein the analogy between the one and the other does properly consist.

3. In order to this, I would inquire, First, What is a dream? You will say, “Who *does* not know this?” Might you not rather say, Who *does* know? Is there anything more mysterious in nature? Who is there that I as not experienced it, that has not dreamed a thousand times? Yet he is no more able to explain the nature of it, than he is to grasp the skies who can give any clear, satisfactory account of the parent of dreams, sleep? It is true, many physicians have attempted this; but they have attempted it in vain. They have talked learnedly about it, but have left the matter at last just as dark as it was before. They tell us of some of its properties and effects; but none can tell what is the essence of it.

4. However, we know the origin of dreams, and that with some degree of certainty. There can be no doubt but some of them arise from the present constitution of the body; while others of them are probably occasioned by the passions of the mind. Again: We are clearly informed in Scripture, that some are caused by the operation of good angels; as others, undoubtedly, are owing to the power and malice of evil angels (if we may dare to suppose that there are any such now; or, at least, that they have anything to do in the world). From the same divine treasury of knowledge we learn that, on some extraordinary occasions, the great Father of spirits has manifested him self to human spirits, “in dreams and visions of the night.” But which of all these arise from natural, which from supernatural, influence, we are many times not able to determine.

5. And how can we certainly distinguish between our dreams and our waking thoughts? What criterion is there by which we may surely know whether we are awake or asleep? It is true, as soon as we awake out of sleep, we know we have been in a dream, and are now awake. But how shall we know that a dream is such while we continue therein? What is a dream? To give a gross and superficial, not a philosophical, account of it: It is a series of persons and things presented to our mind in sleep, which have no being but in our own imagination. A dream, therefore, is a kind of digression from our real life. It seems to be an echo of what was said or done when we were awake. Or, may we say, a dream is a fragment of life, broken off at both ends; not connected either with the part that goes before, or with that which follows after? And is there any better way of distinguishing our dreams from our waking thoughts, than by this very

circumstance? It is a kind of parenthesis, inserted in life, as that is in a discourse, which goes on equally well either with it or without it. By this then we may infallibly know a dream, — by its being broken off at both ends; by its having no proper connection with the real things which either precede or follow it.

6. It is not needful to *prove* that there is a near resemblance between these transient dreams, and the dream of life. It may be of more use to *illustrate* this important truth; to place it in as striking a light as possible. Let us then seriously consider, in a few obvious particulars, the case of one that is just awaking out of life, and opening his eyes in eternity.

7. Let us then propose the case. Let us suppose we had now before us one that was just passed into the world of spirits. Might not you address such a new-born soul in some such manner as this? You have been an inhabitant of earth, forty, perhaps fifty or sixty, years. But now God has uttered his voice, “Awake, thou that sleepest! You awake; you arise; you have no more to do with these poor transient shadows. Arise, and shake thyself from the dust! See, all is real here! all is permanent; all eternal! far more stable than the foundations of the earth; yea, than the pillars of that lower heaven. Now that your eyes are open, see how inexpressibly different are all the things that are now round about you! What a difference do you perceive in yourself! Where is your body, — your house of clay? Where are your limbs, your hands, your feet, your head? There they lie, cold, insensible!

No anger, hereafter, or shame,
 Shall redden the innocent day;
 Extinct is the animal flame,
 And passion is vanish'd away.

What a change is in the immortal spirit! You see everything around you; but how? Not with eyes of flesh and blood. You hear; but not by a stream of undulating air, striking on an extended membrane. You feel; but in how wonderful a manner! You have no nerves to convey the ethereal fire to the common sensory; rather, are you not now all eye, all ear, all feeling, all perception? How different, now you are thoroughly awake, are all the objects round about you! Where are the houses, and gardens, and fields,

and cities, which you lately saw? Where are the rivers, and seas, and everlasting hills? Was it then only in a dream that our poet discovered,

Earth hath this variety from heaven,
Of pleasure situate in hill and dale?

Nay, I doubt all these vanished away like smoke, the moment you awoke out of the body.

8. How strange must not only the manner of existence appear, and the place wherein you are, (if it may be called place; though who can define or describe the place of spirits?) But the inhabitants of that unknown region! whether they are of the number of those unhappy spirits that, “kept not their first estate,” or of those holy ones that still “minister to the heirs of salvation.” How strange are the employments of those spirits with which you are now surrounded! How bitter are they to the taste of those that are still dreaming upon earth! “I have no relish,” said one of these, (a much applauded wit who has lately left the body,) “for sitting upon a cloud all day long, and singing praise to God.” We may easily believe him; and there is no danger of his being put to that trouble. Nevertheless, this is no trouble to them who cease not day and night, but continually sing, “Holy, holy, holy!, Lord God of Sabbath!”

9. Suppose this to be the case with any of you that are now present before God. It may be so tomorrow; perhaps tonight; perhaps this night your “soul may be required of you;” the dream of life may end, and *you* may wake into broad eternity! See, there lies the poor inanimate carcass, shortly to be sown in corruption and dishonor. But where is the immortal, incorruptible spirit? There it stands, naked before the eyes of God! Meantime, what is become of all the affairs which you have been eagerly engaged in under the sun? What profit have you reaped of all your labor and care? Does your money follow you? No; you have left it behind you; — the same thing to you as if it had vanished into air. Does your gay or rich apparel follow you? Your body is clothed with dust and rottenness. Your soul, indeed, is clothed with immortality. But, O! what immortality? Is it an immortality of happiness and glory; or of shame and everlasting contempt? Where is the honor, the pomp, of the rich and the great; the

applause that surrounded you? All are gone; all are vanished away, “Like as a shadow that departeth.” “The play is over,” said Monsieur Moultray when he saw the ball pierce the temples of his dying master.¹⁵ And what cared the courtier for this? No more than if it had been the conclusion of a farce or dance. But while the buffoon slept on and took his rest, it was not so with the monarch. Though he was not terrified with anything on earth, he would be at the very gates of hell. Vain valor! In the very article of death, he grasped the hilt of his sword! But where was he thee next moment, when the sword dropped out of his hand, and the soul out of his body? Then ended the splendid dream of royalty, — of destroying cities, and of conquering kingdoms!

10. “How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!” What are the weapons that are so terrible among us, to the inhabitants of eternity? How are the wise, the learned, the poet, the critic fallen, and their glory vanished away! How is the beauty fallen, the late idol of a gazing crowd! In how complete a sense are “the daughters of music brought low,” and all the instruments thereof forgotten! Are you not now convinced, that (according to the Hebrew proverb) “a living dog is better than a dead lion?” For the *living know* ye, *must* know, unless they obstinately refuse, “that they shall die; but the dead know not anything” that will avail for the ease of their pain, or to lessen their misery. Also “their hope and fear, and their desire,” all are perished; all of them are fled, “they have not any portion in the things that are done under the sun!”

11. Where, indeed, is the *hope* of those who were lately laving deep schemes, and saying, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such a city, and continue there a year, and traffic, and get gain?” How totally had they forgotten that wise admonition, “Ye know not what shall be on the morrow! For, what is your life? It is a vapor that appeareth awhile, and then vanisheth away!” Where is all your business? where your worldly cares, your troubles or engagements? All these things are fled away like smoke; and your soul is left. And how is it qualified for the enjoyment of this new world? Has it a relish for the objects and enjoyments of the invisible world? Are your affections loosened from things below, and fixed on things above, — fixed on that place where Jesus sitteth at the right

hand of God? Then happy are ye; and when He whom ye love shall appear, “ye shall also appear with him in glory.”

12. But how do you relish the company that surrounds you? Your old companions are gone; a great part of them probably separated from you never to return. Are your present companions angels of light? — ministering spirits, that but now whispered, “Sister spirit, come away! We are sent to conduct thee over that gulf into Abraham’s bosom?” And what are those? Some of the souls of the righteous, whom thou didst formerly relieve with “the mammon of unrighteousness;” and who are now commissioned by your common Lord to receive, to welcome you “into the everlasting habitations.” Then the angels of darkness will quickly discern they have no part in you. So they must either hover at a distance, or flee away in despair. Are some of these happy spirits that take acquaintance with you, the same that traveled with you below, and bore a part in your temptations; that, together with you, fought the good fight of faith, and laid hold on eternal life? As you then wept together, you may rejoice together, you and your guardian angels perhaps, in order to increase your thankfulness for being “delivered from so great a death.” They may give you a view of the realms below, those

Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell.

See, on the other hand, the mansions which were “prepared for you from the foundation of the world!” O what a difference between the dream that is past, and the real scene that is now present with thee! Look up! See!

No need of the sun in that day,
Which never is follow’d by night;
Where Jesus’s beauties display
A pure and a permanent light!

Look down! What a prison is there! “‘Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding fire!” And what inhabitants! What horrid, fearful shapes, emblems of the rage against God and man, the envy, fury, despair, fixed within, — causing them to gnash their teeth at Him they so long despised! Meanwhile, does it comfort them to see, across the great gulf, the

righteous in Abraham's bosom? What a place is that! What a "house of God, eternal in the heavens!" Earth is only His footstool; yea,

The spacious firmament on high,
And all the blue, ethereal sky.

Well then may we say to its inhabitants,

Proclaim the glories of your Lord,
Dispersed through all the heavenly street;
Whose boundless treasures can afford
So rich a pavement for his feet.

And yet how inconsiderable is the glory of that house, compared to that of its great Inhabitant! in view of whom all the first-born sons of light, angels, archangels, and all the company of Heaven, full of light as they are full of love,

Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes.

13. How wonderful, then, now the dream of life is over, now you are quite awake, do all these scenes appear! Even such a sight as never entered, or could enter, into your hearts to conceive! How are all those that "awake up after his likeness, now satisfied with it!" They have now a portion, real, solid, incorruptible, "that fadeth not away." Meantime, how exquisitely wretched are they who (to wave all other considerations) have chosen for their portion those transitory shadows which now are vanished, and have left them in an abyss of real misery, which must remain to all eternity!

14. Now, considering that every child of man who is yet upon earth must sooner or later wake out of this dream, and enter real life; how infinitely does it concern every one of us to attend to this before our great change comes! Of what importance is it to be continually sensible of the condition wherein we stand! How advisable, by every possible means, to connect the ideas of time and eternity! so to associate them together, that the thought of one may never recur to your mind, without the thought of the other! It is our highest wisdom to associate the ideas of the visible and invisible world; to connect temporal and Spiritual, mortal and immortal

being. Indeed, in our common dreams we do not usually know we are asleep whilst we are in the midst of our dream. As neither do we know it while we are in the midst of the dream which we call life. But you may be conscious of it now. God grant you may, before you awake in a winding-sheet of fire!

15. What an admirable foundation for thus associating the ideas of time and eternity, of the visible and invisible world, is laid in the nature of religion! For, what is religion, — I mean scriptural religion? for all other is the vainest of all dreams. What is the very root of this religion? It is Emmanuel, God with us! God in man! Heaven connected with earth! The unspeakable union of mortal with immortal. For “truly our fellowship” (may all Christians say) “is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. God hath given unto us eternal Life; and this life is in his Son.” What follows? “He that hath the Son hath life: And he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

16. But how shall we retain a constant sense of this? I have often thought, in my waking hours, “Now, when I fall asleep, and see such and such things I will remember it was but a dream.” Yet I could not, while the dream lasted; and probably none else can. But it is otherwise with the dream of life; which we do remember to be such even while it lasts: And if we do forget it, (as we are indeed apt to do,) a friend may remind us of it. It is much to be wished that such a friend were always near; one that would frequently sound in our ear, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead!” Soon you will awake into real life. You will stand a naked spirit, in the world of spirits, before the face of the great God! See that you now hold fast that “eternal life which he hath given you in his Son.”

17. How admirably does this life of God branch out into the whole of religion, — I mean scriptural religion! As soon as God reveals his Son in the heart of a sinner, he is enabled to say, “The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” He then “rejoices in hope of the glory of God,” even with joy unspeakable. And in consequence both of this faith and hope, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart; which, filling the soul with love to all mankind, “is the fulfilling of the law.”

18. And how wonderfully do both faith and love connect God with man,
and time with eternity! In considerate of this, we may boldly say, —

Vanish then this world of shadows;
 Pass the former things away!
Lord, appear! appear to glad us
 With the dawn of endless day!
O conclude this mortal story
 Throw this universe aside!
Come, eternal King of glory,
 Now descend, and take thy bride!

SERMON CXXII.

ON FAITH.

“Now faith is the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrew. 11:1.

1. **M**ANY times have I thought, many times have I spoke, many times have I wrote, upon these words; and yet there appears to be a depth in them which I am in nowise able to fathom. Faith is, in one sense of the word, a divine conviction of God and of the things of God; in another, (nearly related to, yet not altogether the same,) it is a divine conviction of the invisible and eternal world. In this sense I would now consider, —

2. I am now an immortal spirit, strangely connected with a little portion of earth; but this is only for a while: In a short time I am to quit this tenement of clay, and to remove into another state

Which the living know not,
And the dead cannot, or they may not, tell!

What kind of existence shall I then enter upon, when my spirit has launched out of the body? How shall I feel myself, — perceive my own being? How shall I discern the things that are round about me, either material or spiritual objects? When my eyes no longer transmit the rays of light, how will the naked spirit *see*? When the organs of hearing are moldered into dust, in what manner shall I hear? When the brain is of no further use, what means of thinking shall I have? When my whole body is dissolved into senseless earth, what means shall I have of gaining knowledge?

3. How strange, how incomprehensible, are the means whereby I shall then take knowledge even of the material world! Will things appear then as they do now, — of the same size, shape, and color? Or will they be altered in

any, or all these respects? How will the sun, moon, and stars appear? the sublunary heavens? the planetary heavens? the region of the fixed stars? — how the fields of ether, which we may conceive to be millions of miles beyond them? Of all this we know nothing yet And, indeed. we need to know nothing.

4. What then can we know of those innumerable objects which properly belong to the invisible world; which mortal “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into our hearts to conceive?” What a scene will then be opened, when the regions of hades are displayed without a covering! Our English translators seem to have been much at a loss for a word to render this. Indeed, two hundred years ago, it was tolerably expressed by the word *hell*, which then signified much the same with the word *hades*, namely, the invisible world. Accordingly, by Christ descending into hell, they meant, his body remained in the grave, his soul remained in hades, (which is the receptacle of separate spirits,) from death to the resurrection. Here we cannot doubt but the spirits of the righteous are inexpressibly happy. They are, as Saint Paul expresses it, “with the Lord;” favored with so intimate a communion with him, as “is far better” than whatever the chief of the Apostles experienced while in this world. On the other hand, we learn from our Lord’s own account of Dives and Lazarus, that the rich man, from the moment he left the world, entered into a state of torment. And “there is a great gulf fixed” in hades, between the place of the holy and that of unholy Spirits, which it is impossible for either the one or the other to pass over. Indeed, a gentleman of great learning, the Honorable Mr. Campbell, in his account of the Middle State, published not many years ago, seems to suppose that wicked souls may amend in hades, and then remove to a happier mansion. He has great hopes that “the rich man,” mentioned by our Lord, in particular, might be purified by that penal fire, till, in process of time, he might be qualified for a better abode. But who can reconcile this with Abraham’s assertion, that none can pass over the “great gulf?”

5. I cannot therefore but think, that all those who are with the rich man in the unhappy division of hades, will remain there howling and blaspheming, cursing and looking upwards, till they are cast into “the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” And, on the other hand, can we

reasonably doubt but that those who are now in paradise, in Abraham's bosom. — all those holy souls who have been discharged from the body, from the beginning of the world unto this day, — will be continually ripening for heaven; will be perpetually holier and happier, till they are received into the "kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world?"

6. But who can inform us, in what part of the universe hades is situated, — this abode of both happy and unhappy spirits, till they are re-united to their bodies? It has not pleased God to reveal anything concerning it in the Holy Scripture; and, consequently, it is not possible for us to form any judgment, or even conjecture, about it. Neither are we informed, how either one or the other are employed, during the time of their abode there. Yet may we not probably suppose, that the Governor of the world may sometimes permit wicked souls "to do his gloomy errands in the deep," or, perhaps, in conjunction with evil angels, to inflict vengeance on wicked men? Or will many of them be shut up in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day? In the mean time, may we not probably suppose, that the spirits of the just, though generally lodged in paradise, yet may sometimes, in conjunction with the holy angels, minister to the heirs of salvation? May they not

Sometimes, on errands of love,
Revisit their brethren below?

It is a pleasing thought, that some of these human spirits, attending us with, or in the room of, angels, are of the number of those that were dear to us while they were in the body. So that there is no absurdity in the question, —

Have ye your own flesh forgot,
By a common ransom bought?
Can death's interposing tide
Spirits one in Christ divide?

But, be this as it may, it is certain, human spirits swiftly increase in knowledge, in holiness, and in happiness; conversing with all the wise and holy souls that lived in all ages and nations from the beginning of the

world; with angels and archangels, to whom the children of men are no more than infants; and, above all, with the eternal Son of God, “in whom are his all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” And let it be especially considered, whatever they learn they will retain for ever. For they forget nothing. To forget is only incident to spirits that are clothed with flesh and blood.

7. But how will this material universe appear to a disembodied spirit? Who can tell whether any of these objects that surround us will appear the same as they do now? And if we know so little of these, what can we now know concerning objects of a quite different nature? concerning the spiritual world? It seems it will not be possible for us to discern them at all, till we are furnished with senses of a different nature, which are not yet opened in our souls. “These may enable us both to penetrate the inmost substance of things, whereof we now discern only the surface; and to discern innumerable things, of the very existence whereof we have not now the least perception. What astonishing scenes will then discover themselves to our newly-opening senses! Probably fields of ether, not only ten fold, but ten thousand fold, “the length of this terrene.” And with what variety of furniture, animate and inanimate! How many orders of beings not discovered by organs of flesh and blood! perhaps thrones, dominions, principedoms, virtues, powers! — whether of those that retain their first habitations and primeval strength, or of those that, rebelling against their Creator, have been cast out of heaven! And shall not we then, as far as angels ken, survey the bounds of creation, and see every place where the Almighty

Stopp’d his rapid wheels, and said, —
 “This be thy just circumference, O world?”

Yea, shall we not be able to move, quick as thought, through the wide realms of uncreated night? Above all, the moment we step into eternity, shall we not feel ourselves swallowed up of Him who is in this and every place, — who filleth heaven and earth? It is only the veil of flesh and blood which now hinders us from perceiving, that the great Creator cannot but fill the whole immensity of space. He is every moment above us, beneath us, and on every side. Indeed, in this dark abode, this land of

shadows, this region of sin and death, the thick cloud which is interposed between conceals him from our sight. But the veil will disappear; and he will appear in unclouded majesty, “God over all, blessed for ever!”

8. How variously are the children of men employed in this world! in treading over “the paths they trod six thousand years before!” But who knows how we shall be employed after we enter that invisible world? A little of it we may conceive, and that without any doubt, provided we keep to what God him self has revealed by his word, and what he works in the hearts of his children. Let us consider, First, what may be the employment of unholy Spirits from death to the resurrection. We cannot doubt but the moment they leave the body, they find themselves surrounded by spirits of their own kind, probably human as well as diabolical. What power God may permit these to exercise over them, we do not distinctly know. But it is not improbable, he may suffer Satan to employ them, as he does his own angels, in inflicting death, or evils of various kinds, and the men that know not God: For this end they may raise storms by sea or by land, they may shoot meteors through the air; they may occasion earthquakes; and, in numberless ways, affect those whom they are not suffered to destroy. Where they are not permitted to take away life, they may inflict various diseases; and many of these, which we judge to be natural, are undoubtedly diabolical. I believe this is frequently the case with lunatics. It is observable, that many of those mentioned in scripture, who are called lunatics by one of the Evangelists, are termed demoniacs by another. One of the most eminent Physicians I ever knew, particularly in cases of insanity, the late Dr. Deacon, was clearly of opinion that this was the case with many, if not with most, lunatics. And it is no valid objection to this, that these diseases are so often cured by natural means; for a wound inflicted by an evil spirit might be cured as any other, unless that spirit was permitted to repeat the blow.

9. May not some of these evil spirits be likewise employed, in conjunction with evil angels, in tempting wicked men to sin, and in procuring occasions for them? yea, and in tempting good men to sin, even after they have escaped the corruption that is in the world? Herein, doubtless, they put forth all their strength; and greatly glory if they conquer. A passage in an ancient author may greatly illustrate this: (Although I apprehend, he did

not intend that we should take it literally:) “Satan Summoned his powers, and examined what mischief each of them had done. One said, ‘I have set a house on fire, and destroyed all its inhabitants.’ Another said, ‘I have raised a storm at sea, and sunk a ship; and all on board perished in the waters.’ Satan answered, ‘Perhaps those that were burned or drowned were saved.’ A third said, ‘I have been forty years tempting a holy man to commit adultery; and I have left him asleep in his sin.’ Hearing this, Satan rose to do him honor; and all hell resounded with his praise.” Hear this, all ye that imagine you cannot fall from grace!

10. Ought not we then to be perpetually on our guard against those subtle enemies? Though we see them not, —

A constant watch they keep:
They eye us night and day;
And never slumber, never sleep,
Lest they should lose their prey.

Herein they join with “the rulers of the darkness,” the intellectual darkness, “of this world,” — the ignorance, wickedness, and misery, diffused through it, — to hinder all good, and promote all evil! To this end they are continually “working with energy by the children of disobedience.” Yea, sometimes they work by them those *lying wonders* that might almost deceive even the children of God.

11. But, meantime, how may we conceive the inhabitants of the other part of hades, the souls of the righteous, to be employed? It has been positively affirmed by some philosophical men, that spirits have no place. But they do not observe, that if it were so, they must be omnipresent, — an attribute which cannot be allowed to any but the Almighty Spirit. The abode of these blessed spirits the ancient Jews were used to term Paradise, — the same name which our Lord gave it, telling the penitent thief; “This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Yet in what part of the universe this is situated who can tell, or even conjecture; since it has not pleased God to reveal anything concerning it? But we have no reason to think they are confined to this place; or indeed, to any other. May we not rather say, that, “servants of his,” as well as the holy angels, they “do his pleasure;” whether among the inhabitants of earth, or in any other part of his

dominions? And as we easily believe that they are swifter than the light; even as swift as thought; they are well able to traverse the whole universe in the twinkling of an eye, either to execute the divine commands, or to contemplate the works of God. What a field is here open before them! And how immensely may they increase in knowledge, while they survey his works of creation or providence, or his manifold wisdom in the Church! What depth of wisdom, of power, and of goodness do they discover in his methods of “bringing many sons to glory!” Especially while they converse on any of these subjects, with the illustrious dead of ancient days! with Adam, first of men; with Noah, who saw both the primeval and the ruined world; with Abraham, the friend of God; with Moses, who was favored to speak with God, as it were, “face to face;” with Job, perfected by sufferings; with Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Daniel, and all the Prophets; with the Apostles, the noble army of Martyrs, and all the saints who have lived and died to the present day; with our elder brethren, the holy angels, cherubim, seraphim, and all the companies of heaven; above all the name of creature owns, with Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant! Meantime, how will they advance in holiness; in the whole image of God, wherein they were created; in the love of God and man; gratitude to their Creator, and benevolence to all their fellow-creatures! Yet it does not follow, (what some earnestly maintain,) that this general benevolence will at all interfere with that peculiar affection which God himself implants for our relations, friends, and benefactors. O no! had you stood by his bed-side, when that dying saint was crying out, “I have a father and a mother gone to heaven;” (to paradise, the receptacle of happy spirits;) “I have ten brothers and sisters gone to heaven; and now I am going to them that am the eleventh! Blessed be God that I was born!” would you have replied, “What, if you are going to them? They will be no more to you than any other persons; for you will not know them.” *Not know them!* Nay, does not all that is in you recoil at that thought? Indeed, skeptics may ask, “How do disembodied spirits know each other?” I answer plainly, I cannot tell: But I am certain that they do. This is as plainly proved from one passage of Scripture, as it could be from a thousand. Did not Dives and Lazarus know each other in hades, even afar off? even though they were fixed on different sides of the “great gulf?” Can we doubt, then, whether the souls that are together in paradise shall know one another? The Scripture, therefore, clearly decides

this question. And so does the very reason of the thing; for we know, every holy temper which we carry with us into paradise will remain in us for ever. But such is gratitude to our benefactors. This, therefore, will remain for ever. And this implies, that the knowledge of our benefactors will remain, without which it cannot exist.

12. And how much will that add to the happiness of those spirits who are already discharged from the body, that they are permitted to minister to those whom they have left behind! An indisputable proof of this we have in the twenty-second chapter of the Revelation. When the Apostle fell down to worship the glorious spirit which he seems to have mistaken for Christ, he told him plainly, "I am of thy fellow-servants, the Prophets;" not God, not an angel, but a human spirit. And in how many ways may they "minister to the heirs of salvation!" Sometimes by counteracting wicked spirits whom we cannot resist, because we cannot see them; sometimes by preventing our being hurt by men, or beasts, or inanimate creatures. How often may it please God to answer the prayer of good Bishop Ken!—

O may thine angels, while I sleep,
 Around my bed their vigils keep;
 Their love angelical instill;
 Stop all the avenues of ill!
 May they celestial joys rehearse,
 And thought to thought with me converse
 Or, in my stead, the whole night long,
 Sing to my God a grateful song!

And may not the Father of spirits allot this office jointly to angels, and human spirits waiting to be made perfect?

13. It may indeed be objected, that God has no need of any subordinate agents, of either angelical or human spirits, to guard his children in their waking or sleeping hours; seeing "He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep." And certainly, he is able to preserve them by his own immediate power; yea, and he is able by his own immediate power only, without any instruments at all, to supply the wants of all his creatures both in heaven and earth. But it is, and ever was, his pleasure, not to work by his own immediate power only, but chiefly by subordinate means,

from the beginning of the world. And how wonderfully is his wisdom displayed in adjusting all these to each other! So that we may well cry out, “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all.”

14. This we know, concerning the whole frame and arrangement of the visible work. But how exceeding little do we now know concerning the invisible! And we should have known still less of it, had it not pleased the Author of both worlds to give us more than natural light, to give us “his word, to be a lantern to our feet, and a light in all our paths.” And holy men of old, being assisted by his Spirit, have discovered many particulars of which otherwise we should have had no conception.

15. And without revelation. how little certainty of invisible things did the wisest of men obtain! The small glimmerings of light which they had were merely conjectural. At best they were only a faint dim twilight, delivered from uncertain tradition; and so obscured by heathen fables, that it was but one degree better than utter darkness.

16. How uncertain the best of these conjectures was, may easily be gathered from their own accounts. The most finished of all these accounts, is that of the great Roman poet. Where observe how warily he begins, with that apologetic preface, — *Sit mihi fas audita loqui?* — “May I be allowed to tell what I have heard?” And, in the conclusion, lest any one should imagine he believed any of these accounts, he sends the relater of them out of hades by the *ivory gates* through which, he had just informed us, that only dreams and shadows pass, — a very plain intimation, that all which has gone before, is to be looked upon as a dream!

17. How little regard they had for all these conjectures, with regard to the invisible world, clearly appears from the words of his brother poet; who affirms, without any scruple, —

*Esse aliquos manes, et subterranea reyna,
Nec pueri credunt.*

That there are ghosts, or realms below, not even a man of them now believes.”

So little could even the most improved reason discover concerning the invisible and eternal world! The greater cause have we to praise the Father of lights, who hath opened the eyes of our understanding, to discern those things which could not be seen by eyes of flesh and blood; that He who of old time shined out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, and enlightened us with the light of the glory of God? in the face of Jesus Christ, “the author and finisher of our faith” “by whom he made the worlds;” by whom he now sustains whatever he hath made; for,

Till nature shall her Judge survey,
The King MESSIAH reigns.

These things we have believed upon the testimony of God, the Creator of all things, visible and invisible; by this testimony we already know the things that now exist, though not yet seen, as well as those that will exist in their season, until this visible world shall pass away, and the Son of Man shall come in his glory.

18. Upon the whole, what thanks ought we to render to God, who has vouchsafed this “evidence of things unseen” to the poor inhabitants of earth, who otherwise must have remained in utter darkness concerning them! How invaluable a gift is even this imperfect light, to the benighted sons of men! What a relief is it to the defects of our senses, and, consequently of our understanding; which can give us no information of any thing, but what is first presented by the senses! But hereby a new set of senses (so to speak) is opened in our souls; and, by this means,

The things unknown to feeble sense,
Unseen by reason’s glimmering ray,
With strong, commanding evidence,
Their heavenly origin display.
Faith lends its realizing light:
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly:
The’ Invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye!

LONDON, January 17, 1791.

SERMON CXXIII.

ON THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HUMAN HEART.

“The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Who can know it?”

Jeremiah 17:9.

1. THE most eminent of the ancient Heathens have left us many testimonies of this. It was indeed their common opinion, that there was a time when men in general were virtuous and happy; this they termed the “golden age.” And thee account of this was spread through almost all nations. But it was likewise generally believed, that this happy age had expired long ago; and that men are now in the midst of the “iron age.” At the commencement of this, says the poet, —

*Irrumpit venae peioris in aevum
Omne nefas: fugere pudor, verumque, fisesqus
In quorum sublcere locum, fraudesque, dolique
Insisiaeque, et vis, et amor sceleratus habendi,*

Immediately broke in,
With a full tide, all wickedness and sin:
Shame, truth, fidelity, swift fled away;
And cursed thirst of gold bore unresisted sway.

2. But how much more knowing than these old Pagans are the present generation of Christians! How many labored panegyrics do we now read and hear on the dignity of human nature! One eminent preacher, in one of his sermons, preached and printed a few years ago, does not scruple to affirm,

First, that men in general (if not every individual) are very wise;
Secondly, that men in general are very virtuous; and,

Thirdly, that they are very happy: And I do not know that any one yet has been so hardy as to controvert the assertion.

3. Nearly related to them were the sentiments of an ingenious gentleman, who, being asked, "My Lord, what do you think of the Bible?" answered, "I think it is the finest book I ever read in my life. Only that part of it which indicates the mediatorial scheme, I do not understand; for I do not conceive there is any need of a Mediator between God and man. If indeed," continued he, "I was a sinner, then I should need a Mediator; but I do not conceive I am. It is true, I often act wrong, for want of more understanding: And I frequently feel wrong tempers, particularly proneness to anger; but I cannot allow this to be a sin; for it depends on the motion of my blood and spirits, which I cannot help. Therefore it cannot be a sin; or, if it be, the blame must fall, not on me, but on him that made me." The very sentiments of pious Lord Kames, and modest Mr. Hume!

4. Some years ago, a charitable woman discovered that there was no sinner in the world but the devil "For," said she, "he forces men to act as they do; therefore they are unaccountable: The blame lights on Satan, But these more enlightened gentle men have discovered that there is no sinner in the world but God! For he forces men to think, speak, and act as they do; therefore the blame lights on God alone. Satan, avaunt! It may be doubted whether he himself ever uttered so foul a blasphemy as this!

5. But, whatever unbaptized or baptized infidels may say concerning the innocence of mankind, He that made man and that best knows what he has made, gives a very different account of him. He informs us that "the heart of man," of all mankind, of every man born into the world, "is desperately wicked;" and that it is "deceitful above all things:" So that we may well ask, "Who can know it?"

I.

1. To begin with this: "The heart of man is desperately wicked." In considering this, we have no need to refer to any particular sins; (these are no more than the leaves, or, at most, the fruits, which spring from that evil tree;) but rather to the general root of all. See how this was first planted in

heaven itself, by “Lucifer, son of the morning;” till then undoubtedly “one of the first, if not the first archangel:” Thou said, “I will sit upon the side of the north.” See self-will, the firstborn of Satan! “I will be like the most High.” See pride, the twin sister of self-will. Here was the true origin of evil. Hence came the inexhaustible flood of evils upon the lower world. When Satan had once transfused his own self-will and pride into the parents of mankind, together with a new species of Sin, — love of the world, the loving the creature above the Creator, — all manner of wickedness soon rushed in; all ungodliness and unrighteousness; shooting out into crimes of every kind; soon covering the whole face of the earth with all manner of abominations. It would be an endless task to enumerate all the enormities that broke out. Now the fountains of the great deep were broken up. The earth soon became a field of blood: Revenge, cruelty, ambition, with all sorts of injustice, every species of public and private wrongs, were diffused through every part of the earth. Injustice, in ten thousand forms, hatred, envy, malice, blood-thirstiness, with every species of falsehood, rode triumphant; till the Creator, looking down from heaven, would be no more entreated for an incorrigible race, but swept them off from the face of the earth. But how little were the following generations improved by the severe judgment! They that lived after the flood do not appear to have been a whit better than those that lived before it. In a short time, probably before Noah was removed from the earth, all unrighteousness prevailed as before.

2. But is there not a God in the world? Doubtless there is: And it is “He that hath made us, not we ourselves.” He made us gratuitously, of his own mere mercy; for we could merit nothing of him before we had a being. It is of his mercy that he made us at all; that he made us sensible, rational creatures and, above all, creatures capable of God. It is this, and the alone, which puts the essential difference between men and brutes. But if he has made us, and given us all we have; if we owe all we are and have to him; then surely he has a right to all we are and have, — to all our love and obedience. This has been acknowledged by almost all who believed themselves to be his creatures, in all ages and nations. But a few years ago a learned man frankly confessed, “I could never apprehend that God’s having created us, gave him any title to the government of us; or, that his having created us, laid us under any obligation to yield him our obedience.”

I believe that Dr. Hutcheson was the first man that ever made any doubt of this; or that ever doubted, much less denied, that a creature was obliged to obey his Creator. If Satan ever entertained this thought, (but it is not probable he ever did,) it would be no wonder he should rebel against God, and raise war in heaven. And hence would enmity against God arise in the hearts of men also; together with all the branches of ungodliness which abound therein at this day. Hence would naturally arise the neglect of every duty which we owe to him as our Creator, and all the passions and hopes which are directly opposite to every such duty.

3. From the devil the spirit of independence, self will, and pride, productive of all ungodliness and unrighteousness, quickly infused themselves into the hearts of our first parents in paradise. After they had eaten of the tree of knowledge, wickedness and misery of every kind rushed in with a full tide upon the earth, alienated us from God, and made way for all the rest. Atheism, (now fashionably termed dissipation,) and idolatry, love of the world, seeking happiness in this or that creature, covered the whole earth.

Upright both in heart and will,
 We by our God were made;
 But we turn'd from good to ill,
 And o'er the creatures stray'd;
 Multiplied our wandering thought,
 Which first was fix'd on God alone;
 In ten thousand objects sought
 The bliss we lost in one.

4. It would be endless to enumerate all the species of wickedness, whether in thought, word, or action, that now overspread the earth, in every nation, and city, and family. They all center in this, — Atheism, or idolatry; pride, either thinking of themselves more highly than they ought to think, or glorying in something which they have received, as though they had not received it; independence and self-will, — doing their own will, not the will of Him that made them. Add to this, seeking happiness out of God; in gratifying the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life. Hence it is a melancholy truth, that (unless when the Spirit of God has made the difference) all mankind now, as well as four thousand years ago, “have corrupted their ways before the Lord; and every imagination of the

thought of man's heart is evil, only evil, and what continually." However therefore men may differ in their outward ways, (in which, undoubtedly, there are a thousand differences,) yet in the inward root, the enmity against God, Atheism, pride, self-will, and idolatry, it is true of all, that "the heart of man," of every natural man, "is desperately wicked."

5. But if this be the case, how is it that every one is not conscious of it? For who should "know the things of a man, like the spirit of a man that is in him?" Why is it that so few know themselves? For this plain reason: Because the heart is not only "desperately wicked," but "deceitful above all things." So deceitful, that we may well ask, "Who can know it?" Who, indeed, save God that made it? By his assistance we may, in the Second place, consider this, — the deceitfulness of man's heart.

II.

1. "It is deceitful above all things;" that is, in the highest degree, above all that we can conceive. So deceitful, that the generality of men are continually deceiving both themselves and others. How strangely do they deceive themselves, not knowing either their own tempers or characters, imagining themselves to be abundantly better and wiser than they are! The ancient poet supposes there is no exception to this rule, — "that no man is willing to know his own heart." *Ut nemo in sese tentat descendere, nemo!* None but those that are taught of God.

2. And if men thus deceive themselves, is it any wonder that they deceive others also, and that we so seldom find "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile?" In looking over my books, some years ago, I found the following memorandum — "I am this day thirty years old; and till this day I know not that I have met with one person of that age, except in my father's house, who did not use guile, more or less."

3. This is one of the sorts of desperate wickedness which cleaves to the nature of every man, proceeding from those fruitful roots, — self-will, pride, and independence on God. Hence springs every species of vice and wickedness; hence every sin against God, our neighbor, and ourselves. Against God, — forgetfulness and contempt of God, of his name, his day, his word, his ordinances; Atheism on the one hand, and idolatry on the

other; in particular, love of the world, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life; the love of money, the love of power, the love of ease, the love of the “honor that cometh of men,” the love of the creature more than the Creator, the being lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God: — Against our neighbor, — ingratitude, revenge, hatred, envy, malice, uncharitableness.

4. Hence there is, in the heart of every child of man, an inexhaustible fund of ungodliness and unrighteousness so deeply and strongly rooted in the soul, that nothing less than almighty grace can cure it. From hence naturally arises a plentiful harvest of all evil words and works; and, to complete the whole, that complex of all evils, —

— That foul monster, War, that we meet,
Lays deep the noblest work of the creation;
Which wears in vain its Maker’s glorious image,
Unprivileged from thee!

In the train of this fell monster are murder, adultery, rape, violence, and cruelty of every kind. And all these abominations are not only found in Mahometan or Pagan countries, where their horrid practice may seem to be the natural result of equally horrid principles; but in those that are called Christian countries, yea, in the most knowing and civilized states and kingdoms. And let it not be said, “This is only the case in Roman Catholic countries.” Nay, we that are called Reformed are not one whit behind them in all manner of wickedness. Indeed, no crime ever prevailed among the Turks or Tartars, which we here cannot parallel in every part of Christendom. Nay, no sin ever appeared in heathen or papal Rome, which is not found at this day in Germany, France, Holland, England, and every other Protestant as well as Popish country. So that it might now be said, with as much truth and as few exceptions, of every count in Europe, as it was formerly in the court of Saul “There is none righteous, no, not one: They are altogether become abominable: There is none that understandeth, and seeketh after God.”

5. But is there no exception as to the wickedness of man’s heart? Yes, in those that are born of God. “He that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” God has “purified his heart by faith,”

so that his wickedness is departed from him. "Old things are passed away, and all things" in him "are become new." So that his heart is no longer desperately wicked, but "renewed in righteousness and true holiness." Only let it be remembered, that the heart, even of a believer, is not wholly purified when he is justified. Sin is then overcome, but it is not rooted out; it is conquered, but not destroyed. Experience shows him, First, that the roots of sin, self-will, pride, and idolatry, remain still in his heart. But as long as he continues to watch and pray, none of them can prevail against him. Experience teaches him, Secondly, that sin (generally pride or self-will) cleaves to his best actions: So that, even with regard to these, he finds an absolute necessity for the blood of atonement.

6. But how artfully does this conceal itself, not only from others, but even from ourselves! Who can discover it in all the disguises it assumes, or trace it through all its latent mazes? And if it be so difficult to know the heart of a good man, who can know the heart of a wicked one, which is far more deceitful? No unregenerate man, however sensible, ever so experienced, ever so wise in his generation. And yet these are they who pique themselves upon "knowing the world," and imagine they see through all men. Vain men! One may boldly say, they "know nothing yet as they ought to know." Even that politician in the late reign neither knew the heart of himself or of other men, whose favorite saying was, "Do not tell me of your virtue, or religion: I tell you, every man has his price." Yes, Sir R —; every man like you; every one that sells himself to the devil.

7. Did that right honorable wretch, compared to whom Sir R — was a saint, know the heart of man, — he that so earnestly advised his own son, "never to speak the truth, to lie or dissemble as often as he speaks, to wear a mask continually?" that earnestly counseled him, "not to debauch *single women*," (because some inconveniences might follow,) "but always married women?" Would one imagine this groveling animal ever had a wife or a married daughter of his own? O rare Lord C —! Did ever man so well deserve, though he was a Peer of the realm, to die by the side of Newgate? Or did ever book so well deserve to be burned by the common hangman, as his Letters? Did Mr. David Hume, lower, if possible, than either of the former, know the heart of man? No more than a worm or a beetle does. After "playing so idly with the darts of death," do you now find it a

laughing matter? What think you now of Charon? Has he ferried you over Styx? At length he has taught you to know a little of your own heart! At length you know, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

8. One of the ablest champions of infidelity (perhaps the most elegant and the most decent writer that ever produced a system of religion without being in the least obliged to the Bible for it) breaks out in the fullness of his heart, "Who would not wish that there was full proof of the Christian, Revelation; since it is undoubtedly the most benevolent system that ever appeared in the world!" Might he not add a reason of another kind, — Because without this man must be altogether a mystery to himself? Even with the help of Revelation, he knows exceeding little but without it, he would know abundantly less, and nothing with any certainty. Without the light which is given us by the oracles of God, how could we reconcile his greatness with his meanness? While we acknowledged, with Sir John David, —

I know my soul has power to know all things;
 Yet is she blind, and ignorant of all:
 I know I'm one of nature's little kings;
 Yet to the least and vilest thing in thrall.

9. Who then knoweth the hearts of all men? Surely none but he that made them. Who knoweth his own heart? Who can tell the depth of its enmity against God? Who knoweth how deeply it is sunk into the nature of Satan?

II.

1. From the preceding considerations, may we not learn, First, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool?" For who that is wise would trust one whom he knows to be "desperately wicked?" especially, whom he hath known, by a thousand experiments, to be "deceitful above all things." What can we expect, if we still trust a known liar and deceiver, but to be deceived and cheated to the end?

2. We may, hence, in the Second place, infer the truth of that other reflection of Solomon, "Seest thou a man that is wise in his own eyes?"

there is more hope of a fool than of him.” For at what distance from wisdom must that man be who never suspected his want of it? And will not his thinking so well of himself prevent his receiving instruction from others? Will he not be apt to be displeased at admonition, and to construe reproof into reproach? Will he not therefor be less ready to receive instruction, than even one that has little natural understanding? Surely no fool is so incapable of amendment, as one that imagines himself to be wise. He that supposes himself not to need a physician, will hardly profit by his advice.

3. May we not learn hence, Thirdly, the wisdom of that caution, “Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall?” Or, (to render the text more properly,) “Let him that assuredly standeth, take heed lest he fall.” How firmly so ever he may stand, he has still a deceitful heart. In how many instances has he been deceived already! And so he may again. Suppose he be not deceived now, does it follow that he never will? Does he not stand upon slippery ground? And is he not surrounded with snares into which he may fall and rise no more?

4. Is it not wisdom for him that is now standing, continually to cry to God, “Search me, O Lord, and prove me; try out my reins and my heart! Look well, if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting?” Thou alone, O God, “knowest the hearts of all the children of men:” O show thou me what spirit I am of, and let me not deceive my own soul! Let me not “think of myself more highly than I ought to think.” But let me always “think soberly according as thou hast given me the measure of faith!”

HALIFAX, April 21, 1790.

SERMON CXXIV.

THE HEAVENLY TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS.

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels.” 2 Corinthians. 4:7.

1. How long was man a mere riddle to himself! For how many ages were the wisest of men utterly unable to reveal the mystery, to reconcile the strange inconsistencies, in him, — the wonderful mixture of good and evil, of greatness and littleness, of nobleness and baseness! The more deeply they considered these things, the more they were entangled. The more pains they took, in order to clear up the subject, the more they were bewildered in vain, uncertain conjectures.

2. But what all the wisdom of man was unable to do, was in due time done by the wisdom of God. When it pleased God to give an account of the origin of things, and of man in particular, all the darkness vanished away, and the clear light shone. “God said, Let us make man in our own image.” It was done. In the image of God man was made. Hence we are enabled to give a clear, satisfactory account of the greatness, the excellency, the dignity of man. But “man, being in honor,” did not continue therein; but rebelled against his sovereign Lord. Hereby he totally lost, not only the favor, but likewise the image, of God. And “in Adam all died:” For fallen “Adam begat a son in his own likeness.” And hence we are taught to give a clear, intelligible account of the littleness and baseness of man. He is sunk even below the beasts that perish. Human nature now is not only sensual, but devilish. There is in every man born into the world, (what is not in any part of the brute creation; no beast is fallen so low,) a “carnal mind, which is enmity,” direct enmity, “against God.”

3. By considering, therefore, these things in one view, — the creation and the fall of man, — all the inconsistencies of his nature are easily and fully

understood. The greatness and littleness, the dignity and baseness, the happiness and misery, of his present state, are no longer a mystery, but clear consequences of his original state and his rebellion against God. This is the key that opens the whole mystery, that removes all the difficulty, by showing what God made man at first, and what man has made himself. It is true, he may regain a considerable measure of “the image of God wherein he was created:” But still, whatever we regain, we shall “have this treasure in earthen vessels.”

In order to have a clear connection of this, we may inquire, First, what is; “the treasure” which we now have; and, in the Second place, consider how “we have this treasure in earthen vessels.”

I.

1. And, First, let us inquire, What is this treasure which Christian believers have? I say, believers; for it is of these directly, that the Apostle is here speaking. Part of this they have, in common with other men, in the remains of the image of God. May we not include herein, First, an immaterial principle, a spiritual nature, endued with understanding, and affections, and a degree of liberty; of a self-moving, yea, and self-governing power? (Otherwise we were mere machines; stocks, and stones:) And, Secondly, all that is vulgarity called natural conscience; implying some discernment of the difference between moral good and evil, with an approbation of the one, and disapprobation of the other, by an inward monitor, excusing or accusing? Certainly, whether this is natural or super added by the grace of God, it is found, at least in some small degree, in every child of man. Something of this is found in every human heart, passing sentence concerning good and evil, not only in all Christians, but in all Mahometans, all Pagans, yea, the vilest of savages.

2. May we not believe, that all Christians, though but nominally such, have, sometimes at least, some desire to please God, as well as some light concerning what does really please him, and some convictions when they are sensible of displeasing him? Such treasure have all the children of men, more or less, even when they do not yet know God.

3. But it is not these of whom the Apostle is here speaking; neither is this the treasure which is the subject of his discourse. The persons concerning whom he is here speaking, are those that are born of God; those that, “being justified by faith,” have now redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins; those who enjoy that peace of God which passeth all understanding; whose soul doth magnify the Lord, and rejoice in him with joy unspeakable; and who feel the; “Love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them.” This, then, is the treasure which they have received; — a faith of the operation of God; a peace which sets them above the fear of death, and enables them in every thing to be content; a hope full of immortality, whereby they already “taste of the powers of the world to Come;” the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, with love to every child of man, and a renewal in the whole image of God, in all righteousness and true holiness. This is properly and directly the treasure concerning which the Apostle is here speaking.

II.

1. But This, invaluable as it is, “we have in earthen vessels.” The word is exquisitely proper, denoting both the brittleness of the vessels, and the meanness of the matter they are made of. It directly means, what we term earthenware; china, porcelain, and the like. How weak, how easily broken in pieces! Just such is the case with a holy Christian. We have the heavenly treasure in earthly, mortal, corruptible bodies. “Dust thou art,” said the righteous Judge to his rebellious creatures till then incorruptible and immortal, and to dust thou shalt return.” How finely (but with what a mixture of light and darkness) does the heathen poet touched upon this change! *Post ignem etherea domo subduxerat*, — “After man had stolen fire from heaven,” (what an emblem of forbidden knowledge!) *macies et nova febrium*, etc., — that unknown army of consumption’s, fevers, sickness, pain of every kind, fixed their camp upon earth, which till then they could no more have entered, than they could scale heaven; and all tended to introduce and pave the way for the last enemy, death. From the moment that awful sentence was pronounced, the body received the sentence of death in itself; if not from the moment our first parents completed their rebellion, by eating of the forbidden fruit. May we not probably conjecture that there was some quality naturally in this, which solved the seeds of death in the human body, till then incorruptible and

immortal? Be this as it may, it is certain that from this time, “the corruptible body has pressed down the soul.” And no marvel, seeing the soul, during its vital union with the body, cannot exert any of its operations, any otherwise than in union with the body, with its bodily organs. But all of these are more debased and depraved by the fall of man, than we can possibly conceive; and the brain, on which the soul more directly depends, not less than the rest of the body. Consequently, if these instruments, by which the soul works, are disordered, the soul itself must be hindered in its operations. Let a musician be ever so skillful, he will make but poor music if his instrument be out of tune. From a disordered brain (such as is, more or less, that of every child of man) there will necessarily arise confusedness of apprehension, showing itself in a thousand instances; false judgment, the natural result thereof; and wrong inferences; and from these, innumerable mistakes will follow, in spite of all the caution we can use. But mistakes in the judgment will frequently give occasion to mistakes in practice; they will naturally cause our speaking wrong in some instances, and acting wrong in others; nay, they may occasion not only wrong words or actions, but wrong tempers also. If I judge a man to be better than he really is; in consequence, I really love him more than he deserves. If I judge another to be worse than he really is; I shall, in consequence, love him less than he deserves? Vow, both these are wrong tempers. Yet possibly it may not be in my power to avoid either the one or the other.

2. Such are the unavoidable consequences of having these is treasures in earthen vessels!” Not only death, and its forerunners, — sickness, weakness, and pain, and a thousand infirmities, — but likewise error, in ten thousand shapes, will be always ready to attack us. Such is the present condition of humanity! Such is the state of the wisest men! Lord, “what is man, that thou art still mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou regardest him?”

3. Something of this great truth, — that the “corruptible body presses down the soul,” — is strongly expressed in those celebrated lines of the ancient poet: Speaking of the souls of men, he says,

*Ignis est ollis vigor, et caltestis origo
Seminibus; quantum non noxia corpora tardant,
Terrenique heebetant artus, mor bundaque membra.*

These seeds of heavenly fire,
With strength innate, would to their source aspire,
But that their earthly limbs obstruct their flight,
And check their soaring to the plains of light.

4. “But suppose it pleased the all-wise Creator, for the sin of man, to suffer the souls of men in general to be weighed down in this miserable manner by their corruptible body; why does he permit the excellent treasure which he has entrusted to his own children, to be still lodged in these poor earthen vessels?” Would not this question naturally occur to any reflecting mind? Perhaps it would; and therefore the Apostle immediately furnishes us with a full answer: God has done this, that “the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us;” that it might be undeniably plain, to whom that excellent power belonged; that no flesh might glory in his sight; but that all who have received this treasure might continually cry, “Not unto us, but unto thee, O Lord, be the praise, for thy name and for thy truth’s sake.”

5. Undoubtedly this was the main design of God in this wonderful dispensation; to humble man, to make and keep him little, and poor, and base, and vile, in his own eyes. And whatever we suffer hereby, we are well repaid, if it be a means of “hiding pride from man;” of laying us low in the dust; even then, when we are most in danger of being lifted up by the excellent gifts of God!

6. Nay, if we suffer hereby, from the mean habitation of the Immortal spirit; if pain, sickness, and numberless other afflictions beside, to which we should not otherwise have been liable, assault us on every side, and at length bear us down into the dust of death; what are we losers by this? Losers! No; “In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.” Come on then, disease, weakness, pain, — afflictions, in the language of men. Shall we not be infinite gainers by them? Gainers for ever and ever! seeing “these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!”

7. And are we not, by the consciousness of our present weakness, effectually taught wherein our strength lies? How loud does it proclaim, ‘trust in the Lord Jehovah; for in him is everlasting strength!’” Trust in Him who suffered a thousand times more than ever you can suffer! Hath he not all power in heaven and in earth? then, what though

The heavenly treasure now we have
In a vile house of clay!
Yet He shall to the utmost save,
And keep it to that day.

POTTO, June 17, 1790.

SERMON CXXV.

ON LIVING WITHOUT GOD.

“Without God in the world.” Ephesians 2:12.

1. **P**ERHAPS these words might be more properly translated, Atheists in the world. This seems to be a little stronger expression than, “without God in the world;” which sounds nearly negative, and does not necessarily imply any more than the having no fellowship or intercourse with God. On the contrary, the word Atheist is commonly understood to mean something positive, — the not only disclaiming, any intercourse with him, but denying his very being.

2. The case of these unhappy men may be much illustrated by a late incident; the truth of which cannot reasonably be doubted, there having been so large a number of eye-witnesses. An ancient oak being cut down, and split through the midst, out of the very heart of the tree crept a large toad, and walked away with all the speed he could. Now, how long may we probably imagine had this creature continued there? It is not unlikely it might have remained in its nest above a hundred years. It is not improbable, it was nearly, if not altogether, coeval with the oak; having been some way or other inclosed therein, at the time that it was planted. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to suppose, that it had lived that strange kind of life at least a century. We say, it had lived; but what manner of life? How desirable! How enviable! As Cowley says,

O life, most precious and most dear!
O life, that Epicures would long to share!

Let us spend a few thoughts upon so uncommon a case, and make some improvement of it.

3. This poor animal had organs of sense; yet it had not any sensation. It had eyes; yet no ray of light ever entered its black abode. From the very first instant of its existence there, it was shut up in impenetrable darkness. It was shut up from the sun, moon, and stars, and from the beautiful face of nature; indeed, from the whole visible world, as much as if it had no being.

4. As no air could penetrate its sable recess, it, consequently, could have no *hearing*. Whatever organs it was provided with, they could be of no use; seeing no undulating air could find a way through the walls that surrounded it. And there is no reason to believe that it had any sense analogous to those either of *smelling* or *tasting*. In a creature which did not need any food, the second should have been of no possible use. Neither was there any way whereby the objects of smell or taste could make their approach to it. It must be very little, if at all, that it could be acquainted even with the general sense, — that of *feeling*: As it always continued in one unvaried posture amidst the parts that surrounded it, all of these, being immovably fixed could make no new impression upon it; so that it had only one feeling from hour to hour, and from day to day, during its whole duration.

5. And as this poor animal was destitute of *sensation*, it must have equally been destitute of *reflection*. Its head, (of whatever sort it was,) having no materials to work upon, no ideas of sensation of any kind, could not produce any degree of reflection. It scarce, therefore, could have any *memory*, or any *imagination*. Nor could it have any locative *power*, while it was so closely bound in on every side. If it had in itself some springs of motion; yet it was impossible that power should be exerted, because the narrowness of its cavern could not allow of any change of place.

6. How exact a parallel may be drawn between this creature, (hardly to be called an animal,) and a man that is “without God in the world!” Such as are a vast majority of even those that are called Christians. I do not mean that they are Atheists, in the common sense of the word. I do not believe that these are so numerous as many have imagined. Making all the inquiry and observation I could, for upwards of fifty years, I could not find twenty who seriously disbelieved the being of a God; nay I have found

only two of these (to the best of my judgment) in the British islands: Both of these then lived in London, and had been of this persuasion many years. But several years before they were called to appear before God, both John S — and John B — were fully convinced that there is a God; and, what is more remarkable, they were first convinced that he is a terrible, and then that he is a merciful, God. I mention these two accounts to show, not only that there are real literal Atheists In the world; but also, that even then, if they will condescend to ask it, they may find “grace to help in time of need.”

7. But I do not mean such as these, when I speak of those who are Atheists, or “without God in the world;” but of such as are only practical Atheists; as have not God in all their thoughts; such as have not acquainted themselves with him, neither have any fellowship with him; such as have no more intercourse with God, or the invisible world, than this animal had with the visible. I will endeavor to draw the parallel between these. And may God apply it to their hearts!

8. Every one of these is in exactly such a situation with regard to the invisible, as the toad was in respect to the visible world. That creature had, undoubtedly, a sort of Life, such as it was. It certainly had all the internal and external parts that are essential to animal life; and, without question, it had suitable juice, which kept up a kind of circulation. This was a life indeed! and exactly such a life is that of the Atheist, the man is without God in the world.” What a thick veil is between him and the invisible world, which, with regard to him, is as though it had no being! He has not the least perception of it, not the most distant idea. He has not the least sight of God, the intellectual Sun, nor any the least attraction toward him, or desire to have any knowledge of his ways. Although His light he gone forth into all lands, and His sound into the end of the world, yet he *heareth* no more thereof than of the fabled music of the spheres He *tastes* nothing of the goodness of God, or the powers of the world to come. He does not feel (as our Church speaks) the working of the Holy Spirit in his heart. In a word, he has no more intercourse with, or knowledge of, the spiritual world, than this poor creature had of the natural, while shut up in its dark enclosure.

9. But the moment the Spirit of the Almighty strikes the heart of him that was till then without God in the world, it breaks the hardness of his heart, and creates all things new. The Sun of Righteousness appears, and shines upon his soul, showing him the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He is in a new world. All things around him are become new, such as it never before entered into his heart to conceive. He sees, so far as his newly opened eyes can be the sight,

The opening heavens around him shine,
With beams of sacred bliss.

He sees that he has “an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;” and that he has “redemption in his blood, the remission of sins.” He sees “a new way that is opened into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;” and his light “shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

10. By the same gracious stroke, he that before had ears, but heard not, is now made capable of *hearing*. He hears the voice that raiseth the dead, — the voice of Him that is “the resurrection and the life.” He is no longer deaf to his invitations or commands, to his promises or threatenings; but gladly hears every word that proceeds out of his mouth, and governs thereby all his thoughts, words, and actions.

11. At the same time, he receives other spiritual senses capable of discerning spiritual good and evil. He is enabled to taste, as well as to see, how gracious the Lord is. He enters into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and tastes of the powers of the world to come. He finds Jesus’s love far better than wine; yea, sweeter than honey or the honey comb. He knows what that meaneth: “All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia.” He *feels* the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him; or, as our Church expresses it, “feels the working of the Spirit of God in his heart.” Meantime, it may easily be observed, that the substance of all these figurative expressions is comprised in that one word, *faith*, taken in its wisest sense; being enjoyed, more or less, by every one that believes in the name of the Son of God. This change, from spiritual death to spiritual life, is properly the new birth; all the particulars whereof are admirably well expressed by Dr. Watts, in one verse:

Renew my eyes, open my ears,
 And form my soul afresh
 Give me new passions, joys, and fears,
 And turn the stone to flesh!

12. But before this universal change, there may be many partial changes in a natural man, which are frequently mistaken for it; whereby many say, “Peace, peace!” to their souls, when there is no peace. There may be not only a considerable change in the life, so as to refrain from open sin, yea, the easily besetting sin; but also a considerable change of tempers, conviction of sin, strong desires, and good resolutions. And here we have need to take great care not, on the one hand, to despise the day of small things; nor, on the other, to mistake any of these partial changes, for that entire, general change, the new birth; that total change, from the image of the earthly Adam into the image of the heavenly; from an earthly, sensual, devilish mind, into the mind that was in Christ.

13. Settle it therefore in your hearts, that however you may be changed in many other respects, yet in Christ Jesus, that is, according to the Christian Institution, nothing will avail without the whole mind that was in Christ, enabling you to walk as Christ walked. Nothing is more sure than this: “If any man be in Christ,” a true believer in him, “he is a new creature: Old things,” in him, “are passed away; all things are become new.”

14. From hence we may clearly perceive the wise difference there is between Christianity and morality. Indeed nothing can be more sure, than that true Christianity cannot exist without both the inward experience and outward practice of justice, mercy, and truth; and this alone is genuine morality. But it is equally certain, that all morality, all the justice, mercy, and truth which can possibly exist without Christianity, profiteth nothing at all; is of no value in the sight of God, to those that are under the Christian dispensation. Let it be observed, I purposely adds to those that are under the Christian dispensation; because I have no authority from the word of God “to judge those that are without;” nor do I conceive that any man living has a right to sentence all the heathen and Mahometan world to damnation. It is far better to leave them to Him that made them, and who is “the Father of the spirits of all flesh;” who is the God of the Heathens

as well as the Christians, and who hateth nothing that he hath made. But, meantime, this is nothing to those that name the name of Christ; — all those, being under the law, the Christian law, shall undoubtedly be judged thereby; and, of consequence, unless those be so changed as was the animal above mentioned, unless they have new senses, ideas, passions, tempers, they are no Christians. However just, true, or merciful they may be, they are but Atheists still!

15. Perhaps there may be some well-meaning persons who carry this farther still; who aver, whatever change is wrought in men, whether in their hearts or lives, yet if they have not clear views of those capital electrons, the fall of man, justification by faith, and of the atonement made by the death of Christ, and of his righteousness transferred to them, they can have no benefit from his death. I dare in nowise affirm this. Indeed I do not believe it. I believe the merciful God regards the lives and tempers of men more than their ideas. I believe he respects the goodness of the heart, rather than the clearness of the head; and that if the heart of a man be filled (by the grace of God, and the power of his Spirit) with the humble, gentle, patient love of God and man, God will not cast him into everlasting are, prepared for the devil and his angels, because his ideas are not clear, or because his conceptions are confused. “Without holiness,” I own, “no man shall see the Lord;” but I dare not add, “or clear ideas.”

16. But to return to the text. Let me entreat all of you who are still “without God in the world,” to consider, that, with all your humanity, benevolence, and virtue, you are still

Inclusi tenebris, et carcere caeco:

Inclosed in darkness and infernal shade.

My dear friends! you do not see God. You do not see the Sun of righteousness. You have no fellowship with the father, or with his Son Jesus Christ. You never heard the voice that raiseth the dead. Ye know not the voice of your Shepherd. Ye have not received the Holy Ghost. Ye have no spiritual senses. You have your old, natural ideas, passions, joys, and years; you are not new creatures. O cry to God, that he may rend the veil

which is still upon your hearts; and which gives you occasion to complain,

O dark, dark, dark, I still must say,
Amidst the blaze of gospel-day!

O that you may this day hear his voice, who speaketh as never man spake, saying, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!" Is it not his voice that crieth aloud, is Look unto me, and be thou saved?" He saith, "Lo, I come!" "Even so, Lord Jesus; come quickly!"

ROTHERHAM, July 6, 1790.

SERMON CXXVI.

ON THE DANGER OF INCREASING RICHES.

“If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.” Psalm 62:10.

1. FROM that express declaration of our Lord, “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,” we may easily learn, that none can *have* riches without being greatly endangered by them. But if the danger of barely having them is so great, how much greater is the danger of *increasing* them! This danger is great even to those who receive what is transmitted to them by their forefathers; but it is abundantly greater to those who acquire them by their skill and industry. Therefore, nothing can be more prudent than this caution: “If riches increase, set not thine heart upon them.”

2. It is true, riches, and the increase of them, are the gift of God. Yet great care is to be taken, that what is intended for a blessing, do not turn into a curse. To prevent which, it is highly expedient to consider seriously,

- I. What is meant by riches; and when they may be said to increase.
- II. What is implied in setting our hearts upon them; and how we may avoid it.

I.

1. Consider, First, what is here meant by riches. Indeed some may imagine that it is hardly possible to mistake the meaning of this common word. Yet, in truth, there are thousands in this mistake; and many of them quite innocently. A person of note, hearing a sermon preached upon this subject several years since, between surprise and indignation broke out aloud, “Why does he talk about riches here? There is no rich man at Whitehaven, but Sir James L — r.” And it is true, there was none but he that had forty thousand pounds a year, and some millions in ready money. But a man

may he rich that has not a hundred a year, nor even one thousand pounds in cash. Whosoever has food to eat, and raiment to put on, with something over, is rich. Whoever has the necessaries and conveniences of life for himself and his family, and a little to spare for them that have not, is properly a rich man; unless he is a miser, a lover of money, one that hoards up what he can and ought to give to the poor. For if so, he is a poor man still, though he has millions in the bank; yea, he is the poorest of men; for,

The beggars but a common lot deplore;
The rich poor man's emphatically poor.

2. But here an exception may be made. A person may have more than necessaries and conveniences for his family, and yet not be rich. For he may be in debt; and his debts may amount to more than he is worth. But if this be the case, he is not a rich man, how much money so ever he has in his hands. Yea, a man of business may be afraid that this is the real condition of his affairs, whether it be or no; and then he cannot be so charitable as he otherwise would, for fear of being unjust. How many that are engaged in trade, are in this very condition! those especially that trade to a very large amount; for their affairs are frequently so entangled, that it is not possible to determine, with any exactness, how much they are worth, or, indeed, whether they are worth anything or nothing. Should we not make a fair allowance for them?

3. And beware of forming a hasty judgment concerning the fortune of others. There may be secrets in the situation of a person, which few but God are acquainted with. Some years since, I told a gentleman, "Sir, I am afraid you are covetous." He asked me, "What is the reason of your fear?" I answered, "A year ago, when I made a collection for the expense of repairing the Foundry, you subscribed five guineas. At the subscription made this year you subscribed only half-a-guinea." He made no reply; but after a time asked, "Pray, Sir, answer me a question: Who do you live upon potatoes?" (I did so between three and four years.) I replied, "It has much conduced to my health." He answered, "I believe it has. But did you not do it likewise to save money?" I said, "I did; for what I save from my own meat, will feed another that else would have none." "But, Sir," said he, "if this be your motive, you may save much more. I know a man that

goes to the market at the beginning of every week: There he buys a pennyworth of parsnips, which he boils in a large quantity of water. The parsnips serve him for food, and the water for drink, the ensuing week. So his meat and drink together cost him only a penny a week." This he constantly did, though he had then two hundred pounds a year, to pay the debts which he had contracted before he knew God! And this was he, whom I had set down for a covetous man!

4. But there are those who are conscious before God that they are rich. And, doubtless, some among you are of the number. You have more of the goods of this world than is needful either for yourself or your family. Let each consider for himself. Do *your* riches increase? Do not you understand that plain expression? Have you not more money, or more of money's worth, than you had ten or twenty years ago, or at this time last year? If you keep any account, you can easily know this. Indeed, you ought to know; otherwise, you are not a good steward, even in this respect, of the mammon of unrighteousness. And every man, whether engaged in trade or not, ought to know whether his substance lessens or increases.

5. But many have found out a way never to be rich, though their substance increase ever so much. It is this: As fast as ever money comes in, they lay it out, either in land, or enlarging their business. By this means, each of these, keeping himself bare of money, can still say, "I am not rich;" yea, though he has ten, twenty, a hundred times more substance than he had some years ago. This may be explained by a recent case: A gentleman came to a merchant in London, a few years since, and told him, "Sir, I beg you will give me a guinea for a worthy family in great distress." He replied, "Really, Mr. M., I cannot well afford to give you it just now; but if you will call upon me when I am worth ten thousand pounds, upon such an occasion I will give you ten guineas." Mr. M., after some time, called upon him again, and said, "Sir, I claim your promise; now you are worth ten thousand pounds." He replied, "That is very true: But I assure you, I cannot spare one guinea so well as I could then."

6. It is possible for a man to cheat himself by this ingenious device. And he may cheat other men; for as long "as thou doest good unto thyself, men

will speak well of thee.” “A right *good man*,” says the Londoner, “he is worth a plum” (a hundred thousand pounds). But, alas! he cannot deceive God; and he cannot deceive the devil. Ah, no! the curse of God is upon thee already, and all that thou hast. And tomorrow, when the devil seizes thy soul, will he not say, “What do all thy riches profit thee?” Will they purchase a pillow for thy head, in the lake of fire burning with brimstone? Or will they procure thee a cup of is water to cool thy tongue,” while thou art “tormented in that flame?” O follow the wise direction here given! that God may not say unto thee, “Thou fool!”

7. This shift, therefore, will not avail. It will not be any protection, either against the wrath of God, or the malice and power of the devil. Thou art convicted already of “setting thy heart” upon thy riches, if thou layest out all that thou hast above the conveniences of life, on adding money to money, house to house, or field to field, without giving at least a tenth of thine income (the Jewish proportion) to the poor. By whatsoever means thy riches increase, whether with or without labor; whether by trade, legacies, or any other way; unless thy charities increase in the same proportion; unless thou givest a full tenth of thy substance, of thy fixed and occasional income; thou dost undoubtedly set thy heart upon thy gold, and it will “eat thy flesh as fire!”

8. But, O! who can convince a rich man that he sets his heart upon riches? For considerably above half a century I have spoken on this head, with all the plainness that was in my power. But with how little effect! I doubt whether I have, in all that time, convinced fifty misers of covetousness. When the lover of money was described ever so clearly, and painted in the strongest colors, who applied it to himself? To whom did God, and all that knew him, say, “Thou art the man!” If he speaks to any of you that are present, O do not stop your ears! Rather say, with Zaccheus, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have done any wrong to any man, I restore him fourfold.” He did not mean that he had done this in time past; but that he determined to do so for the time to come. I charge thee before God, thou lover of money, to “go and do likewise!”

9. I have a message from God unto thee, O rich man! whether thou wilt hear or whether thou wilt forbear. Riches have increased with thee; at the

peril of thy soul, “set not thine heart upon them!” Be thankful to Him that gave thee such a talent, so much power of doing good. Yet dare not rejoice over them, but with fear and trembling. *Cave ne inhaereas*, says pious Kempis, *ne capiaris et pereas*: “Beware thou cleave not unto them, lest thou be entangled and perish.” Do not make them thy end, thy chief delight, thy happiness, thy God! See that thou expect not happiness in money, nor anything that is purchasable thereby in gratifying either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, or the pride of life.

10. But let us descend to particulars; and see that each of you deal faithfully with his own soul. If any of you have now twice, thrice, or four times as much substance as when you first saw my face, faithfully examine yourselves, and see if you do not set your hearts, if not directly on money or riches themselves, yet on some of the things that are purchasable thereby; which comes to the same thing. All those the Apostle John includes under that general name, *the world*; and the desire of them, or to seek happiness in them under that form, “the love of the world.” This he divides into three branches, “the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life.” Fairly examine yourselves with regard to these. And, First. as to “the desire of the flesh.” I believe this means the seeking of happiness in the things that gratify the senses. To instance in one: Do not you seek your happiness by enlarging the pleasure of *tasting*? To be more particular: Do you not eat more plentifully, or more delicately, than you did ten or twenty years ago? Do not you use more *drink*, or drink of a more *costly* kind, than you did then? Do you sleep on as hard a bed as you did once, suppose your health will bear it? To touch on one point more: Do you *fast* as often, now you are rich, as you did when you was poor? Ought you not, in all reason, to do this rather more often than more seldom? I am afraid your own heart condemns you. You are not clear in this matter.

11. The Second branch of the love of the world, “the desire of the eyes,” is of a wiser extent. We may understand thereby, the seeking our happiness in gratifying the imagination, (which is chiefly done by means of the eyes,) by grand, or new, or beautiful objects — if they may not all be reduced to one head; since neither grand nor beautiful objects are pleasing when the novelty of them is gone. But are not the veriest trifles pleasing as long as

they are new? Do not some of you, on the score of novelty, seek no small part of your happiness in that trident trifles — dress? Do not you bestow more money, or (which is the same) more time or pains, upon it than you did once? I doubt this is not done to please God. Then it pleases the devil. If you aside your needless ornaments some years since, — ruffles, necklaces, spider caps, ugly, unbecoming bonnets, costly linen, expensive laces, — have you not, in defiance of religion and reason, taken to them again?

12. Perhaps you say you can now *afford* the expense. This is the quintessence of nonsense. Who gave you this addition to your fortune; or (to speak properly) *lent* it to you? To speak more properly still, who lodged it for a time in your hands as his stewards; informing you at the same time for what purposes he entrusted you with it? And can you *afford* to waste your Lord's goods, for every part of which you are to give an account; or to expend them in any other way than that which he hath expressly appointed? Away with this vile, diabolical cant! Let it never more come out of your lips. This *affording* to rob God is the very cant of hell. Do not you know that God entrusted you with that money (all above what buys necessaries for your families) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and, indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind? How can you, how dare you, defraud your Lord, by applying it to any other purpose? When he entrusted you with a little, did he not entrust you with it that you might lay out all that little in doing good? And when he entrusted you with more, did he not entrust you with that additional money that you might do so much the more good, as you had more ability? Had you any more right to waste a pound, a shilling, or a penny, than you had before? You have, therefore, no more right to gratify the desire of the flesh, or the desire of the eyes, now, than when you was a beggar. O no! do not make so poor a return to your beneficent Lord! Rather, the more he entrusts you with, be so much the more careful to employ every mite as he hath appointed.

13. Ye angels of God, ye servants of his, that continually do his pleasure! our common Lord hath entrusted you also with talents far more precious than gold and silver, that you may minister in your various offices to the heirs of salvation. Do not you employ every mite of what you have

received, to the end for which it was given you? And hath he not directed us to do His will on earth, as it is done by you in heaven Brethren, what are we doing! Let us awake! Let us arise! Let us imitate those flaming ministers! Let us employ our whole soul, body, and substance, according to the will of our Lord! Let us render unto God the things that are God's; even all we are, and all we have!

14. Most of those who when riches increase set their hearts upon them, do it indirectly in some of the preceding instances. But there are others who do this more directly; being, properly, “lovers of money;” who love it for its own sake; not only for the sake of what it procures. But this vice is very rarely found in children or young persons; but only, or chiefly, in the old, — in those that have the least need of money, and the least time to enjoy it. Might not this induce one to think, that in many cases it is a penal evil; that it is a sin-punishing evil; that when a man has, for many years, hid his precious talent in the earth, God delivers him up to Satan, to punish him by the inordinate love of it? Then it is that he is more and more tormented by that *auri sacra fames*, — “that execrable hunger after gold” which can never be satisfied. No: It is most true, as the very Heathen observes, — *Crescit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crescit*, — “As money, so the love of money, grows; it increases in the same proportion.” As in a dropsy, the more you drink, the more you thirst; till that unquenchable thirst plunge you into the fire which never shall be quenched!

15. “But is there no way,” you may ask, “either to prevent or to cure this dire disease?” There is one preventative of it, which is also a remedy for it; and I believe there is no other under heaven. It is this: After you have *gained* (with the cautions above given) *all you can*, and *saved all you can*, wanting for nothing; spend not one pound, one shilling, or one penny, to gratify either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, or the pride of life; or, indeed, for any other end than to please and glorify God. Having avoided this rock on the right hand, beware of that on the left. Secondly. *Hoard nothing*. Lay up no treasure on earth, but *give all you can*; that is, all you have. I defy all the men upon earth, yea, all the angels in heaven, to find any other way of extracting the poison from riches.

16. Let me add one word more. After having served you between sixty and seventy years; with dim eyes, shaking hands, and tottering feet, I give you one more advice before I sink into the dust. Mark those words of Saint Paul: “Those that desire” or endeavor “to be rich,” that moment “fall into temptation.” Yea, a deep gulf of temptation, out of which nothing less than almighty power can deliver them. “They fall into a snare;” — the word properly means *a steel trap*, which instantly crushed the animal, taken therein, to pieces; — “and into divers foolish and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and perdition.” Yea, above all men, who now prosper in the world, never forget these awful words! How unspeakably slippery is your path! How dangerous every step! The Lord God enable you to see your danger, and make you deeply sensible of it! O may you “awake up after his likeness, and be satisfied with it!”

17. Permit me to come a little closer still. Perhaps I may not trouble you any more on this head. I am pained for you that are “rich in this world.” Do you give all you can? You who receive five hundred pounds a year, and spend only two hundred, do you give three hundred back to God? If not, you certainly rob God of that three hundred. You that receive two hundred and spend but one, do you give God the other hundred? If not, you rob him of just so much. “Nay, may I not do what I will with *my own*” Here lies the ground of your mistake. It is not your *own* It cannot be, unless you are Lord of heaven and earth. “However, I must provide for my children” Certainly: But how? by making them rich? Then you will probably make them Heathens, as some of you have done already. “What shall I do then?” Lord, speak to their hearts! else the Preacher speaks in vain. Leave them enough to live on, not in idleness and luxury, but by honest industry. And if you have not children, upon what scriptural or rational principle can you leave a groat behind you more than will bury you? I pray consider, what are you the better for what you leave behind you? What does it signify, whether you leave behind you ten thousand pounds, or ten thousand shoes and boots? O leave nothing behind you! Send all you have before you into a better world! Lend it, lend it all unto the Lord, and it shall be paid you again. Is there any danger that his truth should fail? It is fixed as the pillars of heaven. Haste, haste, my brethren, haste! lest you be called away before you have settled what you have on this security! When this is done, you may boldly say, “Now I have

nothing to do but to die! Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.
Come, Lord Jesus! come quickly!”

BRISTOL, September 21, 1790.

SERMONS
ON
SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

FOURTH SERIES.

CONSISTING OF SEVEN DISCOURSES

WHICH WERE PUBLISHED BY MR. WESLEY ONLY IN A
SEPARATE FORM, AND WERE NEVER, BY HIM, EMBODIED
IN ANY COLLECTION OF HIS SERMONS.

SERMON CXXVII.

THE TROUBLE AND REST OF GOOD MEN ¹⁶

PREACHED AT ST. MARY'S IN OXFORD,
ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1735.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF SEVERAL OF THE HEARERS.

“There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest.”

Job 3:17.

WHEN God at first surveyed all the works he had made, “behold, they were very good.” All were perfect in beauty; and man, the Lord of all, was perfect in holiness. And as his holiness was, so was his happiness. Knowing no sin, he knew no pain; but when sin was conceived, it soon brought forth pain. The whole scene was changed in a moment. He now groaned under the weight of a mortal body, and, what was worse, a corrupted soul. That spirit which could have born all his other “infirmities” was itself “wounded,” and sick unto death. Thus, “in the day” wherein he sinned, he began to “die;” and thus “in the midst of life we are in death;” yea, “the whole creation groaneth together,” being in bondage to sin, and therefore to misery.

The whole world is, indeed, in its present state, only one great infirmary. All that are therein are sick of sin; and their one business is to be healed. And for this very end, the great Physician of souls is continually present with them; marking all the diseases of every soul, “and giving medicines to heal its sickness.” These medicines are often painful too: Not that God willingly afflicts his creatures, but he allots them just as much pain as is necessary to their health; and for that reason, — because it is so.

The pain of cure must, then, be endured by every man, as well as the pain of sickness. And herein is manifest the infinite wisdom of Him who careth for us, that the very sickness of those with whom he converses may be a great means of every man's cure. The very wickedness of others is, in a thousand ways, conducive to a good man's holiness. They trouble him, it is true; but even that trouble is "health to his soul, and marrow to his bones." He suffers many things from them; but it is to this end, that he may be "made perfect through" those "sufferings."

But as perfect holiness is not found on earth, so neither is perfect happiness.¹⁷ Some remains of our disease will ever be felt, and some physic will be necessary to heal it. Therefore we must be, more or less, subject to the pain of cure, as well as the pain of sickness. And, accordingly, neither do "the wicked" here "cease from trouble," nor can "the weary be at rest."

Who, then, will "deliver" us "from the body of this death?" Death will deliver us. Death will set those free in a moment, who "were all their life-time subject to bondage." Death shall destroy at once the whole body of sin,¹⁸ and therewith its companion — pain. And therefore, "there the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest."

The Scriptures give us no account of the *place* where the souls of the just remain from death to the resurrection; but we have an account of their *state* in these words: In explaining which I shall consider,

- I. How the wicked do here trouble good men; and,
- II. How be weary are there at rest.

Let us consider, first, how the wicked here trouble good men. And this is a spacious field. Look round the world; take a view of all the troubles therein: How few are there of which the wicked are not the occasion! "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" Whence all the ills that embitter society; that often turn that highest of blessings into a curse, and make it "good for man to be alone?" "Come they not hence," from self-will, pride, inordinate affection? in one word, from wickedness? And can it be otherwise, so long as it remains upon earth? As well may "the

Ethiopian change his skin,” as a wicked man cease to trouble both himself and his neighbor, but especially good men: Inasmuch as, while he is wicked, he is continually injuring either them, or himself, or God.

First. Wicked men trouble those who serve God, by the injuries they do them. As at first, “he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; even so it is now.” And so it must be, till all things are fulfilled; “till heaven and earth pass away,” “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” For there is an irreconcilable enmity between the Spirit of Christ, and the spirit of the world. If the followers of Christ “were of the world, the world would love its own: But because they are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them.” And this hatred they will not fail to show by their words: They will “say all manner of evil against them falsely;” they will “find out many inventions” whereby even “the good that is in them may be evil spoken of;” and in a thousand instances lay to their charge the ill that they know not. From words in due time, they proceed to deeds; treating the servants as their forefathers did their Master; wronging and despitefully using them in as many ways as fraud can invent, and force accomplish.

It is true, these troubles sit heaviest upon those who are yet weak in the faith; and the more of the Spirit of Christ any man gains, the lighter do they appear to him. So that to him who is truly renewed therein, who is full of the knowledge and love of God, all the wrongs of wicked men are not only no evils, but are matter of real and solid joy. But still, though he rejoices for his own sake, he cannot but grieve for theirs. He hath “great heaviness and continual sorrow in” his “heart, for” his “brethren according to the flesh,” who are thus “treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” His eyes weep for them in secret places; he is horribly afraid for them; yea, he “could wish to be accursed” himself; so they might inherit a blessing. And thus it is that they who can not only slight, but rejoice in, the greatest injury done to *them*, yet are troubled at that which wicked men do to themselves, and the grievous misery that attends them.

How much more are they troubled at the injuries wicked men are continually offering to God! This was the circumstance which made “the

contradiction of sinners” so severe a trial to our Lord himself: “He that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me.” And how are these despisers now multiplied upon earth! who fear not the Son, neither the Father. How are we surrounded with those who blaspheme the Lord and his Anointed; either reviling the whole of his glorious gospel, or making him a liar as to some of the blessed truths which he hath graciously revealed therein! How many of those who profess to believe the whole, yet, in effects preach another gospel; so disguising the essential doctrines thereof, by their new interpretations, as to retain the words only, but nothing of “the faith once delivered to the saints!” How many who have not yet made shipwreck of the faith, are strangers to the fruits of it! It hath not purified their hearts; it hath not overcome the world. They are yet “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” They are still “lovers of themselves,” lovers of the world, “lovers of pleasure,” and not “lovers of God.” Lovers of God! No. He “is not in all their thoughts.” They delight not in Him; they thirst not after Him; they do not rejoice in doing his will, neither make their boast of his praise. O faith, working by love, whither art thou fled? Surely the Son of man did once plant thee upon earth. Where art thou now? Among the wealthy? No. “The deceitfulness of riches” there “chokes the word, and it becometh unfruitful.” Among the poor? No. “The cares of the world” are there, so that it bringeth fourth no fruit to perfection. However, there is nothing to prevent its growth among those who have “neither poverty nor riches:” — Yes; “the desire of other things.” And experience shows, by a thousand melancholy examples, that the allowed desire of anything, great or small, otherwise than as a mean to the one thing needful, will by degrees banish the care of that out of the soul, and unfit it for every good word or work.

Such is the trouble — not to descend to particulars, which are endless— that wicked men occasion to the good. Such is the state of all good men while on earth: But it is not so with their souls in paradise. In the moment wherein they are loosed from the body, they know pain no more. Though they are not yet possessed of the “fullness of joy,” yet all grief is done away. For “there the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest.”

II.

1. "There the weary are at rest which was the Second thing to be considered, — not only from those evils which prudence might have prevented, or piety removed, even in this life; but from those which were inseparable therefrom, which were their unavoidable portion on earth. They are now at rest, whom wicked men would not suffer to rest before: For into the seats of the spirits of just men, none but the spirits of the just can enter. They are at length his from the scourge of the tongue: Their name is not here cast out as evil. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Prophets, do not revile, or separate them from their company. They are no longer despitefully used, and persecuted; neither do they groan under the hand of the oppressor. No injustice, no malice, no fraud, is there; they are all "Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile." There are no sinners against their own souls; therefore there is no painful pity, no fear for them. There are no blasphemers of God or of his word; no profaners of his name or of his Sabbaths; no denier of the Lord that bought him; none that tramples on the blood of the everlasting covenant: In a word, no earthly or sensual, no devilish spirit; none who do not love the Lord their God with all their heart.

2. There, therefore, "the weary are at rest" from all the troubles which the wicked occasioned; and indeed from all the other evils which are necessary in this world, either as the consequence of sin, or for the cure of it. They are at rest, in the First place, from bodily pain. In order to judge of the greatness of this deliverance, let but those who have not felt it take a view of one who lies on a sick or death bed. Is this he that was "made a little lower than the angels?" How is the glory departed from him! His eye is dim and heavy; his cheek pale and wan; his tongue falters; his breast heaves and pants, his whole body is now distorted, and writhed to and fro; now moist, and cold, and motionless, like the earth to which it is going. And yet, all this which you see is but the shadow of what he feels. You see not the pain that tears his heart, that shoots through all his veins, and chases the flying soul through every part of her once-loved habitation. Could we see this too, how earnestly should we cry out, "O sin, what have thou done! To what hast thou brought the noblest part of the visible creation! Was it for this the good God made man?" O no! Neither will he suffer it long. Yet a little while, and all the storms of life shall be over, and

thou shalt be gathered into the storehouse of the dead; and “there the weary are at rest!”

3. They “are at rest” from all those infirmities and follies which they could not escape in this life. They are no longer exposed to the delusions of sense, or the dreams of imagination. They are not hindered from seeing the noblest truths, by inadvertence; nor do they ever lose the sight they have once gained, by inattention. They are not entangled with prejudice, nor ever misled by hasty or partial views of the object: And, consequently, no error is there. O blessed place, where truth alone can enter! Truth unmixed, undisguised, enlightening every man that cometh into the world! Where there is no difference of opinions; but all think like; all are of one heart, and of one mind: Where that offspring of hell, controversy, which turneth this world upside down, can never come: Where those who have been sawn asunder thereby, and often cried out in the bitterness of their soul, “Peace, peace!” shall find what they then sought in vain, even a peace which none taketh from them.

4. And yet all this, inconceivably great as it is, is the least part of their deliverance. For in the moment wherein they shake off the flesh, they are delivered, not only from the troubling of the wicked, not only from pain and sickness, from folly and infirmity; but also from all sin. A deliverance this, in sight of which all the rest vanish away. This is the triumphal song which every one beareth when he enters the gates of paradise: — “Thou, being dead, sinnest no more. Sin hath no more dominion over thee. For in that thou diedst, thou diedst unto sin once; but in that thou livest, thou livest unto God.”¹⁹

5. There, then, “the weary are at rest.” The blood of the lamb hath healed all their sickness, hath washed them thoroughly from their wickedness, and cleansed them from their sin. The disease of their nature is cured; they are at length made whole; they are restored to perfect soundness. They no longer mourn be “flesh lusting against the Spirit;” “the law in their members” is now at an end, and no longer “wars against the law of their mind, and brings them into captivity to the law of sin.” There is no root of bitterness left; no remains even of that sin which did “so easily beset them;” no forgetfulness of “Him in whom they live, and move, and have

their being;” no ingratitude to their gracious Redeemer, who poured out his soul unto death for them; no unfaithfulness to that blessed Spirit who so long bore with their infirmities. In a word, no pride, no self-will is there; so that they who are “delivered from the bondage of corruption” may indeed say one to another, and that in an emphatical sense, “Beloved, now are we the children of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

6. Let us view, a little more nearly, the state of a Christian his entrance into the other world. Suppose “the silver cord” of life just “loosed,” and “the wheel broken at the cistern;” the heart can now heat no more; the blood ceases to move; the last breath flies off from the quivering lips, and the soul springs forth into eternity. What are the thoughts of such a soul that has just subdued her last enemy, death? that sees the body of sin lying beneath her, and is new born into the world of spirits? How does she sing, “‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God,’ who hath given me ‘the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!’ O happy day, wherein I shall begin to live! wherein I shall taste my native freedom! When I was ‘born of a woman’ I had ‘but a short time to live,’ and that time was ‘full of misery’ that corruptible body pressed me down, and enslaved me to sin and pain. But the snare is broken, and I am delivered. Hence forth I know them no more. That head is no more an aching head: Those eyes shall no more run down with tears: that heart shall no more pant with anguish or tear; be weighed down with sorrow or care: Those limbs shall no more be racked with pain: Yea, ‘sin hath no more dominion over’ me. At Length, I have parted from thee, O my enemy; and I shall see thy face no more! I shall never more be unfaithful to my Lord, or offend the eyes of his glory: I am no longer that wavering, fickle, self-inconsistent creature, sinning and repenting, and sinning again. No. I shall never cease, day or night, to love and praise the Lord my God with all my heart, and with all my strength. But what are ye? Are ‘all these ministering spirits sent truth to minister to’ one ‘heir of salvation?’ Then, dust and ashes, farewell! I hear a voice from heaven saying, ‘Come away, and rest from thy labors. Thy warfare is accomplished; thy sin is pardoned; and the days of thy mourning are ended.’”

7. My brethren, these truths need little application. Believe ye that these things are so? What, then, hath each of you to do, but to “lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race set before” him? to “count all things” else “but dung” and dross; especially those grand idols, learning and reputation, if they are pursued in any other measure, or with any other view, than as they conduce to the knowledge and love of God? to have this “one thing” continually in thine heart, “when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up?” — to have thy “loins” ever “girt,” and thy “light burning?” — to serve the Lord thy God with all thy might; if by any means, when He requireth thy soul of thee, perhaps in an hour when thou lookest not for Him, thou mayest enter “where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest?”

SERMON CXXVIII.

FREE GRACE.

PREACHED AT BRISTOL,
IN THE YEAR 1740.

TO THE READER.

NOTHING but the strongest conviction, not only that what is here advanced is “the truth as it is in Jesus,” but also that I am indispensably obliged to declare this truth to all the world, would have induced me openly to oppose the sentiments of those whom I esteem for their work’s sake: At whose feet may I be found in the day of the Lord Jesus!

Should any believe it his duty to reply hereto, I have only one request to make, — Let whatsoever you do, be done in charity, in love, and in the spirit of meekness. Let your very disputing show that you have “put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, gentleness, long-suffering;” that even according to this time it may be said, “See how these Christians love one another!”

ADVERTISEMENT

Whereas a pamphlet, entitled, “Free Grace Indeed,” has been published against this Sermon this is to inform the publisher, that I cannot answer his tract till he appears to be more in earnest. For I dare not speak of “the deep things of God” — in the spirit of a prize-fighter or a stage-player.

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

Romans 8:32.

1. **H**ow freely does God love the world! While we were yet sinners, “Christ died for the ungodly.” While we were “dead in sin,” God “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” And how freely with him does he “give us all things!” Verily, Free Grace is all in all!

2. The grace or love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is **FREE IN ALL**, and **FREE FOR ALL**.

3. First. It is free **IN ALL** to whom it is given. It does not depend on any power or merit in man; no, not in any degree, neither in whole, nor in part. It does not in anywise depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver; not on anything he has done, or anything he is. It does not depend on his endeavors. It does not depend on his good tempers, or good desires, or good purposes and intentions; for all these flow from the free grace of God; they are the streams only, not the fountain. They are the fruits of free grace, and not the root. They are not the cause, but the effect of it. Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it. Thus is his grace tree in all; that is, no way depending on any power or merit in man, but on God alone, who freely gave us his own Son, and “with him freely giveth us all things.”

4. But is it free **FOR ALL**., as well as **IN ALL**? To this some have answered, “No: It is free only for those whom God hath ordained to life; and they are but a little flock. The greater part of mankind God hath ordained to death; and it is not free for them. Them God hateth; and, therefore, before they were born, decreed they should die eternally. And this he absolutely decreed; because so was his good pleasure; because it was his sovereign will. Accordingly, they are born for this, — to be destroyed body and soul in hell. And they grow up under the irrevocable curse of God, without any possibility of redemption; for what grace God gives, he gives only for this, to increase, not prevent, their damnation.”

5. This is that decree of predestination. But methinks I hear one say, This is not the predestination which I hold: I hold only the election of grace. What I believe is no more than this, — that God, before the foundation of the world, did elect a certain number of men to be justified, sanctioned, and

glorified. Now, all these will be saved, and none else; for the rest of mankind God leaves to themselves: So they follow the imaginations of their own hearts, which are only evil continually, and, waxing worse and worse, are at length justly punished with everlasting destruction.”

6. Is this all the predestination which you hold? Consider; perhaps this is not all. Do not you believe God ordained them to this very thing? If so, you believe the whole decree; you hold predestination in the full sense which has been above described. But it may be you think you do not. Do not you then believe, God hardens the hearts of them that perish? Do not you believe, he (literally) hardened Pharaoh’s heart; and that for this and he raised him up, or created him? Why, this amounts to just the same thing. If you believe Pharaoh, or any one man upon earth, was created for this end, — to be damned, — you hold all that has been said of predestination. And there is no need you should add, that God seconds his degree which is supposed unchangeable and irresistible, by hardening the hearts of those vessels of wrath whom that decree had before fitted for destruction.

7. Well, but it may be you do not believe even this; you do not hold any decree of reprobation; you do not think God decrees any man to be damned, nor hardens, irresistibly fits him, for damnation; you only say, “God eternally decreed, that all being dead in sin, he would say to some of the dry bones, live, and to others he would not; that, consequently, these should be made alive, and those abide in death, — these should glorify God by their salvation, and those by their destruction.”

8. Is not this what you mean by the election of grace? If it be, I would ask one or two questions: Are any who are not thus elected saved? or were any, from the foundation of the world? Is it possible any man should be saved unless he be thus elected? If you say, “No,” you are but where you was; you are not got one hair’s breadth farther; you still believe, that, in consequence of an unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, the greater part of mankind abide in death, without any possibility of redemption; inasmuch as none can save them but God, and he will not save them. You believe he hath absolutely decreed not to save them; and what is this but decreeing to damn them? It is, in effect, neither more nor less; it comes to

the same thing; for if you are dead, and altogether unable to make yourself alive, then, if God has absolutely decreed he will make only others alive, and not you, he hath absolutely decreed your everlasting detail; you are absolutely consigned to damnation. So then, though you use softer words than some, you mean the same thing; and God's decree concerning the election of grace, according to your account of it, amounts to neither more nor less than what others call God's decree of reprobation.

9. Call it therefore by whatever name you please, election, preterition, predestination, or reprobation, it comes in the end to the same thing. The sense of all is plainly this, — by virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned; it being impossible that any of the former should be damned, or that any of the latter should be saved.

10. But if this be so, then is all preaching vain. It is needless to them that are elected; for they, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be saved. Therefore, the end of preaching — to save souls — is void with regard to them; and it is useless to them that are not elected, for they cannot possibly be saved: They, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be damned. The end of preaching is therefore void with regard to them likewise; so that in either case our preaching is vain, as your hearing is also vain.

11. This, then, is a plain proof that the doctrine of predestination is not a doctrine of God, because it makes void the ordinance of God; and God is not divided against himself. A Second is, that it directly tends to destroy that holiness which is the end of all the ordinances of God. I do not say, none who hold it are holy; (for God is of tender mercy to those who are unavoidably entangled in errors of any kind;) but that the doctrine itself, — that every man is either elected or not elected from eternity, and that the one must inevitably be saved, and the other inevitably damned, — has a manifest tendency to destroy holiness in general; for it wholly takes away those first motives to follow after it, so frequently proposed in Scripture, the hope of future reward and fear of punishment, the hope of heaven and fear of hell. That these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and those into life eternal, is no motive to him to struggle for

life who believes his lot is easy already; it is not reasonable for him so to do, if he thinks he is unalterably adjudged either to life or death. You will say, "But he knows not whether it is life or death." What then? — this helps not the matter; for if a sick man knows that he must unavoidably die, or unavoidably recover, though he knows not which, it is unreasonable for him to take any physic at all. He might justly say, (and so I have heard some speak, both in bodily sickness and in spiritual,) "If I am ordained to life, I shall live; if to death, I shall die; so I need not trouble myself about it." So directly does this doctrine tend to shut the very gate of holiness in general, — to hinder unholy men from ever approaching thereto, or striving to enter in thereat.

12. As directly does this doctrine tend so to destroy several particular branches of holiness. Such are meekness and love, — love, I mean, of our enemies, — of the evil and unthankful. I say not, that none who hold it have meekness and love; (for as is the power of God, so is his mercy;) but that it naturally tends to inspire, or increase, a sharpness or eagerness of temper, which is quite contrary to the meekness of Christ; as then especially appears, when they are opposed on this head. And it as naturally inspires contempt or coldness towards those whom we suppose outcasts from God. "O but," you say, "I suppose no particular man a reprobate." You mean you would not if you could help it: But you cannot help sometimes applying your general doctrine to particular persons: The enemy of souls will apply it for you. You know how often he has done so. But you rejected the thought with abhorrence. True; as soon as you could; but how did it sour and sharpen your spirit in the mean time! You well know it was not the spirit of love which you then felt towards that poor sinner, whom you supposed or suspected, whether you would or no, to have been hated of God from eternity.

13. Thirdly. This doctrine tends to destroy the comfort of religion, the happiness of Christianity. This is evident as to all those who believe themselves to be reprobated, or who only suspect or fear it. All the great and precious promises are lost to them; they afford them no ray of comfort: For they are not the elect of God; therefore they have neither lot nor portion in them. This is an effectual bar to their finding any comfort or

happiness, even in that religion whose ways are designed to be; “ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace.”

14. And as to you who believe yourselves the elect of God, what is your happiness? I hope, not a notion, a speculative belief, a bare opinion of any kind; but a feeling possession of God in your heart, wrought in you by the Holy Ghost, or, the witness of God’s Spirit with your spirit that you are a child of God. This, otherwise termed “the full assurance of faith,” is the true ground of a Christian’s happiness. And it does indeed imply a full assurance that all your past sins are forgiven, and that you are *now* a child of God. But it does not necessarily imply a full assurance of our future perseverance. I do not say this is never joined to it, but that it is not necessarily implied therein; for many have the one who have not the other.

15. Now, this witness of the Spirit experience shows to be much obstructed by this doctrine; and not only in those whom believing themselves reprobated, by this belief thrust it far from them, but even in them that have tasted of that good gift, who yet have soon lost it again, and fallen back into doubts, and years, and darkness, — horrible darkness, that might be felt! And I appeal to any of you who hold this doctrine, to say, between God and your own hearts, whether you have not often a return of doubts and fears concerning your election or perseverance! If you ask, “Who has not?” I answer, Very few of those that hold this doctrine; but many, very many, of those that hold it not, in all parts of the earth; — many of those who know and feel they are in Christ today, and “take no thought for the morrow;” who “abide in him” by faith from hour to hour, or, rather, from moment to moment; — many of these have enjoyed the uninterrupted witness of his Spirit, the continual light of his countenance, from the moment wherein they first believed, for many months or years to this day.

16. That assurance of faith which these enjoy excludes all doubt and fear. It excludes all kinds of doubt and fear concerning their future perseverance; though it is not properly as was said before, an assurance of what is future, but only of what *now* is. And this needs not for its support a speculative belief, that whoever is once ordained to life must live; for it is wrought from hour to hour, by the mighty power of God, “by the Holy

Ghost which is given unto them.” And therefore that doctrine is not of God, because it tends to obstruct, if not destroy, this great work of the Holy Ghost, whence flows the chief comfort of religion, the happiness of Christianity.

17. Again: How uncomfortable a thought is this, that thousands and millions of men, without any preceding; offense or fault of theirs, were unchangeably doomed to everlasting burnings! How peculiarly uncomfortable must it be to those who have put on Christ! to those who, being filled with bowels of mercy, tenderness, and compassion, could even “wish themselves accursed for their brethren’s sake!”

18. Fourthly. This uncomfortable doctrine directly tends to destroy our zeal for good works. And this it does, First, as it naturally tends (according to what was observed before) to destroy our love to the greater part of mankind, namely, the evil and unthankful. For whatever lessens our love, must so far lessen our desire to do them good. This it does, Secondly, as it cuts off one of the strongest motives to all acts of bodily mercy, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and the like, — viz., the hope of saving their souls from death. For what avails it to relieve their temporal wants, who are just dropping into eternal fire? “Well; but run and snatch them as brands out of the fire.” Nay, this you suppose impossible. They were appointed thereunto, you say, from eternity, before they had done either good or evil. You believe it is the will of God they should die. And “who hath resisted his will?” But you say you do not know whether these are elected or not. What then? If you know they are the one or the other, — that they are either elected or not elected, — all your labor is void and vain. In either case, your advice, reproof, or exhortation is as needless and useless as our preaching. It is needless to them that are elected; for they will infallibly be saved without it. It is useless to them that are not elected; for with or without it they will infallibly be damned; therefore you cannot consistently with your principles take any pains about their salvation. Consequently, those principles directly tend to destroy your zeal for good works; for all good works; but particularly for the greatest of all, the saving of souls from death.

19. But, Fifthly, this doctrine not only tends to destroy Christian holiness, happiness, and good works, but hath also a direct and manifest tendency to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation. The point which the wisest of the modern unbelievers most industriously labor to prove, is, that the Christian Revelation is not necessary. They well know, could they once show this, the conclusion would be too plain to be denied, "If it be not necessary, it is not true." Now, this fundamental point you give up. For supposing that eternal, unchangeable decree, one part of mankind must be saved, though the Christian Revelation were not in being, and the other part of mankind must be damned, notwithstanding that Revelation. And what would an infidel desire more? You allow him all he asks. In making the gospel thus unnecessary to all sorts of men, you give up the whole Christian cause. "O tell it not in Gath! Publish it not in the streets of Askelon! Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice;" Lest the sons of unbelief triumph!

20. And as this doctrine manifestly and directly tends to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation, so it does the same thing, by plain consequence, in making that Revelation contradict itself. For it is grounded on such an interpretation of some texts (more or fewer it matters not) as flatly contradicts all the other texts, and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture. For instance: "The assertors of this doctrine interpret that text of Scripture, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," as implying that God in a literal sense hated Esau, and all the reprobated, from eternity. Now, what can possibly be a more flat contradiction than this, not only to the whole scope and tenor of Scripture, but also to all those particular texts which expressly declare, "God is love?" Again: They infer from that text, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," (Romans. 9:15,) that God is love only to some men, viz., the elect, and that he hath mercy for those only; flatly contrary to which is the whole tenor of Scripture, as is that express declaration in particular, "The Lord is loving unto every man; and his mercy is over all his works." (Psalms 145:9.) Again: They infer from that and the like texts, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," that he showeth mercy only to those to whom he had respect from all eternity. Nay, but who replieth against God now? You now contradict the whole oracles of God, which declare throughout, "God is no respecter of

persons:” (Acts 10:34:) “I here is no respect of persons with him.” (Romans 2:11.) Again: from that text, “The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her,” unto Rebecca, “The elder shall serve the younger;” you infer, that our being predestinated, or elect, no way depends on the foreknowledge of God. Flatly contrary to this are all the scriptures; and those in particular, “Elect according to he foreknowledge of God;” (1 Peter 1:2;) “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.” (Romans 8:29.)

21. And “the same Lord over all is rich” in mercy “to all that call upon him:” (Romans 10:12:) But you say, “No; he is such only to those for whom Christ died. And those are not all, but only a few, whom God hath chosen out of the world; for he died not for all, but only for those who were ‘chosen in him before the foundation of the world.’” (Ephesians 1:4.) Flatly contrary to your interpretation of these scriptures, also, is the whole tenor of the New Testament; as are in particular those texts: — Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ dieth,” (Romans 14:15.) — a clear proof that Christ died, not only for those that are saved, but also for them that perish: He is “the Savior of the world;” (John 4:42;) He is “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world;” (1:29;) “He is the propitiation. not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world;” (1 John 2:2;) “He,” the living God, “is the Savior of all men;” (1 Timothy 4:10;) “He gave himself a ransom for all;” (2:6;) “He tasted death for every man.” (Hebrews 2:9.)

22. If you ask, “Why then are not all men saved?” the whole law and the testimony answer, First, Not because of any decree of God; not because it is his pleasure they should die; for, “As I live, saith the Lord God,” “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.” (Ezekiel 18:3, 32.) Whatever be the cause of their perishing, it cannot be his will, if the oracles of God are true; for they declare, “He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;” (2 Peter 3:9;) “He willeth that all men should be saved.” And they, secondly, declare what is the cause why all men are not saved, namely, that they will not be saved: So our Lord expressly, “Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.” (John 5:40.) “The power of the Lord is present to heal” them, but they will not be

healed “they reject the counsel,” the merciful counsel, “of God against themselves,” as did their stiff necked forefathers. And therefore are they without excuse; because God would save them, but they will not be saved: This is the condemnation, “How often would I have gathered you together, and we would not!” (Matthew 23:37.)

23. Thus manifestly does this doctrine tend to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation, by making it contradict itself; by giving such an interpretation of some texts, as flatly contradicts all the other texts, and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture; — an abundant proof that it is not of God. But neither is this all: For, Seventhly, it is a doctrine full of blasphemy; of such blasphemy as I should dread to mention, but that the honor of our gracious God, and the cause of his truth, will not suffer me to be silent. In the cause of God, then, and from a sincere concern for the glory of his great name, I will mention a few of the horrible blasphemies contained in this horrible doctrine. But first, I must warn every one of you that hears, as ye will answer it at the great day, not to charge me (as some have done) with blaspheming, because I mention the blasphemy of others. And the more you are grieved with them that do thus blaspheme, see that ye “confirm your love towards them” the more, and that your heart’s desire, and continual prayer to God, be, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!”

24. This premised, let be observed, that this doctrine represents our blessed Lord, “Jesus Christ the righteous,” “the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth,” as an hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity. For it cannot be denied, that he everywhere speaks as if he was willing that all men should be saved. Therefore, to say he was not willing that all men should be saved, is to represent him as a mere hypocrite and dissembler. It cannot be denied that the gracious words which came out of his mouth are full of invitations to all sinners. To say, then, he did not intend to save all sinners, is to represent him as a gross deceiver of the people. You cannot deny that he says, “Come unto me. all ye that are weary and heavy laden,” If, then, you say he calls those that cannot come; those whom he knows to be unable to come those whom he can make able to come, but will not; how is it possible to describe greater insincerity. You represent him as mocking his

helpless creatures, by offering what he never intends to give. You describe him as saying one thing, and meaning another; as pretending the love which he had not. Him, in “whose mouth was no guile,” you make full of deceit, void of common sincerity; — then especially, when, drawing nigh the city, He wept over it, and said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often *would* I have gathered thy children together, — and ye would not;” **ἠθελῆσα — και ουκ ἠθελῆσατε**. Now, if you say, *they would*, but *he would not*, you represent him (which who could hear?) as weeping crocodiles’ tears; weeping over the prey which himself had doomed to destruction!

25. Such blasphemy this, as one would think might make the ears of a Christian to tingle! But there is yet more behind; for just as it honors the Son, so doth this doctrine honor the Father. It destroys all his attributes at once: It overturns both his justice, mercy, and truth; yea, it represents the most holy God as worse than the devil, as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust. More *false*; because the devil, liar as he is, hath never said, “He willeth all men to be saved:” More *unjust*; because the devil cannot, if he would, be guilty of such injustice as you ascribe to God, when you say that God condemned millions of souls to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, for continuing in sin, which, for want of that grace *he will not* give them, they cannot avoid: And more *cruel*; because that unhappy spirit “seeketh rest and findeth none;” so that his own restless misery is a kind of temptation to him to tempt others. But God resteth in his high and holy place; so that to suppose him, of his own mere motion, of his pure will and pleasure, happy as he is, to doom his creatures, whether they will or no, to endless misery, is to impute such cruelty to him as we cannot impute even to the great enemy of God and man. It is to represent the most high God (he that hath ears to hear let him hear!) as more cruel, false, and unjust than the devil!

26. This is the blasphemy clearly contained in *the horrible decree* of predestination! And here I fix my foot. On this I joint issue with every assertor of it. You represent God as worse than the devil; more false, more cruel, more unjust. But you say you will prove it by Scripture. Hold! What will you prove by Scripture? that God is worse than the devil? It cannot be. Whatever that Scripture proves, it never can prove this;

whatever its true meaning be, this cannot be its true meaning. Do you ask, "What is its true meaning then?" If I say, "I know not," you have gained nothing; for there are many scriptures the true sense whereof neither you nor I shall know till death is swallowed up in victory. But this I know, better it were to say it had no sense at all, than today it had such a sense as this. It cannot mean, whatever it mean besides, that the God of truth is a liar. Let it mean what it will, it cannot mean that the Judge of all the world is unjust. No scripture can mean that God is not love, or that his mercy is not over all his works; that is, whatever it prove beside, no scripture can prove predestination.

27. This is the blasphemy for which (however I love the persons who assert it) I abhor the doctrine of predestination, a doctrine, upon the supposition of which, if one could possibly suppose it for a moment, (call it election, reprobation, or what you please, for all comes to the same thing,) one might say to our adversary, the devil, "Thou fool, why dost thou roar about any longer? Thy lying in wait for souls is as needless and useless as our preaching. Hearest thou not, that God hath taken thy world out of thy hands; and that He doeth it much more effectually? Thou, with all thy principalities and powers, canst only so assault that we may resist thee; but He can irresistibly destroy both body and soul in hell! Thou canst only entice; but His unchangeable decree, to leave thousands of souls in death, compels them to continue in sin, till they drop into everlasting burnings. Thou temptest; He forceth us to be damned; for we cannot resist his will. Thou fool, why goest thou about any longer, seeking whom thou mayest devour? Hearest thou not that God is the devouring lion, the destroyer of souls, the murderer of men? Moloch caused only children to pass through the fire; and that fire was soon quenched; or, the corruptible body being consumed, its torment was at an end; but God, thou art told, by his eternal decree, fixed before they had done good or evil, causes, not only children of a span long, but the parents also, to pass through the fire of hell, the 'fire which never shall be quenched;' and the body which is cast there into, being now incorruptible and immortal, will be ever consuming and never consumed, but 'the smoke of their torment,' because it is God's good pleasure, 'ascendeth up for ever and ever.'"

28. O how would the enemy of God and man rejoice to hear these things were so! How would he cry aloud and spare not! How would he lift up his voice and say, "To your tents, O Israel! Flee from the face of this God, or ye shall utterly perish! But whither will ye flee? Into heaven? He is there. Down to hell? He is there also. Ye cannot flee from an omnipresent, almighty tyrant. And whether ye flee or stay, I call heaven, his throne, and earth, his footstool, to witness against you, ye shall perish, ye shall die eternally. Sing, O hell, and rejoice, ye that are under the earth! For God, even the mighty God, hath spoken, and devoted to death thousands of souls, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof! Here, O death, is thy sting! They shall not, cannot escape; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Here, O grave, is thy victory! Nations yet unborn, or ever they have done good or evil, are doomed never to see the light of life, but thou shalt gnaw upon them for ever and ever! Let all those morning stars sing together, who fell with Lucifer, son of the morning! Let all the sons of hell shout for joy! For the decree is past, and who shall disannul it?"

29. Yea, the decree is past; and so it was before the foundation of the world. But what decree? Even this: "I will set before the sons of men 'life and death, blessing and cursing.' And the soul that chooseth life shall live, as the soul that chooseth death shall die." This decree, whereby "whom God did foreknow, he did predestinate," was indeed from everlastings; this, whereby all who suffer Christ to make them alive are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," now standeth fast, even as the moon, and as the faithful witnesses in heaven; and when heaven and earth shall pass away, yet this shall not pass away; for it is as unchangeable and eternal as is the being of God that gave it. This decree yields the strongest encouragement to abound in all good works and in all holiness; and it is a well-spring of joy, of happiness also, to our great and endless comfort. This is worthy of God; it is every way consistent with all the perfections of his nature. It gives us the noblest view both of his justice, mercy, and truth. To this agrees the whole scope of the Christian elevation, as well as all the parts thereof. To this Moses and all the Prophets bear witness, and our blessed Lord and all his Apostles. Thus Moses, in the name of his Lord: "I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life,

that thou and thy seed may live.” Thus Ezekiel: (To cite one Prophet for all:) “The soul that sinneth, it shall die: The son shall not bear” eternally “the iniquity of the father. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” (18:20) thus our blessed Lord; “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” (John 7:37.) Thus his great Apostle, Saint Paul: (Acts 17:30:) “God commandeth all men everywhere to repent;” — “all men everywhere;” every man in every place, without any exception either of place or person. Thus Saint James: “If any of you lack wisdom, let them ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbaiseth not, and it shall be given him” (James 1:5.) Thus Saint Peter; (2 Peter 3:9:) “The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” And thus Saint John: “It any man sin, we have an Advocate with the father; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins for the whole world.” (1 John 2:1, 2.)

30. O hear ye this, ye that forget God! Ye cannot charge your death upon him! “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” saith the Lord God. (Ezekiel 18:23, etc.) Repent, and turn from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, — for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.” “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. — Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11.)

SERMON CXXIX.

THE CAUSE AND CURE OF EARTHQUAKES.

[FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE YEAR 1750.]

“O come hither, and behold the works of the Lord; what destruction he hath brought upon the earth!”

Psalm 46:8.

OF all the judgments which the righteous God inflicts on sinners here, the most dreadful and destructive is an earthquake. This he has lately brought on our part of the earth, and thereby alarmed our fears, and bid us “prepare to meet our God!” The shocks which have been felt in divers places, since that which made this city tremble, may convince us that the danger is not over, and ought to keep us still in awe; seeing “his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.” (Isaiah 10:4.)

That I may fall in with the design of Providence at this awful crisis, I shall take occasion from the words of my text,

- I. To show that earthquakes are the works of the Lord, and he only bringeth this destruction upon the earth:
- II. Call you to behold the works of the Lord, in two or three terrible instances: And,
- III. Give you some directions suitable to the occasion.

I.

I am to show you that earthquakes are the works of the Lord, and He only bringeth this destruction upon the earth. Now, that God is himself the Author, and sin the *moral* cause, of earthquakes, (whatever the natural cause may be,) cannot be denied by any who believe the Scriptures; for these are they which testify of Him, that it is God “which removeth the mountains, and overturneth them in his anger; which shaketh the earth out

of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble.” (Job 9:5, 6.) “He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.” (Psalms 104:32.) “The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.” (Psalms 97:5) “The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt. Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.” (Nahum 1:5, 6.)

Earthquakes are set forth by the inspired writers as God’s proper judicial act, or the punishment of sin: Sin is the cause, earthquakes the effect, of his anger. So the Psalmist: The earth trembled and quaked; the very foundations also of the hills shook, and were removed, because he was wroth” (Psalms 18:7.) So the Prophet Isaiah: “I will punish the world for their evil, — and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible: — Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.” (Isaiah 13:11, 13.) And again. “Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty; and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down,” (in the original, *perverteth the face thereof*;) “and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. For the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall and not rise again.” (Isaiah 24:1, 18-20.) “Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob.” (Psalms 114:7.) “Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise.” (Isaiah 29:6.)

Nothing can be more express than these scripture testimonies, which determine both the cause and author of this terrible calamity. But reason, as well as faith, doth sufficiently assure us it must be the punishment of sin, and the effect of that curse which was brought upon the earth by the original transgression. Steadfastness must be no longer looked for in the world, since innocency is banished thence: But we cannot conceive that the universe would have been disturbed by these furious accidents; during the state of original righteousness. Wherefore should God’s anger have armed the elements against his faithful subjects? Wherefore should he have

overthrown all his works to destroy innocent men? or why overwhelmed the inhabitants of the earth with the ruins thereof, if they had not been sinful? why buried those in the bowels of the earth who were not to die? Let us then conclude, both from Scripture and reason, that earthquakes are God's *strange works* of judgment, — the proper effect and punishment of sin. I proceed,

II.

To set before you these works of the Lord in two or three terrible instances.

In the year 1692 there happened in Sicily one of the most dreadful earthquakes in all history. It shook the whole island; and not only that, but Naples and Malta shared in the shock. It was impossible for any one to keep on their legs on the dancing earth: Nay, those who lay on the ground were tossed from side to side, as on a rolling billow. High walls leaped from their foundations several paces.

The mischief it did is amazing: Fifty-four cities and towns, besides an incredible number of villages, were almost entirely destroyed. Catania, one of the most famous, ancient, and flourishing cities in the kingdom, the residence of several monarchs, and an university, had the greatest share in the judgment. Father Anth. Serrvoita, being on his way thither, a few miles from the city, observed a black cloud like night hovering over it; and there arose from the mouth of Etna great spires of flame, which spread all around. The sea, all on a sudden, began to roar, and rise in billows; the birds flew about astonished; the cattle ran crying in the fields: and there was a blow as if all the artillery in the world had been discharged at once!

His and his companions horses stopped short, trembling; so that they were forced to alight. They were no sooner off; but they were lifted from the ground above two palms; when, casting his eyes towards Catania, he was astonished to see nothing but a thick cloud of dust in the air. This was the scene of their calamity; for of the magnificent Catania there is not be least footstep to be seen. Of eighteen thousand nine hundred and fourteen inhabitants, eighteen thousand perished therein: In the several cities and

towns sixty thousand were destroyed out of two hundred and fifty-four thousand nine hundred!

In the same year, 1692, on June 7, was the earthquake in Jamaica. It threw down most of the houses, churches, sugarworks, mills, and bridges, throughout the island; tore the rocks and mountains, reducing some of them to plains; destroyed whole plantations, and threw them into the sea; and, in two minutes' time, shook down and destroyed nine-tenths of the town of Port-Royal; the houses sunk outright thirty or forty fathom deep!

The earth, opening, swallowed up people; and they rose in other streets; some in the midst of the harbor, (being driven up again by the sea which rose in those breaches,) and so wonderfully escaped.

Of all wells, from one fathom to six or seven, the water flew out of the top with a vehement motion. While the houses on one side of the street were swallowed up, on the other they were thrown into heaps. The sand in the street rose like waves of the sea, lifting up every body that stood on it, and immediately dropping down into pits; and at the same instant, a flood of water, breaking in, rolled them over and over, while catching hold of beams and rafters to save themselves.

Ships and sloops in the harbor were overset and lost. A vessel, by the motion of the sea and sinking of the wharf, was driven over the tops of many houses, and sunk there.

The earthquake was attended with a hollow rumbling sound, like that of thunder. In less than a minute, three quarters of the houses, and the ground they stood on, with the inhabitants, were quite sunk under water, and the little part left behind was no better than a heap of rubbish!

The shock was so violent that it threw people down on their knees or their faces, as they were running about for shelter, the ground heaved and swelled like a rolling sea; and several houses, still standing, were shuffled and moved some yards out of their places; a whole street is said to be twice as broad now as before.

In many places the earth would crack, and open and shut quick and fast, of which openings two or three hundred might be seen at a time; in some whereof the people were swallowed up; others the closing earth caught by the middle, and squeezed to death; and in that manner they were left buried with only their heads above ground; some heads the dogs ate!

The Minister of the place, in his account, saith, that such was the desperate wickedness of the people, that he was afraid to continue among them; that on the day of the earthquake some sailors and others fell to breaking open and rifling ware houses, and houses deserted, while the earth trembled under them, and the houses fell upon them in the act; that he met many swearing and blaspheming; and that the common harlots, who remained still upon the place, were as drunken and impudent as ever.

While he was running towards the Fort, a wise open place, to save himself, he saw the earth open and swallow up a multitude of people; and the sea mounting in upon them over the fortifications, it likewise destroyed their large burying-place, and washed away the carcasses out of their graves, dashing their tombs to pieces. The whole harbor was covered with dead bodies, floating up and down without burial!

As soon as the violent shock was over, he desired all people to join with him in prayer. Among them were several Jews, who kneeled and answered as they did, and were heard even to call upon Jesus Christ. After he had spent an hour and an half with them in prayer, and exhortations to repentance, he was desired to retire to some ship in the harbor, and, passing over the tops of some houses which lay level with the water, got first into a canoe, and then into a long-boat, which put him on board a ship.

The larger openings swallowed up houses; and out of some would issue whole rivers of water, spouted up a great height into the air, and threatening a deluge to that part which the earthquake spared. The whole was attended with offensive smells, and the noise of falling mountains. The sky in a minute's time was turned dull and red, like a glowing oven. Scarce a planting-house or sugar-work was left standing in all Jamaica. A great part of them was swallowed up, houses, trees, people, and all at one

gape; in the place of which afterwards appeared great pools of water, which, when dried up, left nothing but sand, without any mark that ever tree or plant had been thereon. About twelve miles from the seen, the earth gaped, and spouted out, with a prodigious force, vast quantities of water into the air. But the greatest violence was among the mountains and rocks. Most of the rivers were stopped for twenty-four hours, by the falling of the mountains still, swelling up, they made themselves new channels, tearing up trees, and all they met with, in their passage.

A great mountain split, and fell into level ground, and covered several settlements and destroyed the people there. Another mountain, having made general leaps or moves, overwhelmed great part of a plantation lying a mile off. Another large high mountain, near a day's journey over, was quite swallowed up, and where it stood is now a great lake some leagues over.

After the great shake, those who escaped got on board ships in the harbor, where many continued above two months; the shakes all that time being so violent, and coming so thick, sometimes two or three in an hour, accompanied with frightful noises, like a ruffling wind, or a hollow rumbling thunders with brimstone blasts, that they durst not come ashore. The consequence of the earthquake was, a general sickness from the noisome vapors, which swept away above three thousand persons.

On the 28th of October, 1746, half an hour past ten at night, Lima, the capital city of Peru, was destroyed by an earthquake, which extended an hundred leagues northward, and as many more to the south, all along the sea-coast. The destruction did not so much as give time for right; for, at one and the same instant, the noise, the shock, and the ruin were perceived. In the space of four minutes, during which the greatest force of the earthquake lasted, some found themselves hurried under the ruins of the falling houses; and others crushed to death in the streets by the tumbling of the walls, which fell upon them as they ran here and there.

Nevertheless, the greater part of the inhabitants (who were computed near sixty thousand) were providentially preserved, either in the hollow places which the ruins left, or on the top of the very ruins themselves, without

knowing how they got up thither. For no person, at such a season, had then for deliberation; and supposing he had, there was no place of retreat: For the parts which seemed most firm sometimes proved the weakest; on the contrary, the weakest, at intervals, made the greatest resistance; and the consternation was such, that no one thought himself secure, till he had made his escape out of the city.

The earth struck against the buildings with such violence, that every shock beat down the greatest part of them; and these, tearing along with them vast weights in their fall, (especially the churches and high houses,) completed the destruction of everything they encountered with, even of what the earthquake had spared. The shocks, although instantaneous, were yet successive; and at intervals men were transported from one place to another, which was the means of safety to some, while the utter impossibility of moving preserved others.

There were seventy-four churches, besides chapels, and fourteen monasteries, with as many more hospitals and infirmaries, which were in an instant reduced to a ruinous heap, and their immense riches buried in the earth! But though scarce twenty houses were left standing, yet it does not appear that the number of the dead amounted to much more than one thousand one hundred and forty-one persons; seventy of whom were patients in an hospital, who were buried by the roof falling upon them as they lay in their beds, no person being able to give them any assistance.

Callao, a seaport town, two leagues distant from Lima, was swallowed up by the sea in the same earthquake. It vanished out of sight in a moment; so that not the least sight of it now appears.

Some few towers, indeed, and the strength of its walls, for a time, endured the whole force of the earthquake: But scarcely had its poor inhabitants begun to recover their first fright which the dreadful ruin had occasioned, when suddenly, the sea began to swell, and, rising to a prodigious height, rushed furiously forward, and overflowed, with so vast a deluge of water, its ancient bounds, that, foundering most of the ships which were at anchor in the port, and lifting the rest above the height of the walls and towers, it drove them on, and left them on dry ground far beyond the

town. At the same time, it tore up from the foundations everything therein of houses, and buildings, excepting the two gates, and here and there some small fragments of the walls themselves, which as registers of the calamity, are still to be seen among the ruins and the waters, — a dreadful monument of what they were!

In this raging flood were drowned all the inhabitants of the place, about five thousand persons. Such as could lay hold on any pieces of timber, floated about for a considerable time; but those fragments, for want of room, were continually striking against each other, and so beat off those who had clung to them.

About two hundred, mostly fishermen and sailors, saved themselves. They declared that the waves in their retreat surrounded the whole town, without leaving any means for preservation; and that, in the intervals, when the violence of the inundation was a little abated; they heard the most mournful cries and shrieks of those who perished. Those, likewise who were on board the ships; which, by the elevation of the sea, were carried quite over the town, had the opportunity of escaping. Of twenty-three ships in the port at the time of the earthquake, four were stranded, and all the rest foundered. The few persons who saved themselves upon planks were several times driven about as far as the island of St. Lawrence, more than two leagues from the port. At last some of them were cast upon the sea-shore, others upon the island, and so were preserved.

In these instances we may behold and see the works of the Lord, and how is terrible he is in his doings towards the children of men.” (Psalms 66:5.) Indeed, nothing can be so affecting as this judgment of earthquakes when it comes unexpectedly a thief in the night; — “when hell enlarges herself, and opens her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, descend into it;” (Isaiah 5:14;) — when there is no time to flee, or method to escape, or possibility to resist; — when no sanctuary or refugee remains; no shelter is to be found in the highest towers or lowest caverns; — when the earth opens on a sudden, and becomes the grave of whole families, streets, and cities; and effects this in less time than you are able to tell the story of it; either sending out

a flood of waters to drown, or vomiting out flames of fire to consume them, or closing again upon them, that they die by suffocation or famine, if not by the ruins of their own dwelling; — when parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, magistrates, Ministers, and people, without distinction, in the midst of health, and peace, and business, are buried in a common ruin, and pass all together into the eternal world; and there is only the difference of a few hours or minutes between a famous city and none at all!

Now, if war be a terrible evil, how much more an earthquake, which, in the midst of peace, brings a worse evil than the extremity of war! If a raging pestilence be dreadful, which sweeps away thousands in a day, and ten thousands in a night; if a consuming fire be an amazing judgment; how much more astonishing is this, whereby houses, and inhabitants, towns, and cities, and countries are all destroyed at one stroke in a few minutes! Death is the only presage of such a judgment, with out giving leisure to prepare for another world, or opportunity to look for any shelter in this.

For a man to feel the earth, which hangeth upon nothing, (but as some vast ball in the midst of a thin yielding air,) totter under him, must fill him with secret fright and confusion. History informs us of the fearful effects of earthquakes in all ages; where you may see rocks torn in pieces; mountains not cast down only, but removed; hills raised, not out of valleys only, but out of seas; fires breaking out of waters; stones and cinders belched up; rivers changed; seas dislodged; earth opening; towns swallowed up; and many such-like hideous events!

Of all divine animadversions, there is none more horrid, more inevitable, than this. For where can we think to escape danger, if the most solid thing in all the world shakes? If that which sustains all other things threaten us with sinking under our feet. What sanctuary shall we find from an evil that encompasses us about? And whither can we withdraw, if the gulfs which open themselves shut up our passages on every side?

With what horror are men struck when they hear the earth groan; when her trembling succeeds her complaints; when houses are loosened from their foundations; when the roofs fall upon their heads, and the pavement sinks

under their feet! What hope, when fear cannot be fenced by flight! In other evils there is some way to escape; but an earthquake encloses that it overthrows, and wages war with whole provinces; and sometimes leaves nothing behind it to inform posterity of its outrages. More insolent than fire, which spares rocks; more cruel than the conqueror, who leaves walls; more greedy than the sea, which vomits up shipwrecks; it swallows and devours whatsoever it overturns. The sea itself is subject to its empire, and the most dangerous storms are those occasioned by earthquakes.

I come, in the Third and last place, to give you some directions suitable to the occasion. And this is the more needful, because ye know not how soon the late earthquake, wherewith God hath visited us, may return, or whether He may not enlarge as well as repeat its commission. Once, yea, twice, hath the Lord warned us, that he is arisen to shake terribly the earth. Wherefore, "Fear God, even that God who can in a moment cast both body and soul into hell!" Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty." (Isaiah 2:10.) Ought we not all to cry out, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thy judgments are made manifest!" (Revelation 15:3, 4.)

God speaks to your hearts, as in subterranean thunder. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, — Hear the rod, and who hath appointed it." (Micah 6:9.) He commands you to take notice of his power and justice. "Come and see!" (Revelation 6:5,) while a fresh seal is opening; yea, "come and see the works of God; he is terrible in his doings towards the children of men." (Psalms 66:5.)

When he makes the mountains tremble, and the earth shake, shall not our hearts be moved? "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord; and will ye not tremble at my presence?" (Jeremiah 5:22.) Will ye not fear me, who can open the windows of heaven above, or break up the mountains of the great deep below, and pour forth whole floods of vengeance when I please? — who can "rain upon the wicked snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest;" (Psalms 11:6.) or kindle those steams and exhalations in the bowels and caverns of the earth, and make them force their way to the destruction of towns, cities, and countries? who can thus suddenly turn a

fruitful land into a barren wilderness; an amazing spectacle of desolation and ruin?

“Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” “The lion hath roared; who will not fear? With God is terrible majesty; men do therefore fear him.” Some *do*; and all *ought*. O that his fear might this moment fall upon all you who hear these words; constraining every one of you to cry out, “My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments!” (Psalm 119:120.) O that all might see, now His hand is lifted up, as in act to strike; is stretched out still; and shakes his roll over a guilty land, a people fitted for destruction! For, is not this the nation to be visited? And “shall not I visit for these things? saith the Lord; and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” (Jeremiah 5:9.) What but national repentance can prevent national destruction?

“O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you!” (Psalms 1:22.) That iniquity may not be your ruin, repent! This is the Second advice I would offer you; or, rather, the first enforced upon you farther, and explained. Fear God, and depart from evil; repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance; break off your sins this moment. “Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well,” saith the Lord. (Isaiah 1:16, 17.)

“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3.) “Therefore now, saith the Lord,” who is not willing any should perish, “turn ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?” (Joel 2:12-14.)

“Who knoweth?” A question which should make you tremble. God is weighing you in the balance, and as it were, considering whether to save or to destroy! “Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee;

therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.” (Exodus 33:5.)

God waits to see what effect his warnings will have upon you. He pauses on the point of executing judgment, and cries, “How shall I give thee up?” (Hosea. 11:8) Or, “Why should ye be stricken any more?” (Isaiah 1:5.) He hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. He would not bring to pass his strange act, unless your obstinate impenitence compel him.

“Why will you die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 18:31.) God warns you of the approaching judgment, that ye may take warning, and escape it by timely repentance. He lifts up his hand, and shakes it over you, that ye may see it, and prevent the stroke. He tells you, “Now is the ax laid unto the root of the trees:” (Matthew 3:10:) Therefore repent; bring forth good fruit; and ye shall not be hewn down, and cast into the fire. O do not despise the riches of his mercy, but let it lead you to repentance! Account that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation.” (2 Peter 3:15.) Harden not your hearts, but turn to Him that smites you; or, rather, threatens to smite, that ye may turn and be spared!

How slow is the Lord to anger! how unwilling to punish! By what leisurely steps does he come to take vengeance! How many lighter afflictions before the final blow!

Should he beckon the man on the red horse to return, and say, “Sword, go through this land;” can we complain he gave us no warning? Did not the sword first bereave abroad; and did we not then see it within our borders? Yet the merciful God said, “Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further;” he stopped the invaders in the midst of our land, and turned them back again, and destroyed them.

Should he send the man on the pale horse, whose name is Death, and the pestilence destroy thousands and ten thousands of us; can we deny that first he warned us by the raging mortality among our cattle?

So, if we provoke him to lay waste our earth, and turn it upside down, and overthrow us, as he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah; shall we not have

procured this unto ourselves. Had we no reason to expect any such calamity; no previous notice; no trembling of the earth before it clave; no shock before it opened its mouth? Did he set no examples of so terrible a judgment before our eyes? Had we never heard of the destruction of Jamaica, or Catania, or that of Lima, which happened but yesterday? If we perish at last, we perish without excuse; for what could have been done more to, save us?

Yes; thou hast now another call to repentance, another offer of mercy, whosoever thou art that hearest these words. In the name of the Lord Jesus, I warn thee once more, as a watchman over the house of Israel, to flee from the wrath to come! I put thee in remembrance (if thou hast so soon forgotten it) of the late awful judgment, whereby God shook thee over the mouth of hell! Thy body he probably awoke by it; but did he awake thy soul? The Lord was in the earthquake, and put a solemn question to thy conscience: “Art thou ready to die?” “Is thy peace made with God?” Was the earth just now to open its mouth, and swallow thee up, what would become of thee? Where wouldest thou be? in Abraham’s bosom, or lifting up thine eyes in torment? Hadst thou perished by the late earthquake, wouldest thou not have died in thy sins, or rather gone down quick into hell? Who prevented thy damnation? It was the Son of God! O fall down, and worship him! Give Him the glory of thy deliverance; and devote the residue of thy days to his service!

This is the Third advice I would give you: Repent and believe the gospel. Believe on the Lord, Jesus, and ye shall yet be saved. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish. Repentance *alone* will profit you nothing; neither do ye repent, unless ye confess with broken hearts the most damnable of all your sins, your unbelief; your having rejected, or not accepted, Jesus Christ as your only Savior. Neither can ye repent unless he himself gives the power; unless his Spirit convince you of sin, because ye believe not in Him.

Till ye repent of your unbelief, all your good desires and promises are vain, and will pass away as a morning cloud. The vows which ye make in a time of trouble, ye will forget and break as soon as the trouble is over and the danger past.

But shall ye escape for your wickedness, suppose the earthquake should not return? God will never want ways and means to punish impenitent sinners. He hath a thousand other judgments in reserve; and if the earth should not open its mouth, yet ye shall surely at last be swallowed up in the bottomless pit of hell!

Wouldest thou yet escape that eternal death? Then receive the sentence of death in thyself, thou miserable self-destroyed sinner! Know thy want of living, saving, divine faith! Groan under thy burden of unbelief, and refuse to be comforted till thou hear Him of his own mouth say, “Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

I cannot take it for granted, that all men have faith; or speak to the sinners of this land as to believers in Jesus Christ. For there are the fruits of faith? Faith worketh by love; faith overcometh the world; faith purifieth the heart; faith, in the smallest measure, removeth mountains. If thou canst believe, all things are possible to thee. If thou art justified by faith, thou hast peace with God, and rejoicest in hope of his glorious appearing.

He that believeth hath the witness in himself; hath the earnest of heaven in his heart; hath love stronger than death. Death to a believer has lost its sting; “therefore will he not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” (Psalms 46:2.) For he knows in whom he has believed; and that neither life nor death shall be able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord.”

Dost thou so believe? Prove thy own self by the infallible word of God. If thou hast not the fruits, effects, or inseparable properties of faith, thou hast not faith. Come, then, to the Author and Finisher of faith, confessing thy sins, and the root of all — thy unbelief, till he forgive thee thy sins, and cleanse thee from all unrighteousness. Come to the Friend of sinners, weary and heavy laden, and he will give thee pardon! Cast thy poor desperate soul on his dying love! Enter into the rock, the ark, the city of refuge! Ask, and thou shalt receive faith and forgiveness together. He waited to be gracious. He hath spared thee for this very thing; that thine

eyes might see his salvation. Whatever judgments come in these latter days, yet whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord Jesus shall be delivered.

Call upon Him now, O sinner! and continue instant in prayer, till he answer thee in peace and power! Wrestle for the blessing! Thy life, thy soul, is at stake! Cry mightily unto Him, — “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” “God be merciful unto me a sinner!” Lord, help me! Help my unbelief! Save, or I perish! Sprinkle my troubled heart! Wash me thoroughly in the fountain of thy blood; guise me by thy Spirit; sanctify me throughout, and receive me up into glory!

“Now to God the Father,” etc.

SERMON CXXX.

NATIONAL SINS AND MISERIES.

PREACHED AT

**ST. MATTHEW'S, BETHNAL-GREEN,
ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1775,**

For, the benefit of the Widows and Orphans of the Soldiers who lately fell, near Boston, in New-England.

“Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: But these sheep, what have they done?”

2 Samuel 24:17.

1. **T**HE chapter begins, “And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.” “*Again;*” — it had been kindled against them but a few years before; in consequence of which “there had been a famine in the land three years, year after year,” (2 Samuel 21:1,) till David inquired of the Lord, and was taught, the way of appearing it. We are not informed, in what particular manner Israel had now offended God; by what particular cause his anger was kindled; but barely with the effect. “He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and, Judah.” “*He,*” — not God! Beware how you impute this to the fountain of love and holiness! It was not God, but Satan, who thus moved David. So the parallel scripture expressly declares: “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.” (1 Chronicles 21:1) Satan stood before God, to accuse David and Israel, and to beg God’s permission to tempt David. Standing is properly the accuser’s posture before the tribunals of men; and therefore the Scripture, which uses to speak of the things of God after the manner of

men, represents Satan as appearing in this posture before the tribunal of God. “And David said to Joab, and to rulers of the people, Go, number Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it.” (verse 2.)

2. It does not clearly appear wherein the sin of thus numbering the people consisted. There is no express prohibition of it in any of the Scriptures which were then extant. Yet we read, “The king’s word was abominable to Joab,” (verse 6,) who was not a man of the tenderest conscience, so that he expostulated with David before he obeyed. “Joab answered, Why doth my Lord require this thing?” “Why will he be a cause of trespass,” — of punishment or calamity, — “to Israel?” God frequently punishes a people for the sins of their rulers; because they are generally partakers of their sins, in one kind or other. And the righteous Judge takes this occasion of punishing them for all their sins. In this, Joab was right; for after they were numbered, it is said, “And God was displeased with this thing.” Yea, “David’s heart smote him, and he said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done; and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant.” (2 Samuel 24:10.) Did not the sin lie in the motive on which the thing was done? Did he not do it in the pride of his heart? Probably out of a principle of vanity and ostentation; glorying, not in God, but in the number of his people.

3. In the sequel we find, that even Joab was for once a true prophet: David was a cause of trespass, of punishment, to Israel. His sin, added to all the sins of the people, filled up the measure of their iniquities. So “the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, from the morning,” wherein Gad the prophet gave David his choice, of war, famine, or pestilence, “unto the evening of the third day. And there died of the people, from Dan unto Beersheba, seventy thousand men.” (Verse 15.) “And when David saw the angel that smote the people,” who appeared in the form of a man with a drawn sword in his hand, to convince him the more fully, that this plague was immediately from God, — “he said, Lo, I have sinned, I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done?”

4. Is there not, in several respects, a remarkable resemblance between the case of Israel and our own? General wickedness then occasional a general

visitation; and does not the same cause now produce the same effect? We likewise have sinned and we are punished; and perhaps these are only the beginning of sorrows. Perhaps the angel is now stretching out his hand over England to destroy it. O that the Lord would at length say to him that destroyeth, "it is enough; stay now thine stand!"

5. That vice is the parent of misery, few deny; it is confirmed by the general suffrage of all ages. But we seldom bring this home to ourselves; when we speak of sin as the cause of misery, we usually mean, the sin of other people, and suppose we suffer, because they sin. But need we go so far? Are not our own vices sufficient to account for all our sufferings? Let us fairly and impartially consider this; let us examine our own hearts and lives. We all suffer; and we have all sinned. But will it not be most profitable for us, to consider every one his own sins, as bringing sufferings both on himself and others; to say, "Lo, I have sinned, I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done?"

I.

1. let us inquire, First, what they suffer; and, afterwards, What is the cause of these sufferings? That the people suffer, none can deny; — that they are afflicted in a more than ordinary manner. thousands and tens of thousands are at this day deeply afflicted through want of business. It is true, that this want is in some measure removed in some large and opulent towns. But it is also true, that this is far, very far, from being the general ease of the kingdom. Nothing is more sure, than that thousands of people in the west of England, throughout Cornwall in particular, in the north, and even in the midland counties, are totally unemployed. Hence those who formerly wanted nothing, are now in want of all things. They are so far from the plenty they once enjoyed, that they are in the most deplorable distress, deprived not only of the conveniences, but most of the necessaries, of life. I have seen not a few of these wretched creatures, within little more than an hundred miles of London, standing in the streets, with pale looks, hollow eyes, and meaner limbs; or creeping up and down like walking shadows. I have known families, who a few years ago lived in an easy, genteel manner, reduced to just as much raiment as they had on, and as much food as they could gather in the field. To this one or other of them repaired once a day, to pick up the turnips which the cattle had left;

which they boiled, if they could get a few sticks, or, otherwise, ate them raw. Such is the want of food to which many of our countrymen are at this day reduced by want of business!

2. Grievous enough is this calamity, which multitudes everyday suffer. But I do not know whether many more do not labor under a still more grievous calamity. It is a great affliction to be deprived of bread; but it is a still greater, to be deprived of our senses. And this is the case with thousands upon thousands of our countrymen at this day. Wise-spread poverty (though not in so high a degree) I have seen several years ago. But so wise spread a lunacy I never saw, nor, I believe, the oldest man alive. Thousands of plain, honest people throughout the land, are driven utterly out of their senses, by means of the poison which is so diligently spread through every city and town in the kingdom. They are screaming out for liberty, while they have it in their hands, while they actually possess it; and to so great an extent, that the like is not known in any other nation under heaven; whether we mean civil liberty, a liberty of enjoying all our legal property, — or religious liberty, a liberty of worshipping God according to the dictates of our own conscience. Therefore all those who are either passionately or dolefully crying out, is Bondage! Slavery!” while there is no more danger of any such thing, than there is of the sky falling upon their head, are utterly distracted; their reason is gone; their intellects are quite confounded. Indeed, many of these have lately recovered their senses; yet are there multitudes still remaining, who are in this respect as perfectly mad as any of the inhabitants of Bedlam.

3. Let not any one think, this is but a small calamity which has fallen upon our land. If you saw, as I have seen, in every county, city, town, men who were once of a calm, mild, friendly temper, mad with party-zeal, foaming with rage against their quiet neighbors, ready to tear out one another’s throats, and to plunge their swords into each other’s bowels; if you had heard men, who once feared God and honored the king, now breathing out the bitterest invectives against him, and just ripe, should any occasion offer, for treason and rebellion; you would not then judge this to be a little evil, a matter of small moment, but one of the heaviest judgments which God can permit to fall upon a guilty land.

4. Such is the condition of Englishmen at home. And is it any better abroad? I fear not. From those who are now upon the spot, I learn, that in our colonies also many are causing the people to drink largely of the same deadly wine; thousands of whom are thereby inflamed more and more, till their head are utterly turned, and they are mad to all intents and purposes. Reason is lost in rage; its small still voice is drowned by popular clamor. Wisdom is fallen in the streets. And where is the place of understanding? It is hardly to be found in these provinces. Here is *slavery*, real slavery indeed, most properly so called. For the regular, legal, constitutional form of government is no more. Here is real, not imaginary, bondage: Not the shadow of English liberty is left. Not only no *liberty of the press* is allowed, — none dare print a page, or a line, unless it be exactly conformable to the sentiments of our Lord, the people,— but *no liberty of speech*. Their tongue is not *their own*. None must dare to utter one word, either in favor of KING GEORGE:, or in disfavor of the idol they have set up. — the new, illegal, unconstitutional government, utterly unknown to us and to our forefathers. Here is no *religious liberty*; no liberty of conscience for them that “honor the king,” and whom, consequently, a sense of duty prompts them to defend from the vile calumnies continually vented against him. Here is no *civil liberty*; no enjoying the fruit of their labor, any further than the populace pleases. A man has no security for his trade, his house, his property, unless he will swim with the stream. Nay, he has no security for his life, if his popular neighbor has a mind to cut his throat: For there is no law; no legal magistrate to take cognizance of offenses. There is the gulf of tyranny, — of arbitrary power on one hand, and of anarchy on the other. And, as if all this were not misery enough, see likewise the fell monster, war! But who can describe the complicated misery which is contained in this? Hark! the cannon’s roar! A pitchy cloud covers the face of the sky. Noise, confusion, terror, reign over all! Dying groans are on every side. The bodies of men are pierced, torn, hewed in pieces; their blood is poured on the earth like water! Their souls take their flight into the eternal world; perhaps into everlasting misery. The ministers of grace turn away from the horrid scene; the ministers of vengeance triumph. Such already has been the face of things in that once happy land, where peace and plenty, even while banished from great part of Europe, smiled for near an hundred years.

5. And what is it which drags on these poor victims Into the field of blood? It is a great phantom, which stalks before them which they are taught to call *liberty*! It is this

Which breathes into third hearts stern love of war,
And thirst of vengeance, and contempt of death.

Real liberty, meantime, is trampled under foot, and is lost in anarchy and confusion.

6. But which of these warriors all the while considered the wife of his youth, that is now left a disconsolate widow, — perhaps, with none that careth for her: perhaps, deprived of her only comfort and support, and not having where to lay her head? Who considered his helpless children, now desolate orphans, — it may be, crying for bread, while their mother has nothing left to give them but her sorrows and her tears?

II.

1. And yet “these sheep what have they done,” although all this is come upon them? “Suppose ye that they are sinners above other men, because they suffer such things? I tell your Stay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” It therefore behooves us to consider our own sins; — the cause of all our sufferings. It behooves each of us to say, “Lo, I have sinned; I have done wickedly.”

2. The time would fail, should I attempt to enumerate all the ways wherein we have sinned; but, in general, this is certain, —

The rich, the poor, the high, the low,
Have wandered from his mild command:
The floods of wickedness o'er flow,
And deluge all the guilty land:
People and Priest lie drown'd in sin,
And Prophet yawns to take them in.

How innumerable are the violations of justice among us! Who does not adopt the old maxim, *Si possis, recte; si non, quocunque modo rem*: “If you can get money honestly, do; but, however, get money?”

Where is mercy to be found, if it would stand in opposition to interest? How few will scruple, for a valuable consideration, to oppress the widow or fatherless! And where shall we find truth? Deceit and fraud go not out of our streets. Who is it that speaks truth from his heart? Whose words are the picture of his thoughts? Where is he that has “put away all lying,” that never speaks what he does not mean? Who is ashamed of this? Indeed, it was once said, and even by a statesman., “All other vices have had their patrons: but lying is so base, so abominable a vice, that never was any one found yet who dared openly to plead for it.” Would one imagine this writer lived in a Court? yea, and that in the present century? Did not he himself; then, as well as all his brother-statesmen, plead for a trade of deliberate lying? Did he not plead for the, innocence, yea, and the necessity, of employing spies? — the vilest race of liars under the sun. Yet who ever scrupled using them, but Lord Clarendon?

3. O truth, whither art thou fled? How few have any acquaintance with thee! Do we not continually tell lies for the nonce, without gaining thereby either profit or pleasure? Is not even our common language replete with falsehood? Above a hundred years ago the poet complained,

It never was good day
Since lowly fawning was called compliment.

What would he have said had he lived a century later, when that art was brought to perfection?

4. Perhaps there is one palpable evidence of this, which is not usually attended to. If you blame a man in many other respects, he is not much affronted. But if you say he is a liar, he will not bear it, he takes fire at once. Why is this? Because a man can bear to be blamed, when he is conscious of his own innocence. But if you say he is a liar, you touch a sore spot: He is guilty, and therefore cannot bear it.

5. Is there a character more despicable than even that of a liar? Perhaps there is; even that of an epicure. And are we not a generation of epicures? Is not our *belly* our *God*? Are not eating, and drinking our chief delight, our happiness? Is it not the main study (I fear the only study) of many honorable men to enlarge the pleasure of tasting? When was luxury (not in

food only, but in dress, furniture, equipage) carried to such an height in Great Britain ever since it was a nation? We have lately extended the British empire almost over the globe. We have carried our laurels into Africa, into Asia, into the burning and the frozen climes of America. And what have we brought thence? All the elegance of vice, which either the eastern or western world could afford.

6. Luxury is constantly the parent of sloth. Every glutton will, in due time, be a drone. The more of meat and drink he devours, the less taste will he have for labor. This degeneracy of the Britons from their temperate, active forefathers, was taken notice of in the last century. But if Mr. Herbert then said,

O England, full of sin, but most of sloth!

what would he have said now? Observe the difference between the last and the present century only in a single instance: In the last, the Parliament used to meet *hora quinta, ante merisem*, — “at five in the morning!” Could these Britons look out of their graves, what would they think of the present generation?

7. Permit me to touch on one article more, wherein, indeed, we excel all the nations upon earth. Not one nation under the canopy of heaven can vie with the English in profaneness. Such a total neglect, such an utter contempt, of God is nowhere else to be found. In no other streets, except in Ireland, can you hear on every side,

The horrid oaths the direful curse
That latest weapon of the wretch’s wars
And blasphemy, sad comrade of despair!

8. Now, let each of us lay his hand upon his heart, and say, “‘Lord, is it I?’ Have I added to this flood of unrighteousness and ungodliness, and, thereby, to the misery of my countrymen? Am not I guilty in any of the preceding respects? And do not *they* suffer, because I have sinned?” If we have any tenderness of heart, any bowels of mercies, any sympathy will the afflicted, let us pursue this thought till we are deeply sensible of *our* sins, as one great cause of *their* sufferings.

9. But now the plague is begun, and has already made such ravages both in England and America, what can we do, in order that it may be stayed? How shall we stand between the living and the dead?" Is there any better way to turn aside the anger of God, than that prescribed by St. James: "Purge your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded?" First. "Purge your hands." Immediately put away the evil of your doings. Instantly flee from sin, from every evil word and work, as from the face of a serpent. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth;" no uncharitable, no unprofitable, conversation. Let no guile be found in your mouth: Speak to every man the truth from your heart. Renounce every way of acting, however gainful, which is contrary either to justice or mercy. Do to every one as, in parallel circumstances, you would wish he should do unto you. Be sober, temperate, active; and, in every word and work, labor to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man. Next, through the almighty grace of Him that loved you, and gave himself for you, "purify your hearts by faith." Be no longer double-minded, halting between earth and heaven, striving to serve God and mammon. Purify your hearts from pride, — humbling yourselves under the mighty hand of God; from all party-zeal, anger, resentment, bitterness, which now, especially, will easily beset you; from all prejudice, bigotry, narrowness of spirit; from impetuosity, and impatience of contradiction; from love of dispute, and from every degree of an unmerciful or implacable temper. Instead of this *earthly, devilish wisdom* let "the wisdom from above" sink deep into your hearts; that "wisdom" which "is first pure," then "peaceable, easy to be entreated," — convinced, persuaded, or appeased, — "full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality," — embracing all men; "without hypocrisy," — genuine and unfeigned. Now, if ever, "putting away all malice, all clamor," (railing,) "and evil speaking: Be ye kind one to another," — to all your brethren and countrymen; — "tender-hearted" to all that are in distress; "forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

10. And "now let my counsel be acceptable to" you, to every one of you present before God. "Break off thy sins by repentance, and thy iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity," — of what degree of it still remains among us. Show mercy

more especially to the poor widows, to the helpless orphans, of your countrymen who are now numbered among the dead, who fell among the slain in a distant land. Who knoweth but the Lord will yet be entreated, will calm the madness of the people, will quench the flames of contention, and breathe into all the spirit of love, unity, and concord? Then brother shall not lift up sword against brother, neither shall they know war any more. Then shall plenty and peace flourish in our land, and all the inhabitants of it be thankful for the innumerable blessings which they enjoy, and shall “fear God, and honor the king.”

LONDON, November 7, 1775.

SERMON CXXXI.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LATE WORK OF GOD IN NORTH-AMERICA.

[FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE YEAR 1778.]

“The appearance was, — as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.”

Ezekiel 1:16.

1. **W**HATEVER may be the primary meaning of this mysterious passage of Scripture, many serious Christians, in all ages, have applied it, in a secondary sense, to the manner wherein the adorable providence of God usually works in governing the world. They have judged this expression manifestly to allude to the complicated wheels of his providence, adapting one event to another, and working one thing by means of another. In the whole process of this, there is an endless variety of wheels within wheels. but they are frequently so disposed and complicated, that we cannot understand them at first sight; nay, we can seldom fully comprehend them, till they are explained by the event.

2. Perhaps no age ever afforded a more striking instance of this kind than the present does, in the dispensations of divine providence with respect to our colonies in North-America. In order to see this clearly, let us endeavor, accounting to the measure of our weak understanding,

First, to trace each wheel apart: And,
Secondly, to consider both, as they relate to and answer each other.

I.
And, First, we are to trace each wheel apart.

It is by no means my design to give a particular detail of the late transactions in America; but barely to give a simple and naked deduction of a few well known facts.

I know this is a very delicate subject; and that it is difficult, if not impossible, to treat it in such a manner as not to offend any, particularly those who are warmly attached to either party. But I would not willingly offend; and shall therefore studiously avoid all keen and reproachful language, and use the softest terms I can, without either betraying or disguising the truth.

1. In the year 1736 it pleased God to begin a work of grace in the newly-planted colony of Georgia, then the southernmost of our settlements on the continent of America. To those English who had settled there the year before, were then added a body of Moravians, so called; and a larger body who had been expelled from Germany by the Archbishop of Saltzburg. These were men truly fearing God and working righteousness. At the same time there began an awakening among the English, both at Savannah and Frederica; many inquiring what they must do to be saved, and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance.

2. In the same year there broke out a wonderful work of God in several parts of New-England. It began in Northampton, and in a little time appeared in the adjoining towns. A particular and beautiful account of this was published by Mr. Edwards, Minister of Northampton. Many sinners were deeply convinced of sin, and many truly converted to God. I suppose there had been no instance in America of so swift and deep a work of grace, for an hundred years before; nay, nor perhaps since the English settled there.

3. The following year, the work of God spread by degrees from New-England towards the south. At the same time it advanced, by slow degrees, from Georgia towards the north. In a few souls it deepened likewise; and some of them witnessed a good confession, both in life and in death.

4. In the year 1738 Mr. Whitefield came over to Georgia, with a design to assist me in preaching, either to the English or the Indians. But as I was embarked for England before he arrived, he preached to the English altogether, first in Georgia, to which his chief service was due, then in South and North Carolina, and afterwards in the intermediate provinces, till he came to New-England. And all men owned that God was with him, where so ever he went; giving a general call to high and low, rich and poor, to “repent, and believe the gospel.” Many were not disobedient to the heavenly calling: They did repent and believe the gospel. And by his ministry a line of communication was formed, quite from Georgia to New-England.

5. Within a few years he made several more voyages to America, and took several more journeys through the provinces. And in every journey he found fresh reason to bless God, who still prospered the work of his hands; there being more and more, in all the provinces, who found his word to be “the power of God unto salvation.”

6. But the last journey he made, he acknowledged to some of his friends, that he had much sorrow and heaviness in his heart, on account of multitudes who for a time ran well, but afterwards “drew back unto perdition.” Indeed, in a few years, the far greater part of those who had once “received the word with joy,” yea, had “escaped the corruption that is in the world,” were “entangled again and overcome.” Some were like those who received the seed on stony ground, which “in time of temptation withered away.” Others were like those who received it among thorns: “the thorns” soon “sprang up, and choked it.” Insomuch that he found exceeding few who “brought forth fruit to perfection.” A vast majority had entirely “turned back from the holy commandment delivered to them.”

7. And what wonder? for it was a true saying, which was common in the ancient Church, “The soul and the body make a man; and the spirit and discipline make a Christian.” But those who were more or less affected by Mr. Whitefield’s preaching had no discipline at all. They had no shadow of discipline; nothing of the kind. They were formed into no societies: They had no Christian connection with each other, nor were ever taught to

watch over each other's souls. So that if any fell into lukewarmness, or even into sin, he had none to lift him up: He might fall lower and lower, yea, into hell, if he would; for who regarded it?

8. Things were in this state when, about eleven years ago, I received several letters from America, giving a melancholy account of the state of religion in most of the colonies, and earnestly entreating that some of our Preachers would come over and help them. It was believed they might confirm many that were weak or wavering, and lift up many that were fallen; nay, and that they would see more fruit of their labors in America than they had done either in England or Ireland.

9. This was considered at large in our yearly Conference, at Bristol, in the year 1769: And two of our Preachers' willingly offered themselves; viz., Richard Boardman and Joseph Pillmoor. They were men well reported of by all, and (we believed) fully qualified for the work. Accordingly, after a few days spent in London, they cheerfully went over. They labored first in Philadelphia and New York; afterwards in many other places: And everywhere God was eminently with them, and gave them to see much fruit of their labor. What was wanting before was now supplied: Those who were desirous to save their souls were no longer a rope of sand, but cleave to one another, and began to watch over each other in love. Societies were formed, and Christian discipline introduced in all its branches. Within a few years after, several more of the Preachers were willing to go and assist them. And God raised up many natives of the country, who were glad to act in connection with them; till there were two-and-twenty Traveling Preachers to America, who kept their circuits as regularly as those in England.

10. The work of God then not only spread wiser, particularly in North-Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the Jerseys, but sunk abundantly deeper than ever it had done before. So that at the beginning of the late troubles there were three thousand souls connected together in religious societies; and a great number of these witnessed that the Son of God hath power on earth to forgive sin.

11. But now it was that a bar appeared in the way, a grand hindrance to the progress of religion. The immense trade of America, greater in proportion than even that of the mother country, brought in an immense flow of wealth, which was also continually increasing. Hence both merchants and tradesmen of various kinds accumulated money without end, and rose from indigence to opulent fortunes, quicker than any could do in Europe. Riches poured in upon them as a flood, and treasures were heaped up as the sand of the sea. And hence naturally arose unbounded plenty of all the necessaries, conveniences, yea, and superfluities, of life.

12. One general consequence of this was phrase. The more riches they acquired, the more they were regarded by their neighbors as men of weight and importance: And they would naturally see themselves in at least as fair a light as their neighbor saw them. And, accordingly, as they rose in the world, they rose in their opinion of themselves. As it is generally allowed,

A thousand pound supplies
The want of twenty thousand qualities;

so, the richer they grew, the more admiration they gained, and the more applause they received. Wealth then bringing in more applause, of course brought in more pride, till they really thought themselves as much wiser, as they were wealthier, than their neighbors.

13. Another natural consequence of wealth was luxury, particularly in food. We are apt to imagine, nothing can exceed the luxurious living which now prevails in Great Britain and Ireland. But alas! what is this to that which lately prevailed in Philadelphia and other parts of North America? A merchant or middling tradesman there kept a table equal to that of a nobleman in England; entertaining his guests with ten, twelve, yea, sometimes twenty, dishes of meat at a meal! And this was so far from being blamed by any one, that it was applauded as generosity and hospitality.

14. And is not idleness naturally joined with “fullness of bread?” Does not sloth easily spring from luxury? It did so here, in an eminent degree; such

sloth as is scarce named in England. Persons in the bloom of youth, and in perfect health, could hardly bear to put on their own clothes. The slave must be called to do this, and that, and everything: It is too great labor for the master or mistress. It is a wonder they would be at the pains of putting meat into their own mouths. Why did they not imitate the lordly lubbers in China, who are fed by a slave standing on each side?

15. Who can wonder, if sloth alone beget wantonness? Has it not always had this effect? Was it not said near two thousand years ago,

*Quaeeitur, Aegisthus guare sit factus adulter
In promptu causa est: Desidiosus erat.*²⁰

And when sloth and luxury are joined together, Will they not produce an abundant offspring? This they certainly have done in these parts. I was surprised, a few years ago, at a letter I received from Philadelphia, wherein were (nearly) these words: "You think the women in England (Many of them, I mean) do not abound in chastity. But yet the generality of your women, if compared with ours, might almost pass for vestal virgins." Now, this complication of pride, luxury, sloth, and wantonness, naturally arising from vast wealth and plenty, was the grand hindrance to the spreading of true religion through the cities of North America.

II.

Let us now see the other wheel of divine providence.

1. It may reasonably be supposed that the colonies in New England had, from their very beginning, an hankering after independency. It could not be expected to be otherwise, considering their families, their education, their relations, and the connections they had formed before they left their native country. They were farther inclined to it by the severe and unjust treatment which many of them had met with in England. This might well create in them a fear lest they should meet with the like again, a jealousy of their governors, and a desire of shaking off that dependence, to which they were never thoroughly reconciled. The same spirit they communicated to their children, from whom it descended to the present generation. Nor

could it be effaced by all the favors and benefits which they continually received from the English Government.

2. This spirit generally prevailed, especially in Boston, as early as the year 1737. In that year, my brother, being detained there some time, was greatly surprised to hear almost in every company, whether of Ministers, gentlemen, merchants, or common people, where anything of the kind was mentioned, "We must be independent! We will be independent! We will bear the English yoke no longer! We will be our own governors!" This appeared to be even then the general desire of the people; although it is not probable that there was at that time any formed design. No; they could not be so vain as to think they were able to stand alone against the power of Great Britain.

3. A gentleman who was there in the following year observed the same spirit in every corner of the town: "Why should these *English* blockheads rule over us?" was then the common language. And as one encouraged another herein, the spirit of independency rose higher and higher, till it began to spread into the other colonies bordering upon New-England. Nevertheless, the fear of their troublesome neighbors, then in possession of Canada, kept them within bounds, and for a time prevented the flame from breaking out. But when the English had removed that fear from them, when Canada was ceded to the king of Great Britain, the desire then ripened into a formed design; only a convenient opportunity was wanting.

4. It was not long before that opportunity appeared. The Stamp-Act was passed, and sent over to America. The malcontents saw and pressed their advantage; they represented it as a common cause; and, by proper emissaries, spread their own spirit through another and another colony. By inflammatory papers of every kind, they stirred up the minds of the people. They vilified, first, the English Ministry, representing them, one and all, as the veriest wretches alive, void of all honesty, honor, and humanity. By the same methods they next inflamed the people in general against the British Parliament, representing them as the most infamous villains upon earth, As a company of base, unprincipled hirelings. But still they affected to reverence the King, and spoke very honorably of him. Not

long; a few months after, they treated him in the same manner they had done his Ministers and his Parliament.

5. Matters being now, it was judged, in sufficient forwardness, an association was formed between the northern and southern colonies; both took up arms, and constituted a Supreme power which they termed the Congress. but still they affirmed, their whole design was to secure their liberty; and even to insinuate that they aimed at anything more, was said to be quite cruel and unjust. But in a little time they threw off the mask, and boldly asserted their own independency. Accordingly, Dr.

Witherspoon, President of the College in New-Jersey, in his address to the Congress, (added to a East-Sermon, published by him, August 3, 1776,) uses the following words: — “It appears now in the clearest manner, that, till very lately, those who seemed to take the part of America, in the British Parliament, never did it on American principles. They either did not understand, or were not willing to admit, the extent of our claim. Even the great Lord Chatham’s Bill for Reconciliation would not have been accepted here, and did not materially differ from what the Ministry would have consented to.” Here it is avowed, that their claim was independency, and that they would accept of nothing less.

6. By this open and avowed defection from, and defiance of, their mother country, (whether it was defensible or not, is another question,) at least nine parts in ten of their immense trade to Europe, Asia, Africa, and other parts of America, were cut off at one stroke. In lieu of this they gained at first, perhaps, an hundred thousand pounds a year by their numerous privateers. But even then, this was, upon the whole, no gain at all; for they lost as many ships as they took. Afterwards they took fewer and fewer; and, in the meantime, they lost four or five millions early, (perhaps six or seven,) which their trend brought them in. What was the necessary consequence of this? Why, that, as the fountain of their wealth was dammed up, the streams of it must run lower and lower, till they were wholly exhausted; so that at present these provinces are no richer than the poorest parts either of Scotland or Ireland.

7. Plenty declined in the same proportion as wealth, till universal scarcity took place. In a short time there was everywhere felt a deep want, not

only of the superfluities, not only of the common conveniences, but even of the necessaries, of life. Whole-some food was not to be procured, but at a very advanced price. Decent apparel was not to be had, not even in the large towns. Not only velvets, and silks, and fashionable ornaments, (which might well be spared,) but even linen and woollen clothes, were not to be purchased at any price whatsoever.

8. Thus have we observed each of these wheels apart; — on the one hand, trade, wealth, pride, luxury, sloth, and wantonness spreading far and wide, through the American provinces; on the other, the spirit of independency diffusing itself from north to south.

Let us now observe how each of these wheels relates to, and answers, the other; how the wise and gracious providence of God uses one to check the course of the other, and even employs (if so strong an expression may be allowed) Satan to cast out Satan. Probably, that subtle spirit hoped, by adding to all those other vices the spirit of independency, to have overturned the whole work of God, as well as the British Government, in North America. But He that sitteth in heaven laughed him to scorn, and took the wise in his own craftiness. By means of this very spirits there is reason to believe, God will overturn every hindrance of that work.

9. We have seen, how, by the breaking out of this spirit, in open defiance of the British Government, an effectual check was given to the trade of those colonies. They themselves, by a wonderful stroke of policy, threw up the whole trade of their mother-country, and all its dependencies; made an Act, that no British ship should enter into any of their harbors; nay, they fitted out numberless privateers, which seized upon all the British ships they could find. The king's ships seized an equal number of theirs. So their foreign trade too was brought almost to nothing. Their riches died away with their trade; especially as they had no internal resources; the flower of their youth, before employed in husbandry, being now drawn off into their armies, so that the most fruitful lands were of no use, none being left to till the ground. And when wealth fled away, (as was before observed,) so did plenty too; — abundance of all things being succeeded by scarcity of all things.

10. The wheel now began to move within the wheel. The trade and wealth of the Americans failing, the grand incentives of pride failed also; for few admire or flatter the poor: And, being deserted by most of their admirers, they did not altogether so much admire themselves; especially when they found, upon the trial, that they had grievously miscalculated their own strength; which they had made no doubt would be sufficient to carry all before it. It is true, many of them still exalted themselves; but others were truly and deeply humbled.

11. Poverty, and scarcity consequent upon it, struck still mixture directly at the root of their luxury. There was no place now for that immoderate superfluity either of food or apparel. They sought no more, and could seldom obtain so much as plain food, sufficient to sustain nature. And they were content if they could procure coarse apparel, to keep their clean and warm. Thus they were reduced to the same condition their forefathers were in when the providence of God brought them into this country. They were nearly in the same outward circumstances. Happy, if they were likewise in the same spirit!

12. Poverty and want struck at the root of sloth also. It was now no time to say, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to rest." If a man would not work now, it was plain he could not eat. All the pains he could take were little enough to procure the bare necessities of life: Seeing, on the one hand, so few of them remained, their own armies having swept away all before them; and, on the other, what remained bore so high a price, that exceeding few were able to purchase them.

13. Thus, by the adorable providence of God, the main hindrances of his work are removed. And in how wonderful a manner; — such as it never could have entered into the heart of man to conceive! Those hindrances had been growing up and continually increasing for many years. What God foresaw would prove the remedy? grew up with the disease; and, when the disease was come to its height, then only began to operate. Immense trade, wealth, and plenty, begot and nourished proportionable pride, and luxury, and sloth, and wantonness. Mean time the same trade, wealth, and plenty, begot or nourished the spirit of independency. Who would have imagined,

that this evil disease would lay a foundation for the cure of all the rest? And yet so it was. For this spirit, now come to maturity, and disdainful of all restraint, is now swiftly destroying the trade, and wealth, and plenty whereby it was nourished, and thereby makes way for the happy return of humility, temperance, industry, and chastity. Such unspeakable good does the all-wise God bring out of all this evil! So does “the fierceness of man,” of the Americans, “turn to his praise,” in a very different sense from what Dr. Witherspoon supposes!

14. May we not observe, how exactly, in this grand scene of providence, one wheel answers to the other? The spirit of independency, which our poet so justly terms,

The glorious fault of angels and of gods,

(that is, in plain terms, of devils,) the same which so many call liberally, is over ruled by the justice and mercy of God, first to punish those crying sins and afterwards to heal them. He punishes them by poverty, coming as an armed man, and overrunning the land; by such scarcity as has hardly been known there for a hundred years past; by want of every kind, even of necessary clothing, even of bread to eat. But with what intent does he do this? Surely, that mercy may rejoice over judgment. He punishes that he may amend, that he may first make them sensible of their sins which any one that has eyes to see may read in their punishment; and then bring them back to the spirit of their forefathers, the spirit of humility, temperance, industry, chastity; yea, and a general willingness to hear and receive the word which is able to save their souls. “O the depth, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” — unless so far as they are revealed in his word, and explained by his providence.

15. From these we learn, that spiritual blessings are what God principally intends in all these severe dispensations. He intends they should all work together for the destruction of Satan’s kingdom, and the promotion of the kingdom of his dear Son; that they should all minister to the general spread of “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” But after the inhabitants of these provinces are brought again to “seek the kingdom of

God, and his righteousness,” there can be no doubt, but all other things, all temporal blessings, will be added unto them. He will send through all the happy land, with all the necessaries and conveniences of life not independency, (which would be no blessing, but an heavy curse, both to them and their children,) but liberty, real, legal liberty; which is an unspeakable blessing. He will superadd to Christian liberty, liberty from sin true civil liberty; a liberty from oppression of every kind, — from illegal violence; a liberty to enjoy their lives, their persons, and their property; in a word, a liberty to be governed in all things by the laws of their country. They will again enjoy true British liberty, such as they enjoyed before these commotions: Neither less more than they have enjoyed from their first settlement in America: Neither less nor more than is now enjoyed by the inhabitants of their, mother-country. If their mother-country had ever designed to deprive them of this, she might have done it long ago; and that this was never done, is a demonstration that it was never intended. But God permitted this strange dread of imaginary evils to spread over all the people, that he might have mercy upon all, that he might do good to all, by saving them from the bondage of sin, and bringing them into “the glorious liberty of the children of God!”

SERMON CXXXII.

PREACHED ON MONDAY, APRIL 21st 1777,

ON LAYING THE FOUNDATION OF THE NEW CHAPEL,
NEAR THE CITY-ROAD, LONDON.

“According to this time it shall be said, — What hath God wrought!”

Numbers 23:23.

1. WE need not now inquire, in what sense this was applicable to the children of Israel. It may be of more use to consider in what sense the words are applicable to ourselves;— how far the people of England have reason to say, “According to this time, what hath God wrought!”

2. A great man, indeed, who I trust is now in a better world Dr. Gibson, late Lord Bishop of London, in one of his Charges to his Clergy, flatly denies that God has wrought any “extraordinary works in our nation; — nay, affirms, that to imagine any such thing is no better than downright enthusiasm. It is so, if his Lordship’s supposition is true, — if God has not wrought any extraordinary work; but if He really has, then we may believe and assert it, without incurring any such imputation.

3. Yet a still greater man of a neighboring nation, a burning and a shining light, equally eminent in piety and in learning, partly confirmed the Bishop’s supposition; for Bengelius, being asked why he placed the grand revival of religion so late as the year 1836, replied, “I acknowledge all the prophecies would incline me to place it a century sooner; but an insurmountable difficulty lies in the way: I cannot reconcile this to matter of fact; for I do not know of any remarkable work of God which has been wrought upon earth between the years 1730 and 1740.” This is really surprising. It is strange that sensible men should know so little of what is

done at so small a distance. How could so great a man be ignorant of what was transacted no farther off than England? — especially considering the accounts the published in Germany, some of which were tolerably impartial; nay, considering the particular account which I had sent, as early as the year 1742, to one well known through all the empire, Pastor (afterwards Superintendent) Steinmetz.

4. But has there, indeed, been any extraordinary work; of God wrought in England during this century? This is an important question: It is certainly worthy of our serious consideration; and it is capable of being answered to the full satisfaction of every fair inquirer. He may easily be informed, what work it is, and in what manner it has been wrought. It is true I am in one respect an improper person to give this information; as it will oblige me frequently to speak of myself, which may have the appearance of ostentation: But, with regard to this, I can only cast myself upon the candor of my hearers, being persuaded they will put the most favorable construction upon what is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. For there is no other person, if I decline the task, who can supply my place, who has a perfect knowledge of the work in question, from the beginning of it to this day. We may consider. First, the rise and progress of this work: Secondly, the nature of it.

I.

1. As to the rise of it. In the year 1725, a young student at Oxford was much affected by reading Kempis's "Christian Pattern," and Bishop Taylor's "Rules of Holy Living and Dying." He found an earnest desire to live according; to those rules and to flee from the wrath to come. He sought for some that would be his companions in the way, but could find none; so that, for several years, he was constrained to travel alone, having no man either to guide or to help him. But in the year 1729, he found one who had the same desire. They then endeavored to help each other; and, in the close of the year, were joined by two more. They soon agreed to spend two or three hours together every Sunday evening. Afterwards they sat two evenings together, and, in a while, six evenings, in the week; spending that time in reading the Scriptures, and provoking one another to love and to good works.

2. The regularity of their behavior gave occasion to a young gentleman of the College to say, “I think we have got a new set of *Methodists*,” — alluding to a set of Physicians, who began to flourish at Rome about the time of Nero, and continued for several ages. The name was new and quaint; it cleave to them immediately; and from that time, both those four young gentlemen, and all that had any religious connection with them, were distinguished by the name of *Methodists*.

3. In the four or five years following, another and another were added to the number, till, in the year 1735, there were fourteen of them who constantly met together. Three of these were Tutors in their several Colleges; the rest, Bachelors of Arts or Under-graduates. They were all precisely of one judgment, as well as of one soul; all tenacious of order to the last degree, and observant, for conscience’ sake, of every rule of the Church, and every statute both of the University and of their respective Colleges. They were all orthodox in every point; firmly believing, not only the Three Creeds, but whatsoever they judged to be the doctrine of the Church of England, as contained in her Articles and Homilies. As to that practice of the Apostolic Church, (which continued till the time of Tertullian, at least in many Churches,) the having all things in common, they had no rule, nor any formed design concerning it; but it was so in effect, and it could not be otherwise; for none could want anything that another could spare. This was the infancy of the work. They had no conception of anything that would follow. Indeed, they took “no thought for the morrow,” desiring only to live today.

4. Many imagined that little society would be dispersed, and Methodism (so called) come to an end, when, in October, 1735, my brother, Mr. Ingham, and I, were induced, by a strange chain of providences, to go over to the new colony in Georgia. Our design was to preach to the Indian nations bordering upon that province; but we were detained at Savannah and Frederica, by the importunity of the people, who, having no other Ministers, earnestly requested that we would not leave them. After a time, I desired the most serious of them to meet me once or twice a week at my house. Here were the rudiments of a Methodist society; but, notwithstanding this, both my brother and I were as vehemently attached to the Church as ever, and to every rubric of it; insomuch that I would

never admit a Dissenter to the Lord's Supper, unless he would be re-baptized. Nay, when the Lutheran Minister of the Saltzburghers at Ebenezer, being at Savannah, desired to receive it, I told him, I did not dare to administer it to him, because I looked upon him as unbaptized; as I judged baptism by laymen to be invalid: And such I counted all that were not episcopally ordained.

5. Full of these sentiments, of this zeal for the Church, (from which, I bless God, he has now delivered me,) I returned to England in the beginning of February, 1738. I was now in haste to retire to Oxford, and bury myself in my beloved obscurity; but I was detained in London, week after week, by the Trustees for the Colony of Georgia. In the mean time, I was continually importuned to preach in one and another church; and that not only morning, afternoon, and night, on Sunday, but on week days also. As I was lately come from a far country, vast multitudes flocked together; but in a short time, partly because of those unwieldy crowds, partly because of my unfashionable doctrine, I was excluded from one and another church, and, at length, shut out of all! Not daring to be silent, after a short struggle between honor and conscience, I made a virtue of necessity, and preached in the middle of Moorfields. Here were thousands upon thousands abundantly more than any church could contain; and numbers among them, who never went to any church or place of public worship at all. More and more of them were cut to the heart, and came to me all in tears, inquiring, with the utmost eagerness, what they must do to be saved. I said, "If all of you will meet on Thursday evening, I will advise you As well As I can." The first evening about twelve persons came; the next week, thirty or forty. When they were increased to about an hundred, I took down their names and places of abode, intending, As often as it was convenient, to call upon them at their own houses. Thus, without any previous plan or design, began the Methodist society in England, — a company of people associating together, to help each other to work out their own salvation.

6. The next spring we were invited to Bristol and Kingswood; where, likewise, societies were quickly formed, The year following we went to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and preached to all the colliers and keelmen round it. In 1744, we went through Cornwall, as far as Sennan, near the Land's

End; and, in the compass of two or three years more, to almost every part of England. Some time after, we were desired to go over to Ireland; and, in process of time, to every county therein. Last of all, we were invited to Musselburgh, Glasgow, and several other parts of Scotland. But it was in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Arbroath, and Aberdeen, that we saw the greatest fruit of our labor.

II.

1. Such was the rise, and such has been the progress, of Methodism, from the beginning to the present time. But you will naturally ask, "What is Methodism? What does this new word mean? Is it not a new religion?" This is a very common, nay, almost an universal, supposition; but nothing can be more remote from the truth. It is a mistake all! over. Methodism, so called, is the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive Church, the religion of the Church of England. This old religion, (as I observed in the; "Earnest Appeal to men of Reason and Religion,") is "no other than love, the love of God and of all mankind; the loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved us, — as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth as our own soul. This love is the great medicine of life; the never failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world; for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand; there is humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering, the whole image of God; and, at the same time, a 'peace that passeth all understanding,' with 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.' This religion of love, and joy, and peace, has its seat in the inmost soul; but is ever showing itself by its fruits, continually springing up, not only in all innocence, (for love worketh no ill to his neighbor,) but, likewise, in every kind of beneficence, — spreading virtue and happiness to all around it."

2. This is the religion of the Bible, as no one can deny who reads it with any attention. It is the religion which is continually inculcated therein, which runs through both the old and new Testament, Moses and the Prophets, our blessed Lord and his Apostles, proclaim with one voice, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and thy neighbor as thyself." The Bible declares, "Love is the fulfilling of the law," "the end of

the commandment,” — of all the commandments which are contained in the oracles of God. The inward and outward fruits of this love are also largely described by the inspired writers; so that whoever allows the Scripture to be the word of God, must allow this to be true religion.

3. This is the religion of the primitive Church, of the whole Church in the purest ages. It is clearly expressed, even in the small remains of Clemens Roman’s, Ignatius, and Polycarp; it is seen more at large in the writings of Tertullian, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Cyprian; and, even in the fourth century, it was found in the works of Chrysostom, Basil, Ephrem Syrus, and Macarius. It would be easy to produce “a cloud of witnesses,” testifying the same thing; were not this a point which no one will contest, who has the least acquaintance with Christian antiquity.

4. And this is the religion of the Church of England; as appears from all her authentic records, from the uniform tenor of her Liturgy, and from numberless passages in her Homilies. The scriptural, primitive religion of love, which is now reviving throughout the three kingdoms, is to be found in her Morning and Evening Service, and in her daily, as well as occasional, Prayers; and the whole of it is beautifully summed up in that one comprehensive petition, “cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name.”

5. Permit me to give a little fuller account, both of the progress and nature of this religion, by an extract from a treatise which was published many years ago: —²¹

“Just at the time when we wanted little of filling up the measure of our iniquities, two or three Clergymen of the Church of England began vehemently to call sinners to repentance. Many thousands gathered together to hear them; and, in every place where they came, many began to show such a concern for religion as they never had done before. Many were in a short time deeply convinced of the number and heinousness of their sins, of their evil tempers, of their inability to help themselves, and of the insignificance of their outside religion. And from this repentance sprung fruits meet for repentance; the whole form of their life was

changed. They ‘ceased to do evil and learned to do well.’ Neither was this all; but over and above this outward change, they began to experience inward religion; the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, which they enjoy to this day. They ‘love Him, because he first loved us;’ and this love constrains them to love all mankind, and inspires them with every holy and heavenly temper, with the mind which was in Christ. Hence it is that they are now uniform in their behavior, unblameable in all manner of conversation; and in whatsoever state they are, they have learned therewith to be content. Thus they calmly travel on through life, never repining, or murmuring, or dissatisfied, till the hour comes that they shall drop this covering of earth, and return to the Father of spirits.”

6. This revival of religion has spread to such a degree, as neither we nor our fathers had known. How *extensive* has it been! There is scarce a considerable town in the kingdom, where some have not been made witnesses of it. It has spread to every age and sex, to most orders and degrees of men; and even to abundance of those who, in time past, were accounted monsters of wickedness.

Consider the *swiftness* as well as extent of it. In what age has such a number of sinners been recovered in so short a time from the error of their ways? When has true religion, I will not say since the Reformation, but since the time of Constantine the Great, made so large a progress in any nation, within so small a space? I believe hardly can either ancient or modern history afford a parallel instance.

7. “We may likewise observe the *depth* of the work so extensively and swiftly wrought. Multitudes have been thoroughly convinced of sin; and, shortly after, so filled with joy and love, that whether they were in the body, or out of the body, they could hardly tell; and, in the power of this love, they have trampled under foot whatever the world accounts either terrible or desirable, having evidenced, in the severest trials, an invariable and tender goodwill to mankind, and all the fruits of holiness. Now, so deep a repentance, so strong a faith, so fervent love, and so unblemished holiness, wrought in so many persons in so short a time, the world has not seen for many ages.

8. “No less remarkable is the *purity* of the religion which has extended itself so deeply and swiftly: I speak particularly as to the doctrines holden by those who are the subjects of it. Those of the Church of England, at least, must acknowledge this; for where is there a body of people, who, number for number, so closely adhere to the doctrines of the Church?

“Nor is their religion more pure from heresy than it is from *superstition*. In former times, wherever any unusual religious concern has appeared, there has sprung up with it a zeal for things that were no part of religion. But it has not been so in the present case; no stress has been laid on anything, as though it was necessary to salvation, but what is plainly contained in the word of God. And of the things contained therein, the stress laid on each has been in proportion to the nearness of its relation to what is there laid down as the sum of all, — the love of God and our neighbor. So pure, both from superstition and error; is the religion which has lately spread in this nation.

9. “It is likewise *rational*. It is as pure from enthusiasm as from superstition. It is true, the contrary has been continually affirmed; but to affirm is one thing, to prove is another. Who will prove that it is enthusiasm to love God, yea, to love him with all our heart? Who is able to make good this charge against the love of all mankind? (I do but just touch on the general heads.) But if you cannot make it good, own this religion to be sober, manly, rational, divine.

10. “It is also pure from *bigotry*. Those who hold it are not bigoted to opinions. They would hold right opinions: but they are peculiarly cautious not to rest the weight of Christianity there. They have no such overgrown fondness for any opinions, as to think those alone will make them Christians; or to confine their affection, or esteem, to those that agree with them therein. Nor are they bigoted to any particular branch even of practical religion; they are not attached to one point more than another, they aim at uniform, universal obedience. They contend for nothing circumstantial, as if it were essential to religion; but for everything in its own order.

11. “They dread that *bitter zeal*, that spirit of *persecution*, which has so often accompanied the spirit of reformation. They do not approve of using any kind of violence, on any pretense, in matters of religion. They allow no method of bringing any to the knowledge of the truth, except the methods of reason and persuasion, and their practice is consistent with their profession. They do not, in fact, hinder their dependents from worshipping God, in every respect, according to their own conscience.

But if these things are so, may we not well say, “What hath God wrought!” For such a work, if we consider the *extensiveness* of it, the *swiftness* with which it has spread, the *depth* of the religion so swiftly diffused, and its *purity* from all corrupt mixtures, we must acknowledge cannot easily be paralleled, in all these concurrent circumstances, by any thing that is found in the English annals, since Christianity was first planted in this island.

12. It may throw considerable light upon the nature of this work, to mention one circumstance more, attending the present revival of religion, which, I apprehend, is quite peculiar to it. I do not remember to have either seen, heard, or read of any thing parallel. It cannot be denied that there have been several considerable revivals of religion in England since the Reformation. But the generality of the English nation were little profited thereby, because they that were the subjects of those revivals, Preachers as well as people, soon separated from the Established Church, and formed themselves into a distinct sect. So did the Presbyterians first; afterwards, the Independents the Anabaptists, and the Quakers: And after this was done, they did scarce any good, except to their own little body. As they chose to separate from the Church, so the people remaining therein separated from them, and generally contracted a prejudice against them. But these were immensely the greatest number; so that, by that unhappy separation, the hope of a general, national reformation was totally cut off:

13. But it is not so in the present revival of religion. The Methodists (so termed) know their calling. They weighed the matter at first, and, upon mature deliberation, determined to continue in the Church. Since that time, they have not wanted temptations of every kind to alter their resolution.

They have heard abundance said upon the subject, perhaps all that can be said: They have read the writings of the most eminent pleaders for separations both in the last and present century: They have spent several days in a General Conference upon this very question, “Is it *expedient* (supposing, not granting, that it is *lawful*) to separate from the Established Church?” But still they could see no sufficient cause to depart from their first resolution. So that their fixed purpose is, let the Clergy or laity use them well or ill, by the grace of God, to endure all things, to hold on their even course, and to continue in the Church, maugre men or devils, unless God permits them to be thrust out.

14. Near twenty years ago, immediately after their solemn consultation on the subject, a Clergyman, who had heard the whole, said, with great earnestness, “In the name of God, let nothing move you to recede from this resolution. God is with you, of a truth; and so he will be, while you continue in the Church: But whenever the Methodists leave the Church, God will leave them.” Lord, what is man! In a few months after, Mr. Ingham himself left the Church, and turned all the societies under his care into congregations of independents. And what was the event? The same that he had foretold! — They swiftly moldered into nothing.

Some years after, a person of honor told me, “This is the peculiar glory of the Methodists: However convenient it might be, they will not, on any account or pretense whatever, form a distinct sect or party. Let no one rob you of this glorying I trust none will, as long as I live. But the Giver of this advice entirely forgot it in a very short time, and has, almost ever since, been laboring to form Independent congregations.

15. This has occasioned many to ask, “Why do you say the Methodists form no distinct party, — that they do not leave the Church? Are there not thousands of Methodists who have, in fact, left the Church; who never attend the Church Service; never receive the Lord’s Supper there; nay, who speak against the Church, even with bitterness, both in public and private; yea, who appoint and frequent meetings for divine service at the same hour? How, then, can you affirm that the Methodists do not leave the Church?”

I am glad of so public an opportunity of explaining this; in order to which, it will be necessary to look back some years. The Methodists at Oxford were all one body, and, as it were, one soul; zealous for the religion of the Bible, of the primitive Church, and, in consequence, of the Church of England; as they believed it to come nearer the scriptural and primitive plan than any other national Church upon earth.

When my brother and I returned from Georgia, we were in the same sentiments. And at that time we and our friends were the only persons to whom that innocent name was affixed. Thus far, therefore, all the Methodists were firm to the Church of England.

16. But a good man who met with us when we were at Oxford; while he was absent from us, conversed much with Dissenters, and contracted strong prejudices against the Church: I mean Mr. Whitefield: And not long after he totally separated from us. In some years, William Cudworth and several others separated from him, and turned Independents, as did Mr. Maxfield and a few more, after separating from us. Lastly, a school was set up near Trevecka, in Wales; and almost all who were educated there, (except those that were ordained, and some of them too,) as they disclaimed all connection with the Methodists, so they disclaimed the Church also: Nay, they spoke of it, upon all occasions, with exquisite bitterness and contempt.

Now, let every impartial person judge whether we are accountable for any of these. None of these have any manner of connection with the original Methodists. They are branches broken off from the tree: If they break from the Church also, we are not accountable for it.

These, therefore, cannot make our glorying void, that we do not, will not, form any separate sects but from principle remain, what we always have been, true members of the Church of England.

17. Brethren, I presume the greater part of you also are members of the Church of England. So, at least, you are called; but you are not so indeed, unless you are witnesses of the religion above described. And are you really such? Judge not one another; but every man look into his own

bosom. How stands the matter in your own breast? Examine your conscience before God. Are you an happy partaker of this scriptural, this truly primitive, religion? Are you a witness of the religion of love? Are you a lover of God and all mankind? Does your heart glow with gratitude to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, the Father of the spirits of all flesh, who giveth you life, and breath, and all things; who hath given you his Son, his only Son, that you “might now perish, but have everlasting life?” Is your soul warm with benevolence to all mankind? Do you long to have all men virtuous and happy? And does the constant tenor of your life and conversation bear witness of this? Do you “love, not in word” only, “but in deed and in truth?” Do you persevere in the “work of faith, and the labor of love? — Do you “walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us?” Do you, as you have time, “do good unto all men;” and in as high a degree as you are able? *Whosoever* thus “doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” *Whosoever* thou art, whose heart is herein as my heart, give me thine hand! Come, and let us magnify the Lord together, and labor to promote his kingdom upon earth! Let us join hearts and hands in this blessed work, in striving to bring glory to God in the highest, by establishing peace and goodwill among men, to the uttermost of our power! First. Let our hearts be joined herein; let us unite our wishes and prayers; let our whole soul pant after a general revival of pure religion and undefiled, the restoration of the image of God, pure love, in every child of man! Then let us endeavor to promote, in our several stations, this scriptural, primitive religion; let us, with all diligence, diffuse the religion of love among all we have any intercourse with; let us provoke all men, not to enmity and contention, but to love and to good works; always remembering those deep words, (God engrave them on all our hearts!) “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him!”

SERMON CXXXIII.

PREACHED OF OCCASION OF

**THE DEATH OF
THE REV. MR. JOHN FLATTER,**

Vicar of Madeley, Shropshire.

TO THE READER.

IT was a consciousness of my own inability to describe, in a manner worthy of the subject, such a person as Mr. Fletcher, which has one great reason of my not writing this sooner I judged, only an Apelles was proper to paint an Alexander. But I at length submitted to importunity, and hastily put together some memorials of this great man; intending, if God permit, when I have more leisure, and more materials, to write a fuller account of his life

LONDON, November 9, 1785.

JOHN WESLEY

“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: For the end of that man of peace.”

Psalms 37:37.

IN the preceding verses, taken together with this, there is a beautiful contrast between the death of a wicked and that of a good man. “I myself,” says the Psalmist “have seen the ungodly in great power, and flourishing like a green bay tree. I went by, and, lo! he was gone; I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found.” Dost thou desire to be found happy, both

in life and in death? “Then keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right; for that shall bring a man peace at the last.” The words are rendered in the new translation with far more force and elegance: “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: For the end of that man is peace.” It is not improbable, that David, while he uttered these words, had a particular instance before his eyes, such an instance was that of the great and good man whom God has not long ago taken to himself:

In discoursing on these words, I purpose, first, briefly to inquire, Who is the person that is here spoken of, “the perfect, the upright man?” I will endeavor, Secondly, to explain the promise, “That shall bring a man peace at the last;” or, as it is expressed in the other version, “The end of that man is peace, I will then, with the divine assistance, show a little more at large, in how glorious a manner it was fulfilled in the end of that “perfect and upright man” who has been lately removed from us.

I.

1. I am; First, briefly to inquire who is the person that is here spoken of, “the upright and perfect man.” In speaking on this head, I shall not endeavor to describe the character of an upright Jew, such as David himself was, or any of those holy men that lived under the Mosaic dispensation: It more nearly imports us to consider such an upright man as are those that live under the Christian dispensation; such as we have lived and died since “life and immortality” have been “wrought to light by the gospel.”

2. In this sense, he is a perfect and upright man who believes in the name of the Son of God; he is one in whom it has pleased the Father to reveal the Son of his love, and who, consequently, is able to declare, “The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God; who loved me, and gave himself for us.” He is one that finds “the Spirit of God witnessing with his spirit, that he is a child of God,” and unto whom Jesus Christ is made of God “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

3. This faith will undoubtedly work by love. Accordingly, every Christian believer has “the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him.” And, loving God, he loves his brother also; his

goodwill extends to every child of man. By this, as well as by the fruits of love, — lowliness, meekness, and resignation, — he shows that there is the same “mind in him which was in Christ Jesus.”

4. As to his outward behavior, the upright Christian believer is blameless and unprovable. He is holy, as Christ that has called him is holy, in all manner of conversation; ever laboring to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man. He not only avoids all outward sin, but “abstains from all appearance of evil.” He steadily walks in all the public and private ordinances of the Lord blameless. He is zealous of good works; as he hath time, doing good, in every kind and degree, to all Men. And in the whole course of his life he pursues one invariable rule, — whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, to do all to the glory of God.

II.

And surely “the end of this man is peace;” the meaning of which words we are now, in the Second place, to consider.

I do not conceive this immediately to refer to that glorious peace which is prepared for him in the presence of God to all eternity; but rather to that which he will enjoy in the present world, before his spirit returns to God that gave it. Neither does it seem directly to refer to outward peace, or deliverance from outward trouble; although it is true, many good men, who had been long buffeted by adversity, and troubled on every side, have experienced an entire deliverance from it, and enjoyed a remarkable calm before they went hence. But this seems chiefly to refer to inward peace; even that “peace of God which passeth all understanding.” Therefore it is no wonder that it cannot be fully and adequately expressed in human language. We can only say, it is an unspeakable calmness and serenity of spirit, a tranquillity in the blood of Christ, which keeps the souls of believers, in their latest hour, even as a garrison keeps a city; which keeps not only their hearts, all their passions and affections, but also their minds, all the motions of their understanding and imagination, and all the workings of their reason in Christ Jesus. This peace they experienced in a higher or lower degree, (suppose they continued in the faith,) from the time they first found redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins. But when they have nearly finished their course, it generally flows as: a

river, even in such a degree as it had not before entered into their hearts to conceive. A remarkable instance of this, out of a thousand, occurred many years ago: — Enoch Williams, one of the first of our Preachers that was stationed at Cork, (who had received this peace when he was eleven years old, and never lost it for an hour) after he had rejoiced in God with joy unspeakable, during the whole course of his illness, was too much exhausted to speak many words, but just said, “Peace! peace!” and died.

III.

So was the Scripture fulfilled. But it was far more gloriously fulfilled in that late eminent servant of God; as will clearly appear if we consider a few circumstances, First, of his life, and, Secondly, of his triumphant death.

1. Indeed we have, as yet, but a very imperfect knowledge of his life. We know little more of his early years, than that he was from his infancy so remarkably regardless of food, that he would scarce take enough to sustain life; and that he had always much of the fear of God, and a real sense of religion. He was born September 12, in the year 1729, at Nyon, in Switzerland, of a very reputable family. He went through the usual course of academical studies, in the University of Geneva. One of his uncles, who was at that time a General Officer in the Imperial service, then invited him into the same service, promising to procure him a commission. But just as he came into Germany, the war was at an end. Being so far on his way, he was then invited into Holland, by another uncle. who had, a little before, been desired, by a correspondent in England, to procure a tutor for a gentleman’s sons. He asked Mr. Fletcher whether he was willing to go into England, and undertake this office. He consented, and accordingly went over to England, and undertook the care of Mr. Hill’s two sons, at Tern, in Shropshire; and he continued in that office till the young gentlemen went to the University.

2. When Mr. Hill went up to London, to attend the Parliament, he took his lady and Mr. Fletcher with him. While they were dining at St. Alban’s, he walked out into the town, but did not return till the coach was set out for London. How ever, a saddle-horse being left, he came after, and overtook them on the same evening. Mrs. Hill asking him why he stayed behind, he

said, "I was walking through the market-place, and I heard a poor old woman talk so sweetly of Jesus Christ, that I knew not how the time passed away." "I will be hanged," said Mrs. Hill, "if our Tutor does not turn Methodist by and by!" "Methodist, Madam," said he, "pray what is that?" She replied, "Why, the Methodists are a people that do nothing but pray. They are praying all day and all night." "Are they?" said he "then, with the help of God, I will find them out, if they be above ground." He did, not long after, find them out, and had his desire; being admitted into the society. While he was in town, he met in Mr. Richard Edwards's class, and lost no opportunity of meeting. And he retained a peculiar regard for Mr. Edwards to the day of his death.

3. It was not long before he was pressed in spirit to call sinners to repentance. Seeing the world all around him lying in wickedness, he found an earnest desire

To pluck poor brands out of the fire,
To snatch them from the verge of hell.

And though he was yet far from being perfect in the English tongue, particularly with regard to the pronunciation of it, yet the earnestness with which he spake, seldom to be seen in England, and the unspeakably tender affection to poor, lost sinners, which breathed in every word and gesture, made so deep an impression on all that heard, that very few went empty away.

4. About the year 1753, (being now of a sufficient age,) he was ordained Deacon and Priest, and soon after presented to the little living of Madeley, in Shropshire. This, he had frequently said, was the only living which he ever desired to have. He was ordained at Whitehall; and the same day, being informed that I had no one to assist me at West-street chapel, he came away as soon as ever the ordination was over, and assisted me in the administration of the Lord's Supper. And he was now doubly diligent in preaching, not only in the chapels at West street and Spitalfields, but wherever the providence of God opened a door to proclaim the everlasting gospel. This he did frequently in French, (as well as in English,) of which all judges allowed him to be a complete master.

5. Hence he removed into the Vicarage house at Madeley. Here he was fully employed among his parishioners, both in the town and in Madeley-Wood, a mile or two from it, — a place much resembling Kingswood, almost wholly inhabited by poor colliers, and their numerous families. These forlorn ones (little wiser than the beasts that perish) he took great pains to reform and instruct; and they are now as judicious and as well behaved a people as most of their station in the three kingdoms.

6. But, after some time, he was prevailed upon by the Countess of Huntingdon to leave his beloved retreat, and remove into Wales, in order to superintend her school at Trevecka. This he did with all his power, instructing the young men both in learning and philosophy; till he received a letter from the Countess, together with the circular letter signed by Mr. Shirley, summoning all that feared God in England to meet together at Bristol, at the time of the Methodist Conference, in order to bear testimony against the “dreadful heresy” contained in the Minutes of the preceding Conference. Her Ladyship declared, that all who did not absolutely renounce those eight propositions which were contained in the Minutes of that Conference must immediately leave her house. Mr. Fletcher was exceedingly surprised at this peremptory declaration. He spent the next day in fasting and prayer; and in the evening wrote to her ladyship, that he not only could not utterly renounce, but must entirely approve of, all those eight propositions; and therefore had obeyed her order, by leaving her house, and returning to his own at Madeley.

7. That circular letter was the happy occasion of his writing those excellent “Checks to Antinomianism,” in which one knows not which to admire most, the purity of the language, (such as a foreigner scarce ever wrote before,) the strength and clearness of the argument, or the mildness and sweetness of the spirit which breathes throughout the whole; insomuch that I nothing wonder at a Clergyman that was resolved never to part with his *dear decrees*, who, being pressed to read them, replied, “No; I will never read Mr. Fletcher’s writings; for if I did, I should be of his mind.” He now likewise wrote several other valuable tracts. Meantime, he was more abundant in his ministerial labors, both in public and private; visiting his whole parish, early and late, in all weathers; regarding neither heat nor cold, rain nor snow, whether he was on horseback or on foot. But

this insensibly weakened his constitution, and sapped the foundation of his health; which was still more effectually (lone by his intense and uninterrupted studies, at which he frequently continued, with scarce any intermission, fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen hours a day. Meantime, he did not allow himself necessary food. He seldom took any regular meals, unless he had company; but twice or thrice in four-and-twenty hours ate some bread and cheese, or fruit; instead of which, sometimes he took a draught of milk, and then wrote on again. When one reproved him for this, for not allowing himself a sufficiency of necessary food, he replied, with surprise, "Not allow myself food! Why, our food seldom costs my house-keeper and me less than two shillings a week!"

8. Being informed that his health was greatly impaired, I judged nothing was so likely to restore it as a long journey: So I proposed his taking a journey with me into Scotland, to which he willingly consented. We set out in the spring, and, after traveling eleven or twelve hundred miles, returned to London in autumn. I verily believe, had he traveled with me a few months longer, he would have quite recovered his health; but being stopped by his friends, he quickly relapsed, and fell into a true pulmonary consumption.

9. But this sickness was not unto death; it was only sent that the glory of the Lord might appear. During the whole course of it, he remained at Newington, and was visited by persons of all ranks; and they all marveled at the grace of God that was in him. In all his pain, no complaint came out of his mouth; but his every breath was spent, either in praising God, or exhorting and comforting his neighbor.

10. When nothing else availed, he was advised to take a journey by sea and by land into his own country. He did this in company with Mr. Ireland, a well tried and faithful friend, who loved him as a brother, and thought no pains ill bestowed, if he could preserve valuable a life. He resided in his own country about a year, and was a blessing to all that were round about him. Being much recovered, he spent some months in France, and then returned in perfect health to Madeley.

11. In the year 1781, with the full approbation of all his friends, he married Miss Bosanquet; of whom, as she is still alive, I say no more at present, than that she was the only person in England whom I judged to be worthy of Mr. Fletcher. By her tender and judicious care his health was confirmed more and more; and I am firmly convinced, that had he used this health in traveling all over the kingdom, five, or six, or seven months every year, for which never was man more eminently qualified, no, (not Mr. Whitefield himself,) he would have done more good than any other man in England. I cannot doubt but this would have been the more excellent way. However, though he did not accept of this honor, he did abundance of good in that narrow sphere of action which he chose; and was a pattern well worthy the imitation of all the parochial Ministers in the kingdom.

12. His manner of life during the time that he and his wife lived together, it may be most satisfactory to give in her own words: —

“It is no little grief to me that my dearly-beloved husband has left no account of himself in writing; and I am not able to give many particulars of a life the most angelical I have ever known.

“He was born at Nyon, in the Canton of Berne, in Switzerland. In his infancy he discovered a lively genius, and great tenderness of heart. One day, having offended his father, who threatened to correct him, he kept himself at a distance in the garden, till, seeing his father approach, and fearing his anger would be renewed by the sight of him he ran away; but he was presently struck with deep remorse, thinking, “What! Do I run away from my father? What a wicked wretch! It may be, I may live to grow up and have a son that will run away from me!” And it was some years before the impression of sorrow, then made upon him, wore off.

“When he was about seven years old, he was reprov'd by his nurse-maid saying, ‘You are a naughty boy; and the devil takes all such.’ After he was in bed, he began to reflect on her words: His heart smote him, and he said, ‘I am a naughty boy; and perhaps God will let the devil fetch me away.’ He got up on the bed, and for a considerable time wrestled with God in prayer; till he felt such a sense of the love of God as made him quite easy.”

Part of the next paragraph I omit, being nearly the same with what I inserted before.

“When he entered Mr. Hill’s family, he did not know Christ in his heart. One Sunday evening, as he was writing some music, the servant came in to make up the fire, and, looking at him, said, ‘Sir, I am very sorry to see you so employed on the Lord’s Day.’ He immediately put away his music, and, from that hour, became a strict observer of that holy day.

“Not long after, he met with a person who asked him to go with her and hear the Methodists. He readily consented. The more he heard, the more uneasy he grew; and, doubling his diligence, he hoped by *doing much* to render himself acceptable to God; till one day, hearing Mr. Green, he was convinced he did not know what true faith was. This occasioned many reflections in his mind. ‘Is it possible,’ said he, that I, who have made divinity my study, and have received the *premium of piety* (so called) from the University for my writings on divine subjects, — that I should still be so ignorant, as not to know what faith is.” But the more he examined, the more he was convinced: Then sin revived, and hope died away. He now sought by the most rigorous austerities, to conquer an evil nature, and bring heaven born peace into his soul. But the more he struggled, the more he was convinced that all his fallen soul was sin; and that nothing but a revelation of the love of Jesus could make him a Christian. For this he groaned with unwearied assiduity; till one day, after much wrestling with God, lying prostrate on his face before the throne, he felt the application of the blood of Jesus. Now his bonds were broken, and his free soul began to breathe a pure air. Sin was beneath his; feet, and he could triumph in the Lord, the God of his salvation.

“From this time he walked valiantly in the ways of God; and, thinking he had not leisure enough in the day he made it a constant rule to sit up two nights in a week, for reading, prayer, and meditation; in order to sink deeper into that communion with God which was become his soul’s delight. Meantime, he took only vegetable food; and, for above six months, lived wholly on bread with milk and water.

“Notwithstanding the nights he sat up, he made it a rule never to sleep as long as he could possibly keep awake. For this purpose he always took a candle and look to bed with him; but one night, being overcome with sleep before he had put out the candle, he dreamed his curtains, pillow, and cap were on fire, without doing him any harm. And so it was: In the morning, part of his curtains, pillow, and cap were burned; but not an hair of his head was singed. So did God give his angels charge over him!

“Some time after, he was favored with a particular manifestation of the love of God; so powerful, that it appeared to him as if body and soul would be separated. Now all his desires centered in one, that of devoting himself to the service of his precious Master. This he thought he could do best by entering into orders. God made his way plain, and he soon after settled in Madeley. He received this parish as from the immediate hand of God, and unweariedly labored therein, and in the adjacent places, till he had spent himself in his Master’s service, and was ripening fast for glory. Much opposition he met with for many years, and often his life was in danger. Sometimes he was inwardly constrained to warn obstinate sinners, that, if they did not repent, the hand of God would cut them off. And the event proved the truth of the prediction. But, notwithstanding all their opposition, many were the seals of his ministry.

“He had an earnest desire that the pure gospel should remain among his people after he was taken away. For this purpose he surmounted great difficulties in building the house in Madeley-Wood. He not only saved for it the last farthing he had, but when he was abroad, proposed to let the Vicarage house; designing at his return, to live in a little cottage near it, and appropriating the rent of it for clearing that house.

“Since the time I had the honor and happiness of living with him, everyday made me more sensible of the mighty work of the Spirit upon him. The fruits of this were manifest in all his life and conversation; but in nothing more than in his meekness and humility. It was a meekness which no amount could move; an humility which loved to be unknown, forgotten, and despised.²² How hard is it to find an eminent person who loves an equal! But his delight was in preferring others to himself. It appeared so natural in him, that it seemed as his meat to set every one before himself.

He spake not of the fault of an absent person but when necessary; and then with the utmost caution he made no account of his own labors; and perhaps carried to an extreme his dislike of hearing them mentioned.

“Patience is the daughter of humility. In him it discovered itself in a manner which I wish I could either describe or imitate. It produced in him a ready mind to embrace every cross with alacrity and pleasure. And for the good of his neighbor, (the poor in particular,) nothing seemed hard, nothing wearisome. When I have been grieved to call him out of his study, from his closet-work, two or three times in an hour, he would answer, ‘O, my dear, never think of that; it matters not what we do, so we are always ready to meet the will of God; it is only conformity to this which makes any employment excellent.’

“He had a singular love for the lambs of the God; — the children; and applied himself with the greatest diligence to their instruction, for which he had a peculiar gift; and this populous parish found him full exercise for it. The poorest met with the same attention from him as the rich. For their sakes, he almost grudged himself necessaries, and often expressed a pain in using them, while any of his parish wanted them.

“But while I mention his meekness and love, let me not forget the peculiar favor of his Master in giving him the most firm and resolute *courage*. In reproving sin and daring sinners, he was a ‘son of thunder;’ and regarded neither fear nor favor, when he had a message from God to deliver.

“With respect to his communion with God, it is much to be lamented that we have no account of it from his own pen. But thus far I can say, it was his constant care to keep an uninterrupted sense of the divine presence. In order to this he was slow of speech, and had the exactest government of his words. To this he was so inwardly attentive, as sometimes to appear stupid to those who knew him not; though few conversed in a more lively manner when he judged it would be for the glory of God. It was his continual endeavor to draw up his own and every other spirit to an immediate intercourse with God; and all his intercourse with me was so mingled with prayer and praise, that every employment, and every meal, was, as it were, performed therewith. He often said, ‘It is a very little

thing, so to hang upon God by faith as to feel no departure from him. But I want to be filled with the fullness of his Spirit.’ ‘I feel,’ said he, ‘sometimes such gleams of light, as it were wafts of heavenly air, as seem ready to take my soul with them to glory.’ A little before his last illness, when the fever began to rage among us, he preached a sermon on the duty of visiting the sick, wherein he said, ‘What do you fear? Are you afraid of catching the distemper, and dying? O, fear it no more! What an honor to die in our Master’s work! If permitted to me, I should account it a singular favor.’ In his former illness he wrote thus: ‘I calmly wait, in unshaken resignation, for the full salvation of God; ready to venture on his faithful life, and on the sure mercies of David. His time is best, and is my time; death has lost its sting; and, I bless God, I know not what hurry of spirits is, or unbelieving fears.’

“For his last months, he scarce ever lay down or rose up without these words in his mouth, —

I nothing have, I nothing am,
My treasure’s in the bleeding Lamb,
Both now and evermore

“In one of the letters which he wrote some time since to his dear people of Madeley, some of his words are, ‘I leave this blessed island for awhile; but I trust I shall never leave the kingdom of God, — the shadow of Christ’s cross, — the clefts of the rock, smitten and pierced for us. There I meet you in spirit; thence, I trust, I shall joyfully leap into the ocean of eternity, to go and join those ministering spirits who wait on the heirs of salvation. And if I am no more allowed to minister to you on earth, I rejoice at the thought that I shall perhaps be allowed to accompany the angels who if you abide in the faith, will be commissioned to carry you into Abraham’s bosom.’

“The thought enlivens my faith! Lord, give me to walk in his steps! Then shall I see him again, and my heart shall rejoice, and we shall eternally behold the Lamb together. Faith brings near the welcome moment! And now he beckons me away, and Jesus bids me come!”

I know not that anything can or need be added to this, but Mrs. Fletcher's account of his death, which follows also in her own words: —

“For some time before his late illness he was particularly penetrated with the nearness of eternity. There was scarce an hour in which he was not calling upon us to drop every thought and every care, that we might attend to nothing but drinking deeper into God. We spent much time in wrestling with God; and were led in a peculiar manner to abandon our whole selves into the hands of God, to do or suffer whatever was pleasing to him.

“On Thursday, August 4, he was employed in the work of God from three in the afternoon till nine at night. When he came home, he said, ‘I have taken cold.’ On Friday and Saturday he was not well, but seemed uncommonly drawn out in prayer. On Saturday night his fever appeared very strong. I begged him not to go to church in the morning; but he told me, ‘It was the will of the Lord;’ in which case I never dared to persuade. In reading Prayers, he almost fainted away. I got through the crowd, and entreated him to come out of the desk. But he let me and others know, in his sweet manner, that we were not to interrupt the order of God. I then retired to my pew, where all around me were in tears. When he was a little recovered by the windows being opened, he went on, and preached with a strength and recollection that surprised us all.

“After sermon he went up to the communion-table with these words, ‘I am going to throw myself under the wings of the cherubim, before the mercy-seat.’ The service holden till near two. Sometimes he could scarce stand, and was often obliged to stop. The people were deeply affected; weeping was on every side. Gracious Lord! how was it my soul was kept so calm in the midst of the most tender feelings? Notwithstanding his extreme weakness, he gave out several verses of hymns, and lively sentences of exhortation. When service was over, we hurried him to bed, where he immediately fainted away. He afterward dropped into a sleep for some time; and, on waking, cried out, with a pleasant smile, ‘Now, my dear, thou seest I am no worse for doing the Lord's work: He never fails me when I trust in him.’ Having got a little dinner, he dozed most of the evening, now and then waking full of the praises of God. At night his fever returned, though not violent; but his strength decreased amazingly. On

Monday and Tuesday we had a little paradise together: He lay on a couch in the study, and, though often changing posture, was sweetly pleasant, and frequently slept a good while. Then awake, he delighted in hearing me read hymns and tracts on faith and love. His words were all animating, and big patience beyond expression. When he had any nauseous medicines to take, he seemed to enjoy the cross, according to a word he used often to repeat, that we were to seek a perfect conformity to the will of God, and leave him to give us what comfort he saw good. I asked him, whether he had any advice to leave me, if he should be taken from me: He replied, 'I have nothing particular to say: The Lord will open all before thee.' I said, 'Have you any conviction that God is about to take you?' He said, 'No; not in particular; only I always see death so inexpressibly near, that we both seem to stand on the very verge of eternity.' While he slept a little, I besought the Lord, if it was his good pleasure, to spare him to me a little longer; but my prayer seemed to have no wings, and I could not help mingling continually therewith, 'Lord, give me perfect resignation!' This uncertainty made me tremble, lest God was going to put into my hand the bitter cup with which he lately threatened my husband. Some weeks before, I myself was ill of the fever. My husband then felt the whole parting scene, and struggled for perfect resignation. He said, 'O Polly, shall I ever see the day when thou must be carried out to bury? How will the little things which thy tender care has prepared for me in every part of the house, — how will they wound and distress me! How is it? I think I feel jealousy! I am jealous of the worms! I seem to shrink at giving my dear Polly to the worms!'

"Now all these reflections returned upon my heart with the weight of a millstone. I cried to the Lord, and those words were deeply impressed on my spirit, 'Where I am, there shall my servants be, that they may behold my glory.' This promise was full of comfort to my soul. I saw, that in Christ's immediate presence was our home, and that we should find our reunion in being deeply centered in him. I received it as a fresh marriage for eternity. As such I trust for ever to hold it. All that day, whenever I thought of that expression, 'to behold my glory,' it seemed to wipe away every tear, and was as the ring whereby we were joined anew.

“Awaking some time after, he said, ‘Polly, I have been thinking, it was Israel’s fault that they asked for *signs*. We will not do so; but, abandoning our whole selves into the hands of God, we will lie patiently before him, assured that he will do all things well.’

“‘My dear love,’ said I, ‘if ever I have done or said any thing to grieve thee, how will the remembrance wound my heart, shouldest thou be taken from me!’

“He entreated and charged me, with inexpressible tenderness, not to allow the thought; declaring his thankfulness for our union, in a variety of words written on my heart as with the adamantine pen of friendship, deeply dipped in blood.

“On Wednesday, after groaning all day under the weight of the power of God, he told me he had received such a manifestation of the full meaning of those words, ‘God is love,’ as he could never be able to tell. “It tills me” said he, ‘every moment. O Polly, my dear Polly. God is love! Shout, shout aloud! I want a gust of praise to go to the ends of the earth! But it seems as if I could not speak much longer. Let us fix on a sign between ourselves;’ (tapping me twice with his fingers;) ‘ — now I mean, God is love; and we will draw each other into God. Observe! By this we will draw each other into God!’

“Sally coming in,” he cried out, “O Sally, God is love! Shout, both of you! I want to hear you shout his praise!” All this time, the medical friend, who diligently attended him, hoped he was in no danger; as he had no bad head-ache, much sleep, without the least delirium, and an almost regular pulse. For as the disease, though commissioned to take his life, restrained by the power of God!

“On Thursday his speech began to fail. While he was able, he spoke to all that came in his way. Hearing a stranger was in the house, he ordered her to be called up, though uttering two sentences almost made him faint. To his friendly doctor he would not be silent while he had any power of speech; often saying, ‘O Sir, you take much thought for my body; give me leave to take thought for your soul.’ When I could scarce understand

anything he said; I spoke these words, 'God is love.' Instantly, as if all his powers were awakened, he broke out in a rapture, 'God is love! love! love! O for that gust of praise I want to sound!' — Here his voice again failed. He suffered many ways, but with such patience as none but those then present can conceive. If I named his sufferings, he would smile, and make the sign.

“On Friday, finding his body covered with spots, I felt a sword pierce through my soul. As I was kneeling by his side, with my hand in his, entreating the Lord, to be with us in this tremendous hour, he strove to say many things, but could not; pressing my hand, and often repeating the sign. At last he breathed out, “Head of the Church, be Head to my wife!” When, for a few moments, I was forced to leave him, Sally said to him, ‘My dear master, do you know me?’ He replied, ‘Sally, God will put his right hand under you.’ She added, ‘O my dear master, should you be taken away, what a disconsolate creature will my poor dear mistress be!’ He replied, ‘God will be her all in all.’ He had always delighted much in these words, —

Jesu’s blood, through earth and skies,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy! cries.

Whenever I repeated them to him, he would answer, ‘Boundless! boundless! boundless!’ He now added, though with great difficulty,

Mercy’s full power I *soon* shall prove,
Loved with an everlasting love.

“On Saturday afternoon his fever seemed quite off and a few friends standing near the bed, he reached his hand to each, and, looking on a Minister, said, ‘Are you ready to assist tomorrow?’ His recollection surprised us, as the day of the week had not been named in his room. Many believed he would recover; and one said, ‘Do you think the Lord will raise you up?’ He strove to answer, saying, ‘Raise me in the resur’ — meaning in the resurrection. Or another, asking the same question, he said, ‘I leave it all to God.’

“In the evening, the fever returned with violence, and the mucus falling on his throat almost strangled him. It was supposed the same painful emotion would grow more and more violent to the last. As I felt this exquisitely, I cried to the Lord to remove it; and, glory be to his name, he did. From that time, it returned no more. As night drew on, I perceived him dying very fast. His fingers could hardly make the sign, (which he scarce ever forgot,) and his speech seemed quite gone. I said ‘My dear creature, I ask not for myself, I know thy soul; but for the sake of others, if Jesus is very present with thee, lift thy right hand.’ He did. ‘If the prospect of glory sweetly opens before thee, repeat the sign.’ He immediately raised it again; and, in half a minute, a second time: He then threw it up as if he would reach the top of the bed. After this, his dear hands moved no more; but on my saying, ‘Art thou in much pain?’ he answered, ‘No.’ From this time, he lay in a kind of sleep, though with his eyes open and fixed. For the most part, he sat upright against pillows, with his head a little inclining to one side; and so remarkably composed and triumphant was his countenance, that the least trace of death was scarcely discernible in it.

“Twenty-four hours he was in this situation, breathing like a person in common sleep. About thirty-five minutes past ten, on Sunday night, August 14th, his precious soul entered into the joy of his Lord, without one struggle or groan, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

“And here I break off my mournful story: But on my bleeding heart the fair picture of his heavenly excellence will be for ever drawn. When I call to mind his ardent zeal, his laborious endeavors to seek and save the lost, his diligence in the employment of his time, his Christ-like condescension toward me, and his uninterrupted converse with heaven, — I may well be allowed to add, my loss is beyond the power of words to paint. I have gone through deep waters; but all my afflictions were nothing compared to this. Well: I want no pleasant prospect, but upwards; nor anything whereon to fix my hope, but immortality.

“On the 17th, his dear remains were deposited in Madeley churchyard, amid the tears and lamentations of thousands. The Service was performed by the Rev. Mr. Hatton, Rector of Waters-Upton, whom God enabled to

speak in a pathetic manner to his weeping flock. In the conclusion, at my request, he read the following paper: —

“As it was the desire of my beloved husband to be buried in this plain manner, so, out of tenderness, he begged that I might not be present: And in all this I would obey him.

“Permit me then, by the mouth of a friend, to bear my open testimony, to the glory of God, that I, who have known him in the most perfect manner, am constrained to declare, that I never knew any one walk so closely in the ways of God as he did. The Lord gave him a conscience tender as the apple of an eye. He literally preferred the interest of every one to his own.

“He was rigidly just, but perfectly loose from all attachment to the world. He shared *his all* with the poor, who lay so close to his heart, that at the approach of death, when he could not speak without difficulty, he cried out, ‘O my poor! what will become of my poor?’ He was blessed with so great a degree of humility, as is scarce to be found. I am witness, how often he has rejoiced in being treated with contempt. Indeed, it seemed the very food of his soul to be little and unknown. When he desired me to write a line to his brother, if he died; I replying ‘I will write him all the Lord’s dealings with thee;’ ‘No, no,’ said he, ‘write nothing about me. I only desire to be forgotten. *God is all.*’

“His zeal for souls I need not tell *you*. Let the labors of twenty-five years, and a martyr’s death in the conclusion, imprint it on your hearts. His diligent visitation of the sick occasioned the fever, which, by God’s commission, tore him from you and me; and his vehement desire to take his last leave of you, with dying lips and hands, gave, it is supposed, the finishing stroke, by preparing his blood for putrefaction. Thus has he lived and died your servant; and will any of you refuse to meet him at God’s right hand in that day?

“He walked with death always in sight. About two months ago, he came to me and said, ‘My dear love, I know not how it is, but I have a strange impression, death is very near us, as if it would be some sudden stroke upon one of us. And it draws out all my soul in prayer, that we may be

ready.’ He then broke out, ‘Lord, prepare the soul thou wilt call! and O stand by thy poor disconsolate one that shall be left behind!’

“A few days before his departure, he was filled with love in an uncommon manner; saying to me, ‘I have had such a discovery of the depth of that word, *God is love*, I cannot tell the half. O shout his praise!’ The same he testified, as long as he had a voice, and continued to testify to the end, by a most lamb-like patience, in which he smiled over death, and set his last seal to the glorious truths he had so long preached among you.

“Three years, nine months, and two days, I have possessed my heavenly minded husband; but now the sun of my earthly joy is set for ever, and my soul filled with an anguish which only finds its consolation in a total resignation to the will of God. When I was asking the Lord, if he pleased, to spare him to me a little longer, the following promise was impressed on my mind with great power: (In the accomplishment of which I look for our reunion:) — ‘Where I am, there shall my servants be, that they may behold my glory.’ Lord, hasten the hour!”

There is little need of adding any farther character of this man of God to the foregoing account, given by one who wrote out of the fullness of her heart. I would only observe, that for many years I despaired of finding any inhabitant of Great Britain, that could stand in any degree of comparison with Gregory Lopez or Monsieur de Renty. But let any impartial person judge, if Mr. Fletcher was at all inferior to them. Did he not experience as deep communion with God, and as high a measure of inward holiness, as was experienced either by one or the other of those burning and shining lights? And it is certain his outward holiness shone before men with full as bright a luster as theirs. But if any should attempt to draw a parallel between them, there are two circumstances that deserve consideration. One is, we are not assured that the writers of *their* lives did not extenuate, if not suppress what was amiss in them; and some things amiss we are assured there were, viz., many touches of superstition, and some of idolatry, in worshipping saints, the Virgin Mary in particular: But I have not suppressed or extenuated anything in Mr. Fletcher’s character; for, indeed, I knew nothing that was amiss, — nothing that needed to be extenuated, much less suppressed. A second circumstance is, that the

writers of *their* lives could not have so full a knowledge of them, as both Mrs. Fletcher and I had of Mr. Fletcher; being eye and ear witnesses of his whole conduct. Consequently, we know that his life was not sullied with any mixture of either idolatry or superstition. I was intimately acquainted with him for above thirty years; I conversed with him morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a Journey of many hundred miles; and in all that time, I never heard him speak one improper word, nor saw him do an improper action. — To conclude: Many exemplary men have I known, holy in heart and life, within fourscore years, but one equal to him I have not known, — one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God. So unblamable a character in every respect I have not found either in Europe or America, and I scarce expect to find another such on this side of eternity.

But it is possible we all may be such as he was: Let us then endeavor to follow him as he followed Christ!

NORWICH.

October 2nd, 1785.

HIS EPITAPH.

Here lies the Body

OF

THE REV. JOHN WILLIAM DE LA FLECHER.

*Vicar of Madeley;
Who was born at Nyon in Switzerland,
September 12, 1729,
And finished his course, August 14, 1785,*

In this village,
Where his unexampled labors
Will never be forgotten.
He exercised his ministry for the space of twenty-five years
In this parish,
With uncommon zeal and ability.
But though many believed his report,
Yet he might with justice have adopted
The lamentation of the Prophet:
“All the day long have I stretched out my hands
Unto a disobedient and gainsaying people
Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord,
And my work with my God.”

SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

FIFTH SERIES.

CONSISTING OF EIGHT DISCOURSES

**WHICH WERE PUBLISHED FROM MR. WESLEY'S
MANUSCRIPTS AFTER HIS DEATH, BUT NEVER DESIGNED
BY HIM FOR PUBLICATION.** ²³

The first Sermon of the series, however, entitled, "True Christianity Defended," is every way worthy of its author. It seems to have been intended as a kind of *Conoio ad Clerum*; and contains a faithful exposure of that departure from the pure doctrines of Protestantism which then prevailed in the Church of England, and of that lack of discipline and of morals which was so awfully manifest in the University of Oxford, as well as in general society. To deliver such a sermon before that learned body must have required no small degree of pious resolution; and is a striking display of that spirit of sacrifice by which Mr. Wesley was actuated.

— EDIT.]

SERMON CXXXIV.

TRUE CHRISTIANITY DEFENDED.

(THE following Sermon was found in a mutilated manuscript among Mr. Wesley's papers. It is dated June 24, 1741. A Latin copy of the same Discourse has also been discovered. Mr. Pawson, with great care, copied the former, and I have supplied the deficiencies out of the latter. On collating both Sermons, I find several variations, and though not of any great importance, yet sufficient, in my judgment, to vindicate the propriety of translating and publishing the Latin one, not merely as a matter of curiosity, but of utility. The Sermon, no doubt, was written with the design of being preached before the University of Oxford; but whether it ever were preached there, cannot be determined.

A. CLARKE

“How is the faithful city become an harlot!” Isaiah 1:21.

1. “WHEN I bring the sword upon a land, saith the Lord, if the watchman blow the trumpet, and warn the people, then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take away any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.” (Ezekiel 33:2-6.)

2. It cannot be doubted, but that word of the Lord is come unto every Minister of Christ also. “So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: Therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die: If thou dost not speak to warn the

wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.”

3. Nor ought any man, therefore, to be accounted our enemy because he telleth us the truth: The doing of which is indeed an instance of love to our neighbor, as well as of obedience to God. Otherwise, few would undertake so thankless a task: For the return they will find, they know already. The Scripture must be fulfilled: “Me the world hateth,” saith our Lord, “because I testify of it that the deeds thereof are evil.”

4. It is from a full, settled conviction, that I owe this labor of love to my brethren, and to my tender parent,²⁴ by whom I have been nourished for now more than twenty years, and from whom, under God, I have received those advantages of which I trust I shall retain a grateful sense till my spirit returns to God who gave it; it is, I say, from a full conviction that love and gratitude, as well as that dispensation of the gospel wherewith I am entrusted, require it of me, that even I have undertaken to speak on a needful, though unwelcome, subject. I would indeed have wished that some more acceptable person would have done this. But should all hold their peace, the very stones would cry out, “How is the faithful city become an harlot!”

5. How faithful she was once to her Lord, to whom she had been betrothed as a chaste virgin, let not only the writings of her sons, which shall be had in honor throughout all generations, but also the blood of her martyrs, speak; — a stronger testimony of her faithfulness than could be given by words, even

By all the speeches of the babbling earth.

But how is she now become an harlot! How hath she departed from her Lord! How hath she denied him, and listened to the voice of strangers!
both,

- I. In respect of doctrine; and,
- II. Of practice.

I.

In respect of doctrine.

1. It cannot be said that all our writers are setters forth of strange doctrines. There are those who expound the oracles of God by the same Spirit wherewith they were written; and who faithfully cleave to the solid foundation which our Church hath laid agreeable thereto; touching which we have His word who cannot lie, that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” There are those also, (blessed be the Author of every good gift!) who, as wise master builders, build thereon, not hay or stubble, but gold and precious stones, — but that charity which never faileth.

2. We have likewise cause to give thanks to the Father of Lights, for that he hath not left himself without witness; but that there are those who now preach the gospel of peace, the truth as it is in Jesus. But how few are these in comparison of those (οι καπηλευοντες) who *adulterate* the word of God! How little wholesome food have we for our souls, and what abundance of poison! How few are there that, either in writing or preaching, declare the genuine gospel of Christ, in the simplicity and purity wherewith it is set forth in the venerable records of our own Church! And how are we inclosed on every side with those who, neither knowing the doctrines of our Church, nor the Scriptures, nor the power of God, have found out to themselves inventions wherewith they constantly corrupt others also!

3. I speak not now of those (πρωτοτοκοι του Σατανα) *first-born of Satan*, the Deists, Arians, or Socinians. These are too infamous among us to do any great service to the cause of their master. But what shall we say of those who are accounted the pillars of our Church, and champions of our faith; who, indeed, betray that Church, and sap the very foundations of the faith we are taught thereby?

4. But how invidious a thing it is to show this! Who is sufficient to bear the weight of prejudice which must necessarily follow the very mention of such a charge against men of so established a character? nay, and who have, indeed, in many other respects, done great service to the Church of God? Yet must every faithful Minister say, “God forbid that I should

accept any man's person!' I dare not give any man flattering titles, nor spare any that corrupt the Gospel. 'In so doing my Maker would soon take me away'"

5. Let me, however, be as short as may be upon this head; and I will instance only in two or three men of renown, who have endeavored to sap the very foundation of our Church, by attacking its fundamental, and, indeed, the fundamental doctrine of all Reformed Churches; viz., justification by faith alone. One of these, and one of the highest station in our Church, hath written and printed, before his death, several Sermons, expressly to prove, that not *faith alone*, but *good works* also, are necessary in order to justification. The unpleasing task of quoting particular passages out of them is superseded by the very title of them; which is this: "The Necessity of Regeneration," (which he at large proves to imply holiness both of heart and life,) "in order to Justification."²⁵

6. It may appear strange to some, that an angel of the Church of God, (as the great Shepherd terms the overseers of it,) and one so highly esteemed both in our own and many other nations, should coolly and calmly thus speak. But O, what is he in comparison of the great Bishop Bull! Who shall be able to stand, if this eminent scholar, Christian, and Prelate, in his youth wrote and published to the world, and in his riper years defended, the positions that follow? —

"A man is said (εξ έργων δικαιοῦται) *to be justified by works*; because good works are the condition, according to the divine appointment, established in the gospel covenant, requisite and necessary to a man's justification; that is, to his obtaining remission of sins through Christ."

BULLI Harm. *Apost.*, p. 4.

A little after, being about to produce testimonies in proof of this proposition, he says, "The first class of these shall be those who speak of good works in a general sense, as the requisite and necessary condition of justification." Then follow certain texts of Scripture; after which he adds, "Who does not believe that in these scriptures there is an abundance of good works required, which if a man do not perform, he is altogether excluded from the hope of pardon, and remission of sins?" — *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Having introduced some other things, he adds, “Besides faith, there is no one but may see that *repentance* is required as necessary to justification. Now, repentance is not one work alone, but is, as it were, a collection of many others: For in its compass the following works are comprehended:

-
- (1.) Sorrow on account of sin:
 - (2.) Humiliation under the hand of God:
 - (3.) Hatred to sin:
 - (4.) Confession of sin:
 - (5.) Ardent supplication of the divine mercy:
 - (6.) The love of God:
 - (7.) Ceasing from sin:
 - (8.) Firm purpose of new obedience:
 - (9.) Restitution of ill-gotten goods:
 - (10.) Forgiving our neighbor his transgressions against us:
 - (11.) Works of beneficence, or almsgiving.

How much these things avail to procure remission of sins from God is sufficiently evident from Daniel 4:27; where the Prophet gives this wholesome advice to Nebuchadnezzar, who was at that time cleaving to his sins: ‘Redeem²⁶ your sins by alms-giving, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor.’” — Ibid., p. 10.

7. To instance in one point more: All the Liturgy of the Church; full of petitions for that holiness without which, the Scripture everywhere declares, no man shall see the Lord. And these are all summed up in those comprehensive words which we are supposed to be so frequently repeating: “Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name.” It is evident that in the last clause of this petition, all outward holiness is contained: Neither can it be carried to a greater height, or expressed in stronger terms. And those words, “Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts,” contain the negative branch of inward holiness; the height and depth of which is purity of heart, by the inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit. The remaining words, “that we may perfectly love thee,” contain the

positive part of holiness; seeing this love, which is the fulfilling of the law, implies the whole mind that was in Christ.

8. But how does the general stream of writers and Preachers (let me be excused the invidious task of instancing in particular persons) agree with this doctrine? Indeed, not at all. Very few can we find who simply need earnestly enforce it. But very many who write and preach as if Christian holiness, or religion, were a purely negative thing; as if, not to curse or swear, not to lie or slander, not to be a drunkard, a thief, or a whoremonger, not to speak or do evil, was religion enough to entitle a man to heaven! How many, if they go something further than this, describe it only as an outward thing; as if it consisted chiefly, if not wholly, in doing good, (as it is called,) and using the means of grace! Or, should they go a little farther still, yet what do they add to this poor account of religion? Why, perhaps, that a man should be orthodox in his opinions, and have a zeal for the constitution in Church and state. And this is all: This is all the religion they can allow, without degenerating into enthusiasm! So true it is, that the faith of a devil, and the life of a Heathen, make up what most men call a *good Christian*!

9. But why should we seek further witnesses of this? Are there not many present here who are of the same opinion? who believe that a good moral man, and a good Christian, mean the same thing? that a man need not trouble himself any further, if he only practices as much Christianity as was written over the Heathen Emperor's gate, — "Do as thou wouldst be done unto;" especially if he be not an infidel, or a heretic, but believes all that the Bible and the Church say is true?

10. I would not be understood, as if I despised these things, as if I undervalued right opinions, true morality, or a zealous regard for the constitution we have received from our fathers. Yet what are these things, being alone? What will they profit us in that day? What will it avail to tell the Judge of all, "Lord, I was not as other men were; not unjust, not an adulterer, not a liar, not an immoral man?" Yea, what will it avail, if we have done all good, as well as done no harm, — if we have given all our goods to feed the poor, — and have not charity? How shall we then look on those who taught us to sleep on and take our rest, though "the love of

the Father was not in us?" or who, teaching us to seek salvation by works, cut us off from receiving that faith freely, whereby alone the love of God could have been shed abroad in our hearts?

To these miserable corrupters of the gospel of Christ, and the poison they have spread abroad is chiefly owing,

II.

Secondly, that general corruption in practice as well as in doctrine. There is hardly to be found (O tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon!) either the form of godliness, or the power! So is "the faithful city become an harlot!"

1. With grief of heart I speak it, and not with joy, that scarcely is the form of godliness seen among us. We are all indeed called to be saints, and the very name of Christians means no less. But who has so much as the appearance? Take any one you meet; take a second, a third, a fourth, or the twentieth. Not one of them has even the appearance of a saint, any more than of an angel. Observe his look, his air, his gesture! Does it breathe nothing but God? Does it bespeak a temple of the Holy Ghost? Observe his conversation; not an hour only, but day by day. Can you gather from any outward sign, that God dwelleth in his heart? that this is an everlasting spirit, who is going to God? Would you imagine that the blood of Christ was shed for that soul, and had purchased everlasting salvation for it; and that God was now waiting till that salvation should be wrought out with fear and trembling?

2. Should it be said, "Why, what signifies the form of godliness?" we readily answer, Nothing, if it be alone. But the absence of the form signifies much. It infallibly proves the absence of the power. For though the form may be without the power, yet the power cannot be without the form. Outward religion may be where inward is not; but if there is none without, there can be none within.

3. But it may be said, "We have public prayers both morning and evening in all our Colleges." It is true; and it were to be wished that all the members thereof, more especially the elder, those of note and character,

would, by constantly attending them, show how sensible they are of the invaluable privilege. But have all who attend them the form of godliness? Before those solemn addresses to God begin, does the behavior of all who are present show that they know before whom they stand? What impression appears to be left on their minds when those holy offices are ended? And even during their continuance, can it be reasonably inferred from the tenor of their outward behavior, that their hearts are earnestly fixed on Him who standeth in the midst of them? I much fear, were a Heathen, who understood not our tongue, to come into one of these our assemblies, he would suspect nothing less than that we were pouring out our hearts before the Majesty of heaven and earth. What then shall we say, (if indeed “God is not mocked,”) but, “What a man soweth, that also shall he reap?”

4. “On Sundays, however,” say some, “it cannot be denied that we have the form of godliness, having sermons preached both morning and afternoon, over and above the morning and evening Service.” But do we keep the rest of the Sabbath day holy? Is there no needless visiting upon it? no trifling, no impertinence of conversation? Do neither you yourself do any unnecessary work upon it, nor suffer others over whom you have any power, to break the laws of God and man herein? If you do, even in this you have nothing whereof to boast. But herein also you are guilty before God.

5. But if we have the form of godliness on one day in a week, is there not on other days what is quite contrary thereto? Are not the best of our conversing hours spent in foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient? nay, perhaps, in wanton talking too; such as modest ears could not hear? Are there not many among us found to eat and drink with the drunken? And if so, what marvel is it that our profaneness should also go up into the heavens, and our oaths and curses into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath?

6. And even as to the hours assigned for study, are they generally spent to any better purpose? Not if they are employed in reading (as is too common) plays, novels, or idle tales, which naturally tend to increase our inbred corruption, and heat the furnace of our unholy desires seven times

hotter than it was before? How little preferable is the laborious idleness of those who spend day after day in gaming or diversions vilely casting away that time the value of which they cannot know, till they are passed through it into eternity!

7. Know ye not then so much as this, you that are called moral men, that all idleness is immorality; that there is no grosser dishonesty than sloth; that every voluntary blockhead is a knave? He defrauds his benefactors, his parents, and the world; and robs both God and his own soul. Yet how many of these are among us! How many lazy drones, as if only *fruges consumere nati*! “born to eat up the produce of the soil.” How many whose ignorance is not owing to incapacity, but to mere laziness! How few, (let it not seem immodest that even such a one as I should touch on that tender point,) of the vast number who have it in their power, are truly learned men! Not to speak of the other eastern tongues, who is there that can be said to understand Hebrew? Might I not say, or even Greek? A little of Homer or Xenophon we may still remember; but how few can readily read or understand so much as a page of Clemens Alexandrinus, Chrysostom, or Ephrem Syrus? And as to philosophy, (not to mention mathematics, or the abstruser branches of it,) how few do we find who have laid the foundation, — who are masters even of logic; who thoroughly understand so much as the rules of syllogizing; the very doctrine of the moods and figures! O what is so scarce as learning, save religion!

8. And indeed learning will be seldom found without religion; for temporal views, as experience shows, will very rarely suffice to carry one through the labor required to be a thorough scholar. Can it then be dissembled, that there is too often a defect in those to whom the care of youth is entrusted? Is that solemn direction sufficiently considered, (Statute. p. 7,) “Let the tutor diligently instruct those scholars committed to his care in strict morality; and especially in the first principles of religion, and in the articles of doctrine?”

And do they, to whom this important charge is given, labor diligently to lay this good foundation? to fix true principles of religion in the minds of youth entrusted with them by their lectures? to recommend the practice

thereof by the powerful and pleasing influence of their example? to enforce this by frequent private advice, earnestly and strongly inculcated? to observe the progress, and carefully inquire into the behavior, of every one of them? in a word, to watch over their souls as they that must give account?

9. Suffer me, since I have begun to speak upon this head, to go a little farther. Is there sufficient care taken that they should know and keep the statutes which we are all engaged to observe? How then is it that they are so notoriously broken everyday? To instance only in a few:

It is appointed, as to divine offices and preaching, “That all shall publicly attend: — Graduates and scholars shall attend punctually, and continue till all be finished with due reverence from the beginning to the end.” (P. 181.)

It is appointed, “That scholars of every rank shall abstain from all kinds of play where money is contended for; such as cards, dice, and bowls; nor shall they be present at public games of this nature.” (P. 157.)

It is appointed, “That all (the sons of noblemen excepted) shall accustom themselves to black or dark-colored clothing; and that they shall keep at the utmost distance from pomp and extravagance.” (P. 157.)

It is appointed, “That scholars of every rank shall abstain from alehouses, inns, taverns, and from every place within the city where wine, or any other kind of liquor, is ordinarily sold.” (P. 164.)

10. It will be objected, perhaps, that “these are but little things.” Nay, but perjury is not a little thing; nor, consequently, the willful breach of any rule which we have solemnly sworn to observe. Surely those who speak thus have forgotten those words: “Thou shalt pledge thy faith to observe all the statutes of this University. So help thee God, and the holy inspired Gospels of Christ!”
(P. 229.)

11. But is this oath sufficiently considered by those who take it; or any of those prescribed by public authority? Is not this solemn act of religion, the

calling God to record on our souls, commonly treated as a slight thing? in particular by those who swear by the living God, that “neither entreaties nor reward, neither hatred nor friendship, neither hope nor fear induce them to give a testimony to any unworthy person?” (P. 88;) and by those who swear, “I know this person to be meet and fit in morals and knowledge for that high degree to which he is presented?” (P. 114.)

12. Yet one thing more. We have all testified before God, “that all and every the Articles of our Church, as also the Book of Common Prayer, and the ordaining of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, are agreeable to the word of God.” And, in so doing, we have likewise testified, “that both the First and the Second Book of Homilies doth contain godly and whole some doctrine.” But upon what evidence have many of us declared this? Have we not affirmed the thing we know not? If so, however true they may happen to be, we are found false witnesses before God. Have the greater part of us ever used any means to know whether these things are so or not? Have we ever, for one hour, seriously considered the Articles to which we have subscribed? If not, how shamefully do we elude the design of the very compilers, who compiled them “to remove difference of opinion, and to establish unanimity in the true religion!”

13. Have we half of us read over the Book of Common Prayer, and of ordaining Bishops, Priests, and Deacons? If not, what is it we have so solemnly confirmed? In plain terms, we cannot tell. And as to the two Books of Homilies, it is well if a tenth part of those who have subscribed to them, I will not say, had considered them before they did this, but if they have even read them over to this day! Alas, my brethren! How shall we reconcile these things even to common honesty, to plain heathen morality? So far are those who do them, nay, and perhaps defend them too, from having even the form of Christian godliness!

14. But, waving all these things, where is the power? Who are the living witnesses of this? Who among us (let God witness with our hearts) experimentally knows the force of inward holiness? Who feels in himself the workings of the Spirit of Christ, drawing up his mind to high and heavenly things? Who can witness, — “The thoughts of my heart God hath cleansed by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit?” Who knoweth that

“peace of God which passeth all understanding?” Who is he that “rejoiceth with joy unspeakable and full of glory?” Whose “affections are set on things above, not on things of the earth?” Whose “life is hid with Christ in God?” Who can say, “I am crucified with Christ; yet I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the body, I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me?” In whose heart is the “love of God shed abroad, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him?”

15. Is not almost the very notion of this religion lost? Is there not a gross overflowing ignorance of it? Nay, is it not utterly despised? Is it not wholly set at nought, and trodden under foot? Were any one to witness these things before God, would he not be accounted a madman, an enthusiast? Am not I unto you a barbarian who speak thus? My brethren, my heart bleeds for you. O that you would at length take knowledge, and understand that these are the words of truth and soberness! O that you knew, at least in this your day, the things that make for your peace!

16. I have been a messenger of heavy tidings this day. But the love of Christ constraineth me; and to me it was the less grievous, because for you it was safe. I desire not to accuse the children of my people. Therefore, neither do I speak thus in the ears of them that sit on the wall; but to you I endeavor to speak the truth in love, as a faithful Minister of Jesus Christ. And I can now “call you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”

17. May the God of all grace, who is long-suffering, of tender mercy, and repenteth him of the evil, fix these things in your hearts, and water the seed he hath sown with the dew of heaven! May he correct whatsoever he seeth amiss in us! May he supply whatsoever is wanting! May he perfect that which is according to his will; and so establish, strengthen, and settle us, that this place may again be a faithful city to her Lord; yea, the praise of the whole earth!

SERMON CXXXV.

ON MOURNING FOR THE DEAD.

PREACHED AT EPWORTH, JANUARY 11, 1726, AT THE FUNERAL
OF JOHN GRIFFITH:
A HOPEFUL YOUNG MAN.

“Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”

2 Samuel 12:23.

THE resolution of a wise and good man, just recovering the use of his reason and virtue, after the bitterness of soul he had tasted from the hourly expectation of the death of a beloved son, is comprised in these few but strong words. He had fasted and wept, and lay all night upon the earth, and refused not only comfort, but even needful sustenance, whilst the child was still alive, in hopes that God would be gracious, as well in that as in other instances, and reverse the just sentence he had pronounced. When it was put in execution, in the death of the child, he arose and changed his apparel, having first paid his devotions to his great Master, acknowledging, no doubt, the mildness of his severity, and owning, with gratitude and humility, the obligation laid upon him, in that he was not consumed, as well as chastened, by his heavy hand; he then came into his house, and behaved with his usual composure and cheerfulness. The reason of this strange alteration in his proceedings, as it appeared to those who were ignorant of the principles upon which he acted, he here explains, with great brevity, but in the most beautiful language, strength of thought, and energy of expression: “Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”

“To what end,” saith the resigned mourner, “should I fast, now the child is dead? Why should I add grief to grief; which, being a volunteer, increases

the affliction I already sustain? Would it not be equally useless to him and me? Have my tears or complaints the power to refix his soul in her decayed and forsaken mansion? Or, indeed, would he wish to change, though the power were in his hands, the happy regions of which he is now possessed, for this land of care, pain, and misery? O vain thought! Never can he, never will he, return to me: Be it my comfort, my constant comfort, when my sorrows bear hard upon me, that I shall shortly, very shortly, go to him! that I shall soon awake from this tedious dream of life, which will soon be at an end; and then shall I gaze upon him; then shall I behold him again, and behold him with that perfect love, that sincere and elevated affection, to which even the heart of a parent is here a stranger! when the Lord God shall wipe away all tears from my eyes; and the least part of my happiness shall be that the sorrow of absence shall flee away!”

The unprofitable and bad consequences, the sinful nature, of profuse sorrowing for the dead, are easily deduced from the former part of this reflection; in the latter, we have the strongest motives to enforce our striving against it, — a remedy exactly suited to the disease, — a consideration which, duly applied, will not fail, either to prevent this sorrow, or rescue us from this real misfortune.

Grief, in general, is the parent of so much evil, and the occasion of so little good to mankind, that it may be justly wondered how it found a place in our nature. It was, indeed, of man’s own, not of God’s creation; who may permit, but never was the author of, evil. The same hour gave birth to grief and sin, as the same moment will deliver us from both. For neither did exist before human nature was corrupted, nor will it continue when that is restored to its ancient perfection.

Indeed, in this present state of things, that wise being, who knows well how to extract good out of evil, has shown us one way of making this universal frailty highly conducive both to our virtue and happiness. Even grief, if it lead us to repentance, and proceed from a serious sense of our faults, is not to be repented of, since those who thus sow in tears shall reap in joy. If we confine it to this particular occasion, it does not impair, but greatly assist, our imperfect reason; pain, either of body or mind,

acting quicker than reflection, and fixing more deeply in the memory any circumstance it attends.

From the very nature of grief, which is an uneasiness in the mind on the apprehension of some present evil, it appears, that its arising in us, on any other occasion than that of sin, is entirely owing to our want of judgment. Are any of those accidents, in the language of men termed misfortunes, such as reproach, poverty, loss of life, or even of friends, real evils? So far from it, that, if we dare believe our Creator, they are often positive blessings. They all work together for our good. And our Lord accordingly commands us, even when the severest loss, that of our reputation, befalls us, if it is in a good cause, as it must be our own fault if it be not, to “rejoice and be exceeding glad.”

But what fully proves the utter absurdity of almost all our grief, except that for our own failings, is, that the occasion of it is always past before it begins. To recall what has already been, is utterly impossible, and beyond the reach of Omnipotence itself. Let those who are fond of misery, if any such there be, indulge their minds in this fruitless inquietude. They who desire happiness will have a care how they cherish such a passion, as is neither desirable in itself, nor serves to any good purpose, present or future.

If any species of this unprofitable passion be more particularly useless than the rest, it is that which we feel when we sorrow for the dead. We destroy the health of our body, and impair the strength of our minds, and take no price for those invaluable blessings; we give up our present, without any prospect of future, advantage; without any probability of either recalling them hither, or profiting them where they are.

As it is an indifferent proof of our wisdom, it is still a worse of our affection for the dead. It is the property of envy, not of love, to repine at another’s happiness; to weep, because all tears are wiped from their eyes. Shall it disturb us, who call ourselves his friends, that a weary wanderer has at length come to his wished-for home? Nay, weep we rather for ourselves, who still want that happiness; even to whom that rest appeareth yet in prospect.

Gracious is our God and merciful, who, knowing what is in man, that passions when it has conquered reason, always takes the appearance of it, lest we should be misled by this appearance, adds the sanction of his unerring commands to the natural dictates of our own understanding. The judgment, perhaps, might; be so clouded by passion, as to think it reasonable to be profuse in our sorrow at parting from a beloved object; but Revelation tells us, that all occurrences of life must be born with patience and moderation, — otherwise we lay a greater weight on our own souls than external accidents can do without our concurrence, — with humility, — because from the offended justice of God we might well have expected he would have inflicted much worse, and with resignation, — because we know, whatsoever happens is for our good; and although it were not, we are not able to contend with, and should not therefore provoke, Him that is stronger than we.

Against this fault, which is inconsistent with those virtues, and, therefore, tacitly forbidden in the precepts that enjoin them, St. Paul warns us in express words: “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him: — Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14, 18.) And these, indeed, are the only words which can give lasting comfort to a spirit whom such an occasion hath wounded. Why should I be so unreasonable, so unkind, as to desire the return of a soul now in happiness to me, — to this habitation of sin and misery; since I know that the time will come, yea, is now at hand, when, in spite of the great gulf fixed between us, I shall shake of these chains and go to him?

What he was, I am both unable to paint in suitable colors, and unwilling to attempt it. Although the chief, at least the most common, argument for those labored encomiums on the dead, which for many years have so much prevailed among us, is, that there can be no suspicion of flattery; yet we all know, that the pulpit, on those occasions, has been so frequently prostituted to those servile ends, that it is now no longer capable of serving them. Men take it for granted, that what is there said are words of

course; that the business of the speaker is to describe the beauty, not the likeness, of the picture; and, so it be only well drawn, he cares not whom it resembles: In a word, that his business is to show his own wit, not the generosity of his friend, by giving him all the virtues he can think on.

This, indeed, is an end that is visibly served in those ill-timed commendations; of what other use they are, it is hard to say. It is of no service to the dead to celebrate his actions; since he has the applause of God and his holy angels, and also that of his own conscience. And it is of very little use to the living; since he who desires a pattern may find enough proposed as such in the sacred writings. What! must one be raised from the dead to instruct him, whilst Moses, the Prophets, and the blessed Jesus are still presented to his view in those everlasting tables? Certain it is, that he who will not imitate these, would not be converted, though one literally rose from the dead.

Let it suffice to have paid my last duty to him, (whether he is now hovering, over these lower regions, or retired already to the mansions of eternal glory,) by saying, in a few plain words, such as were his own, and were always agreeable to him, that he was to his parents an affectionate, dutiful son; to his acquaintance, an ingenuous, cheerful, good-natured companion; and to me, a well tried, sincere friend.

At such a loss, if considered without the alleviating circumstances, who can blame him that drops a tear? The tender meltings of a heart dissolved with fondness, when it reflects on the several agreeable moments which have now taken their flight never to return, give an authority to some degree of sorrow. Nor will human frailty permit an ordinary acquaintance to take his last leave of them without it. Who then can conceive, much less describe, the strong emotion, the secret workings of soul which a parent feels on such an occasion? None, surely, but those who are parents themselves; unless those few who have experienced the power of friendship; than which human nature, on this side of the grave, knows no closer, no softer, no stronger tie!

At the tearing asunder of these sacred bands, well may we allow, without blame, some parting pangs; but the difficulty is, to put as speedy a period

to them as reason and religion command us. What can give us sufficient ease after that rupture, which has left such an aching void in our breasts? What, indeed, but the reflection already mentioned, which can never be inculcated too often, — that we are hastening to him ourselves; that, pass but a few years, perhaps hours, which will soon be over, and not only this, but all other desires will be satisfied; when we shall exchange the gaudy shadow of pleasure we have enjoyed, for sincere, substantial, untransitory happiness?

With this consideration well imprinted in our minds, it is far better, as Solomon observes, to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting. The one embraces the soul, disarms our resolution, and lays us open to an attack: The other cautions us to recollect our reason, and stand upon our guard and refuses that noble steadiness, and seriousness of temper, which it is not in the power of an ordinary stroke to discompose. Such objects naturally induce us to lay it to heart, that the next summons may be our own; and that since death is the end of all men without exception, it is high time for the living to lay it to heart.

If we are, at any time, in danger of being overcome by dwelling too long on the gloomy side of this prospect, to the giving us pain, the making us unfit for the duties and offices of life, impairing our faculties of body or mind, — which proceedings, as has been already shown, are both absurd, unprofitable, and sinful; let us immediately recur to the bright side, and reflect, with gratitude as well as humility, that our time passeth away like a shadow; and that, when we awake from this momentary dream, we shall then have a clearer view of that latter day. in which our Redeemer shall stand upon the earth; when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall be clothed with immortality; and when we shall sing, with the united choirs of men and angels, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

SERMON CXXXVI.

ON CORRUPTING THE WORD OF GOD.

PREACHED ABOUT THE YEAR 1728.

“We are not as many, who corrupt the word of God: But as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”

2 Corinthians 2:17.

MANY have observed, that nothing conduces more to a Preacher’s success with those that hear him, than a general good opinion of his sincerity. Nothing gives him a greater force of persuasion than this; nothing creates either a greater attention in the hearers, or a greater disposition to improve when they really believe that he has no other end in speaking, but what he fairly carries in view, and that he is willing that they should see all the steps he takes for the attainment of that end, — it must give them a strong presumption, both that what he seeks is good, and the method in which he seeks it.

But how to possess them with this belief is the question. How shall we bring them to take notice of our sincerity, if they do not advert to it of themselves? One good way, however common, is, frankly and openly to profess it. There is something in these professions, when they come from the heart, strongly insinuating into the hearts of others. Persons of any generosity that hear them, find themselves almost forced to believe them; and even those who believe them not, are obliged in prudence, not to let their incredulity appear, since it is a known rule, — the honester any man is, the less apt is he to suspect another. The consequence whereof is plain: Whoever, without proof, is suspicious of his neighbor’s sincerity, gives a probable proof that he judges of *his* heart from the falseness of his own.

Would not any man be tempted to suspect his integrity, who, without proof, suspected the want of it in another, that had fairly and openly professed the principles on which he acted? Surely none, but such as had corrupted the word of God, or wished that it were corrupted, could lightly suspect either St. Paul of doing it, or any that after him should use his generous declaration: “We are not as many, who corrupt the word of God: But as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”

Not that the Apostle, any more than his followers in preaching the gospel, desires the people wholly to rely on his words; for afterwards he appeals to his actions to confirm them. And those who in this can imitate him, need not to entreat men to believe their sincerity. If our works bear the stamp of it, as well as our words, both together will speak so loudly and plainly, that every unprejudiced person must understand that we speak in Christ, as in sincerity, and that in so doing we consider we are in the sight of that God whose commission we bear.

Those whom the Apostle accuses of the contrary practice, of corrupting the word of God, seem to have been Jews, who owned Jesus to be the Christ, and his gospel to be divine, yet adulterated it, by intermingling with it the law of Moses, and their own traditions. And in doing this, that principal view was, to make a gain of Christ; which, consequently, laid them under a necessity of concealing the end they proposed, as well as the means they used in order to obtain it. On the contrary, those who intend the good of mankind, are by no means concerned to hide their intentions. If the benefit we propose in keep it private. If the benefit we propose be to others, it is always our interest to make it public; and it is the interest both of ourselves and others, to make public those marks of distinction whence may clearly be known who corrupt the word of God, and who preach it in sincerity.

The First and great mark of one who corrupts the word of God, is, introducing into it human mixtures; either the errors of others, or the fancies of his own brain. To do this, is to corrupt it in the highest degree; to blend with the oracles of God, impure dreams fit only for the mouth of the devil! And yet it has been so frequently done, that scarce ever was any erroneous opinion either invented or received, but Scripture was quoted to

defend it. And when the imposture was too bare faced, and the test cited for it appeared too plainly either to make against it, or to be nothing to the purpose; then recourse has usually been had to a Second method of corrupting it, — by mixing it with false interpretations. And. this is done, sometimes by repeating the words wrong; and sometimes by repeating them right, but putting a wrong sense upon them; one that is either strained and unnatural, or foreign to the writer's intention in the place from whence they are taken; perhaps contrary either to his intention in that very place, or to what he says in some other part of his writings. And this is easily effected: Any passage is easily perverted, by being recited singly, without any of the preceding or following verses, by this means it may often seem to have one sense, when it will be plain, by observing what goes before and what follows after, that it really has the direct contrary: For want of observing which, unwary souls are liable to be tossed about with every wind of doctrine, whenever they fall into the hand of those who have enough of wickedness and cunning, thus to adulterate what they preach, and to add now and then a plausible comment to make it go down the more easily.

A Third sort of those who corrupt the word of God, though in a lower degree than either of the former, are those who do so, not by adding to it, but by taking from it; who take either the spirit or substance of it away, while they study to prophesy only smooth things, and therefore palliate or color what they preach, in order to reconcile it to the taste of the hearers. And that they may do this the better, they commonly let those parts go that will admit of no coloring. They wash their hands of those stubborn texts that will not bend to their purpose, or that too plainly touch upon the reigning vices of the place where they are. These they exchange for those more soft and tractable ones, that are not so apt to give offense. Not one word must be said of the tribulation and anguish denounced against sinners in general; much less of the unquenchable fire, which, if God be true, awaits several of those particular offenses that have fallen within their own notice. These tender parts are not to be touched without danger, by them who study to recommend themselves to men; or, if they are, it must be with the utmost caution, and a nice evasion in reserve. But they may safely thunder against those who are out of their reach, and against those sins which they suppose none that hear them are

guilty of. No one takes it to heart, to hear those practices laid open which he is not concerned in himself. But when the stroke comes home, when it reaches his own case, then is he, if not convinced, displeased, or angry, and out of patience.

These are the methods of those corrupters of the word, who act in the sight of men, not of God. He trieth the hearts, and will receive no service in which the lips only are concerned. But their words have no intercourse with their thoughts. Nor is it proper for them that they should. For if their real intention once appeared, it must make itself unsuccessful. They purposes it is true, to do good by the gospel of Christ; but it is to themselves, not to others. Whereas they that use sincerity in preaching the gospel, in the good of others seek their own. And that they are sincere, and speak as commissioned officers in the sight of Him whose commission they bear, plainly appears from the direct contrariety between their practice, and that of the dissemblers above described.

First. Consider, it is not their own word they preach, but the word of Him that sent them. They preach it genuine and unmixed. As they do not only profess, but really believe, that, “if any man add unto the word of God, He will add unto him all the plagues that are written in it,” they are fearful of doing it in the least instance. You have the gospel from them, if in a less elegant manner, yet fair, and as it is; without any mixture of errors to pollute it, or misinterpretation to perplex it; explained in the most natural, obvious manner, by what precedes and what follows the place in question; and commented upon by the most sure way, the least liable to mistake or corruption, the producing of those parallel places that express the same thing the more plainly.

In the next place, they are as cautious of taking from, as of adding to, the word they preach. They dare no more, considering in whose sight they stand, say less, than more, than He hath assigned them. They must publish, as proper occasions offer, all that is contained in the oracles of God; whether smooth or otherwise, it matters nothing, since it is unquestionably true, and useful too: “For all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God; and is profitable either for doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness,” — either to teach us what we

are to believe or practice, or for conviction of error, reformation of vice. They know that there is nothing superfluous in it, relating either to faith or practice; and therefore they preach all parts of it, though those more particularly which are more immediately wanted where they are. They are far from abstaining from speaking against any vice because it is fashionable and in repute in the place Providence has allotted them; but for that very reason they are more zealous in testifying against it. They are so far from abstaining from speaking for any virtue because it is unfashionable and in disrepute where they are placed, that they therefore the more vigorously recommend it.

Lastly. They who speak in sincerity, and as in the sight of Him who deposes them, show that they do so, by the manner in which they speak. They speak with plainness and boldness, and are not concerned to palliate their doctrine, to reconcile it to the taste of men. They endeavor to set it always in a true light, whether it be a pleasing one or not. They will not, they dare not, soften a threatening, so as to prejudice its strength neither represent sin in such mild colors as to impair its native blackness. Not that they do not choose mildness, when it is likely to be effectual. Though they know “the terrors of the Lord,” they desire rather to “persuade men.” This method they use, and love to use it, with such as are capable of persuasion with such as are not, they are obliged, if they will be faithful, to take the severer course. Let the revilers look to that; it harms not them. Let the hearers accommodate themselves to the word; the word is not, in this sense, to be accommodated to the hearers. The Preacher of it would be no less in fault, in a slavish obsequiousness on one side, than in an unrelenting sternness on the other.

If, then, we have spoken the word of God, the genuine unmixed word of God, and that only; if we have put no unnatural interpretation upon it, but taken the known phrases in their common obvious sense, — and when they were less known, explained scripture by scripture; if we have spoken the whole word, as occasion offered, though rather the parts which seemed most proper to give a check to some fashionable vice, or to encourage the practice of some unfashionable virtue; and if we have done this plainly and boldly, though with all the mildness and gentleness that the nature of the subject will bear; — then, believe ye our works, if not our words; or

rather, believe them both together. Here is all a Preacher can do; all the evidence that he either can or need give of his good intentions. There is no way but this to show that he speaks as of sincerity, as commissioned by the Lord, and as in his sight. If there be any who, after all this, will not believe that it is his concern, not our own, we labor for; that our first intention in speaking, is to point him the way to happiness, and to disengage him from the great road that leads to misery; we are clear of the blood of that man, — it rests on his own head. For thus saith the Lord, who hath set us as watchmen over the souls of our countrymen and brethren: “If thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it;” — much more if we use all methods possible to convince him that the warning is of God; — “if he do not turn from his way,” — which certainly he will not, if he do not believe that we are in earnest, — “he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thine own soul.”

SERMON CXXXVII.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1732. ²⁷

“But some man will say, slow are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”

1 Corinthians 15:35.

THE Apostle having, in the beginning of this chapter, firmly settled the truth of our Savior’s resurrection, adds, “Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?” It cannot now any longer seem impossible to you that God should raise the dead; since you have so plain an example of it in our Lord, who was dead and is alive; and the same power which raised Christ must also be able to quicken our mortal bodies.

“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” How can these things be? How is it possible that these bodies should be raised again, and joined to their several souls, which many thousands of years ago were either buried in the earth, or swallowed up in the sea, or devoured by fire? — which have moldered into the finest dust, — that dust scattered over the face of the earth, dispersed as far as the heavens are wide; — nay, which has undergone ten thousand changes, has fattened the earth, become the food of other creatures, and these again the food of other men? How is it possible that all these little parts, which made up the body of Abraham, should be again ranged together, and, unmixed with the dust of other bodies, be all placed in the same order and posture that they were before, so as to make up the very self-same body which his soul at his death forsook? Ezekiel was indeed, in a vision, set down in a valley full of dry bones, “and he heard a noise, and behold a

shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone; the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet.” This might be in a vision. But that all this, and much more, should in time come to pass; that our bones, after they are crumbled into dust, should really become living men; that all the little parts whereof our bodies were made, should immediately, at a general summons, meet again, and every one challenge and possess its own place, till at last the whole be perfectly rebuilt; that this, I say, should be done, is so incredible a thing, that we cannot so much as have any notion of it. And we may observe, that the Gentiles were most displeas'd with this article of the Christian faith; it was one of the last things the Heathens believ'd; and it is to this day the chief objection to Christianity, “How are the dead raised up? With what body do they come?” In my discourse on these words, I shall do three things: —

- I. I shall show, that the resurrection of the self same body that died and was buried, contains nothing in it incredible or impossible.
- II. I shall describe the difference which the Scripture makes between the qualities of a glorified and a mortal body.
- III. I shall draw some inferences from the whole.

I.

I shall show, that the resurrection of the self-same body that died, contains nothing in it incredible or impossible. But before I do this, it may be proper to mention some of the reasons upon which this article of our faith is built. And,

1. The plain notion of a resurrection requires, that the self-same body that died should rise again. Nothing can be said to be raised again, but that very body that died. If God give to our souls at the last day a new body, this cannot be call'd the resurrection of our body; because that word plainly implies the fresh production of what was before.
2. There are many places of Scripture that plainly declare it. St. Paul, in the 53rd verse of this chapter, tells us that “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Now, by this mortal, and this corruptible, can only

be meant, that body which we now carry about with. us, and shall one day lay down in the dust.

The mention which the Scripture makes of the places where the dead shall rise, further shows, that the same body which died shall rise. Thus we read in Daniel: “Those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” And, we may like wise observe, that the very phrase, of sleep and awake, implies, that when we rise again from the dead, our bodies will be as much the same as they are when we awake from sleep. Thus, again, our Lord affirms, (John 5:28, 29,) “The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.” Now, if the same body do not rise again, what need is there of opening the graves at the end of the world? The graves can give up no bodies but those which were laid in them. If we were not to rise with the very same bodies that died, then they might rest for ever. To this we need only add that of St. Paul: “The Lord shall change this vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” Now, this vile body can be no other than that with which we are now clothed, which must be restored to life again.

That in all this there is nothing incredible or impossible, I shall show by proving these three things: —

1. That it is possible for God to keep and preserve unmixed, from all other bodies, the particular dust into which our several bodies are dissolved, and can gather and join it again, how far soever dispersed asunder.
2. That God can form that dust so gathered together, into the same body as it was before.
3. That when he hath formed this body, he can enliven it with the same soul that before inhabited it.

1. God can distinguish and keep unmixed from all other bodies the particular dust into which our several bodies are dissolved, and can gather it together and join it again, how far soever dispersed asunder. God is infinite both in knowledge and power. He knoweth the number of the

stars, and calleth them all by their names; he can tell the number of the sands on the sea-shore: And is it at all incredible, that He should distinctly know the several particles of dust into which the bodies of men are moldered, and plainly discern to whom they belong, and the various changes they have undergone? Why should it be thought strange, that He, who at the first formed us, whose eyes saw our substance yet being imperfect, from whom we were not hid when we were made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, should know every part of our bodies, and every particle of dust whereof we were composed? The artist knows every part of the watch which he frames; and if it should fall in pieces, and the various parts of it lie in the greatest disorder and confusion, yet he can soon gather them together, and as easily distinguish one from another, as if every one had its particular mark. He knows the use of each, and can readily give it its proper place, and put them all exactly in the same figure and order they were before. And can we think that the Almighty Builder of the world, whose workmanship we are, does not know whereof we are made, or is not acquainted with the several parts of which this earthly tabernacle is composed? All these lay in one vast heap at the creation, till he separated them one from another, and framed them into those distinct bodies whereof this beautiful world consists. And why may not the same Power collect the ruins of our corrupted bodies, and restore them to their former condition? All the parts into which men's bodies are dissolved, however they seem to us carelessly scattered over the face of the earth, are yet carefully laid up by God's wise disposal till the day of the restoration of all things. They are preserved in the waters and fires, in the birds and beasts, till the last trumpet shall summon them to their former habitation.

“But,” say they, “it may sometimes happen that several mens' bodies may consist of the self-same matter. For the bodies of men are often devoured by other animals, which are eaten by other men. Nay, there are nations which feed upon human flesh; consequently, they borrow a great part of their bodies from other men. And if that which was part of one man's body becomes afterwards part of another man's, how can both rise at the last day with the same bodies they had before?” To this it may easily be replied, that a very small part of what is eaten turns to nourishment, the far greater part goes away recording to the order of

nature. So that it is not at all impossible for God, who watches over and governs all this, so to order things, that what is part of one man's body, though eaten by another, shall never turn to his nourishment; or, if it does, that it shall wear off again, and, some time before his death, be separated from him, so that it may remain in a capacity of being restored at the last day to its former owner.

2. God can form this dust, so gathered together, into the same body it was before. And that it is possible, all must own who believe that God made Adam out of the dust of the earth. Therefore, the bodies of men being dust after death, it is no other than it was before; and the same power that at the first made it of dust, may as easily re-make it, when it is turned into dust again. Nay, it is no more wonderful than the forming a human body in the womb, which is a thing we have daily experience of, and is doubtless as strange an instance of divine power as the resurrection of it can possibly be. And were it not so common a thing, we should be as hardly brought to think it possible that such a beautiful fabric as the body of man is, with nerves and bones, flesh and veins, blood, and the several other parts whereof it consists, should be formed as we know it is; as now we are, that hereafter it should be rebuilt when it has been crumbled into dust. Had we only heard of the wonderful production of the bodies of men, we should have been as ready to ask, "How are men made, and with what bodies are they born?" as now, when we hear of the resurrection, "How are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come?"

3. When God hath raised this body, he can enliven it with the same soul that inhabited it before. And this we cannot pretend to say is impossible to be done; for it has been done already. Our Savior himself was dead, rose again, and appeared alive to his disciples and others, who had lived with him many years, and were then fully convinced that he was the same person they had seen die upon the cross. Thus have I shown that the resurrection of the same body is by no means impossible to God; that what he hath promised he is able also to perform, by that "mighty power by which he is able to subdue all things to himself." Though, therefore, we cannot exactly tell the manner how it shall be done, yet this ought not in the least to weaken our belief of this important article of our faith. It is enough, that He to whom all things are possible hath passed his word that

he will raise us again. Let those who presume to mock at the glorious hope of all good men, and are constantly raising objections against it, first try their skill upon the various appearances of nature. Let them explain everything which they see happen in this world, before they talk of the difficulties of explaining the resurrection. Can they tell me how their own bodies were fashioned and curiously wrought? Can they give me a plain account, by what orderly steps this glorious stately structure, which discovers so much workmanship and rare contrivance, was at first created? How was the first drop of blood made; and how came the heart, and veins, and arteries to receive it? Of what, and by what means, were the nerves and fibers made? What fixed the little springs in their due places, and fitted them for the several uses for which they now serve? How was the brain distinguished from the other parts of the body, and filled with spirits to move and animate the whole? How came the body to be fenced with bones and sinews, to be clothed with skin and flesh, distinguished into various muscles? Let them but answer these few questions about the mechanism of our own bodies, and I will answer all the difficulties concerning the resurrection of them. But if they cannot do this without having recourse to the infinite power and wisdom of the FIRST CAUSE, let them know that the same power and wisdom can re-animate it, after it is turned into dust; and that there is no reason for our doubting concerning the thing because there are some circumstances belonging to it which we cannot perfectly comprehend or give a distinct account of.

II.

I now proceed to the Second thing I proposed; which was, to describe the difference the Scripture makes between the qualities of a mortal and of a glorified body.

The change which shall be made in our bodies at the resurrection, according to the Scripture account, will consist chiefly in these four things: —

1. That our bodies shall be raised immortal and incorruptible.
2. That they shall be raised in glory.
3. That they shall be raised in power.
4. That they shall be raised spiritual bodies.

1. The body that we shall have at the resurrection shall be immortal and incorruptible: “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Now, these words, *immortal* and *incorruptible*, not only signify that we shall die no more, (for in that sense the damned are immortal and incorruptible,) but that we shall be perfectly free from all the bodily evils which sin brought into the world; that our bodies shall not be subject to sickness, or pain, or any other inconveniences we are daily exposed to. This the Scripture calls “the redemption of our bodies,” — the freeing them from all their maladies. Were we to receive them again, subject to all the frailties and miseries which we are forced to wrestle with, I much doubt whether a wise man, were he left to his choice, would willingly take his again; — whether he would not choose to let his still lie rotting in the grave, rather than to be again chained to such a cumbersome clod of earth. Such a resurrection would be, as a wise Heathen calls it, “a resurrection to another sleep.” It would look more like a redemption to death again, than a resurrection to life.

The best thing we can say of this house of earth, is, that it is a ruinous building, and will not be long before it tumbles into dust; that it is not our home, — we look for another “house, eternal in the heavens;” that we shall not always be confined here, but that in a little time we shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, from this burden of flesh, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. What frail things these bodies of ours are! How soon are they disordered! To what a troop of diseases, pains, and other infirmities are they constantly subject! And how does the least distemper disturb our minds, and make life itself a burden! Of how many parts do our bodies consist! and if one of these be disordered, the whole man suffers. If but one of these slender threads, whereof our flesh is made up, be stretched beyond its due proportion, or fretted by any sharp humor, or broken, what torment does it create! Nay, when our bodies are at the best, what pains do we take to answer their necessities, to provide for their sustenance, to preserve them in health, and to keep them tenantable, in some tolerable fitness for our souls’ use! And what time we can spare from our labor is taken up in rest, and refreshing our jaded bodies, and fitting them for work again. How are we forced, even naturally, into the confines of death; even to cease to be; — at least to pass so many hours

without any useful or reasonable thoughts, merely to keep them in repair! But our hope and comfort are, that we shall shortly be delivered from this burden of flesh: When “God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.” O when shall we arrive at that happy and where no complaints were ever heard, where we shall all enjoy uninterrupted health both of body and mind, and never more be exposed to any of those inconveniences that disturb our present pilgrimage. When we shall have once passed from death unto life, we shall be eased of all the troublesome care of our bodies, which now takes up so much of our time and thoughts. We shall be set free from all those mean and tiresome labors which we must now undergo to support our lives. You robes of light, with which we shall be clothed at the resurrection of the just, will not stand in need of those careful provisions which it is so troublesome to us here either to procure or to be without. But then, as our Lord tells us, those who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world “neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more, but they are equal to the angels.” Their bodies are neither subject to disease, nor want that daily sustenance which these mortal bodies cannot be without. “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God will destroy both it and them.” This is that perfect happiness which all good men shall enjoy in the other world, — a mind free from all trouble and guilt, in a body free from all pains and diseases. Thus our mortal bodies shall be raised immortal. They shall not only be always preserved from death, (for so these might be, if God pleased,) but the nature of them shall be wholly changed, so that they shall not retain the same seeds of mortality; — they cannot die any more.

2. Our bodies shall be raised in glory. “Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” A resemblance of this we have in the luster of Moses’s face, when he had conversed with God on the mount. His face shone so bright, that the children of Israel were afraid to come near him, till he threw a veil over it. And that extraordinary majesty of Stephen’s face seemed to be an earnest of his glory. “All that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.” How then, if it shone so gloriously even on earth, will it shine in the other world, when his, and the bodies of all the saints, are made like

unto Christ's glorious body! How glorious the body of Christ is, we may guess from his transfiguration. St. Peter, when he saw this, when our Lord's face shone as the sun, and his raiment became shining and white as snow, was so transported with joy and admiration, that he knew not what he said. When our Savior discovered but a little of that glory which he now possesses, and which in due time he will impart to his followers, yet that little of it made the place seem a paradise; and the disciples thought that they could wish for nothing better than always to live in such pure light, and enjoy so beautiful a sight. "It is good for us to be here: Let us make three tabernacles;" — here let us fix our abode for ever. And if they thought it so happy only to be present with such heavenly bodies, and to behold them with their eyes, how much happier must it be to dwell in such glorious mansions, and to be themselves clothed with so much brightness!

This excellency of our heavenly bodies will probably arise, in great measure, from the happiness of our souls. The unspeakable joy that we then shall feel will break through our bodies? and shine forth in our countenances; as the joy of the soul, even in this life, has some influence upon the countenance, by rendering it more open and cheerful: So Solomon tells us, "A man's wisdom makes his face to shine." Virtue, as it refines a man's heart, so it makes his very looks more cheerful and lively.

3. Our bodies shall be raised in power. This expresses the sprightliness of our heavenly bodies, the nimbleness of their motion, by which they shall be obedient and able instruments of the soul. In this state, our bodies are no better than clogs and fetters, which confine and restrain the freedom of the soul. The corruptible body presses down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weighs down the mind. Our dull, sluggish, inactive bodies are often unable, or backward, to obey the commands of the soul. But in the other life, "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint:" Or, as another expresses it, "they shall run to and fro like sparks among the stubble." The speed of their motion shall be like that of devouring fire in stubble; and the height of it, above the towering of an eagle; for they shall meet the Lord in the air when he comes to judgment, and mount up with him into the highest heaven. This earthly

body is slow and heavy in all its motions, listless and soon tired with action. But our heavenly bodies shall be as fire; as active and as nimble as our thoughts are.

4. Our bodies shall be raised spiritual bodies. Our spirits are now forced to serve our bodies, and to attend their leisure, and do greatly depend upon them for most of their actions. But our bodies shall then wholly serve our spirits, and minister to them, and depend upon them. So that, as by “a natural body” we understand one fitted for this lower, sensible world for this earthly state; so “a spiritual body is one that is suited to a spiritual state, to an invisible world to the life of angels. And, indeed, this is the principal difference between a mortal and a glorified body. This flesh is the most dangerous enemy we have: We therefore deny and renounce it in our baptism. It constantly tempts us to evil. Every sense is a snare to us.” All its lusts and appetites are inordinate. It is ungovernable, and often rebels against reason. The law in our members wars against the law of our mind. When the spirit is willing the flesh is weak; so that the best of men are forced to keep it under, and use it hardly, lest it should betray them into folly and misery. And how does it hinder us in all our devotions! How soon does it jade our minds when employed on holy things! How easily, by its enchanting pleasures, does it divert them from those noble exercises! But when we have obtained the resurrection unto life, our bodies will be spiritualized, purified, and refined from their earthly grossness; then they will be fit instruments for the soul in all its divine and heavenly employment; we shall not be weary of singing praises to God through infinite ages.

Thus, after what little we have been able to conceive of it, it sufficiently appears, that a glorified body is infinitely more excellent and desirable than this vile body. The only thing that remains is,

III.

To draw some inferences from the whole. And, First, from what has been said, we may learn the best way of preparing ourselves to live in those heavenly bodies; which is, by cleansing ourselves more and more from all earthly affections, and weaning ourselves from this body, and all the pleasures that are peculiar to it. We should begin in this life to loosen the

knot between our souls and this mortal flesh; to refine our affections, and raise them from things below to things above, to take off our thoughts, and disengage them from present and sensible things, and accustom ourselves to think of, and converse with, things future and invisible; that so our souls, when they leave this earthly body, may be prepared for a spiritual one, as having beforehand tasted spiritual delights, and being in some degree acquainted with the things which we then shall meet with. A soul wholly taken up with this earthly body is not fit for the glorious mansions above. A sensual mind is so wedded to bodily pleasures, that it cannot enjoy itself without them; and it is not able to relish any other, though infinitely to be preferred before them. Nay, such as follow the inclinations of their fleshly appetites, are so far unfit for heavenly joys, that they would esteem it the greatest unhappiness to be clothed with a spiritual body. It would be like clothing a beggar in the robes of a king. Such glorious bodies would be uneasy to them, they would not know what to do in them, they would be glad to retire and put on their rags again. But when we are washed from the guilt of our sins, and cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then we shall long to be dissolved, and to be with our exalted Savior; we shall be always ready to take wing for the other world, where we shall at last have a body suited to our spiritual appetites.

2. From hence we may see how to account for the different degrees of glory in the heavenly world. For although all the children of God shall have glorious bodies, yet the glory of them all shall not be equal. "As one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead." They shall all shine as stars; but those who, by a constant diligence in well doing, have attained to a higher measure of purity than others, shall shine more bright than others. They shall appear as more glorious stars. It is certain that the most heavenly bodies will be given to the most heavenly souls; so that this is no little encouragement to us to make the greatest progress we possibly can in the knowledge and love of God, since the more we are weaned from the things of the earth now, the more glorious will our bodies be at the resurrection.

3. Let this consideration engage us patiently to bear whatever troubles we may be exercised with in the present life. The time of our eternal

redemption draweth nigh. Let us hold out a little longer, and all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and we shall never sigh nor sorrow any more. And how soon shall we forget all we endured in this earthly tabernacle, when once we are clothed with that house which is from above! We are now but on our journey towards home, and so must expect to struggle with many difficulties; but it will not be long ere we come to our journey's end, and that will make amends for all. We shall then be in a quiet and safe harbor, out of the reach of all storms and dangers. We shall then be at home in our Father's house, no longer exposed to the inconveniences which, so long as we abide abroad in these tents, we are subject to. And let us not forfeit all this happiness, for want of a little more patience. Only let us hold out to the end, and we shall receive an abundant recompense for all the trouble and uneasiness of our passage, which shall be endless rest and peace. Let this, especially, fortify us against the fear of death: It is now disarmed, and can do us no hurt. It divides us, indeed, from this body awhile; but it is only that we may receive it again more glorious. As God, therefore, said once to Jacob, "Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will go down with thee, and will surely bring thee up again;" so may I say to all who are born of God, "Fear not to go down into the grave; lay down your heads in the dust; for God will certainly bring you up again, and that in a much more glorious manner." Only "be ye steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;" and then let death prevail over, and pull down, this house of clay; since God hath undertaken to rear it up again, infinitely more beautiful, strong, and useful.

SERMON CXXXVIII.

ON GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1733.

“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

Ephesians 4:30.

THERE can be no point of greater importance to him who knows that it is the Holy Spirit which leads us into all truth and into all holiness, than to consider with what temper of soul we are to entertain his divine presence; so as not either to drive him from us, or to disappoint him of the gracious ends for which his abode with us is designed; which is not the amusement of our understanding, but the conversion and entire sanctification of our hearts and lives.

These words of the Apostle contain a most serious and affectionate exhortation to this purpose. “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

The title “holy,” applied to the Spirit of God, does not only denote that he is holy in his own nature, but that he makes us so; that he is the great fountain of holiness to his church; the Spirit from whence flows all the grace and virtue, by which the stains of guilt are cleansed, and we are renewed in all holy dispositions, and again bear the image of our Creator. Great reason, therefore, there was for the Apostle to give this solemn charge concerning it, and the highest obligation lies upon us all to consider it with the deepest attention; which that we may the more effectually do, I shall inquire,

- I. In what sense the Spirit of God is said to be grieved at the sins of men:
- II. By what kind of sin he is more especially grieved.

III. I shall endeavor to show the force of the Apostle's argument against grieving the Holy Spirit, — "By whom we are sealed to the day of redemption."

I.

I am, First, to inquire, in what sense the Spirit of God may be said to be grieved with the sins of men. There is not anything of what we properly call passion in God. But there is something of an infinitely higher kind: Some motions of his will, which are more strong and vigorous than can be conceived by men; and although they have not the nature of human passions, yet will answer the ends of them. By grief, therefore, we are to understand, a disposition in God's will, flowing at once from his boundless love to the persons of men, and his infinite abhorrence of their sins. And in this restrained sense it is here applied to the Spirit of God in the words of the Apostle. And the reasons for which it is peculiarly applied to him are, First, because he is more immediately present with us; Second, because our sins are so many contempts of this highest expression of his love, and disappoint the Holy Spirit in his last remedy; and, Third, because, by this ungrateful dealing, we provoke him to withdraw from us.

1. We are said to grieve the Holy Spirit by our sins, because of his immediate presence with us. They are more directly committed under his eye, and are, therefore, more highly often give to him. He is pleased to look upon professing Christians as more peculiarly separated to his honor; nay, we are so closely united to him, that we are said to be "one spirit with him;" and, therefore, every sin which we now commit, besides its own proper guilt, carries in it a fresh and infinitely high provocation. "Know ye not your own selves," saith St. Paul, "that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" And how are they so, but by his inhabitation and intimate presence with our souls? When, therefore, we set up the idols of earthly inclinations in our hearts, (which are properly his altar,) and bow down ourselves to serve those vicious passions which we ought to sacrifice to his will, — this must needs be, in the highest degree, offensive and grievous to him. "For what concord is there between" the Holy Spirit "and Belial? or what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"

2. We grieve the Holy Spirit by our sins, because they are so many contempts of the highest expression of his love, and disappoint him in his last remedy whereby he is pleased to endeavor our recovery. And thus every sin we now commit is done in despite of all his powerful assistances, in defiance of his reproofs, — an ungrateful return for infinite lovingkindness!

As the Holy Spirit is the immediate minister of God's will upon earth, and transacts all the great affairs of the Church of Christ, — if while he pours out the riches of his grace upon us, he finds them all unsuccessful, no wonder if he appeals to all the world, in the words of the Prophet, against our ingratitude: “And now, O ye men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” These, and many more such, which we meet with in the Holy Scriptures, are the highest expressions of the deepest concern; such as imply the utmost unwillingness to deal severely even with those whom yet, by all the wise methods of his grace, he could not reform. The Holy Spirit here represents himself as one who would be glad to spare sinners if he could; and therefore we may be sure it is grievous to him that by their sins they will not suffer him.

For men thus to disappoint the Holy Spirit of Love, — for that too is his peculiar title, — to make him thus wait that he may be gracious, and pay attendance on us through our whole course of folly and vanity, and to stand by, and be a witness of our stubbornness, with the importunate offers of infinite kindness in his hands, — is a practice of such a nature that no gracious mind can hear the thoughts of it. It is an argument of God's unbounded mercy, that he is pleased to express, that he is only grieved at it; that his indignation does not flame out against those who are thus unholy ungrateful, and consume them in a moment. It was such ingratitude as this in the Jews, after numberless experiences of his extraordinary mercies towards them, that made infinite love, at last, turn in bitterness to reward them according to their doings; as we find the account given by the Prophets, in the most affecting and lively manner. And surely, considering the much greater obligations he hath laid on us, who

enjoy the highest privileges, we may be sure that our sinful and untoward behavior will, at last, be as great as the mercies we have abused.

There is no doubt but God observes all the sons of men, and his wrath abides on every worker of iniquity. But it is the unfaithful professor who has known his pardoning love, that grieves his Holy Spirit; which implies a peculiar baseness in our sins. A man may be provoked, indeed, by the wrongs of his enemy; but he is properly grieved by the offenses of his friend. And, therefore, besides our other obligations, our very near relation to God, as being his friends and children. would, if we had a spark of gratitude in our souls, be a powerful restraint upon us, in preserving us from evil.

3. But if arguments of this kind are not strong enough to keep us from grieving our best Friend, the Holy Spirit of God, let us consider, that, by this ungrateful conduct, we shall provoke him to withdraw from us. The truth of this, almost all who have ever tasted of the good gifts of the Holy Spirit must have experienced. It is to be hoped that we have had, some time or other, so lively a sense of his holy influence upon us, as that when we have been so unhappy as to offend him, we could easily perceive the change in our souls, in that darkness, distress, and despondency which more especially follow the commission of willful and presumptuous sins. At those seasons, the blessed Spirit retired and concealed his presence from us, we were justly left to a sense of our own wretchedness and misery, till we humbled ourselves before the Lord, and by deep repentance and active faith obtained a return of divine mercy and peace. And the more frequently we offend him, the more we weaken his influences in our souls. For frequent breaches will necessarily occasion estrangement between us; and it is impossible that our intercourse with him can be cordial, when it is disturbed by repeated interruptions. So a man will forgive his friend a great many imprudences, and some willful transgressions; but to find him frequently affronting him, all his kindness will wear off by degrees; and the warmth of his affection, even towards him who had the greatest share of it, will die away; as he cannot but think that such a one does not any longer either desire or deserve to maintain a friendship with him.

II.

I come now to consider by what kinds of sin the Holy Spirit is more especially grieved. These sins are, in general, such as either at first wholly disappoint his grace of its due effect upon our souls, or are afterwards directly contrary to his gracious and merciful assistances. Of the former sort, I shall only mention, at present, inconsiderateness, of the latter, sins of presumption.

The First I shall mention, as being more especially grievous to the Holy Spirit, is inconsiderateness and inadvertence to his holy motions within us. There is a particular frame and temper of soul, a sobriety of mind, without which the Spirit of God will not concur in the purifying of our hearts. It is in our power, through his preventing and assisting grace, to prepare this in ourselves; and he expects we should, this being the foundation of all his after-works. Now, this consists in preserving our minds in a cool and serious disposition, in regulating and calming our affections, and calling in and checking the inordinate pursuits of our passions after the vanities and pleasures of this world; the doing of which is of such importance, that the very reason why men profit so little under the most powerful means, is, that they do not look enough within themselves, — they do not observe and watch the discords and imperfections of their own spirits, nor attend with care to the directions and remedies which the Holy Spirit is always ready to suggest. Men are generally lost in the hurry of life, in the business or pleasures of it, and seem to think that their regeneration, their new nature, will spring and grow up within them, with as little care and thought of their own as their bodies were conceived and have attained their full strength and stature; whereas, there is nothing more certain than that the Holy Spirit will not purify our nature, unless we carefully attend to his motions, which are lost upon us while, in the Prophet's language, we "scatter away our time," — while we squander away our thoughts upon unnecessary things, and leave our spiritual improvement, the one thing needful, quite unthought of and neglected.

There are many persons who, in the main of their lives, are regular in their conversation, and observe the means of improvement, and attend upon the holy sacrament with exactness; who yet, in the intervals of their duties, give too great liberty to their thoughts, affections, and discourse: They

seem to adjourn. the great business of salvation to the next hour of devotion. If these professors lose so much in their spiritual estate for want of adjusting and balancing their accounts, what then must we think of those who scarce ever bestow a serious thought upon their eternal welfare? Surely there is not any temper of mind less a friend to the spirit of religion, than a thoughtless and inconsiderate one, that, by a natural succession of strong and vain affections shuts out everything useful from their souls, till, at length, they are overtaken by a fatal lethargy; they lose sight of all danger, and become insensible of divine convictions; and in consequence, quite disappoint all the blessed means of restoration. If, therefore, we measure the Holy Spirit's concern at the sins of men by the degrees of his disappointment, we may conclude, that there is no state of mind that grieves him more, unless that of actual wickedness.

Presumptuous sins are, indeed, in the highest manner offensive to the Holy Spirit of God. They are instances of open enmity against him, and have all the guilt of open rebellion. The willful sinner is not ignorant or surprised, but knowingly fights against God's express commandment, and the lively, full, and present conviction of his own mind and conscience; so that this is the very standard of iniquity. And all other kinds of sins are more or less heinous, as they are nearer or farther off from sins of this dreadful nature; inasmuch as these imply the greatest opposition to God's will, contempt of his mercy, and defiance of his justice. This, if any thing can, doubtless, must so grieve him as to make him wholly withdraw his gracious presence.

III.

I come now to show the force of the Apostle's argument against grieving the Holy Spirit, — Because we “are sealed to the day of redemption.”

By “the day of redemption” may be meant, either the time of our leaving these bodies at death, or, of our taking them again at the general resurrection. Though here it probably means the latter; in which sense the Apostle uses the word in another place: “Waiting for the adoption, to it, the redemption of our bodies.” And to this day of redemption we are sealed by the Holy Spirit these three ways:

1. By receiving his real stamp upon our souls; by being made the partakers of the divine nature.
2. By receiving him as a mark of God's property; as a sign that we belong to Christ. And,
3. As an earnest and assurance to our own spirits, that we have a title to eternal happiness.

And, First, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, by our receiving his real stamp upon our souls; being made the partakers of the divine nature, and "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." This is, indeed, the design of his dwelling in us, to heal our disordered souls, and to restore that image of his upon our nature, which is so defaced by our original and actual corruptions. And until our spirits are, in some measure, thus renewed, we can have no communion with him. For "if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." But by the renewal of our minds in the image of Him that created us, we are still more capable of his influences; and by means of a daily intercourse with him, we are more and more transformed into his likeness, till we are satisfied with it.

This likeness to God, this conformity of our will and affections to his will, is, properly speaking, holiness; and to produce this in us, is the proper end and design of all the influences of the Holy Spirit. By means of his presence with us, we receive from him a great fullness of holy virtues; we take such features of resemblance in our spirits as correspond to his original perfections. And thus we are sealed by him, in the first sense, by way of preparation for our day of redemption.

And since we are so, and our new nature thus grows up under the same power of his hands, what do we, when we grieve him by our sins, but undo and destroy his work? We frustrate his designs by breaking down the fences which he had been trying to raise against the overflowing of corruption; so that, at last we entirely defeat all his gracious measures for our salvation.

2. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption, as a sign of God's property in us, and as a mark that we belong to Christ. And this

is, by his appointment, the condition and security of that future happiness, into which he will admit none but those who have received the Spirit of his Son into their hearts. But in whomsoever he finds this mark and character, when he shall come to judge the world, these will he take to himself, and will not suffer the destroyer to hurt them. To this very purpose the Prophet Malachi, speaking of those who feared God, says, “They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels; — that is to say, when I set my seal and mark upon them; — and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

Now, if the Holy Spirit be the sign, the seal, and the security of our salvation, then, by grieving him by our sins, we break up this seal with our own hands, we cancel our firmest security, and, as much as in us lies, reverse our own title to eternal life.

Besides this, the Holy Spirit within us is the security of our salvation; he is likewise an earnest of it, and assures our spirits that we have a title to eternal happiness. “The Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.” And in order that this inward testimony may be lively and permanent, it is absolutely necessary to attend carefully to the secret operation of the Holy Spirit within us; who, by infusing his holy consolations into our souls, by enlivening our drooping spirits, and giving us a quick relish of his promises, raises bright and joyous sensations in us, and gives a man, beforehand, a taste of the bliss to which he is going. In this sense, God is said, by the Apostle to the Corinthians, to have “sealed us, and to have given the earnest of his Spirit in our hearts;” and that earnest, not only by way of confirmation of our title to happiness, but as an actual part of that reward at present, the fullness of which we expect hereafter.

SERMON CXXXIX.

ON LOVE.

PREACHED AT SAVANNAH,
FEBRUARY 20, 1736.

“Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, and have not love it profiteth me nothing.”

1 Corinthians 13:3.

THERE is great reason to fear that it will hereafter be said of most of you who are here present, that this scripture, as well as all those you have heard before, profited you nothing. Some, perhaps, are not serious enough to attend to it; some who do attend, will not believe it; some who do believe it, will yet think it a hard saying, and so forget it as soon as they can; and, of those few who receive it gladly for a time, some, having no root of humility, or self-denial, when persecution ariseth because of the word, will, rather than suffer for it, fall away. Nay, even of those who attend to it, who believe, remember, yea, and receive it so deeply into their hearts, that it both takes root there, endures the heat of temptation, and begins to bring forth fruit, yet will not all bring forth fruit unto perfection. The cares or pleasures of the world, and the desire of other things, (perhaps not felt till then,) will grow up with the word, and choke it.

Nor am I that speak the word of God any more secure from these dangers than you that hear it. I, too, have to bewail; “an evil heart of unbelief.” And whenever God shall suffer persecution to arise, yea, were it only the slight one of reproach, I may be the first that is offended. Or, if I be enabled to sustain this, yet, should he let loose the cares of the world upon me, or should he cease to guard me against those pleasures that do not lead

to him, and the desire of other things, I should surely be overwhelmed, and, having preached to others, be myself a castaway.

Why then do I speak this word at all? Why? Because a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me: And, though what I shall do tomorrow I know not, today I will preach the gospel. And with regard to you, my commission runs thus: "Son of man, I do send thee to them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; — whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."

Thus saith the Lord God, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (In order to this, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.") "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." In secret, likewise, "pray to thy Father who seeth in secret," and "pour out thy heart before him." Make my word "a lantern to thy feet, and a light unto thy paths." Keep it "in thy heart, and in thy mouth, when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." "Turn unto me with fasting," as well as prayer; and, in obedience to thy dying Redeemer, by eating that bread and drinking that cup, "show ye forth the Lord's death till he come." By the power thou shalt through these means receive from on high, do all the things which are enjoined in the law, and avoid all those things which are forbidden therein, knowing "that if ye offend in one point, ye are guilty of all." "To do good also, and to distribute, forget not;" — yea, while you have time, do all the good you can unto all men. Then "deny thyself, take up thy cross daily;" and, if called thereto, "resist unto blood." And when each of you can say, "All this have I done," then let him say to himself farther, (words at which not only such as Felix alone? but the holiest soul upon earth might tremble,) "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

It concerns us all, therefore, in the highest degree, to know,

- I. The full sense of these words, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned;"
- II. The true meaning of the word *love*; and,

III. In what sense it can be said, that without love all this profiteth us nothing.

I.

As to the First: It must be observed that the word used by St. Paul properly signifies, *To divide into small pieces, and then to distribute what has been so divided*; and, consequently, it implies, not only divesting ourselves at once of all the worldly goods we enjoy, either from a fit of distaste to the world, or a sudden start of devotion, but an act of choice, and that choice coolly and steadily executed. It may imply, too, that this be done not out of vanity, but in part from a right principle; namely, from a design to perform the command of God, and a desire to obtain his kingdom. It must be farther observed, that the word give signifies, actually to deliver a thing according to agreement; and, accordingly, it implies, like the word preceding, not a hasty, inconsiderate action, but one performed with opened eyes and a determined heart, pursuant to a resolution before taken. The full sense of the words, therefore, is this; which he that hath ears to hear, let him hear: “Though I should give all the substance of my house to feed the poor; though I should do so upon mature choice and deliberation; though I should spend my life in dealing it out to them with my own hands, yea, and that from a principle of obedience; though I should suffer, from the same view, not only reproach and shame, not only bonds and imprisonment, and all this by my own continued act and deed, not accepting deliverance, but, moreover, death itself, — yea, death inflicted in a manner the most terrible to nature: yet all this, if I have not love, (the love of God, and the love of all mankind, ‘shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost given unto me,’) it profiteth me nothing.”

II.

Let us inquire what this love is, — what is the true meaning of the word. We may consider it either as to its properties or effects: And that we may be under no possibility of mistake, we will not at all regard the judgment of men, but go to our Lord himself for an account of the nature of love; and, for the effects of it, to his inspired Apostle.

The love which our Lord requires in all his followers, is the love of God and man; — of God, for his own, and of man, for God's sake. Now, what is it to love God, but to delight in him, to rejoice in his will, to desire continually to please him, to seek and find our happiness in him, and to thirst day and night for a fuller enjoyment of him?

As to the measure of this love, our Lord hath clearly told us, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Not that we are to love or delight in none but him: For he hath commanded us, not only to love our neighbor, that is, all men, as ourselves, — to desire and pursue their happiness as sincerely and steadily as our own, — but also to love many of his creatures in the strictest sense; to delight in them, to enjoy them: Only in such a manner and measure as we know and feel, not to indispose but to prepare us for the enjoyment of Him. Thus, then, we are called to love God with all our heart.

The effects or properties of this love, the Apostle describes in the chapter before us. And all these being infallible marks whereby any man may judge of himself; whether he hath this love or hath it not, they deserve our deepest consideration.

"Love suffereth long," or is long-suffering. If thou lose thy neighbor for God's sake, thou wilt bear long with his infirmities: If he want wisdom, thou wilt pity and not despise him: If he be in error, thou wilt mildly endeavor to recover him, without any sharpness or reproach: If he be overtaken in a fault, thou wilt labor to restore him in the spirit of meekness: And if, haply, that cannot be done soon, thou wilt have patience with him; if God, peradventure, may bring him, at length, to the knowledge and love of the truth. In all provocations, either from the weakness or malice of men, thou wilt show thyself a pattern of gentleness and meekness, and, be they ever so often repeated, wilt not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Let no man deceive you with vain words: He who is not thus long-suffering, hath not love.

Again: "Love is kind." Whosoever feels the love of God and man shed abroad in his heart, feels an ardent and uninterrupted thirst after the happiness of all his fellow-creatures. His soul melts away with the very

fervent desire which he hath continually to promote it; and out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. In his tongue is the law of kindness. The same is impressed on all his actions. The flame within is continually working itself away, and spreading abroad more and more, in every instance of goodwill to all with whom he hath to do. So that whether he thinks or speaks, or whatever he does, it all points to the same end, — the advancing, by every possible way, the happiness of all his fellow-creatures. Deceive not, therefore, your own souls: He who is not thus kind, hath not love.

Farther: “Love envieth not.” This, indeed, is implied, when it is said, “Love is kind.” For kindness and, envy are inconsistent: They can no more abide together than light and darkness. If we earnestly desire all happiness to all, we cannot be grieved at the happiness of any. The fulfilling of our desire will be sweet to our soul; so far shall we be from being pained at it. If we are always doing what good we can to our neighbor, and wishing we could do more, it is impossible that we should repine at any good he receives: Indeed, it will be the very joy of our heart. However, then, we may flatter ourselves, or one another, he that envieth hath not love.

It follows, “Love vaunteth not itself;” or rather, is not rash or hasty in judging: For this is indeed the true meaning of the word. As many as love their neighbor for God’s sake, will not easily receive an ill opinion of any to whom they wish all good, spiritual as well as temporal. They cannot condemn him even in their hearts without evidence; nor upon slight evidence neither; nor, indeed, upon any, without first, if it be possible, having him and his accuser face to face, or, at the least, acquainting him with the accusation, and letting him speak for himself. Every one of you feels that he cannot but act thus with regard to one whom he tenderly loves. Why, then, he who doth not act thus hath not love.

I only mention one thing more of the effects or properties of this love: “Love is not puffed up.” You cannot wrong one you love: Therefore, if you love God with all your heart, you cannot so wrong him as to rob him of his glory, by taking to yourself what is due to him only. You will own that all you are, and all you have, is his; that without him you can do nothing; that he is your light and your life, your strength and your all; and

that you are nothing, yea, less than nothing, before him. And if you love your neighbor as yourself; you will not be able to prefer yourself before him. Nay, you will not be able to despise any one, any more than to hate him. As the wax melteth before the fire, so doth pride melt away before love. All haughtiness, whether of heart, speech, or behavior, vanishes away where love prevails. It bringeth down the high looks of him who boasted in his strength, and maketh him as a little child; diffident of himself, willing to hear, glad to learn, easily convinced, easily persuaded. And whosoever is otherwise minded, let him give up all vain hope: He is puffed up, and so hath not love.

III.

It remains to inquire, in what sense it can be said that “though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, yea, though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.”

The chief sense of the words is, doubtless, this: That whatsoever we do, and whatsoever we suffer, if we are not renewed in the spirit of our mind, by “the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us,” we cannot enter into life eternal. None can enter there, unless in virtue of the covenant which God hath given unto man in the Son of his love.

But, because general truths are less apt to affect us, let us consider one or two particulars, with regard to which all we can do or suffer, if we have not love, profiteth us nothing. And, First, all without this profiteth not, so as to make life happy; nor, Secondly, so as to make death comfortable.

And, First, without love nothing can so profit us as to make our lives happy. By happiness, I mean, not a slight, trifling pleasure, that perhaps begins and ends in the same hour; but such a state of well-being as contents the soul, and gives it a steady, lasting satisfaction. But that nothing without love can profit us, as to our present happiness, will appear from this single consideration. You cannot want it, in any one single instance, without pain; and the more you depart from it, the pain is the greater. Are you wanting in long-suffering? Then, so far as you fall short of this, you fall short of happiness. The more the opposite tempers

— anger, fretfulness, revenge — prevail, the more unhappy you are. You know it; you feel it; nor can the storm be allayed, or peace ever return to your soul, unless meekness, gentleness, patience, or, in one word, love, take possession of it. Does any man find in himself ill will, malice, envy, or any other temper opposite to kindness? Then is misery there: And the stronger the temper, the more miserable he is. If the slothful man may be said to eat his own flesh, much more the malicious, or envious. His soul is the very type of hell; — full of torment as well as wickedness. He hath already the worm that never dieth, and he is hastening to the fire that never can be quenched. Only as yet the great gulf is not fixed between him and heaven. As yet there is a Spirit ready to help his infirmities; who is still willing, if he stretch out his hands to heaven, and bewail his ignorance and misery, to purify his heart from vile affections, and to renew it in the love of God, and so lead him by present, up to eternal, happiness.

Secondly. Without love, nothing can make death comfortable.

By comfortable, I do not mean stupid, or senseless. I would not say, he died comfortably who died of an apoplexy, or by the shot of a cannon, any more than he who, having his conscience seared, died as unconcerned as the beasts that perish. Neither do I believe that you would envy any one the comfort of dying raving mad. But, by a comfortable death, I mean, a calm passage out of life, full of even, rational peace and joy. And such a death, all the acting and all the suffering in the world cannot give, without love.

To make this still more evident, I cannot appeal to your own experience; but I may to what we have seen, and to the experience of others. And two I have myself seen going out of this life in what I call a comfortable manner, though not with equal comfort. One had evidently more comfort than the other, because he had more love.

I attended the first during a great part of his last trial, as well as when he yielded up his soul to God. He cried out, “God doth chasten me with strong pain; but I thank him for all; I bless him for all; I love him for all!” When asked, not long before his release, “Are the consolations of God small with you?” he replied aloud, “No, no, no!” Calling all that were near

him by their names, he said, "Think of heaven, talk of heaven: All the time is lost when we are not thinking of heaven." Now, this was the voice of love; and, so far as that prevailed, all was comfort, peace, and joy. But as his love was not perfect, so neither was his comfort. He had intervals of fretfulness, and therein of misery; giving by both an incontestable proof that love can sweeten both life and death. So when that is either absent from, or obscured in, the soul, there is no peace or comfort there.

It was in this place that I saw the other good soldier of Jesus Christ grappling with his last enemy, death. And it was, indeed, a spectacle worthy to be seen of God, and angels, and men. Some of his last breath was spent in a psalm of praise to Him who was then giving him the victory; in assurance whereof he began the triumph even in the heat of the battle. When he was asked, "Hast thou the love of God in thy heart?" He lifted up his eyes and hands, and answered, "Yes, yes!" with all the strength he had left. To one who inquired if he was afraid of the devil, whom he had just mentioned as thanking his last attack upon him, he replied, "No, no: My loving Savior hath conquered every enemy: He is with me: fear nothing." Soon after, he said, "The way to my loving Savior is sharp, but it is short." Nor was it long before he fell into a sort of slumber, wherein his soul sweetly returned to God that gave it.

Here, we may observe, was no mixture of any passion or temper contrary to love; therefore, there was no misery; perfect love casting out whatever might have occasioned torment. And whosoever thou art that hast the like measure of love, thy last end shall be like his.

SERMON CXL.

ON PUBLIC DIVERSIONS.

“Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?”

Amos 3:6.

It is well if there are not too many here who are nearly concerned in these words of the Prophet; the plain sense of which seems to be this: Are there any men in the world so stupid and senseless, so utterly void of common reason, so careless of their own and their neighbors' safety or destruction, as when an alarm of approaching judgments is given, to show no signs of apprehension? to take no care in order to prevent them, but go on as securely as if no alarm had been given? Do not all men know that whatsoever evil befalls them, it befalls them either by God's permission, or by his appointment; and that he designs every evil of this life to warn men to avoid still greater evils? that he suffers these lighter marks of his displeasure, to awaken mankind, so that they may shun his everlasting vengeance, and be timely advised, by feeling a part of it, so to change their ways that his whole displeasure may not arise?

I intend, speaking on this subject, to show,

First, that there is no evil in any place but the hand of the Lord is in it.

Secondly. That every uncommon evil is the trumpet of God blown in that place, so that the people may take warning.

Thirdly. To consider whether, after God hath blown his trumpet in this place, we have been duly afraid.

I am, First, to show, in few words, that there is no evil in any place but the hand of the Lord is therein. No evil, that is, no affliction or calamity, whether of a public or of a private nature, whether it concerns only one, or

a few persons, or reaches to many, or to all, of that place where it comes. Whatever circumstance occasions loss or pain to any man, or number of men, may in that respect be called all evil and of such evil the Prophet speaks in these words. Of such evils, we are to believe, that they never happen but by the knowledge and permission of God. And of every such evil we may say, that the Lord hath done it, either be his own immediate power, by the strength of his own right hand, or by commanding, or else suffering, it to be done by those his servants that do his pleasure. For the Lord is King, be the people never so impatient; yea, the great King of all the earth. Whatsoever, therefore, is done in all the earth, (sin only excepted,) he doeth it himself. The Lord God Omnipotent still reigneth; and all things are so subject unto him, that his will must be done, whether we agree to it or not, as in heaven, so also upon earth. Not only his blessed angels, but all things, serve him in all places of his dominion; those wicked spirits which rule the darkness of this world, and those men who are like them, he rules by constraint; the senseless and brute parts of the creation, by nature; and those men who are like God, by choice. But, however it be, with or without their own choice, they all act in obedience to his will; and particularly so, when, in judgment, he still remembers mercy, and permits a smaller evil that he may prevent a greater. Then, at least, we are to acknowledge the hand of God in whatsoever instruments he makes use of. It makes little difference, whether he executes his purpose by the powers of heaven or hell, or by the mistakes, carelessness, or malice of men. If a destroying angel marches forth against a town or a country, it is God who empowers him to destroy. If bad men distress one or more of their fellowcreatures, the ungodly are a sword of his. If fire, hail, wind, or storm be let loose upon the earth, yet they only fulfill his word. So certain it is, that there is no evil in any place which the Lord, in this sense, hath not done

I am to prove, Secondly, that every uncommon evil is the trumpet of God blown in that place where it comes, that the people may take warning.

Every private affliction is doubtless the voice of God, whereby he calls upon that person to flee to him for succor. But if any extraordinary affliction occurs, especially when many persons are concerned in it, we may not only say that in this God speaks to us, but that the God of glory

thundereth. This voice of the Lord is in power! This voice of the Lord is full of majesty! This demands the deepest attention of all to whom it comes. This loudly claims the most serious consideration; not only of those to whom it is peculiarly sent, but of all those who are round about them. This, like a voice from heaven, commands that all people should be afraid, should tremble at the presence of God! that every one should feel and show that religious fear, that sacred awe, of the majesty of God, which is both the beginning and perfection of wisdom; that fear which should make them haste to do whatsoever the Lord their God commands them, and careful not to turn aside from it to the right hand or the left.

It is needless to use many words to prove this, after what has been proved already. For if there be no evil in any place which the Lord hath not done, and if he doth not willingly send evil on any place, but only to warn them to avoid greater evils; then it is plain, that, wherever any evil is, it is the trumpet of God blown in that place, to the end that the people may be so afraid as not to continue in anything which displeaseth him. Then it is plain, that, in every such merciful evil, God speaks to this effect: "O that there were such an heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always; that it might be well with them, and their children after them!"

Thirdly. What signs we have manifested of this wise and grateful fear, I am now to consider more at large.

First. Let us consider how God hath blown his trumpet in this place; and, Secondly, whether we have been duly afraid. Let us consider, First, how God hath blown his trumpet among us in this place. And that it might never be forgotten, it were much to be wished, not only that parents would tell their children, to the intent that their posterity might know it, and the children that are yet unborn; but also, that it were written in our public register, for a standing memorial to all generations; that in the very weak, and on the very day, when that diversion which hath had a considerable share in turning the Christian world upside down, was to have been brought in hither also such a fire broke out, as neither we nor our fathers had seen in this place; a fire which soon spread itself not over one only, but over several dwelling-houses; which so went forth in the

fury of its strength, that it soon prevailed over the weak resistance made against it, and left only so much standing of most of those buildings over which it prevailed, as might serve to quicken our remembrance of it. Let it be told, that those who came prepared for another prospect, were entertained with that of devouring flames! a prospect which continued during the whole time of the intended diversion, and which was but too plainly to be seen, together with the fiery pillars of smoke which increased its horror, from the very place which had been pitched upon for the scene of this diversion.

This is the bare matter of fact. And even from this, let any one, in whom is the spirit of a man, judge, whether the trumpet of God hath not sufficiently sounded among us of this place! And doth this trumpet give an uncertain sound? How would you have God speak more plainly? Do you desire that the Lord should also thunder out of heaven, and give hail-stones and coals of fire? Nay, rather let us say, "It is enough! Speak no more, Lord; for thy servants hear! Those to whom thou hast most severely spoken are afraid, and do seek thee with their whole heart. They resolve not to prolong the time, but even now, by thy gracious assistance, to look well if there be any way of wickedness in them, and to turn their feet unto the way everlasting; to renounce everything that is evil in thy sight; yea, the sin that doth the most easily beset them; and to use their whole diligence for the time to come, to make their calling and election sure. Those to whom thou hast spoken by the misfortune of their neighbors are likewise afraid at thy tokens, and own that it was thy mere goodness, that they, too, and their substance, were not consumed. They likewise firmly purpose in themselves to make the true use of thy merciful warning; to labor more and more, day by day, to purge themselves from all sin, from every earthly affection, that they may be fit to stand in the presence of that God who is himself 'a consuming fire!'"

But have we indeed been thus duly afraid? This is now to be considered. And because we cannot see the hearts of others, let us form our judgment from their actions, which will be best done by a plain relation, of which every one that hears it can easily tell whether it be true or false.

In the day following that on which the voice of God had so dreadfully commanded us to exchange our mirth for sadness, the diversion which that had broken off was as eagerly begun anew. Crowds of people flocked out of that very town where the destruction had been wrought the day before, and rushed by the place of desolation to the place of entertainment! Here you may see the ground covered with heaps of ruins, mingled with yet unquenched fire; a little way off; as thickly covered with horses and men, pressing on to see another new sight. On this side were the mourners bewailing the loss of their goods, and the necessities of their families; on the other, the festers delighting themselves with the sport they had gained. Surely, such a mixture of mirth and sadness, of feasting and mourning, of laughing and weeping, hath not been seen from the day in which our forefathers first came up into this land until yesterday.

Such is the fear we have shown of the wrath of God! Thus have we been afraid after he had blown his trumpet among us! These are the signs we have given of our resolution to avoid whatever is displeasing in his sight! Hereby we have proved how we design to avoid that diversion in particular, which he hath given us so terrible a reason to believe is far from being pleasing to him! Not that this is the only reason we have to believe so. Besides this last melancholy argument against it, we have so many others, as any serious Christian would find it a hard task to answer. But I have only time to mention slightly a few of the consequences that were never yet separated from it.

Before I mention these, it is not necessary for me to say whether the diversion is sinful in itself, simply considered, or not. If any one can find a race which has none of those consequences, let him go to it in the name of God. Only, till he finds one which does not give occasion to these or the like villains, let him who nameth the name of Christ have a care of any way encouraging them.

One thing more I would have observed, that it is so far from being uncharitable to warn well meaning people of the tendency of these diversions, that the more clearly and strongly any one represents it to them, the more charitable to them he is. This may be made plain by a very easy comparison. You see the wine when it sparkles in the cup, and are

going to drink of it. I tell you there is poison in it! and, therefore, beg you to throw it away. You answer, "The wine is harmless in itself" I reply, Perhaps it is so; but still if it be mixed with what is not harmless, no one in his senses, if he knows it at least, unless he could separate the good from the bad, will once think of drinking it. If you add, "It is not poison to me, though it be to others;" then I say, Throw it away for thy brother's sake, lest thou embolden him to drink also. Why should thy strength occasion thy weak brother to perish, for whom Christ died? Now let any one judge which is the uncharitable person: He who pleads against the wine or the diversion, for his brother's sake; or he who pleads against the life of his brother, for the sake of the wine or the diversions.

All the doubt there can be is this: "Is there poison in this diversion which is supposed to be harmless in itself?" To clear this up, let us, First, observe the notorious lying that is always joined with it; the various kinds of over reaching and cheating; the horrid oaths and curses that constantly accompany it, wherewith the name of our Lord God, blessed for ever, is blasphemed. Whenever where was this diversion ever known without these dreadful consequences? Who was ever one day present at one of these entertainments, without being himself a witness to some of these? And surely these alone, had we no other ill consequences to charge upon this diversion, are enough, till a way is found to purge it from them, to make both God and all wise men to abhor it.

But, over and above these, we charge it, Secondly, with affording the fairest means to exercise and to increase covetousness. This is done by the occasion it gives to all who please to lay wagers with one another, which commonly brings as strong a desire of possessing what is another's was, will hardly cease when that one point is decided; but will be exceedingly likely to leave such a thirst in the mind, as not all the winning in the world will satisfy. And what amends can the trifling sport of a thousand people make for one soul thus corrupted and ruined? Therefore, on this account too, till a way is known to secure all that frequent it from this danger, well may this sport itself be an abomination to Him who values one soul more than the whole world.

May we not well fear, that it is an abomination to the Lord, because of a Third effect of it? because it is so apt to inflame those passions which he so earnestly commands us to quench? because many people are so heated on such occasions, as they never ought to be on any occasion? supposing it possible that a man might be angry and not sin; yet hardly upon such occasions, or in such a degree as those who are angry on such occasions commonly are. This consequence, too, let him separate from such a diversion, who would prevent its being displeasing to God.

Till this be done, let no one say, “What harm is there in a horse race?” But if any should still ask that question, we can answer yet more particularly, Are you a young person who desire to go to it? Then it is likely you go either to see or to be seen; to admire other fine sights, or to be admired yourself. The hurt of this is, it nourishes that friendship which is enmity with God. It strengthens those affections which are already too strong, — the desire of the eye, and the pride of life. All such diversions as these are the noblest instruments the devil has to fill the mind with earthly, sensual, and devilish passions; to make you of a light and trifling spirit; in a word, to make you a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. Are you, who desire to go to it, advanced in years, and, therefore, less subject to such temptations? Take heed that your hearts deceive you not. But be it as you suppose, hath it not done you hurt enough, if it has hindered any of you from partaking of the blessed sacrament? if by preventing either that serious examination or that private devotion which you wisely use before you come to it, it has occasioned your neglecting to come to this holy table; and so not only disobeying a plain command of God, but likewise losing all those inestimable advantages which are there reached out to them who obey him? Are you a rich man that desire to go? Then you have probably given something towards it. That is, you have thrown away that seed which might have born fruit to eternity! You have thrown away a part of that talent, which had you rightly improved, you might have been an everlasting gainer by it! You have utterly lost what God himself, had you lent it to him, would richly have repaid you. For you have given to those who neither need, nor perhaps thank you for it; which if you had bestowed upon your helpless brethren, your blessed Redeemer would have esteemed it as done unto himself, and would have treated you accordingly at the great day. Are you a poor man, who have gone or given

anything to this diversion? Then it has done you most hurt of all. It has made you throw away, for an idle sport abroad, what your wife and family wanted at home. If so, you have denied the faith, and are far worse than an infidel. But suppose it cost you no money, was it not hurt enough if it cost you any of your time? What had you to do to run after trifling diversions, when you ought to have been employed in honest labor? Surely if the rich think, that God hath given them more than they want, (though it will be well if they do not one day think otherwise,) yet *you* have no temptation to think so. Sufficient for your day is the labor thereof.

I have but a few words to add, — and those I speak not to them who are unwilling to hear, whose affections are set upon this world, and therefore their eyes are blinded by it; but I speak to them in whom is an understanding heart, and a discerning spirit; — who, if they have formerly erred, are now resolved, by the grace of God, to return no more to the error of their ways; but for the time to come, not only to avoid, but also earnestly to oppose, whatsoever is contrary to the will of God. To these I say, Are you young? So much the rather scorn all employments that are useless, but much more if they are sinful: For you are they, whose wisdom and glory it is to remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Are you Elder? So much the rather bestow all the time which you can spare from the necessary business of this life, in preparing yourself and those about you for their entrance into a better life. For your day is far spent, and your night is at hand. Redeem herefore the little time you have left. Are you rich? Then you have particular reason to labor that you may be rich in good works: For you are they to whom much is given, not to throw away, but to use well and wisely; and of you much shall be required. Are you poor? Then you have particular reason to work with your hands, that you may provide for your own household. Nor when you have done this, have you done all; for then you are to labor that you may give to him that needeth, — not to him that needeth diversions, but to him that needeth the necessaries of nature, — that needeth clothes to cover him, food to support his life, or a house where to lay his head.

What remains, but that we labor, one and all, young and old, rich and poor, to wipe off the past scandal from our town and people? First, by

opposing to the utmost, for the time to come, by word and deed, among our friends, and all we have to do with, this unhappy diversion, which has such terribly hurtful consequences; by doing all we possibly can to hinder its coming among us any more. And, Secondly, by showing all the mercy we can to our afflicted neighbors, according as God hath prospered us, and, by this timely relief of them, buying up for ourselves a good foundation against the day of necessity. Thirdly, by our constant attendance on God's public service and blessed sacrament, and our watchful, charitable, and pious life. Thus giving the noblest proof before men and angels, that although, even after we were troubled, we went wrong, yet, upon more deeply considering how God hath blown his trumpet among us, we were afraid. We then shall say with an awakened heart, Behold, the Lord our God hath showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. Now, therefore, while time is, let us put away far from us every accursed thing: "For if we hear this voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die."

SERMON CXLI.

ON THE HOLY SPIRIT.

PREACHED AT ST. MARY'S, OXFORD, ON WHIT-SUNDAY,
1736.

“Now the Lord is that Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:17.

THE Apostle had been showing how the gospel ministry was superior to that of the law: The time being now come when types and shadows should be laid aside, and we should be invited to our duty by the manly and ingenuous motives of a clear and full revelation, open and free on God's part, and not at all disguised by his ambassadors. But what he chiefly insists upon is, not the *manner*, but the *subject* of their ministry: “Who hath made us able ministers,” saith he, “of the New Testament: Not of the letter, but of the Spirit: For the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.” Here lies the great difference between the two dispensations: That the law was indeed *spiritual* in its demands, requiring a life consecrated to God in the observance of many rules; but, not conveying spiritual assistance, its effect was only to kill and mortify man, by giving him to understand, that he must needs be in a state of great depravity, since he found it so difficult to obey God; and that, as particular deaths were by that institution inflicted for particular sins, so death, in general, was but the consequence of his universal sinfulness. But the ministration of the New Testament was that of a “Spirit which giveth life;” — a Spirit, not only promise, but actually conferred; which should both enable Christians now to live unto God, and fulfill precepts even more spiritual than the former; and restore them hereafter to perfect life, after the ruins of sin and death. The incarnation, preaching, and death of Jesus Christ were designed to represent, proclaim, and purchase for us this gift of the Spirit; and therefore says the Apostle, “The Lord is that Spirit,” or *the Spirit*.

This description of Christ was a proper inducement to Jews to believe on him; and it is still a necessary instruction to Christians, to regulate their expectations from him. But think this age has made it particularly necessary to be well assured what Christ is to us: When that question is so differently resolved by the pious but weak accounts of some pretenders to *faith* on one hand, and by the clearer, but not perfectly Christian, accounts of some pretenders to *reason* on the other: While some derive from him a “righteousness of God,” but in a sense somewhat improper and figurative; and others, no more than a charter of pardon, and a system of morality: While some so interpret the gospel, as to place the holiness they are to be saved by in something divine, but exterior to themselves; and others, so as to place it in things really within themselves, but not more than human. Now, the proper cure of what indistinctness there is one way, and what infidelity in the other, seems to be contained in the doctrine of my text: “The Lord is that Spirit.” In treating of which words, I will consider,

- I. The nature of our fall in Adam; by which it will appear, that if “the Lord” were not “that Spirit,” he could not be said to save or redeem us from our fallen condition.
- II. I will consider the person of Jesus Christ; by which it will appear that “the Lord is that Spirit.” And,
- III. I will inquire into the nature and operations of the Holy Spirit, as bestowed upon Christians.

I.

I am to consider the nature of our fall in Adam.

Our first parents did enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit; for they were created in the image and likeness of God, which was no other than his Spirit. By that he communicates himself to his creatures, and by that alone they can bear any likeness to him. It is, indeed, his life in them; and so properly divine, that, upon this ground, angels and regenerate men are called his children.

But when man would not be guided by the Holy Spirit, it left him. When he would be wise in his own way, and in his own strength, and did not depend in simplicity upon his heavenly Father, the seed of a superior life was recalled from him. For he was no longer fit to be formed into a

heavenly condition, when he had so unworthy a longing for, or rather dependence upon, an earthly fruit, which he knew God would not bless to him; no longer fit to receive supernatural succors when he could not be content with his happy state towards God, without an over-curious examination into it.

Then he found himself forsaken of God, and left to the poverty, weakness, and misery of his own proper nature. He was now a mere animal, like unto other creatures made of flesh and blood, but only possessed of a larger understanding; by means of which he should either be led into greater absurdities than they could be guilty of, or else be made sensible of his lost happiness, and put into the right course for regaining it; that is, if he continued a careless apostate, he should love and admire the goods of this world, the adequate happiness only of animals; and, to recommend them and dissemble their defects, add all the ornament to them that his superior wit could invent. Or else (which is indeed more above brutes, but no nearer the perfection of man as a partaker of God, than the other) he should frame a new world to himself in theory; sometimes by warm imaginations, and sometimes by cool reasonings, endeavor to aggrandize his condition and defend his practice, or at least divert himself from feeling his own meanness and disorder.

If, on the other hand, he should be willing to find out the miseries of his fall, his understanding might furnish him with reasons for constant mourning, for despising and denying himself; might point out the sad effects of turning away from God and losing his Spirit, in the shame and anguish of a nature at variance with itself; thirsting after immortality, and yet subject to death; approving righteousness, and yet taking pleasure in things inconsistent with it; feeling an immense want of something to perfect and satisfy all its faculties, and yet neither able to know what that mighty thing is, otherwise than from its present defects, nor how to attain it, otherwise than by going contrary to its present inclinations.

Well might Adam now find himself naked; nothing less than God was departed from him. Till then he had experienced nothing but the goodness and sweetness of God; a heavenly life spread itself through his whole frame, as if he were not made of dust; his mind was filled with angelic

wisdom; a direction from above took him by the hand; he walked and thought uprightly, and seemed not to be a child or novice in divine things. But now he had other things to experience; something in his soul that he did not find, nor need to fear, while he was carried on straight forward by the gentle gale of divine grace; something in his body that he could not see nor complain of, while that body was covered with glory. He feels there a self-displeasure, turbulence, and confusion; such as is common to other spirits who have lost God: He sees here causes of present shame and a future dissolution; and a strong engagement to that grovelling life which is common to animals that never enjoyed the divine nature.

The general character, therefore, of man's present state is death, — a death from God, whereby we no longer enjoy any intercourse with him, or happiness in him; we no longer shine with his glory, or act with his powers. It is true, while we have a being, “in *him* we must live, and move, and have our being;” but this we do now, not in a *filial* way, but only in a *servile* one, as all, even the meanest creatures, exist in him. It is one thing to receive from God an ability to walk and speak, eat and digest, — to be supported by his hand as a part of this earthly creation, and upon the same terms with it, for farther trial or vengeance; and another, to receive from him a life which is his own likeness, — to have within us something which is not of this creation, and which is nourished by his own immediate word and power.

Yet this is not that whole that is implied in man's sin. For he is not only inclined himself to all the sottishness of appetite, and all the pride of reason, but he is fallen under the tutorage of the evil one, who mightily furthers him in both. The state he was at first placed in, was a state of the most simple subjection to God, and this entitled him to drink of his Spirit; but when he, not content to be actually in Paradise, under as full a light of God's countenance as he was capable of, must know good and evil, and be satisfied upon rational grounds whether it was best for him to be as he was, or not; when, disdaining to be directed as a child, he must weigh every thing himself, and seek better evidence than the voice of his Maker and the seal of the Spirit in his heart; then he not only obeyed, but became like to, that eldest son of pride, and was unhappily entitled to frequent visits, or rather a continued influence, from him. As life was annexed to his

keeping the command, and, accordingly, the Spirit, which alone could *form* it unto true life, dwelt in his body; so, being sentenced to death for his transgression, he was now delivered unto “him who has the power of death, that, is, the devil,” whose hostile and unkindly impressions promote death and sin at once.

This being the state of man, if God should send him a Redeemer, what must that Redeemer do for him? Will it be sufficient for him to be the promulgator of a new law, — to give us a set of excellent precepts? No: If we could keep them, that alone would not make us happy. A good conscience brings a man the happiness of being consistent with himself, but not that of being raised above himself into God; which every person will find, after all, is the thing he wants. Shall he be the fountain of an *imputed* righteousness, and procure the tenderest favor to all his followers? This is also not enough. Though a man should be allowed to be righteous, and be exempt from all punishment, yet if he is as really enslaved to the corruptions of nature, as endued with these privileges of redemption, he can hardly make himself easy; and whatever favor he can receive from God, here or hereafter, without a communication of himself, it is neither the cure of a spirit fallen, nor the happiness of one reconciled. Must not then our Redeemer be (according to the character which St. John, his forerunner, gave of him) one that “baptizeth with the Holy Ghost,” — the Fountain and Restorer of that to mankind, whereby they are restored to their first estate, and the enjoyment of God? And this is a presumptive argument that “The Lord is that Spirit.”

II.

But it will appear more plainly that he is so, from the Second thing proposed, which was the consideration of the person of Jesus Christ.

He was one to whom “God gave not the Spirit by measure: but in him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and of his fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.” Indeed, all the communications of the Godhead, which any creatures could receive, were always from him as the Word of God, but all that mankind now in an earthly state were to receive, must be from him by means of that body, at first mortal, like unto theirs,

and then glorious “in the likeness of God,” which he took upon him for their sake.

In the beginning, the heavenly Word, — being a Spirit that issued from the Father, and the Word of his power, — made man an image of immortality, according to the likeness of the Father; but he who had been made in the image of God, afterwards became mortal, when the more powerful Spirit was separated from him. To remedy this, the Word became man, that man by receiving the adoption might become a son of God once more; that the light of the Father might rest upon the flesh of our Lord, and come bright from thence unto us; and so man, being encompassed with the light of the Godhead, might be carried into immortality. When he was incarnate and became man, he recapitulated in himself all generations of mankind, making himself the center of our salvation, that what we lost in, Adam, even the image and likeness of God, we might receive all Christ Jesus. By the Holy Ghost coming upon Mary, and the power of the highest overshadowing her, the incarnation of Christ was wrought, and a new birth, whereby man should be born of God, was shown; that as by our first birth we did inherit death, so by this birth we might inherit life.

This is no other than what St. Paul teaches us: “The first man, Adam, was made a living soul, but the Second Adam was made a quickening spirit.” All that the first man possessed of himself, all that he has transmitted to us, is “a living soul;” a nature endued with an animal life, and receptive of a spiritual. But the Second Adam is, and was made to us, “a quickening spirit;” by a strength from him as our Creator, we were at first raised above ourselves; by a strength from him as our Redeemer we shall again live unto God.

In him is laid up for us that supplement to our nature, when we shall find the need of sooner or later; and that it cannot be countervailed by any assistance from the creatures, or any improvement of our own faculties: For we were made to be happy only in God; and all our labors and hopes, while we do not thirst after our deified state, — to partake as truly of God as we do of flesh and blood, to be glorified in his nature, as we have been dishonored in our own, — are the labors and hopes of those who utterly mistake themselves.

The divine wisdom knew what was our proper consolation, though we did not. What does more obviously present itself in the Savior of the world, than an union of man with God? — an union attended with all the propriety of behavior that we are called to, as candidates of the Spirit; such as walking with God in singleness of heart, perfect self-renunciation, and a life of sufferings, — an union which submitted to the necessary stages of our progress; where the divine life was hid, for the most part, in the secret of the soul till death; in the state of separation, comforted the soul, but did not raise it above the intermediate region of Paradise; at the resurrection, clothed the body with heavenly qualities, and the powers of immortality; and at last raised it to the immediate presence and right hand of the Father.

Christ is not only God above us; which may keep us in awe, but cannot save; but he is Immanuel, God with us, and in us. As he is the Son of God, God must he where he is; and as he is the Son of man, he will be with mankind; the consequence of this is, that in the future age “the tabernacle of God will be with men,” and he will show them his glory; and, at present, he will dwell in their hearts by faith in his Son.

I hope it sufficiently appears, that “the Lord is that Spirit.” Considering what we are, and what we have been, nothing less than the receiving that Spirit again would be redemption to us; and considering who that heavenly person was that was sent to be our Redeemer, we can expect nothing less from him.

III.

I proceed now to the Third thing proposed, viz., to inquire into the nature and operations of the Holy Spirit, as bestowed upon Christians.

And here I shall pass by the particular extraordinary gifts vouchsafed to the first ages for the edification of the Church; and only consider what the Holy Spirit is to every believer, for his personal sanctification and salvation. It is not granted to every one to raise the dead, and heal the sick. What is most necessary, is, to be sure, as to ourselves, that we are “passed from death unto life;” to keep our bodies pure and undefiled, and let them

reap that health which flows from a magnanimous patience, and the serene joys of devotion. The Holy Spirit has enabled men to speak with tongues, and to prophesy; but the light that most necessarily attends it is a light to discern the fallacies of flesh and blood, to reject the irreligious maxims of the world, and to practice those degrees of trust in God and love to men, those foundation is not so much in the present appearances of things, as in some that are yet to come. The object which this light brings us most immediately to know is ourselves; and by virtue of this, one that is born of God, and has a lively hope, may indeed see far into the ways of Providence, and farther yet into the Holy Scriptures; for the Holy Scriptures, excepting some accidental and less necessary parts, are only a history of that new man which he himself is; and Providence is only a wise disposal of events for the awakening of particular persons, and ripening the world in general for the coming of Christ's kingdom.

But I think the true notion of the Spirit is, that it is some portion of, as well as preparation for, a life in God, which we are to enjoy hereafter. The gift of the Holy Spirit looks full to the resurrection: for then is the life of God completed in us.

Then, after man has passed through all the penalties of sin, the drudgery and vanity of human life, the painful reflections of an awakened mind, the infirmities and dissolution of the body, and all the sufferings and mortification's a just God shall lay in his way; when, by this means, he is come to know God and himself, he may safely be entrusted with true life, with the freedom and ornaments of a child of God; for he will no more arrogate anything to himself. Then shall the Holy Spirit be fully bestowed, when the flesh shall no longer resist it, but he itself changed into an evangelical condition, being clothed upon with the interruption of the Holy Spirit; when the body which, by being born with the soul, and living through it, could only be called an animal one, shall now become spiritual, whilst by the Spirit it rises into eternity.

Everything in Christianity is some kind of anticipation of something that is to be at the end of the world. If the Apostles were to preach by their Master's command, "that the kingdom of God drew nigh;" the meaning was, that from henceforth all men should fix their eyes on that happy

time, foretold by the Prophets, when the Messiah should come and restore all things; that by renouncing their worldly conversation, and submitting to the gospel institution, they should fit themselves for, and hasten, that blessing. "Slow are we the sons of God." as St. John tells us; and yet what he imparts to us at present will hardly justify that title, without taking in that fullness of his image which shall then he displayed in us, when we shall be "the children of God, by being the children of the resurrection."

True believers, then, are entered upon a life, the *sequel* of which they know not; for it is "a life hid with Christ in God." We, the forerunner, hath attained the end of it, being gone unto the Father; but we can know no more of it than appeared in him while he was upon earth. And even that, we shall not know but by following his steps; which if we do, we shall be so strengthened and renewed day by day in the inner man, that we shall desire no comfort from the present world through a sense of "the joy set before us;" though, as to the outward man, we shall be subject to distresses and decays, and treated as the offscouring of all things.

Well may a man ask his own heart, whether it is able to admit the Spirit of God. For where that divine Guest enters, the laws of another world must be observed: The body must be given up to martyrdom, or spent in the Christian warfare, as unconcernedly as if the soul were already provided of its house from heaven; the goods of this world must he parted with as freely, as if the last fire were to seize them tomorrow; our neighbor must be loved as heartily as if he were washed from all his sins, and demonstrated to be a child of God by the resurrection from the dead. The fruits of this Spirit must not be mere moral virtues, calculated for the comfort and decency of the present life; but holy dispositions, suitable to the instincts of a superior life already begun.

Thus to press forward, whither the promise of life calls him, — to turn his back upon the world, and comfort himself in God, — every one that has faith perceives to be just and necessary, and forces himself to do it: Every one that has hope, does it gladly and eagerly, though not without difficulty; but he that has love does it with ease and singleness of heart.

The state of love, being attended with is joy unspeakable and full of glory,” with rest from the passions and vanities of man, with the integrity of an unchangeable judgment, and an undivided will, is, in a great measure, its own reward; yet not so as to supersede the desire of another world. For though such a man, having a free and insatiable love of that which is good, may seldom have need formally to propose to himself the hopes of retribution, in order to overcome his unwillingness to his duty; yet surely he must long for that which is best of all; and feel a plain attraction towards that country in which he has his place and station already assigned him; and join in the earnest expectation of all creatures, which wait for the manifestation of the sons of God. For now we obtain but some part of his Spirit, to model and fit us for incorruption, that we may, by degrees, be accustomed to receive and carry God within us; and, therefore, the Apostle calls it, “the earnest of the Spirit;” that is, a part of that honor which is promised us by the Lord. If, therefore, the earnest, abiding in us, makes us spiritual even now, and that which is mortal is, as it were, swallowed up of immortality; how shall it be when, rising again, we shall see him face to face? when all our members shall break forth into songs of triumph, and glorify Him who hath raised them from the dead, and granted them everlasting life? For if this earnest or pledge, embracing man into itself, makes him now cry, “Abba, Father;” what shall the whole grace of the Spirit do, when, being given at length to believers, it shall make us like unto God, and perfect us through the will of the Father?

And thus I have done what was at first proposed: I have considered the nature of our fall in Adam; the person of Jesus Christ; and the operations of the Holy Spirit in Christians.

The only inference I will draw from what has been said, and principally from the account of man’s fall, shall be, the reasonableness of those precepts of self-denial, daily suffering, and renouncing the world, which are so peculiar to Christianity, and which are the only foundation whereon the other virtues, recommended in the New Testament, can be practiced or, attained, in the sense there intended.

This inference is so natural, that I could not help anticipating, it in some measure all the while. One would think it should be no hard matter to

persuade a creature to abhor the badges of his misery; to dislike a condition or mansion which only banishment and disgrace have assigned him; to trample on the grandeur, refuse the comforts, and suspect the wisdom of a life whose nature it is to separate him from his God.

Your Savior bids you “hate your own life.” If you ask the reason, enter into your heart, see whether it be holy, and full of God; or whether, on the other hand, many things that are contrary to him are wrought there, and it is become a plantation of the enemy. Or, if this be too nice an inquiry, look upon your body. Do you find there the brightness of an angel, and the vigor of immortality? If not, be sure your soul is in the same degree of poverty, nakedness, and absence from God. It is true, your soul may sooner be re-admitted to some rays of the light of God’s countenance; than your body can; but if you would take any step at all towards it, to dislike your present self must be the first.

You want a reason why you should renounce the world. Indeed you cannot see the prince of it walking up and down, is “seeing whom he may devour;” and you may be so far ignorant of his devices, as not to know that they take place, as well in the most spacious measures of business and learning, as in the wildest pursuits of pleasure. But this, however, you cannot but see, that the world is not still a paradise of God, guarded and ennobled with the light of glory; it is, indeed, a place where God has determined he will not appear to you at best, but leave you in a state of hope, that you shall see his face when this world is dissolved.

However, there is a way to rescue ourselves, in great measure, from the ill consequences of our captivity; and our Savior has taught us that way. It is by suffering. We must not only “suffer many things,” as he did, and so enter into our glory: but we must also suffer many things, that we may get above our corruption at present, and enjoy the Holy Spirit.

The world has no longer any power over us, than we have a quick relish of its comforts; and suffering abates that. Suffering is, indeed, a direct confutation of the pretenses which the flattering tempter gains us by: For I am in human life; and if that life contains such soft ease, ravishing pleasure, glorious eminence, as you promise, why am I thus? Is it because

I have not yet purchased riches to make me easy, or the current accomplishments to make me considerable? Then I find that all the comfort you propose is by leading me off from myself; but I will rather enter deep into my own condition, had as it is: Perhaps I shall be nearer to God, the Eternal Truth, in feeling sorrows and miseries that are personal and real, than in feeling comforts that are not so. I begin already to find that all my grievances center in one point: There is always at the bottom one great loss or defect, which is not the want of friends or gold, of health or philosophy. And the abiding sense of this may possibly become a prayer in the ears of the Most High; a prayer not resulting from a set of speculative notions, but from the real, undissembled state of all that is within me; nor, indeed, so explicit a prayer as to describe the thing I want, but, considering how strange a want mine is, as explicit a one as I can make since, then, suffering opens me a door of hope, I will not put it from me as long as I live: It helps me to a the discovery of one period of my existence, though it is a low one; and bids fairer for having some connection with a more glorious period that may follow, than the arts of indulgence, the amusements of pride and sloth, and all the dark policy of this world, which wage war with the whole truth, that man must know and feel, before he can look towards God. It may be, while I continue on the cross, I shall, like my Savior, put off its principalities and powers; recover myself more and more from the subjection I am indeed in (which he only seemed to be) to those wicked rulers, and to “triumph over them in it.” At least, it shall appear, in the day when God shall visit, that my heart, though grown unworthy of his residence, was too big to be comforted by any of his creatures and was kept for him, as a place originally sacred, though for the present unclean.

But supposing that our state does require of us to “die daily,” — to sacrifice all that this present life can boast of, or is delighted with, before we give up life itself; supposing also? that in the hour we do somewhat of this kind, we receive light and strength from God, to grow superior to our infirmities, and are carried smoothly towards him in the joy of the Holy Ghost; yet how can a man have such frequent opportunities of suffering? Indeed, martyrdoms do not happen in every age, and some days of our lives may pass without reproaches from men; we may be in health, and not want food to eat and raiment to put on; (though health itself, and

nutrition itself, oblige us to the pain of a constant correction of them;) yet still, the love of God and heavenly hope will not want something to oppress them in this world.

Let a man descend calmly into his heart, and see if there be no root of bitterness springing up; whether, at least, his thoughts, which are ever in motion, do not sometimes sally out into projects suggested by pride, or sink into indolent trifling, or he entangled ill mean anxiety. Does not he find a motion of anger, or of gaiety, leavening him in an instant throughout; depriving him of the meekness and steady discernment he labored after? Or, let him but conceive at any time, that unfeigned obedience, and watchful zeal, and dignity of behavior, which, is suitable, I do not say to an angel, but to a sinner that has a good hope through grace,” and endeavor to work himself up to it; and if he find no sort of obstacle to this within him, he has indeed then no opportunity of suffering. In short, if he is such an abject sort of creature, as will, unless grace should do him a perpetual violence, relapse frequently into a course of thinking and acting entirely without God; then he can never want occasions of suffering, but will find his own nature to be the same burden to him, as that “faithless and perverse generation” was to our Savior, of whom he saith, “How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?”

I will conclude all with that excellent Collect of our Church: — “O God, who in all ages hast taught the hearts of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Savior; who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.”

NOTES

1. The following is Francis translation of these lines from Horace: —

“Let them hiss on,
While in my own opinion fully blest,
I count my money, and enjoy my chest.”

— EDIT.

2. Sermons, vol. 2.

3. The following is Boscawen’s translation of this quotation from Horace:—

“Eutrapelus, whome’er he chose
To ruin, deck’d in costly clothes.”

— EDIT.

4. At the time of writing this sermon. He is since dead.

5. His Journal, written by himself, is extant.

6. Viz., Redeeming Time from Sleep.

7. Then crowds succeed, who, prodigal of breath,
Themselves anticipate the doom of death;
Though free from guilt, they cast their lives away,
And sad and sullen hate the golden day.
O with what joy the wretches now would bear
pain, toil, and woe, to breathe the vital air!
In vain! By fate for ever are they bound
With dire Avernus, and the lake profound;
And Styx, with nine wide channels, roars around!

Mr. Pitt’s Virgil

8. This quotation from Terence is thus translated by Colman: —

“I am a man; and all calamities
That touch humanity come home to me.”

— EDIT.

9. The Lord’s supper.

10. Thus translated by Pitt:

“Scarce twelve strong men the ponderous mass could raise,
Such as disgrace these dark degenerate days.”

— EDIT.

11. The following is Boscawen's translation of this quotation from Horace:

"Fastidious, peevish, prone to praise What pass'd when in their youthful days, And with severe censorious tongue Correct the follies of the young."

— EDIT

12. Dr. Annesley (my mother's father) was Rector of the parish of Cripplegate.

13. This quotation from Virgil is thus translated by Pitt: —

"Ev'n when those bodies are to death resign'd,
Some old inherent spots are left behind;
A sully'ing tincture of corporeal stains
Deep in the substance of the soul remains.
Thus are her splendors dimm'd, and crusted o'er
With those dark vices that she knew before.
For this the souls a various penance pay,
To purge the taint of former crimes away.
Some in the *sweeping breezes* are refined,
And hung on high to *whiten in the wind*:
Some cleanse their stains beneath the *gushing streams*
And some rise glorious from the *searching flames*."

— EDIT.

14. Respecting this Sermon the following information is given by Mr. Moore, in his "Life of Mr. Wesley," vol. 2, p. 339: — "I was with Mr. Wesley in London when he published that Sermon. He had encouraged me to be a man of one book; and he had repeatedly invited me to speak fully whatever objection I had to any thing which he spoke or published. I thought that some things in that discourse were not to be found in THE BOOK; and I resolved to tell him so the first opportunity. It soon occurred. I respectfully observed that I agreed with him, that the Lord had always sent by whom He would send, instruction, reproof, and correction in righteousness, to mankind and that there was a real distinction between the prophetic and priestly office in the Old Testament, and the prophetic and pastoral office in the New; (where no priesthood is mentioned but that of our Lord, but I could not think that what he had said concerning the evangelists and the Pastors, — Bishops, was agreeable to what we read there; viz., that the latter had a right to administer the sacraments, which the former did not possess. I observed, "Sir, you know that the Evangelists Timothy and Titus were ordered by the Apostle to ordain

Bishops in every place; and surely they could not impart to them an authority which they did not themselves possess.' He looked earnestly at me for some time, but not with displeasure. He made no reply, and soon introduced another subject, I said no more. The man of one book would not dispute against it. I believe, he sad, his love to the Church, from which he never deviated unnecessarily, had in his instance led him a little too far."

— EDIT.

15. Charles XII., King of Sweden, at the siege of Frederickshall.
16. This appears to have been the first Sermon that Mr. Wesley ever committed to the press. It was preached about a month before he sailed for Georgia; and published the same year by C. Rivington, in St. Paul's Church-Yard. After remaining out of print upwards of ninety years, it is here republished as an authentic, and not uninteresting, specimen of his preaching at the time when he left his native country to convert Heathens; and, as he states, learned in the ends of the earth, what he least of all suspected, that he had never been comforted himself. The reader will observe that while the Sermon displays great seriousness and zeal, it exhibits a very inadequate view of real Christianity. The Preacher attributes the sanctification of human nature, in a great measure, to personal sufferings; assumes that the body is the seat of moral evil; and that sin exists in the best of Christians till they obtain deliverance by the hand of death. With what ability and success he afterwards opposed these unevangelical principles, and taught the doctrine of present salvation from all sin, by faith in Jesus Christ, is well known to all who are conversant with his Works, and especially with his Journal and Sermons. Viewed in connection with his subsequent writings, this Sermon is of considerable importance, as it serves very strikingly to illustrate the change which took place in his religious sentiments previously to his entrance upon that astonishing career of ministerial labor and usefulness, by which he was so eminently distinguished. As a perfect antidote to the doctrinal mistakes which it contains, the reader is referred to the admirable Sermon, emitted "The Scripture Way of Salvation." (Sermons; vol. 2.) — EDIT.

17. In this life adult Christians are saved from all sin, and are made perfect in love. See Mr. Wesley's "Plain account of Christian Perfection." — EDIT.
18. This doctrine, that we are saved from sin by death, is nowhere taught in sacred Scripture, as Mr. Wesley afterwards perceived, and demonstrated in the treatise just mentioned, and in several of his Sermons.— EDIT.
19. The sentiment which is here again expressed, that it is death which destroys sin in the human heart, though couched in the language of an Apostle, is a branch of that philosophical Mysticism which Mr. Wesley entertained at this early period of his life, and which he afterwards renounced for the scriptural doctrine of salvation by faith. According to the New Testament, every believer is already delivered from the dominion of sin; and the Bible never represents the entire sanctification of our nature as effected by death. It is the work of the Holy Spirit; and is not suspended upon the dissolution of the body, but upon the exercise of a steadfast faith in the almighty Savior — EDIT.
20. The following is Tate's translation of this quotation from Ovis: —
"The adulterous lust that did Aegisthus seize,
And brought on murder, sprang from wanton ease." — EDIT.
21. Farther Appeal, Part 3
22. I think this was going to an extreme.
23. Most of these Discourses, it will be observed, were written before Mr. Wesley obtained correct views of the way of salvation; and as they were not published either with his knowledge or by his appointment, he should not be made responsible for the sentiments which they contain. That on the resurrection of the body was only revised and abridged by him; and it is probable that some others of them were not his composition
24. The University of Oxford.
25. Tillotson's Sermon's, Vol. I, etc.
26. The Bishop translates *peruk*, with the Vulgates *redeem*, or *buy off* but the proper and literal meaning is, break off — A.C.