THE

# WORKS

OF

# NATHANIEL LARDNER, D.D.

## IN ELEVEN VOLUMES:

CONTAINING THE

CREDIBILITY OF THE GOSPEL HISTORY;

JEWISH AND HEATHEN TESTIMONIES;

HISTORY OF HERETICS;

AND HIS SERMONS AND TRACTS:

WITH

GENERAL CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES, AND COPIOUS INDEXES.

TO THE FIRST VOLUME IS PREFIXED

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

ANDREW KIPPIS, D.D. F.R.S. AND S.A.

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VOLUME X.

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COUNSELS OF PRUDENCE FOR THE USE OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

A

# DISCOURSE

## ON THE WISDOM OF THE SERPENT AND THE INNOCENCE OF THE DOVE:

*In which are recommended general Rules of Prudence; with particular Directions relating to Buſineſs, Converſation, Friendſhip, and Uſefulneſs.*

[FIRST PUBLISHED IN MDCCXXXVII.]

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MATT. x. 16.

BEHOLD, I SEND YOU FORTH AS SHEEP IN THE MIDST OF WOLVES: BE YE THEREFORE WISE AS SERPENTS, AND HARMLESS AS DOVES.

THIS advice is found among thoſe directions, which our bleſſed Lord gave his diſciples, when he ſent them from him upon a commiſſion in his life-time here on earth. *Theſe twelve Jeſus ſent forth, and commanded them, ſaying: go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael. And as ye go, preach, ſaying: the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the ſick, caſt out devils: freely ye have received, freely give,* Matt. x. 5—8.

It is reaſonable to conclude, that the diſciples received this commiſſion with much pleaſure and ſatisfaction, accounting it a great honour done them, and conceiving at the ſame time fond expectations of honour and acceptance wherever they came. They were to carry with them very joyful and deſirable tidings, that *the kingdom of heaven was at hand:* they were empowered to confer very great benefits, and were required to do all freely, without receiving any gratuity. The limitation in their commiſſion could not but be a high recommendation of it: the good news was to be publiſhed to Jews, and them only; not to Gentiles, nor to Samaritans.

But our Lord thought not fit to diſmiſs them without ſome particular counſels and directions, which would be of uſe to them now, but eſpecially hereafter; when their

commission should receive an enlargement, both with regard to the subject matter of their message, and the persons to whom they were to carry it. And he judged it needful to give them some hints of a different reception from what they thought of, and some cautions to be upon their guard; that they might not afford any just ground for misconstructions or injurious reflections, nor do any thing that should tend to draw upon themselves a disagreeable treatment. He therefore tells them: *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.* 'You mean well yourselves, 'and you think well of others. But I must forewarn you, 'that many, to whom you are going, have selfish and 'malicious dispositions, and are subtle and artful. For 'which reason you are to be cautious and prudent: *Be 'ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* Main-'taining your present innocence and integrity, decline 'dangers as much as possible, and take care not to give 'any ground for reflection upon your conduct.'

This advice then of our Saviour to his disciples will give me just occasion to recommend some rules and directions of prudent conduct and behaviour to those who are entering upon the stage of action in the world. In doing which I shall take this method.

I. I shall represent the nature of prudence.

II. I shall shew the necessity, grounds and reasons of prudence.

III. I intend to lay down some rules and directions concerning a prudent conduct, with regard both to our words and actions.

I. I shall represent the nature of prudence. In general, t is a discerning and employing the most proper means of obtaining those ends, which we propose to ourselves. He who aims at his own advancement is prudent, if he contrive a good scheme for that purpose, and then put in practice the several parts of it with diligence and discretion. If the end aimed at be the good and welfare of others, in any particular respect; then prudence lies in taking those methods, which are most likely to promote the advantage of those persons, and in doing that in the way least prejudicial to ourselves, and most consistent with our own safety.

It is an important branch of prudence to avoid faults. One false step sometimes ruins, or however greatly em-

barrasses

baraſſes and retards a good deſign. Therefore prudent conduct depends more on great caution and circumſpection than great abilities. A bright genius is neceſſay for producing a fine compoſition. Courage and preſence of mind are needful for a hazardous undertaking: but circumſpection alone, ſuch caution as ſecures againſt errors and faults, makes up a great part of prudent conduct, by preventing many evils and inconveniences.

Prudence likewiſe ſuppoſeth the maintaining of innocence and integrity. We may not neglect our duty to avoid danger. The principal wiſdom is to approve ourſelves to God, and it is better to ſuffer any temporal evil, than incur the Divine diſpleaſure. Theſe diſciples of Chriſt were to go out and preach, ſaying: *The kingdom of heaven is at hand.* That was the work aſſigned them by their Lord and Maſter, which therefore it was their duty to perform, and they could by no means decline. But they might do it in the way, which would leaſt expoſe them to inconveniences, and was moſt likely to ſecure acceptance to their meſſage and themſelves. This is prudence.

We are not out of a pretence of diſcretion to deſert the cauſe of truth. But we are to eſpouſe it with ſafety, if we can; that is, maintain it in the way leaſt offenſive to others, and leaſt dangerous to ourſelves.

Nor have we a right from any rules of prudence to uſe unlawful methods to obtain our end. Our end is ſuppoſed to be good, and the means muſt be ſo likewiſe. Thus far of the nature of prudence.

II. I would now ſhew the neceſſity, grounds and reaſons of prudence. Theſe are chiefly the wickedneſs and the weakneſs of men. The former is the reaſon, which our Lord refers to. *Behold, I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves: be ye therefore wiſe as ſerpents.* It is upon this ground likewiſe, that St. Paul recommends the practice of prudent caution: *See then that ye walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe, redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil,* Eph. v. 15, 16. Some men are malicious and deſigning, enemies to truth and virtue, and to all that are hearty friends of either. Good men therefore are obliged to be upon their guard, and make uſe of ſome methods of defence and ſecurity. Others are weak and ſimple, and therefore liable to be miſled and impoſed upon by the inſinuations of the ſubtle and malicious.

Nay, if there were no bad men, yet there would be need of a prudent behaviour, becauſe ſome who have not much reflection or experience are apt to put wrong conſtructions upon harmleſs actions.

This leads us ſomewhat farther into the nature of prudence, and to obſerve a particular, which could not be ſo well taken notice of, before we had obſerved this ground and reaſon of it. For a great part of prudence lies in denying ourſelves, ſo as to keep ſome way within the limits of virtue. A good man, if all about him were wiſe and good, might be ſecure in his innocence alone. It might then be ſufficient to mean well, and to purſue directly the good ends he has in view, without doing any harm in the proſecution of them. But now, on account of the weakneſs of ſome, he muſt not only be innocent, but he muſt alſo obviate miſconſtructions and miſrepreſentations.

We may perceive this in an inſtance or two. Our Saviour directs his diſciples at the eleventh verſe of this chapter: *Into whatſoever city or town ye enter, inquire who is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence.* This is more particularly expreſſed in another Goſpel: *In the ſame houſe remain, eating and drinking ſuch things as they give: go not from houſe to houſe,* Luke x. 7. They had not then in the eaſtern countries houſes of public entertainment. And it was uſual for men of good diſpoſitions, ſuch as our Lord terms worthy, to entertain ſtrangers. The diſciples were ſent two and two. They were not to make a long abode in any place, and would not be thought burdenſome by any that were worthy, or hoſpitable men. But our Lord charges them *not to go from houſe to houſe,* or remove from the place they had firſt reſorted to. This perhaps might be ſometimes done very reaſonably. But our Lord does now in a manner abſolutely reſtrain his diſciples from acting thus, whatever ſome others might do; that they might not give any the leaſt ground of ſuſpicion, or inſinuation, that they were curious about their entertainment.

It was upon this principle that the apoſtle Paul went yet farther, and in ſome places, particularly in Greece, waved his right to a ſubſiſtence from thoſe he taught, as he obſerves to the Corinthians: *If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheleſs we have not uſed this power, but ſuffer all things, leſt we ſhould hinder the goſpel of Chriſt,* 1 Cor. ix. 12. Again, ver. 19. *Though I be free from*

*from all men, yet have I made myself servant to all, that I might gain the more.* This rule he observed also at Thessalonica: *For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travel: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God,* 1 Thess. ii. 9.

I have now given you a view of the nature of prudence, and the reasons of it.

III. In the next place I am to lay down some rules and directions concerning a prudent conduct, with regard to our words and actions.

This is indeed a work of some niceness and delicacy, and is most properly reserved for men of distinguished characters. There is likewise oftentimes a backwardness in men to pay any deference to directions of this kind, except they are delivered by men of large experience, and of great renown for wisdom. For this reason, as it seems, Solomon in his book of Proverbs, containing excellent rules of virtue and prudence, thought fit to introduce wisdom herself proclaiming her kind intentions to mankind, and delivering many of those directions, that men might be the better induced to hearken to them. And when he was about to publish some remarks upon the world, and the affairs of men in it; he aggrandises his own character, and sets it off to the best advantage; giving himself the title of *the Preacher*, or Collector, Ecc. i. 1. One who had been long and carefully employed in laying up a store of just and useful observations; and who had good opportunities for that purpose, as he was *King in Jerusalem:* affirming likewise, that he had *given his heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven*; that he *had seen all the works that are done under the sun*, and that his *heart had great experience in wisdom and knowledge*, Ecc. i. 1—16.

As we have before us for our guidance the observations of those who have been eminent for wisdom, and whose character is well established in the world; it may be presumed, that all these high qualifications are not now requisite for a performance of this nature. And I would hope, that they, for whom the following directions are chiefly intended, are already so wise, or so well disposed at least, as to be willing to kearken to good counsel from any one who means them well. It will be my care to deliver such rules of prudence, as have been approved and recom-

mended by thoſe who have had a knowledge of the world, and are eſteemed good judges of mankind. And I ſhall generally ſupport the rules laid down by reaſons, which if they do not convince, the counſel itſelf may be the leſs regarded.

Rules of this ſort are very numerous, and have been often given, as many are in the book of Proverbs, without connection or dependence on each other. I ſhall propoſe thoſe I mention in the following method: Firſt, I ſhall obſerve ſome general rules of prudence; and then ſome particular directions relating to buſineſs, civil converſation in the world, more intimate friendſhip and private relations; laſtly, uſefulneſs to others.

1. I ſhall mention ſome general rules of prudence. The preſervation of our integrity in acting ſtrictly according to the rules of religion and virtue will not be allowed a place among theſe rules. However, (as has been already ſhewn,) it ought to be ſuppoſed. Our bleſſed Lord does not omit the innocence of the dove, when he recommends the wiſdom of the ſerpent. I muſt therefore again deſire it may be obſerved, that nothing I am about to ſay is to be underſtood as inconſiſtent with integrity; which, though not properly a rule of prudence, is oftentimes of advantage, and is both a mean of ſecurity, and adds weight and influence to a man's character. *He that walketh uprightly, walketh ſurely, but he that perverteth his way ſhall be known*, Prov. x. 9. Again: *In the way of righteouſneſs there is life, and in the path way thereof there is no death*, ch. xii. 28. Moreover: *The path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day*, ch. iv. 18. Though virtuous and upright men ſhould for a while lie in obſcurity, they may ſhine hereafter with a greater luſtre. And, which is above all external conſiderations and advantages of this preſent world, virtue is of the higheſt importance to the inward peace of the mind, and our everlaſting happineſs in the world to come. Suppoſing then a ſtrict regard to uprightneſs of heart, and innocence of behaviour;

1.) The firſt rule of prudence I lay down is this, that we ſhould endeavour to know ourſelves. He that knows not himſelf may undertake deſigns he is not fit for, and can never accompliſh; in which he muſt therefore neceſſarily meet with diſappointment. Nor can any man have comfort and ſatisfaction in an employment that is unſuitable to his temper.

Beſide

Beſide a knowledge of our own genius, temper and inclination; it is needful, that we ſhould be alſo poſſeſſed of a juſt idea of our outward circumſtances and condition, and the relation we bear to perſons about us. It is one branch of prudence for a man to behave agreeably to his own particular character. If he miſtake that, he will be guilty of many improprieties. But a juſt diſcernment of our own circumſtances, and of our relation to other men, will make way for an agreeable and acceptable deportment.

The knowledge of yourſelves will prevent conceit on the one hand, and meanneſs of ſpirit and conduct on the other. You will readily act with that modeſt aſſurance, which becomes your birth, eſtate, age, ſtation, abilities, ſkill and other advantages; without departing from your juſt right, or aſſuming more than ought to be reaſonably allowed you.

2.) Endeavour to know other men. It is a point of charity to hope the beſt of every man, and of prudence to fear the worſt. Not that theſe are inconſiſtent. It would be to miſrepreſent a Chriſtian virtue extremely, to ſuppoſe, that it obliged us to truſt men without any knowledge of them. We are to hope and ſuppoſe of every man, that he is good and honeſt, till we have ſome proof to the contrary. This is the judgment of charity. But we are not bound to employ men, or confide in them, till we have ſome poſitive evidences of their honeſty and capacity for the truſt we would commit to them, or the work in which we would employ them.

Some men are unreaſonably ſuſpicious and jealous. Becauſe they are bad themſelves, or becauſe they have had dealings with ſome that are ſo, they have formed a notion that all men are falſe and unfaithful. This is a wicked extreme. They who are in it are fitly puniſhed for ſo diſadvantageous and unjuſt an opinion of their fellow-creatures. Such muſt needs become contemptible themſelves. They may be ſafe, but they can never make any figure in ſociety; it being, I ſuppoſe, impoſſible for one man alone to carry on any important deſign, or do any thing conſiderable in any buſineſs or profeſſion. There is therefore a neceſſity of mutual confidence among men.

On the other hand, ſome good men are apt to think, that all other men are ſo. This is oftentimes the ſentiment likewiſe of the young and unexperienced. And

indeed it muſt be ſome uneaſineſs to thoſe who are innocent and undeſigning themſelves, to ſuſpect other men, or to withhold truſt and confidence from them. But however kind and favourable their apprehenſions and inclinations may be, it would certainly be imprudent to truſt to all appearances, and give credit to every pretence. The counſel in the text is given by our Lord to his honeſt well-meaning diſciples, becauſe he knew there were men in the world of bad diſpoſitions, more than theſe unexperienced diſciples were aware of: *Behold, I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves: be ye therefore wiſe as ſerpents.* Solomon has an obſervation to this purpoſe: *The ſimple believeth every word, but the prudent looketh well to his goings,* Prov. xiv. 15. The confidence placed in men ought to be proportioned to the evidences of their faithfulneſs and capacity. If any act otherwiſe, there is danger of ſhame and diſappointment. It muſt therefore be of great advantage in life to be able to form a true judgment of men.

The knowledge of men, the ſkill of diſcerning their talents and diſpoſitions, will be of uſe not only in buſineſs, but alſo in civil converſation, in the choice of friendſhips and relations, in deſigns of uſefulneſs, and indeed in every occaſion and occurrence of life. You will thereby know, whom to truſt with ſafety, whom to be free and open with in converſation, whoſe favour it is your intereſt to ſeek, on whom you can beſtow your favours and ſervices with a likely proſpect of doing ſome good, or with hopes of grateful returns, if ever you ſhould want them.

3.) Watch, and embrace opportunities. This is a rule, which ought to be obſerved with regard to our words and actions. *There is a ſeaſon for every thing, and every thing is beautiful in its time,* Ecc. iii. 1, 11. *There is a time to ſpeak, and a time to keep ſilence,* ſays Solomon, ver. 7. Again, *A word ſpoken in due ſeaſon, how good is it?* Prov. xv. 23. *A word fitly ſpoken is like apples of gold in pictures of ſilver,* ch. xxv. 11.

In all affairs there are ſome ſpecial opportunities, which it is a point of wiſdom to improve. *He that gathers in ſummer is a wiſe ſon. But he that ſleepeth in harveſt is a ſon that cauſeth ſhame,* Prov. x. 5. Some opportunities, like that here mentioned by Solomon, are obvious to all. And it muſt be groſs ſtupidity not to know them, and incorrigible ſloth to neglect them. But there are ſome opportunities, which will

will be obſerved and taken by none but thoſe who are diſcerning and attentive. Every one can ſee an opportunity, when it is paſt: but he only who is wiſe, ſees it beforehand, or perceives and embraces it, when preſent.

4.) Adviſe with thoſe who are able to give you good counſel. *Without counſel purpoſes are diſappointed, but in the multitude of counſellors they are eſtabliſhed*, Prov. xv. 22. At leaſt, in all important and difficult caſes call in the aid of ſome friends. *Every purpoſe is eſtabliſhed by counſel, and with good advice make war*, ch. xx. 18. It is great preſumption in any man to be ſelf-ſufficient, and to ſuppoſe, that in all caſes he can act well by his own ſkill alone.

As counſel ought to be aſked, ſo there ſhould be a diſpoſition to hearken to it; or at leaſt, to weigh well the reaſons that are brought for or againſt any deſign. *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkens unto counſel is wiſe*, Prov. xii. 15.

But yet there is need of ſome diſcretion in the choice of counſellors. They ſhould be uſually the aged and experienced; always, if poſſible, ſuch as are ſincere and diſintereſted. I ſcarce need therefore to caution you againſt adviſing with your rivals and competitors. If you are ſo happy as to have parents, to whom you can have recourſe, you muſt be in the right to conſult with them in affairs of moment. If you have not this advantage, however recollect the advices they have given you. Perhaps they have left with you ſome counſels of prudence, as well as of virtue. When you are forming deſigns inconſiſtent with their counſels, give ſuch deſigns a ſecond conſideration, before you take a final reſolution. This may be reckoned a point of wiſdom, as well as a piece of reſpect due to thoſe who heartily wiſhed your welfare.

After them, adviſe with, and hearken to, thoſe who are moſt like them in a ſincere and unaffected concern for your true intereſt. But if any whom you conſult, always adviſe according to your own inclinations, you may be aſſured they are not your friends. It is not your intereſt they conſult, but their own. So likewiſe, if any, of whom you honeſtly aſk advice, with an intention to be informed and guided by them, are ſhy and reſerved, though at other times, and upon other occaſions, they are open enough, you ſhould remember not to go to them again. It is not worth the while to reveal your deſigns to ſuch.

It

It can be of no advantage, and may be attended with ſome inconveniences.

5.) Reſtrain and govern your affections. This is of great importance to the prudent conduct of life. In all debates he who is calm and compoſed, as all are ſenſible, has a vaſt advantage over a heated adverſary. But I mean not the reſtraint of anger only, or reſentment upon a provocation; but a ſteady government of all the paſſions, and a calm and compoſed temper of mind in all occurrences. He who is overſet by a croſs accident, is loſt beyond redreſs, and can never get out of a difficulty, though there ſtill remain ſeveral ways of eſcape and recovery.

Avoid too great eagerneſs for any earthly thing. Men of violent inclinations are immediately for action. They have no ſooner thought of a thing, but they muſt have it. They are at once paſſed the ſtate of deliberation within themſelves, and of conſultation with others. Men who are extremely eager for gain and riches, are not always the moſt ſucceſsful. They precipitate all their meaſures. They can never have an opportunity, becauſe they cannot wait till it offers. Such uſually run deſperate hazards, and accordingly meet with great loſſes. Solomon, who has ſo often ſpoken of the benefit of diligence, does nevertheleſs diſcourage eagerneſs of ſpirit and action, as ruinous and deſtructive. *The thoughts of the diligent*, ſays he, *tend only to plenteouſneſs: but of every one that is haſty, only to want*, Prov. xxi. 5.

Then, the men of haſty ſpirit often plunge themſelves into great difficulties; which no after thought of their own, nor kind aſſiſtance of their friends can extricate them out of. What Solomon ſays of men ſubject to intemperate anger is very likely to be the caſe of all who have any other ungoverned paſſion: *A man of great wrath ſhall ſuffer puniſhment: for, if thou deliver him, yet thou muſt do it again*, Prov. xix. 19. If you help them out of one trouble, yet they will ſoon run themſelves into ſome other. And in another place the ſame wiſe man has given a lively image of the defenceleſs and deplorable condition of thoſe who are under the government of violent paſſions: *He that has no rule over his own ſpirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls*, Prov. xxv. 28.

It ſeems to be for this reaſon, that men of leſſer abilities do often ſucceed better in buſineſs, and indeed in ſome important affairs, than the more acute and penetrating.

They

They have ſlow capacities, but they are abundantly recompenſed by the coolneſs of their paſſions. They move on with a ſteady, even pace, without ſlips or falls; till at length, to the ſurpriſe of all who were not very diſcerning indeed, they diſtance many, who ſet out with much more life and vigour.

Theſe are general rules of prudence. They need not to be mentioned again. But they ought to be obſerved upon every particular occaſion, and will be of uſe in all the affairs and actions of life that require prudent conduct and management.

2. I am now to lay down ſome particular rules of prudence concerning ſeveral branches of conduct, and divers circumſtances of life. They will concern theſe four points beforementioned; buſineſs, civil converſation, more intimate friendſhips and relations, and uſefulneſs to others.

1.) Of buſineſs. I may not preſume to give many directions relating to this matter. But I apprehend it to be a point of great prudence, for a man to endeavour to be fully maſter of his employment. He who is ſkilful in his calling, and diligently attends to it, and is punctual to his promiſes and engagements, can ſeldom fail of encouragement. Theſe may be generally reckoned ſurer means of ſucceſs, than a large acquaintance, addreſs, importunity, or any other ſuch like arts of procuring the dealings of men: though theſe need not be entirely neglected, and may be of uſe, if they are not too much depended on. Intereſt is a prevailing principle, and that will diſpoſe men to be concerned with, and employ thoſe who are ſkilful, diligent and punctual.

It is alſo eſteemed a point of prudence for men to abide in the employment to which they have been educated, and in which they have once engaged; unleſs there be ſome great and particular inconvenience attending it, or ſome ſtrong and peculiar inducement to another.

But by no means hearken to the ſpeeches of thoſe, who would draw you off from all employment. Some there are in the world, men of ſprightly and aſpiring fancies, (as they would be thought) who would perſuade you, that buſineſs is below the dignity of rational beings; or however, of all who would ſhine and be diſtinguiſhed. You will be juſtified by Solomon in throwing contempt on ſuch imaginations: *He that is deſpiſed, and has a ſervant, is better than he that honoureth himſelf, and lacketh bread,* Prov. xii. 9.

Again,

Again, ver. 11. *He that tilleth his land, ſhall have plenty of bread, but he that followeth vain perſons ſhall have poverty enough.*

2.) The next thing concerning which I would give ſome directions is civil converſation. In general, endeavour to act according to your own character, and maintain that ſuitably to the perſons you meet with, of different abilities, principles and circumſtances.

He is happy in the art of converſation, who can preſerve a mean, without being light, or formal; neither too reſerved, nor too open. Reſervedneſs is diſagreeable and offenſive; too great openneſs, in mixed company, with which you are not well acquainted, is often attended with dangerous conſequences. It may be a good rule for every man, to guard eſpecially againſt that extreme, which he is moſt liable to fall into; by which he is in the greateſt danger of expoſing himſelf, or offending others. Which is the worſt extreme, may not be eaſy to determine. But I think, if we will take the judgment of Solomon, too great openneſs muſt be the moſt inconſiſtent with prudence. For ſilence is with him a mark of wiſdom, and there is ſcarce any one thing, he has oftener recommended than the government of the tongue; nor any thing, he has more plainly and more frequently condemned, than talkativeneſs. I ſhall remind you of ſome of his ſayings upon this argument. *In the multitude of words there wanteth not ſin. But he that refraineth his lips is wiſe*, Prov. x. 19. *He that hath knowledge, ſpareth his words: even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wiſe, and he that ſhutteth his lips, is eſteemed a man of underſtanding*, ch. xvii. 27, 28. *The tongue of the wiſe uſeth knowledge aright. But the mouth of fools poureth out fooliſhneſs*, ch. xv. 2. *A fool uttereth all his mind, but a wiſe man keepeth it in till afterwards*, ch. xxix. 11. *Wiſdom reſteth in the heart of him that has underſtanding: but that which is in the midſt of fools is made known*, Prov. xiv. 33. *He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his mouth, ſhall have deſtruction*, ch. xiii. 3. Eſpecially, be cautious of what you ſay of others; and be not too forward in giving characters, either by way of praiſe or diſpraiſe.

The only end of converſation is not to entertain, or inſtruct others. You are likewiſe to aim at your own improvement, and the increaſe of your preſent ſtock of learning and knowledge. Nor is it neceſſary, in order to be agree-

able,

able, that you ſhould entertain the company with diſcourſe. You may as much oblige ſome men by patient attention to what they ſay, as by producing juſt and new obſervations of your own. For young perſons particularly, ſilence and modeſty muſt be advantageous qualities in converſation. St. James's precept is general: *Let every man be ſwift to hear, ſlow to ſpeak*, Jam. i. 19: And if attended to, would leſſen the multitude of ſome men's words, very much to their own benefit, and the improvement of ſociety.

Another rule of prudence relating to this matter, which is alſo a point of duty, is: *If poſſible, live peaceably with all men*, Rom. xii. 18. Do not needleſsly offend, or diſoblige any. A reſolution to pleaſe men at all adventures, amidſt the preſent variety of ſentiments and affections in the world, would engage us, at ſeaſons, to deſert the cauſe of truth, liberty and virtue. And therefore our Lord has juſtly pronounced a woe upon thoſe who are univerſally applauded, ſaying: *Woe unto you when all men ſhall ſpeak well of you*, Luke vi. 26. Such a reputation is rarely to be obtained without a baſe and criminal indifference for ſome things very valuable and important to the general intereſt of mankind. However, do not deſpiſe any man, though ever ſo mean. Malice and hatred are active principles. And, as has been often obſerved, one enemy may do you more miſchief, than many friends can do you good. Nor is there any man ſo mean, or ſo feeble, but he may ſome time have an opportunity of doing you much good, or much harm.

You are not to be afraid of men, nor too ſolicitous to pleaſe them, nor to ſtoop to flattery or meanneſs to gain their favour. Theſe are methods neither very virtuous, nor very prudent. For they ſeldom procure laſting eſteem or affection. If you gain men's favour by flattery, you can keep it no longer than you are willing to be their ſlaves, or their tools. But you may endeavour by eaſy civilities, and real ſervices, to oblige and gain all you can. This we may do, this we ought to do, according to the rules of Chriſtianity, good breeding and prudence.

Chooſe, as much as may be, the converſation of thoſe who are wiſer and more experienced than yourſelves. Avoid the company of thoſe, who indulge intemperate mirth, and neglect the rules of decency; from whom you can expect no benefit, and from whom you are in danger of receiving

a taint

a taint to your virtue, or a blot to your reputation. *He that walketh with wiſe perſons*, ſaith Solomon, *ſhall be wiſe, but a companion of fools ſhall be deſtroyed*, Prov. xiii. 20.

3.) In the third place I ſhall mention ſome obſervations concerning more intimate friendſhips and private relations. It is a rule to chooſe friends among acquaintance, and not to enter into intimacy with thoſe of whom you have had no trial, becauſe a falſe friend is the moſt dangerous enemy. Solomon has a direction relating to this point: *Thine own friend, and thy father's friend forſake not*, Prov. xxviii. 10. The meaning is not, that we ſhould not deſert ſuch, or refuſe to aſſiſt them when they are in diſtreſs: but it is a rule of prudence, to chooſe for friends, or to apply to thoſe, when we are in any trouble or difficulty, whoſe ſincerity and faithfulneſs have been tried and experienced.

In the choice of friends it may be prudent to have ſome regard to equality of age, as well as circumſtances, and to an agreement of ſentiments and diſpoſitions.

If you are to avoid the converſation of the openly vicious, (as was before obſerved) you are to make friendſhip only with men of known and approved virtue. Let thoſe be your friends, whom God himſelf loves; the meek, the humble, the peaceable who abhor ſtrife and contention. Solomon's caution againſt familiarity with men of a contrary diſpoſition is delivered with ſome peculiar concern and earneſtneſs: *Make no friendſhip*, ſays he, *with an angry man, and with a furious man thou ſhalt not go; leſt thou learn his ways, and get a ſnare to thy ſoul*, Prov. xxii. 24, 25. You may likewiſe conſider, whether they ſhew a good economy in their own affairs: what has hitherto been their behaviour among their friends and acquaintance: what proofs they have given of fidelity, diſcretion, candour, generoſity. The more good properties meet in your friend, the more entire and comfortable will be your friendſhip, and the more likely is it to be durable. Happy is the man, who has a few friends; true, diſcreet, generous. But to admit into intimacy men deſtitute of all good qualities, who neither have faithfulneſs nor generoſity to ſtand by you in diſtreſſes and afflictions, nor wiſdom to direct you in difficulties, would be only to increaſe the troubles and vexations of life, without abating any of them, or making proviſion for a perplexed and difficult circumſtance.

Solomon,

Solomon, who was ſenſible of the bleſſing of a true friend, and has deſcribed the advantages and the offices of friendſhip, has alſo ſtrongly repreſented the diſappaintment and vexation of miſplaced confidence. Concerning the advantages of friendſhip he ſpeaks in this manner. *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adverſity*, Prov. xvii. 17. *Two are better than one, becauſe they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth: for he has not another to help him up.* Again, *if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail againſt him, two ſhall withſtand him; and a three-fold cord is not eaſily broken*, Ecc. iv. 9, 10, 11, 12. But then he has obſerved likewiſe by way of caution and admonition: *Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint*, Prov. xxv. 19.

When you have adopted any into intimacy and friendſhip, they are in a great meaſure upon a level with relations. Though they differ ſomewhat, I ſhall ſpeak of them jointly, to avoid prolixity.

There are here two things principally to be aimed at: one is, that friendſhips and alliances be preſerved without open ruptures: the other is, that whilſt there remains an outward ſhow of friendſhip, or alliances ſubſiſt; there may be a real harmony, and a mutual exchange of affections and ſervices.

In the firſt place, it is of great importance, that friendſhips and alliances, once contracted, ſhould be preſerved, without open ruptures. For, though you have right on your ſide; yet * breaches between friends, or relatives, are ſeldom without ſcandal to both parties. But if you eſcape that, you will not avoid all uneaſineſs in yourſelves. A diſtant ſtrangeneſs, or open variance, after mutual endearments, will be grievous to men of

* It will not be amiſs to tranſcribe here a paſſage of Photius. Some readers will be pleaſed to ſee, how this thought is expreſſed by ſo fine a writer. Μη ταχυς ησθα ξενγνυειν εις φιλιαν· συζευξας δε, ωαντι τροπω τον δεσμον αλυτον συντηρει, απαν τα ωλησιον ανεχων το βαρος, ωλην ει μηπω ψυχης κινδυνον επαγει· αι γαρ ωρος τας φιλας διαστασεις την ολην ωροαιρεσιν εκφαυλιζυσι των ανθρωπων, και α τον υωαιτιον μονον, αλλα και τον αναιτιον εις την αυτην υπονοιαν καταστωσιν. Phot. Ep. i. p. 27.

kind

kind and generous diſpoſitions. The other end is the preſervation of real harmony.

In order to ſecure both theſe ends ſeveral things are of great uſe. It is an obſervation of Solomon relating to this point: *A man that has friends muſt ſhew himſelf friendly*, Prov. xviii. 24. You muſt not admit a ſelfiſh temper. You are to be concerned for your friend's intereſt, as well as your own.

As perfection is not to be found on earth, you are to be prepared and diſpoſed to overlook ſome faults. You are not to know every thing which you ſee or hear. *He that covereth a tranſgreſſion ſeeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter, ſeparateth very friends*, Prov. xvii. 9. *A fool's wrath is preſently known: but a prudent man covereth ſhame*, ch. xii. 16. If any difference happen, drop it again as ſoon as you recover your temper. *The beginning of ſtrife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with*, ch. xvii. 14. You are not to break with a friend for a ſmall matter.

The better to ſecure the laſting love and good will of your friends, aim not barely at the preſervation of a real affection for them, and the performance of real ſervices; but conſult likewiſe the manner of performing benefits. You think this worthy of your regard in order to gain a friendſhip: why ſhould you not alſo for preſerving, or cheriſhing it?

Indeed, all good offices ſhould be done in an obliging manner. And friendly actions are to be improved by friendly words. There is a polite piece of advice in the book of Eccleſiaſticus: *My ſon, blemiſh not thy good deeds; neither uſe unconfortable words, when thou giveſt any thing. Shall not the dew aſſuage the heat? So is a word better than a gift. Lo, is not a word better than a gift? But both are with a gracious man*, Ecc. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

Treſpaſs not too far on the goodneſs and affection of the kindeſt and moſt loving friend or relative by too frequent cóntradictions, eſpecially in matters of ſmall moment; or by too keen, or too frequent jeſts, or by any ſeeming neglect, or a rude familiarity: but whilſt you uſe the openneſs, freedom and confidence of a friend; oblige yourſelves to the ſame, or very near the ſame outward forms of civility and reſpect with which you receive a ſtranger. This muſt be of ſome importance, becauſe few men can perſuade themſelves

themſelves, that they are really beloved, when they ſeem to be deſpiſed.

4.) The laſt thing to be ſpoken to is uſefulneſs to others. Though I am giving rules and directions chiefly to young people, who are but ſetting out in the world; yet I think it not proper to omit entirely this matter, there being few good and innocent perſons, however young, who have not alſo ſome generoſity; and they are apt to be forming deſigns of uſefulneſs to other men, as well as of advancement for themſelves.

There are two branches of uſefulneſs; one concerning the intereſt of civil ſociety, the other the intereſt of truth and religion; or the temporal, and the ſpiritual good and welfare of men.

One branch of uſefulneſs is ſerving the intereſt of civil ſociety. For this every man may be concerned, having firſt carefully informed himſelf about it, that he may make a true judgment wherein it conſiſts. You ſhould manifeſt a ſteady regard to the public welfare upon every occaſion that requires your aſſiſtance: ſhewing, that you are not to be impoſed upon by falſe pretences, and that your integrity is inviolable; that you will not for a little preſent profit, nor for all your own perſonal ſhare in the world, ſell, or betray the welfare of the public, and of mankind in general. If you maintain this ſteadineſs in the way ſuitable to your ſtation, it will procure you weight and influence. I ſuppoſe this may be more adviſable, than to imitate thoſe, who out of a forward zeal for the public have been ſo far tranſported as to leave their proper ſtation, and ſet upon reforming the world, hoping to root out at once all abuſes and corruptions. From ſome things that have already happened in the world, in almoſt every age and part of it, one may ſafely foretel, what will be the iſſue of ſuch an undertaking. You will be baffled, and then deſpiſed. Poſſibly, Solomon has an eye to ſuch attempts as theſe, when he ſays: *Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyſelf over-wiſe: why ſhouldſt thou deſtroy thyſelf?* Ecc. vii. 16.

It is a regular and becoming deportment in a man's own proper ſtation, which is moſt likely to give him weight and authority. Go on therefore by a juſt diſcharge of all the duties of your condition, to lay up a ſtock of reputation and influence. To do this will be great prudence, and to

improve it, as occaſions offer, or to hazard and lay it all out for the good of the public, in a caſe of emergency, will be both prudent and generous.

The other branch of uſefulneſs is promoting the intereſt of truth and religion. There are three or four rules to be obſerved here, which may be collected from ſome directions, and the example of our bleſſed Lord and his apoſtles. *Caſt not your pearls before ſwine: if they perſecute you in one city, flee into another: inſtruct men, as they are able to bear it: uſe mildneſs of ſpeech, and meekneſs of behaviour.*

Theſe rules partly regard our own ſafety, and partly the beſt way of obtaining the end aimed at. For, as every good man ought to have a zeal for the happineſs of others, and particularly for promoting truth and virtue; ſo it is a point of prudence to purſue ſuch good ends in the uſe of thoſe means, which are moſt likely to obtain them, and with as little danger or damage to ourſelves as may be.

The firſt is a rule delivered by our Saviour: *Give not that which his holy unto the dogs, neither caſt ye your pearls before ſwine, leſt they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you,* Matt. vii. 6. There is a rule of like import in the Proverbs: *Speak not in the ear of a fool, for he will deſpiſe the wiſdom of thy words,* Prov. xxiii. 9. This too is partly the deſign of that direction, which St. Paul gives to Timothy: deſcribing ſome men, that they had a *form of godlineſs, denying the power of it; from ſuch,* ſays he *turn away,* 2 Tim. iii. 5. Leave them, as men whom you have no proſpect of doing any good to. Our Lord himſelf obſerved this rule; for he rarely addreſſed himſelf directly to the phariſees, but rather taught the people: and his diſciples afterwards having made a tender of the goſpel to the Jews, when they rejected it, went from them to the Gentiles. Acts xiii. 46.

The true character of thoſe men who are not the ſubjects of inſtruction is this; they *truſt in themſelves, that they are righteous, and deſpiſe others,* Luke xviii. 9. Again: *Their heart is waxed groſs, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they cloſed; leſt at any time they ſhould ſee with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and ſhould be converted and healed,* Matt. xiii. 15.

Theſe are not to be inſtructed. Nor would they admit a direct addreſs and application to be made to them. You

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may warn others againſt them, you may weep over them, you may pray for them, but you cannot teach them. It is a dangerous thing to offer them any ſervice to enlighten them. If they are not under ſome external reſtraints, *they turn again and rend you.* If therefore upon trial you meet with men of this character and diſpoſition, you are to retreat as well as you can. The moſt that can be thought of is to wait for a better opportunity.

However, our bleſſed Lord gives this charge to his diſciples: *What I tell you in darkneſs, that ſpeak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the houſe top,* Matt. x. 27. Proclaim the doctrine you have heard from me publicly wherever you go, and do all that lies in your power to recommend it to all men. And it muſt be owned, that they who have an opportunity of applying to great numbers of men, either by diſcourſe or writing, have a vaſt advantage; and they are bound by their fidelity to Chriſt, and by all that is dear and ſacred in truth, religion and virtue, to improve this advantage to the utmoſt of their ability. If they ſcatter abroad the principles of religion, ſome will fall upon good ground, whence may be expected a plentiful harveſt.

The ſecond rule relating to this matter is, *If they perſecute you in one city, flee into another,* Matt. x. 23. You may decline the heat of men's rage and diſpleaſure, and reſerve yourſelves for better times, or for more teachable and better diſpoſed perſons. Of the firſt believers after our Lord's aſcenſion it is ſaid: *And at that time there was a great perſecution againſt the church that was at Jeruſalem, and they were all ſcattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apoſtles,* Acts viii. 1. It is likely, the apoſtles had ſome ſpecial directions from the Holy Ghoſt, not to depart from Jeruſalem, and they there enjoyed accordingly a ſpecial protection: but the reſt of the believers left Jeruſalem for the preſent, and ſhifted for themſelves, as they could, in other parts. Nay we afterwards find apoſtles alſo obſerving this rule. Peter having been delivered out of priſon by an angel, after he had been put in cuſtody by Herod, *departed and went to another place,* Acts xii. 17. Of Paul and Barnabas it is related, that when at Iconium *there was an aſſault made both of the Gentiles, and alſo of the Jews, to uſe them deſpitefully; they were aware of*

*it, and fled unto Lyſtra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lies round about,* chap. xiv. 5, 6.

Thirdly, teach men as they are able to bear it. So did our bleſſed Lord. Says the evangeliſt: *And with many ſuch parables ſpake he the word unto them, as they were able to bear it,* Mark iv. 33. So he taught the diſciples alſo, delivering ſome things with ſome obſcurity, becauſe they were not able to bear a plain and full revelation of them: *I have yet many things to ſay unto you, but ye cannot bear them now,* John xvi. 12. This may be the fault of men, that they are not able to hear every truth plainly ſpoken: but yet there muſt be ſome compliance and condeſcenſion in this reſpect. *And I, brethren,* ſays St. Paul to the Corinthians, *could not ſpeak unto you as unto ſpiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Chriſt Jeſus. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it,* 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2. You muſt therefore, as the apoſtles did, *become all things to all men, that by all means you may ſave ſome,* 1 Cor. ix. 22. You are not to depart from your own integrity, nor your proper character: but ſo far as can be done conſiſtent with theſe, you are to ſuit your inſtructions to men's abilities and conditions.

Fourthly, in this work uſe great mildneſs of ſpeech, and meekneſs of behaviour. You are not to provoke any that are teachable by reflecting on their want of underſtanding, nor to ſuffer your zeal to degenerate into rudeneſs. It has been obſerved by ſome, that the apoſtles of Chriſt were eminent examples of an excellent decorum in their diſcourſes, and in their whole behaviour. And among other directions to Timothy St. Paul has not failed to recommend particularly meekneſs of behaviour, as the moſt likely method of reclaiming men from their errors. *The ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekneſs inſtructing them that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth,* 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. That you may gain men to truth and virtue, apply the ſtrongeſt arguments to their reaſon and conſcience, without a contemptuous treatment of their perſons or prejudices.

Theſe gentle methods of reformation will be generally preferred by good men, and may be reckoned the moſt probable means of conviction: but I do not deny, that ſome faults and follies of men may fitly be ridiculed; and

and ſome men may be rebuked ſharply by proper perſons, and with all authority. All which is no more than putting in practice the direction of Solomon: *Anſwer a fool according to his folly, leſt he be wiſe in his own conceit,* Prov. xxvi. 5.

I have now ſet before you ſome general rules of prudence, and ſome particular directions concerning divers branches of conduct. But you are not to ſuppoſe, that prudence is to be learned by rules only. It is rather a habit, which muſt be gained by obſervation, action and experience. Suffer not yourſelves to be embarraſſed and perplexed with a great multitude and variety of rules, nor be over ſolicitous about a proper decorum: for too great anxiety always ſpoils the performance. In a word, be but fully maſter of your own character, and poſſeſſed of an habitual deſire of pleaſing, together with a modeſt perſuaſion that you ſhall do well, and you will do ſo.

There can be no occaſion for me to add a particular recommendation of the ſtudy of prudence, having before ſhewn the neceſſity, and the grounds and reaſons of it. The text itſelf demonſtrates the lawfulneſs and expedience of prudent conduct. Nor can any be altogether inſenſible of the importance of it to ſucceſs in life. Virtue, learning, the knowledge of arts and ſciences, are like diamonds, that have an intrinſic value, but muſt be ſet and poliſhed, before they are fit for ſhow or uſe. Though divers other natural and acquired accompliſhments may procure affection and eſteem, it is diſcretion only that can preſerve them.

I am not apprehenſive of any abuſe of the directions here laid down. They have no tendency to make men ſelfiſh or cunning. They are deſigned for the young and unexperienced; as likewiſe for the honeſt, the good-natured, and the generous, of any age and condition. Though you ſhould be ſimple, they who are deſigning will practiſe their arts of ſubtlety and miſchief. By a prudent behaviour you will not encourage their evil practices, but only ſecure yourſelves againſt them, and be better qualified for ſucceſs and uſefulneſs in the world.

After all, you are not to depend upon your own care and prudence, but to recommend yourſelves and your honeſt well-laid deſigns to the divine protection and bleſſing. It has been ſeen by thoſe who have diligently obſerved human counſels and events, *that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the*

*battle to the ſtrong, neither yet bread to the wiſe, nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, nor yet favour to men of ſkill, but time and chance happeneth to them all*, Ecc. ix. 11. As all human affairs are liable to accidents and diſaſters, a firm perſuaſion, and ſerious regard to the over-ruling providence of God, which is not limited by the preſent ſcene of things, cannot but contribute to your happineſs, by preparing your minds for all events, and enabling you to bear afflictions and diſappointments with patience.

It may likewiſe be one good foundation of happineſs, to admit but moderate affections for the great things of this world. If you are truly religious, you may be content with a little, and will manage that well. Without a great eſtate, by frugal and prudent conduct, you may have enough for yourſelves, and your immediate dependents; and be able to do good to others alſo. Happy had it been for ſome men, as well as for the public, if from the very firſt, and all their days, they had rather aimed to be wiſe and good, than rich or great. Finally, if you do good for the ſake of doing good, which is a noble principle; and with a view to future rewards, which are incomparably great, and certain: you will not be much concerned, though you miſs of preſent rewards, which you know to be but trifles, and never were your principal aim.

May you then add to virtue prudence, and abound in both yet more and more; that you may eſcape the ſnares of the wicked, and the miſapprehenſions of the weak; may have ſucceſs in buſineſs, acceptance with mankind, happineſs in friendſhip and every private relation; may be uſeful members of civil ſociety, and of the church of God; may enjoy contentment, and peace of mind in all events: and at length obtain the diſtinguiſhed recompenſes, which God, who is infinitely wiſe and holy, will beſtow upon thoſe, who have not only been *undefiled in the way*, Pſalm cxix. 1. but have alſo advanced the welfare of their fellow-creatures, and the honour of his name in the world.

A CAUTION

A CAUTION AGAINST

# CONFORMITY TO THIS WORLD:

## TWO DISCOURSES ON ROMANS xii. 2.

[FIRST PUBLISHED IN MDCCXXXIX.]

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## DISCOURSE I.

### ROM. xii. 2.

### AND BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD.

THIS chapter contains directions for the practice of many virtues. It begins with exhortations of a general nature, recommended with great earneſtneſs: *I beſeech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye preſent your bodies a living ſacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reaſonable ſervice. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye tranſformed by the renewing of your mind.* In the remaining part of the chapter are recommended to Chriſtians divers virtues; ſuch as humility, faithfulneſs and diligence in the improvement of their talents and in the diſcharge of the duties of their ſeveral ſtations, undiſſembled love of each other, patience under afflictions, a love of peace, forbearance of enemies, and even kindneſs to them if they are in diſtreſs.

My preſent deſign is to conſider the cautionary direction of the text: *And be not conformed to this world.* By the world, as you well know, in the New Teſtament, and in common diſcourſe, is often meant this preſent ſtate, and the things of it. It likewiſe ſometimes denotes the ſinful cuſtoms and practices of men, who live in this world; or the bad men of the world, who live according to the luſts of the fleſh, and as if they looked for no other happineſs, but what conſiſts in the poſſeſſions and enjoyments of this world: and ſo generally had men abandoned themſelves to ſin and folly, that ſatan is ſpoken of as the *god of this world*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. as if he had been the deity, they acknowledged and worſhipped.

Indeed before the coming of Chriſt, and the publication of his goſpel, human nature lay in a very deplorable and degenerate condition, being generally involved in great darkneſs and ignorance, and under the power of irregular and exorbitant appetites and affections: little virtue, either in the Heathen or the Jewiſh world: things contrary to reaſon practiſed by men of every rank: the very principles of the guides and inſtructors of men too much ſuited to extenuate vice, or too weak to check the torrent of it; and often recommending little elſe but a bare performance of external acts of religion, without, and in the ſtead of, real virtue and true piety.

The apoſtle therefore now writing to the Chriſtians at Rome, judged it neceſſary at the beginning of his practical directions, to caution them againſt being carried away with the ſtream of irreligion and wickedneſs: and it is to be feared, that ſtill there may be reaſon for ſuch a caution. The goſpel may have made ſome conſiderable alteration in the world. Yea, it ought to be owned, that the world has been greatly reformed and amended thereby. It has bleſſed many with juſter ſentiments concerning God and the way of ſerving him. It has alſo had a good effect upon the manners of men; and many have been influenced by the good principles they have received. Great numbers have been preſerved from ſins, they otherwiſe would not have eſcaped. Others have reached to degrees of virtue, which they never would have attained without its aſſiſtance: and the number of truly good and upright men is not ſo ſmall as formerly; but, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, much enlarged and increaſed.

Nevertheleſs there are many, whoſe lives are not agreeable to the rules of right reaſon, or the precepts of the Chriſtian religion. And though it ſhould be allowed, or charitably ſuppoſed and hoped, that they are not now the moſt, who act contrary to the precepts of religion; yet a caution, *not to be conformed to the world*, may not be uſeleſs or needleſs. If there are but few, who act as men of the world, and are principally influenced by the things of this preſent life: yet conſidering the deceitfulneſs of our hearts, the bias of inclination to ſome ſins, and the force of only a few bad examples; (eſpecially, where there are many) it may be reaſonable to guard againſt imitation of them, or conformity to others in that which is evil.

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In diſcourſing on this text I ſhall take the following method:

I. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the deſign and meaning of this direction.

II. I intend to conſider the importance of obſerving it, and offer ſome reaſons and arguments againſt conformity to this world.

III. After which, I ſhall conclude with a few reflections.

I. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the deſign and meaning of this direction.

And hereby is not to be underſtood, that we are ſtudiouſly to avoid all conformity and agreement with men of the world. We all agree in one common nature, and perform the ordinary functions and operations of the animal and rational life: and we are to provide for the wants and neceſſities of nature, as well as other men. Nor does the apoſtle deſign to reſtrain or forbid a diligent purſuit of the comforts and advantages of this life, in any methods that are lawful and innocent: but what he means is, that we ſhould not be led aſide by multitudes, or by any of thoſe we converſe with, into the practiſe of any thing ſinful and unlawful.

But beſide this general explication of the words, I would mention ſome particulars, in which we ought not to be conformed to others, how much ſoever ſuch things may prevail.

1. We are not to be conformed to the world in thoſe ſins, which are called *ſins of the fleſh*. In this caution the apoſtle very probably has an eye to theſe things, inaſmuch as they were very generally indulged among the heathens, with whom the Chriſtians at Rome were ſurrounded. So he writes to the Epheſians: *This I ſay therefore, and teſtify in the Lord; that ye henceforth walk not as other gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having the underſtanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their heart: who being paſt feeling have given themſelves over to laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs. But ye have not ſo learned Chriſt, if ſo be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jeſus; that ye put off, concerning the former converſation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful luſts,* Eph. iv. 17—22. He requires, that ſuch things be *not once named*, ch. v. 3. among Chriſtians; that is, that there be no inſtances of ſuch tranſgreſſions among them: but that they behave, *as becometh ſaints; and have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works*

*of*

*of darkneſs, but rather reprove them*, ver. 11. He likewiſe directs, that *fooliſh talking and jeſting, which are not convenient*, ver. 4. ſhould quite ceaſe from among them.

Nor are we to indulge ourſelves in any intemperance or exceſs, that diſorders the reaſon, prejudices the health, and indiſpoſes for the duties of life. *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is exceſs*, Eph. v. 18. We are not to be guilty of compliance here. Though ſome ſhould take it ever ſo much amiſs, that we will not be like them, or bear them company therein, we are reſolutely to decline a conformity with them. Thus St. Peter, referring to the prevailing cuſtoms of heathens: *For the time paſt of our life may ſuffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we walked in laſciviouſneſs, exceſs of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it ſtrange, that you run not with them to the ſame exceſs of riot, ſpeaking evil of you*, 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4. So it was then. And it is to be feared, that ſtill among ſome, and in ſome places, this kind of exceſs is ſo common, that not a few may be tempted by the cuſtomarineſs of it.

2. Chriſtians are not to be conformed to the world, or the men of it, in any injuſtice, either in the way of fraud or violence. Says St. Paul to the Epheſians: *Let him that ſtole ſteal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good*, Eph. iv. 28. Among the ancient laws of God delivered to the Iſraelites are ſuch as theſe: *Ye ſhall do no unrighteouſneſs in judgment, in mete-yard, in weight, or in meaſure. Juſt balances, juſt weights, a juſt ephah, a juſt hin ſhall ye have. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt*, Lev. xix. 35, 36. Solomon obſerves: *A falſe balance is abomination to the Lord; but a juſt weight is his delight*, Prov. xi. 1. And God himſelf by his prophet reproves prevailing injuſtice in this manner: *Are there yet the treaſures of wickedneſs in the houſe of the wicked, and the ſcant meaſure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and the bag of deceitful weights?* Mic. vi. 10, 11. Chriſtians then certainly ought to be fair and open in their dealings, and to do to every man what is juſt. Though we could unobſerved detain what is rightfully due to any, we ſhould not withhold it. We are not only to decline unreputable methods of gain, which all men would condemn, and cry out of; but every artifice that is unjuſt and unequal, however common with ſome, and ſecure from the cognizance of human laws. We ſhould be willing to exert ourſelves to

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ſecure to others their rightful poſſeſſions againſt unjuſt invaders; but ſhould never employ our power, or art, or influence, for getting into our hands what belongs to others. Though a good man does not chooſe to be oppreſſed, and would uſe all proper meaſures to ſecure himſelf from wrong; yet he would much rather ſuffer, than do an injury. To be wronged of his poſſeſſions, or rightful inheritance, by the artifices of deſigning perſons, might be matter of much grief and concern; but to treat others in ſuch a way, never enters into his heart: nor would any conſideration whatever prove a temptation to ſuch fraudulent proceeding. He would rather loſe what he has, than gain the greateſt eſtate by an act of injuſtice.

3. Chriſtians are not to be conformed to the world, or the men of it, in the practice of known falſhood. It is one of St. Paul's practical directions to the Epheſians: *Therefore, putting away lying, ſpeak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another*, Eph. iv. 25. The words we uſe are to expreſs the ſenſe of our minds. We are not to promiſe any thing, but what we intend to do: and when we have promiſed, we are to perform according to our engagements. Nor does it ſeem conſiſtent with truth and ſincerity to make pompous profeſſions of affection, reſpect and eſteem, beſide, and beyond the ſenſe of our minds: creating thereby vain dependences, and big expectations; for our own preſent intereſt poſſibly, but to the real detriment, and laſting and piercing vexation and diſappointment of thoſe who have been deceived by us. A Chriſtian alſo, one would think, ſhould reckon it incumbent on him to have a regard to truth in leſſer, as well as in greater matters. However cuſtomary it may be with ſome people to be at the ſame time at home to ſome, and abroad to others, and to direct their attendants to deliever a known falſhood, and to perſiſt in it: a man of honour and conſcience will ſcarce encourage, or approve a practice, which is a breach upon ſincerity, and may have pernicious conſequences.

I need not add here, that if we are not to tranſgreſs the rules of veracity in our ordinary diſcourſe and converſation, much leſs may we falſify upon ſolemn occaſions: when beſide the weight of our own credit, we call God to be witneſs to the truth of what we ſay.

4. We are not to conform to the world, and the men of it, in a profane uſe of the name of God. Reverence is always due

due to the Supreme Being: in which they appear to be defective, who upon trivial occaſions appeal to God for the truth of what they ſay. If any ſhould inſiſt, that they do it ſometimes without knowing they do ſo, or thinking of it: they only ſhew thereby, that they have been long habituated to a practice which is not to be juſtified. For, is it not an offence, to atteſt inſignificant points with an oath? which is a ſolemn and awful thing, not to be introduced into ſociety, but for deciding matters of weight and importance. A ſober and conſiderate heathen or deiſt, who has upon his mind a ſerious ſenſe of religion, would not approve that the Divine Being ſhould be mentioned, or ſpoken of in ſuch a light and irreverent manner, as would be judged a contemptuous uſe of the name of a great man. And ſhall Chriſtians venture upon ſuch an uſe of the name of God, who have ſo much more reaſon to love and honour him? Is it not ſtrange and ſurpriſing, that a ſin, to which, as is often ſaid, there is ſo little temptation, ſhould be ſo common, as it is, among thoſe who are called by that honourable name? But however common it may be among ſome, chiefly, I think, of the higher and lower ranks of men; (in which, as well as in ſome other things, they too much agree) let us not be conformed to them therein.

Nor can it be fit for us to ſtake our ſalvation, or life, or credit, for the truth of matters of little or no conſequence, as ſome frequently do. This is a practice, that is not to be reconciled to the reaſon of any thoughtful and conſiderate perſon, who has a ſenſe of religious obligations, and is concerned for the good order and welfare of ſociety. And our bleſſed Lord has interpoſed here, and has expreſsly forbid not only the ſwearing by the name of God in converſation, and the ordinary commerce of life, but alſo thoſe leſſer, or more diminutive oaths, in which the name of God is not expreſsly invoked. *Ye have heard, that it has been ſaid by* [or rather *to*] *them of old time; thou ſhalt not forſwear thyſelf, but ſhalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I ſay unto you; ſwear not at all*, Matt. v. 33, 34. Our Saviour does not intend to forbid ſwearing upon ſolemn and momentous, but only upon trivial and ordinary occaſions: *neither by heaven, for it is God's throne: nor by the earth, for it is his footſtool: neither by Jeruſalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither ſhalt thou ſwear by thy head, for thou canſt not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay: for whatſoever*

*whatſoever is more than theſe cometh of evil.* Theſe directions of our Lord are ſufficiently clear, and eaſy to be applied by men of theſe times.

It is unneceſſary to add, that if invocations of the Deity in a light manner, and upon trivial occaſions, be evil; it is ſtill a more aggravated offence to call upon God to condemn or deſtroy others upon occaſion of none, or very trifling affronts and injuries.

5. We are not to be conformed to the world in idleneſs and miſpending of time. Though it ſhould be the cuſtom of ſome, or of many around us, to devote their time and abilities to trifling matters, of little or no uſe and benefit to themſelves or others; they are not to be followed or imitated by us. Diverſions are allowable, if they are innocent in themſelves, and if they are made uſe of by us as a refreſhment of our wearied ſpirits, and that we may be better fitted for employments of a higher nature. But diverſions are not to be ſuffered to grow up into conſtant employments, and to thruſt out uſeful and neceſſary buſineſs. Then they become ſinful: for this life is our only opportunity of providing for eternity: and therefore it would be loſt, if ſpent in eating and drinking, and playing, without making preparation for a future ſtate. If we rightly conſider the ſhortneſs of life, the work we have to do, the many avocations that are almoſt unavoidable; we ſhall think, that time ought not to be ſquandered and thrown away, but improved with care and diligence.

A large part of moſt men's time is requiſite for providing the neceſſaries, or comforts and conveniences of life. If they ſhould indulge ſloth and idleneſs, they would be reduced to want and poverty. If the neceſſaries and comforts of life are provided to our hand for us, we may be well employed in improving our minds, and in ſerving and helping others.

And do we think, that we have no occaſion to employ ſome time in private, in ſerious meditation and reflection upon ourſelves, and our more public and ordinary conduct? Are we ſatisfied that all is right already, and that our behaviour is without fault, or that there is no room left for amendment? May it not be of uſe to take ſome time to review our diverſions and amuſements, our tranſactions in buſineſs, and even our acts of public worſhip?

Time very often runs waſte in converſation, and yet we ought not to be unſociable and unfriendly. Should we not therefore be glad to render that time more profitable? As

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for thoſe who have ſuperior abilities, or any ſuperior advantage in point of age, character and ſtation: may they not do well to aim at raiſing and improving friendly converſation? and ſhould not others be ready to join in ſuch attempts, and to ſet forward thoſe topics that are inſtructive and edifying, as well as entertaining? that thoſe ſeaſons may not be altogether, and always, void and empty ſpaces, of which we can give no good account; but uſeful and beneficial: ſuch as all may be able to reflect upon with pleaſure, and ſome with thankfulneſs, long afterwards.

6. We are not to be conformed to the world in a cenſorious temper, and detracting ſpeech and diſcourſe. Some there are, who ſcarce think any thing well done, but what is done by themſelves: who have a mean opinion of the abilities and performances of other men, or ſeem to have ſo: and by artfully leſſening and detracting from them, they endeavour to bring the reſt of mankind into the like ſentiment.

Some men have a vaſt acquaintance with the private affairs and actions of their neighbours, but more eſpecially, as it ſeems, with their weakneſſes and failings: and having a good deal of knowledge of this kind, it is not eaſy for them to hide ſuch a treaſure. Men who have a great deal of knowledge are uſually fond of ſhewing it, and ſometimes even among thoſe, who ſet no value upon the ſciences they are maſters of: but men are apt to be communicative of this knowledge above any other, becauſe diſcoveries of this ſort are generally acceptable: the ſmalleſt trifles of this nature being more eagerly ſought, and more readily embraced by abundance of people, than relations of great and noble actions.

There can be no good reaſon, why men ſhould be prying and inquiſitive into the private affairs of families, or particular perſons. When ſuch things are known, there can be very ſeldom any good purpoſe ſerved by divulging them. If they are mentioned at all, certainly there can be no good reaſon for giving them a wrong turn, making things appear worſe than they are, concealing circumſtances, that might alleviate an imprudence; and poſſibly adding ſome others, that tend to aggravate and enhance it.

This muſt be owned to be an unreaſonable practice: but yet it is not uncommon. Though every man is tender of his own good name, how many act, as if the reputation of other

other men and their families was a thing of ſmall value in their eſteem!

We are therefore to be upon our guard here. We are not to form and raiſe ſtories to the prejudice of others. Nor are we to report what we have heard without reſerve, or caution, or any good occaſion for ſo doing. Nay, it might be well, if ſometimes we would decline receiving relations of this kind, that the practice of tale-bearing may be the more effectually diſcouraged: or, if we cannot well avoid hearing them, however doing it without any ſatisfaction, real or apparent, and diverting the diſcourſe to other matters, as ſoon as may be.

If we do not arrive at this degree of perfection, yet let us take heed, that we be not raſh and ſevere in our cenſures; nor condemn and exclaim againſt actions and conduct, of which we know but very few circumſtances.

We are all too apt to tranſgreſs in many things, and in few things more, than in an abuſe of the faculty of ſpeech. Says St. James: *My brethren, be not many maſters, knowing, that we ſhall receive the greater condemnation: for in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body*, James iii. 1, 2.

I might here particularly caution and argue againſt loading men with cenſures and reproaches on account of their differing from us in matters of ſpeculation. For whereas upon other occaſions ſome turn the imprudences of others into heinous ſins; here men often make that a crime which is a virtue. They cenſure men as abandoned of God, and in a ſtate of damnation, for believing certain opinions, which poſſibly are true and reaſonable: but if they be falſe, ſtill thoſe perſons would not deſerve to be ſeverely cenſured by us, if they have honeſtly uſed their beſt endeavours in the ſearch of truth. Let us not be conformed to others in ſuch a temper and conduct as this. But when men differ from us, let us take the more favourable ſide of the queſtion; and hope, that though they are miſtaken, as we think, yet they do not err wilfully, or obſtinately, but that they are open to conviction, and are ſincere and upright. But at preſent I ſay no more of this matter.**

**. If any ſhould find this diſcourſe too long for one reading, they may break off here.

7. We

7. We are not to be conformed to this world, or the men of it, in a luxurious and extravagant courſe of life. And, have we not reaſon to be upon our guard here? Is not this a prevailing and general fault? Has it not invaded all ranks and orders of men? Is not this one of the ſins of our days? And does it not manifeſtly bring upon us many diſtreſſes and calamities, and threaten us with more? Does not extravagance prevail, not in one thing only, but in all? Is it not ſeen in diet, apparel, furniture, equipage, diverſions, and in every article of expence that can be named?

What can be ſaid in defence of that †‡ gaming, in various forms, which has been ſo greatly improved and cultivated; in which great numbers of people have attained ſuch exquiſite ſkill and underſtanding? Is not this the ordinary diverſion, or rather buſineſs of many among us; of rich and poor, high and low, young and old? Are there not numerous inſtances of this practice, which are plainly, and extremely unreaſonable? Certainly, it cannot but be offenſive to ſee thoſe gaming for ſums of money, be they greater or ſmaller, who, ſo far as can be judged by their outward appearance, are extremely deſtitute: and it muſt be a manifeſt and heinous immorality, for men to miſpend time, and hazard ſums of money in this way, whoſe families are unprovided with things neceſſary for their ſupport.

If then tranſgreſſions of this kind are common with any of our rank and acquaintance, we ought to be upon our guard, and take heed that we be not conformed to them. For gaming is altogether improper for ſome: and to be addicted to it, or to hazard large ſums of money this way, muſt be unreaſonable in all. The loſs of time, hazard of eſtate, health, temper and virtue, with which this practice is attended, ſhould either entirely deter men from it, or at leaſt induce them to be very careful not to exceed.

But this is not the only thing to be avoided by us. There are many other ways of profuſeneſs: and, when this is the caſe: when frugality is unreputable; when economy is thought to be below all people of rank, of both ſexes; when they who make a decent appearance, and pay to all what is

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juſtly due to them, and relieve and ſupport diſtreſſed families, and are liberal in promoting divers good works: when ſuch as theſe can ſcarce maintain their credit in the world, for want of pomp and ſplendour, and a glittering ſhew and appearance; then certainly we have need to be upon our guard againſt that profuſeneſs, which is above our circumſtances, which might exhauſt our ſubſtance, involve us in perplexing and inextricable difficulties, and hazard the total loſs of that little virtue that remains in us.

8. Another thing, in which we ought not to be conformed to this world, is uncharitableneſs in things of a religious concern. This we may have reaſon to guard againſt: for the pride of our hearts, the good opinion we are too apt to have of ourſelves, diſpoſes us very much to be offended with thoſe who differ from us. Therefore, if unfavourable ſentiments of ſome perſons, and a ſevere treatment of them, be common, we are in great danger of being miſled. Indeed this has often been a common, though it be an heinous injuſtice. It has been common among thoſe who have been the people of God by profeſſion, as well as among ignorant heathens and idolaters. How ſtrangely a blind zeal, or uncharitable temper toward ſuch as differed from them, raged among the Jewiſh people, we ſee in the hiſtory of the New Teſtament; particularly in their treatment of the apoſtle Paul, and other harmleſs diſciples and followers of Jeſus Chriſt. If we were to look into the hiſtory of Chriſtianity, ſince it prevailed in the Roman empire, and obſerve the conduct of the ſeveral ſects and parties of Chriſtians; we ſhould find it a difficult undertaking to vindicate the conduct of any one of them, when they have been uppermoſt, and have had power in their hands. Scarce any age or period, but affords inſtances of hard and unrighteous treatment of men for the ſake of ſome differences in religious opinions. Very few of thoſe who have had the chief direction of church-affairs, who have not been blamable for ſome rigour and uncharitableneſs in ſentiment or practice. And oftentimes they who by their ſtations have been guides and teachers of others, have earneſtly inculcated ſuch a zeal, ſuch a temper and conduct toward thoſe who have not been in all things of the ſame mind with them, as is extremely unrighteous and unmerciful. Nor are they thoſe only who are chief in power that are guilty in this reſpect: for they alſo who are few in number, and of ſmall authority, in compariſon of others, will ſometimes aſſume, and become

imperious and uncharitable toward thoſe who differ from them in theſe points.

This then is a very common fault; and becauſe common, the greater care and circumſpection are neceſſary: for every one has a right to think for himſelf, and is obliged to determine according to the beſt of his own judgment and underſtanding: and it is a duty incumbent upon every one to inquire ſeriouſly into the things of religion, and to judge according to evidence. Therefore no man, or body of men, civil or eccleſiaſtical, can have a right to impoſe religious creeds or articles upon other men, and to puniſh them for not aſſenting to them. Any one may propoſe reaſons and arguments in behalf of his opinions: but no man ought to enforce aſſent any farther than his arguments convince.

It is true, no one has a right to do, or teach any thing, that is contrary to the peace of ſociety. That is the magiſtrate's province. But where opinions are innocent, and have no direct tendency to diſturb the peace and quiet of others, and men are guilty of no injuſtice, they have a right to the protection of the power of the ſociety in which they live, and ought to enjoy the privileges of peaceable ſubjects.

And that we ought to avoid a perſecuting, and a malevolent temper and conduct with regard to men of different ſentiments, and to practice much tenderneſs, mildneſs, forbearance and love, is apparent not only from the reaſon and fitneſs of things, as juſt now hinted, but alſo from the conduct and example of our bleſſed Lord and his apoſtles, and from the mildneſs of the principles and precepts of the Chriſtian religion, as recorded in the books of the New Teſtament; which was not planted and ſpread in the world by force and violence, by human authority, and the power of the ſword, but by reaſon and argument, and the example of a holy and amiable life and converſation. Moreover, the Chriſtian religion did by the like means ſpread and prevail for a good while after the death of Chriſt's apoſtles, and their fellow-labourers, without human ſupports, and notwithſtanding frequent and violent perſecutions. And though the favour of the civil power and authority, upon the converſion of Conſtantine, might be an advantage for a while: yet I ſuppoſe, it may be allowed to be a juſt obſervation, that ſince Chriſtians, inſtead of being perſecuted, as they had been by Jews and Heathens, have perſecuted one another, Chriſtianity has made little progreſs, but has rather loſt ground. For the

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Let us not then be afraid of religious liberty, as prejudicial and unfriendly to truth. Let us not by any means concur in any methods of rigour and ſeverity toward men of different ſentiments, as thinking thereby to promote the intereſt of religion and virtue. For beſide that ſuch methods are in themſelves unreaſonable and unrighteous, they are alſo detrimental to the cauſe of truth.

9. Another thing, *in which we ought not to follow others*, is indifference about the things of religion. Of this men may be in danger on various accounts. Conſidering the many differences and diſſenſions, there are upon this head; the animoſity and fierceneſs with which religious diſputes are often managed; the many abuſes of religion, that is, its name and profeſſion, by hypocritical, artful and ſelf-intereſted men; ſome may be apt to take offence, and to determine, no more to concern themſelves about it, but let all things abroad have their courſe; whilſt they, for their part, ſecure, as far as poſſible, their own preſent worldly eaſe and advantage.

Others may be in danger of much indolence upon this head from other conſiderations. Religion, ſay they, is an abſtruſe and difficult thing. Let us therefore acquieſce in the determinations of our ſuperiors and governors in church and ſtate, and believe as they require: or, let us follow thoſe to whom we are allied, and do as they deſire, eſpecially if they are at all importunate, without giving ourſelves any pain about this matter.

But this indifference and indolence ought to be guarded againſt. Whatever diſſenſions there are in the world, partly through human weakneſs, partly through human wickedneſs and deceit, there is a difference of things. Truth and virtue are realities, built upon ſolid foundations: and with care and attention the great and general principles of true religion,

young and old? Are there not numerous instances of this practice, which are plainly, and extremely unreasonable? Certainly, it cannot but be offensive to see those gaming for sums of money, be they greater or smaller, who, so far as can be judged by their outward appearance, are extremely destitute: and it must be a manifest and heinous immorality, for men to misspend time, and hazard sums of money in this way, whose families are unprovided with things necessary for their support.

If then transgressions of this kind are common with any of our rank and acquaintance, we ought to be upon our guard, and take heed that we be not conformed to them. For gaming is altogether improper for some: and to be addicted to it, or to hazard large sums of money this way, must be unreasonable in all. The loss of time, hazard of estate, health, temper and virtue, with which this practice is attended, should either entirely deter men from it, or at least induce them to be very careful not to exceed.

But this is not the only thing to be avoided by us. There are many other ways of profuseness: and, when this is the case: when frugality is unreputable; when economy is thought to be below all people of rank, of both sexes; when they who make a decent appearance, and pay to all what is

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Let us not then be afraid of religious liberty, as prejudicial and unfriendly to truth. Let us not by any means concur in any methods of rigour and ſeverity toward men of different ſentiments, as thinking thereby to promote the intereſt of religion and virtue. For beſide that ſuch methods are in themſelves unreaſonable and unrighteous, they are alſo detrimental to the cauſe of truth.

9. Another thing, in which we ought not to follow others, is indifference about the things of religion. Of this men may be in danger on various accounts. Conſidering the many differences and diſſenſions, there are upon this head; the animoſity and fierceneſs with which religious diſputes are often managed; the many abuſes of religion, that is, its name and profeſſion, by hypocritical, artful and ſelf-intereſted men; ſome may be apt to take offence, and to determine, no more to concern themſelves about it, but let all things abroad have their courſe; whilſt they, for their part, ſecure, as far as poſſible, their own preſent worldly eaſe and advantage.

Others may be in danger of much indolence upon this head from other conſiderations. Religion, ſay they, is an abſtruſe and difficult thing. Let us therefore acquieſce in the determinations of our ſuperiors and governors in church and ſtate, and believe as they require: or, let us follow thoſe to whom we are allied, and do as they deſire, eſpecially if they are at all importunate, without giving ourſelves any pain about this matter.

But this indifference and indolence ought to be guarded againſt. Whatever diſſenſions there are in the world, partly through human weakneſs, partly through human wickedneſs and deceit, there is a difference of things. Truth and virtue are realities, built upon ſolid foundations: and with care and attention the great and general principles of true religion,

and the main branches of virtue, may be diſcerned from error and vice.

Every man therefore ſhould endeavour, to the beſt of his power, according to the circumſtances he is in, to know and underſtand the chief things of religion, and the grounds and evidences of them. He ſhould be diſpoſed to profeſs the truth ſo far as he is acquainted with it, and to appear among thoſe, who make a public acknowledgment of the great Creator and Sovereign of the world, and of that revelation, which he has made of his will to mankind. He ſhould be concerned for the rights of conſcience in general, and be heartily deſirous, that all men may enjoy the privilege of worſhipping God according to their light and knowledge. He ſhould never join in oppreſſing others for conſcience ſake: but according to his ſtation and circumſtances ſhould oppoſe ſuch meaſures, and vindicate thoſe who are any way injuriouſly treated on account of their religious ſentiments.

10. and laſtly, We are not to be conformed to the world, or the men of it, in an exceſſive and inordinate affection for earthly and temporal things. We are not to act, as if this world were our home, and the things of it our portion, and our all. We ſhould be more moderate in our deſires of temporal good things, and leſs afraid of the evils and ſufferings of this life, than many are. If ſome ſeek the things of this world, more than thoſe of another; and, if diſappointments in ſuch purſuits plunge them into incurable grief and diſtreſs; we ſhould be cautious of ſuch intemperate affection for earthly things. If ſome are unreaſonably tranſported with ſucceſſes in their worldly deſigns, and are elated thereby beyond meaſure, ſo as to treat others with ſcorn and diſdain; we ſhould be aſhamed of ſuch miſbehaviour. If we are bleſſed in like manner, let us thankfully own the goodneſs of God; but *rejoice as though we rejoiced not, becauſe the faſhion of this world paſſeth away*, 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31.
Do many repine, and murmur againſt God, becauſe they are not proſpered, as ſome others are? and is there among men a general uneaſineſs with their own circumſtances? We ſhould be contented and reſigned; that it may appear, we acknowledge the over-ruling providence of God, and that there are other ſources of joy and ſatisfaction, beſide increaſe and abundance of worldly goods. Whatever condition

condition we are in, eſpecially if we are in any higher ſtation, let us not *ſeek our own* intereſt only, as too many do, *but every one* of us alſo *another's wealth*, 1 Cor. x. 24.

In theſe things we are not to follow, or imitate other men; nor in any thing elſe, that is diſhonourable to the majeſty of God, or that debaſeth, and is unworthy of our rational and immortal nature, or that is injurious to our fellow-creatures. In other things, which are not contrary to reaſon, or expreſs revelation, we may do as others do: we may enjoy the ſame comforts, follow the ſame employments, take the ſame diverſions, that others do; and may uſe the language of the place and country and time, wherein we live. For I do not intend to caſt a ſnare before you, or raiſe groundleſs and needleſs ſcruples in any man's mind. It is not my deſign abſolutely to condemn muſic, or dancing, or thoſe diverſions, in which chance, or hazard, has a part, as well as ſkill; or thoſe entertainments, in which are repreſented the humours and manners of men, and the revolutions of ſtates and empires, or the viciſſitudes of particular perſons. Theſe things I do not look upon, as in themſelves, and always evil. They then only become evil, when they are perverted, or abuſed (as I fear they often are) or when they are accidentally evil, or hurtful to us, for want of prudent circumſpection; which is neceſſary every where, and at all times, and more eſpecially upon ſome occaſions.

But then the reſtrictions and cautions before-mentioned ought to be here remembered. Men are not to waſte their time, or their ſubſtance, in diverſions and amuſements. They ought not to hazard any large part of their ſubſtance, the loſs of which might be any conſiderable inconvenience to them. They ſhould decline ſuch games, as greatly engage them, and too much raiſe their paſſions. Men may do well to take heed, that no amuſements rob them of their wiſdom, or their ſerioufneſs, or their importance in life. If any indecency appear in the entertainments ſet before them, they ought to deteſt and reſent it, to ſhew their diſlike and abhorrence of it, and to diſcountenance it in the way beſt ſuited to their ſtation and character. We ought ever to be careful to avoid familiarity with the wicked: and it ſhould be eſteemed a point of prudence rarely to be neglected, eſpecially by young perſons, not to venture alone, where there is any

danger, but to ſecure to themſelves the company of ſome ſober and religious aſſociates; whoſe preſence may keep off ſome temptations, or give a check to them.

It is almoſt needleſs for me to add, that I do not underſtand, or explain this text, as regulating men's outward garb. A good man may without ſcruple follow the faſhion of his country, and the habit of others about him, of the like rank and ſtation in the world. St. Peter indeed gives ſuch directions as theſe to women, eſpecially the married: *Whoſe adorning, let it not be that outward adorning, of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, and 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 Pet. iii. 3. But it is eaſy to perceive, that what this apoſtle intends hereby is, that ſuch ſhould eſteem the ornaments of the mind above thoſe of the body, and be more concerned about that which is inward, than that which is outward. God declares to the Jews by the prophet Hoſea: *I deſire mercy, and not ſacrifice,* Hoſ. vi. 6. But no one underſtands thereby, that God had not deſired ſacrifice at all, but that he preferred mercy above ſacrifice, or deſired the one more than the other: as appears alſo from what immediately follows: *and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.* So likewiſe our Lord ſays: *Lay not up to yourſelves treaſures upon earth, where moth and ruſt doth corrupt: but lay up to yourſelves treaſures in heaven, where neither moth nor ruſt doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and ſteal,* Matt. vi. 19, 20. He does not abſolutely forbid to ſeek, or lay up earthly treaſures; but he teaches men to prefer heavenly and incorruptible above earthly and corruptible treaſures, and to be more concerned for the one than the other. Theſe obſervations are to be applied to the like excellent advices of the apoſtle Paul upon the ſame ſubject: *In like manner alſo, (I will) that women adorn themſelves in modeſt apparel, with ſhamefacedneſs and ſobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or coſtly array, but (which becometh women profeſſing godlineſs) with good works,* 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10.

This text then is not a caution againſt complying with others in things in which there is no harm, but againſt following men in that which is really evil and ſinful.

I ſhould now proceed to ſhew the importance of obſerving this cautionary direction, according to the explication

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that has been given, in its ſeveral branches and articles. But that, with a reflection or two by way of concluſion, muſt be deferred to another opportunity.

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## DISCOURSE II.

ROM. xii. 2.

AND BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD.

In diſcourſing on theſe words I have propoſed in the firſt place, to ſhew the deſign and meaning of this direction, *Be not conformed to this world:* ſecondly to ſhew the importance of obſerving it; and then to add a reflection or two by way of concluſion.

II. Having formerly explained this contionary direction, I now proceed to the ſecond head of diſcourſe; to ſhew the importance of obſerving it, and to offer ſome reaſons and arguments againſt conformity to this world.

1. It is plain, that the wiſe and holy apoſtle eſteemed this a thing of no ſmall moment. This caution is placed almoſt at the head of the practical directions, with which he concludes this large and copious epiſtle to the Romans: and I ſuppoſe, that the earneſtneſs, with which this addreſs begins, ought to be underſtood to be continued and carried on in the words of the text. *I beſeech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye preſent your bodies a living ſacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reaſonable ſervice*, ver. 1. It follows: *And be not conformed to this world.* As if he had ſaid: and by the conſideration of the ſame mercies of God, in which you, as Chriſtians, have partaken abundantly, be perſuaded not to be conformed to this world, and to be upon your guard againſt complying with the men of it in any thing that is evil.

2. By no means, upon no account, be ye like the men of this world in any of their evil and corrupt practices. Though you live where ſin abounds, and where ſome ſins are even faſhionable, you are to keep yourſelves free from them. Though ſuch things ſhould be practiſed and indulged, not only by many, but by the moſt, and thoſe who by means of their wit and fine parts, or by their high quality and

ſtation in the world, can give reputation to whatever they do, and make almoſt any thing appear graceful; you are not to be moved from your ſteadfaſtneſs in virtue, or from thoſe purpoſes you have formed upon a ſerious and deliberate view and conſideration of things.

Though our lot ſhould be caſt in times and places, in which there are few who love true religion, and walk in the path of virtue; and though theſe few ſhould be mean in their outward appearance; let us be contented to have our portion with them: and though in the way of irreligion and vice ſhould be found the learned, the rich, the great and honourable of this world; let us not be drawn aſide by their example. We ought not to be induced to any compliances that are ſinful. This is a forbidden and dangerous complaiſance. We may part with what elſe we will for peace ſake, and for the good of others: but we can do no man any good upon the whole by parting with our integrity. I ſay upon the whole: for poſſibly by ſome acts of wickedneſs the preſent temporal intereſt of ſome particular perſons may be advanced: but it is a moſt unreaſonable thing, that one man ſhould hazard his eternal ſalvation for the ſake of the temporal grandeur of another: and beſides, he who upon any conſiderations whatever violates the laws of God and reaſon ſets his neighbour a pernicious example, that may harden him in ſin to his final and utter ruin.

Let us not then go over to thoſe who are involved in the practice of vice: but let us do all that lies in our power to bring them over to the love and practice of true holineſs: and for this end let us endeavour to ſet religion in a good light. Let our converſation be an example of ſtrict virtue, without auſterity. If our mirth be without levity, let us alſo be ſerious without moroſeneſs or peeviſhneſs. Above all, let our religion be ſincere and undiſſembled; not an empty, though ſolemn profeſſion, but a real principle, producing the good fruits of righteouſneſs, gentleneſs and mercy.

3. Herein, it muſt be owned, there is no ſmall difficulty; but there is a neceſſity of it, unleſs the world were ſo reformed that all in general were wiſe and good. Our bleſſed Lord therefore ſays: *Enter ye in at the ſtrait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to deſtruction, and many there be which go in thereat: becauſe ſtrait is the gate, and narrow*

*narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*, Matt. vii. 13, 14. And ſays St. John: *We know, that whoſoever is born of God ſinneth not: but he that is begotten of God keepeth himſelf, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedneſs*, 1 John v. 18.

4. It is an ancient precept in the law of Moſes: *Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil*, Ex. xxiii. 2. And Solomon ſays: *My ſon, if ſinners entice thee, conſent thou not: my ſon, walk thou not in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path*, Prov. i. 10, 15. It has been always eſteemed by wiſe men a noble and commendable reſolution of Joſhua: *As for me, and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord*, Joſh. xxiv. 15. though all the tribes, and other families of Iſrael, ſhould forſake the Lord, and go after other gods. But Chriſtians are better fortified againſt the temptation of numerous examples than other men, and have ſtronger motives to ſteadfaſtneſs in virtue. They know better than others the excellency and obligations of true holineſs, the deformity of ſin, and the different conſequences of each. If it would be a fault in other men, it muſt be much more ſo in them, to be influenced by numbers to forſake the paths of religion and virtue.

5. And though the number of the ſincerely good and reſolutely virtuous may be ſmall in a comparative view, yet they are more than a few upon the whole. Some there have been in all ages, who have approved themſelves to God and their own conſciences. The apoſtle to the Hebrews having given a catalogue of excellent perſons from almoſt the beginning of time, ſome of whom *endured the trial of cruel mockings and ſcourgings, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented*, Heb. xi. animates the Chriſtans of his days with the conſideration of their number, when collected together. *Wherefore*, ſays he, *ſeeing we alſo are compaſſed about with ſo great a cloud of witneſſes, let us lay aſide every weight, and the ſin that does ſo eaſily beſet us, and let us run with patience the race that is ſet before us*, ch. xii. 1.

6. Some ſingularity, or eminence, and uncommon ſteadfaſtneſs in that which is truly good and excellent, is very becoming, and even expedient in Chriſtians. How can it be otherwiſe? If the principles and precepts of their religion be more ſublime, pure and perfect, than thoſe of any other religion, and have a ſuitable influence; muſt

muſt they not neceſſarily create ſome difference between them and other men? They are certainly obliged to act according to the truths they have received. They gladly would, that others ſhould keep them company: but if they obſtinately refuſe, and will not be perſuaded, they muſt leave them behind, and follow Jeſus whither he leads them. *If ye were of the world*, ſays our Lord to his diſciples, *the world would love his own: but becauſe ye are not of the world, but I have choſen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*, John xv. 19. Chriſt ſuppoſeth, that as his people are not of the world, ſo they will often meet with diſagreeable treatment in it: but they are to remember their character, and to endeavour to excel, and thereby to be uſeful. After this manner he ſpeaks to his people and followers: *Ye are the ſalt of the earth: but if the ſalt have loſt its ſavour, wherewith ſhall it be ſalted? It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be caſt out, and to be troden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is ſet on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a buſhel, but on a candleſtick, and it giveth light to all that are in the houſe. Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven*, Matt. v. 13—16. Says St. Paul to the Epheſians: *Be not ye partakers with them; for ye were ſometime darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord*, Eph. v. 7, 8. Once more, in the epiſtle to the Philippians: *That ye may be blameleſs and harmleſs, the ſons of God without rebuke, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe nation, among whom ye ſhine as lights in the world*, Philip. ii. 15.

7. Our bleſſed Lord highly approves, and will reward and diſtinguiſh thoſe, who are faithful to him in the midſt of temptations, and uphold the honour of his name in the world. He ſaid to his diſciples: *Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleaſure to give you the kingdom*, Luke xii. 32. In the book of the Revelation he encourages ſome by his ſervant John: *Thou haſt a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments: and they ſhall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the ſame ſhall be clothed in white raiment: and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confeſs his name before my Father, and before his angels*, Rev. iii. 4, 5.

8. Finally, there will be much comfort and ſatisfaction of mind reſulting from this conduct, even in this world. The

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context ſuggeſts this argument. *Preſent your bodies*, give up yourſelves ſincerely to God, as *a living ſacrifice, holy, acceptable, which is your reaſonable ſervice. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.* Let the temper of your mind become truly religious, ſpiritual and heavenly, inſtead of being any longer ſenſual and carnal: *that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.* Then you will will not only know and diſcern, but approve, and delightfully perform that reaſonable and excellent worſhip and obedience, which the goſpel requires. Hold on then in the way of religion and virtue, notwithſtanding the temptations you meet with to decline and forſake it. The pleaſure will be great, your comforts will grow and increaſe, and you will more and more approve the choice you have made, as wiſe and reaſonable.

III. I ſhall now conclude with a few reflections.

1. *Be not conformed to this world.* Is there occaſion for ſuch a caution as this? Is the world in which we live degenerate and corrupt? and are we liable to be miſled and enſnared by it? May not this diſpoſe us to a life of privacy and retirement? or reconcile us to it, if it be our lot? Muſt not this alſo abate our affection for this world, and life therein, and increaſe our willingneſs to depart out of it, whenever God pleaſeth? If we be continued in the world, and act therein; let us take care, both that we be not enſnared ourſelves, and that no one be the worſe for us. Let us ſcorn to give any countenance and ſupport to falſhood or vice. Let us eſteem it our indiſpenſible duty to anſwer the ends of life. If preferment will not be obtained, but by baſe and ſinful compliances, let us give over all thoughts of riſing in the world. If we cannot keep our ſtation, without parting with our integrity, let us reſign it. It is better to live with a good conſcience in obſcurity and contempt, than to enjoy the careſſes and applauſes of fellow-creatures in the way of falſhood and iniquity. Better, I ſay: for the end of ſuch will be happy and glorious. The Pſalmiſt of old could ſay: *I had rather be a door-keeper in the houſe of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedneſs: for the Lord God is a ſun and a ſhield. The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withold from him that walketh uprightly.*

*O Lord*

*O Lord of hoſts, bleſſed is the man that truſteth in thee,* Pſalm lxxxiv.

2. Let us each one, in our ſeveral ſtations and circumſtances, attend to this caution: *Be not conformed to this world.*

You that are young poſſibly will admit to be warned and admoniſhed. I ſhall therefore remind you of a few particulars. To perſons of your age the world and many things therein have peculiar charms; and what is cuſtomary and reputable comes to you with ſtrong recommendations, and muſt be very taking. You are deſirous of eſteem, and think it fit and becoming in ſuch as you to lay hold of that which tends to render you acceptable and agreeable; or to raiſe and advance you in the world. But, if you have a ſerious ſenſe of religious things, you muſt be aware, that you are not to follow the example of others, whether right or wrong. You will do well therefore, whilſt you are ſetting out in the world, to form a fixed purpoſe and reſolution of mind, that you will govern yourſelves by the rules of reaſon and revelation. Take heed, that the commonneſs of ſome ſins never abate the horror and dread you once had of them. Avoid friendſhip and intimacy with the corrupt and degenerate part of mankind; *leſt you learn their ways, and get a ſnare to your ſoul,* Prov. xxii. 25. Let your uſual companions be ſuch as appear to have impreſſions of religion upon their minds, and walk in the paths of virtue. You will be helpful to each other; good beginnings will be cheriſhed and improved, and you will keep one another in countenance, if you ſhould meet with ſome, who are ſo vile and daring, as to ſcoff at religion and virtue, and ridicule your conſcientious reſpect to the obligations of either.

But, beſide the young, there are others alſo, to whom this cautionary direction might be addreſſed, if they would receive it: for, as the young are liable to be ſeduced by their companions and equals; ſo likewiſe they who are of mature age may be in danger of being miſled by the bad example of ſome of their equals in age and ſtation; or by ſome of ſuperior ſtation, influence and authority; who to outward appearance are ſerious and attentive, but it is only to the honours, riches, preferments, ſtate and grandeur of this world. Our Lord freely reproved ſuch people, and warned others againſt them; as may be ſeen at large in the twenty-

twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew's goſpel, and elſewhere. *Then ſpake Jeſus unto the multitude and to his diſciples, ſaying: the ſcribes and phariſes ſit in Moſes's ſeat. All therefore whatever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do: but do ye not after their works: for they ſay and do not,* Matt. xxiii. 1—3 *But all their works they do to be ſeen of men,* ver. 5. *But woe unto you ſcribes and phariſees, hypocrites: for ye ſhut up the kingdom of heaven againſt men. For ye neither go in yourſelves, neither ſuffer ye them that are entering to go in,* ver. 13. Our Lord charged his diſciples to *beware of the leaven of the phariſees, which is hypocriſy,* Luke xii. 1. Theſe men had an outward appearance of ſanctity, and were greatly eſteemed by many. Nevertheleſs they were plainly influenced by ſelfiſh views, which prejudiced them againſt the truth, and led them alſo to obſtruct and diſcountenance thoſe who were well-diſpoſed to it. *How can ye believe,* ſaid our Lord to ſome of them, *which receive honour one of another, and ſeek not the honour that cometh from God only?* John v. 44. St. Paul obſerves to Titus, that ſome *teach things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's ſake,* Tit. i. 11. *But,* ſays he, *ſpeak thou the things which become ſound doctrine,* ch. ii. 1. He earneſtly cautions Timothy againſt a covetous diſpoſition, which had been fatal to ſome, who had taken upon them the profeſſion of the Chriſtian religion; ſaying, *The love of money is the root of all evil, which while ſome coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themſelves through with many ſorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee theſe things, and follow after righteouſneſs, godlineſs, faith, love, patience, meekneſs,* 1 Tim. vi. 10, 11. An undue love of wealth, honour, influence and authority, may be as prejudicial to the intereſts of religion in a man's mind, as an inordinate love of ſenſual pleaſure; and there may be as much need for ſome to guard againſt the example of the formal, who are covetous, ambitious and aſpiring, as for others to be upon their guard againſt that of the gay and voluptuous, the thoughtleſs and inconſiderate.

Let us then all attend to this cautionary direction, and the thoughts annexed to it in the ſame verſe: *And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind; that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

And let us beg of God to aſſiſt us in reſiſting the temptations of a vain world: that we may never be induced to follow

follow a multitude in that which is evil; but may be followers of thoſe, who in ancient or later times, have given an example of lively faith and ſteadfaſt virtue: that we may at length ſit down with them, not only in peace and ſafety, but in the plentiful poſſeſſion of the trueſt riches, and the full enjoyment of the pureſt and ſublimeſt entertainments, in the kingdom of heaven for ever and ever. Amen.

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A

# SERMON

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE LATE

REV. WILLIAM HARRIS, D.D. WHO DIED MAY 25, 1740, ÆT. LXV.

[FIRST PUBLISHED IN MDCCXL.]

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## DEDICATION.

To the congregation of Proteſtant Diſſenters, meeting in Crouched Fryars, London, this ſermon, occaſioned by the death of their late honoured and worthy paſtor, the Rev. Dr. William Harris, and publiſhed at their requeſt, is inſcribed by their humble ſervant,

N. LARDNER.

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## 2 THESS. i. 10.

WHEN HE SHALL COME TO BE GLORIFIED IN HIS SAINTS, AND TO BE ADMIRED IN ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE.

WHEN our Lord comes again, he comes to judge the world, and to reward every man according to his works; as the apoſtle writes in his context to the Chriſtians at Theſſalonica, who ſuffered perſecution for the goſpel: *It is a righteous thing with God to recompenſe tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled reſt with us: when the Lord ſhall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know*

*know not God, and that obey not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power: when he ſhall come to be glorified in his ſaints, and to be admired in all them that believe:* that is, when he ſhall come to be glorified, in the eye of the whole world, in the puniſhments inflicted on the final and irreconcilable enemies of God and religion, and in the glorious and happy circumſtances of thoſe who have ſincerely embraced the truth, and have been under the power and influence of it.

We way improve theſe words, by obſerving and enlarging ſomewhat upon theſe three propoſitions:

I. Chriſt will come again.

II. When he comes, he will be glorified in the happy and advantageous circumſtances of his people.

III. He will be admired by all who have believed in him, and continued faithful to the end.

Prop. I. Chriſt will come again. This is no leſs certain, than that he once dwelt on this earth. The time is ſtill a ſecret to us, and perhaps to all orders of intelligent creatures: but the thing itſelf is undoubted. He will come again at the time appointed of the Father, as St. Peter obſerves in one of his firſt ſermons after the deſcent of the ſpirit: *whom the heavens muſt receive, till the time of the reſtitution of all things*, Acts iii. 21. At the very inſtant of his aſcenſion, his diſciples were expreſsly aſſured of it by two angels: *This ſame Jeſus*, ſay they, *which is taken up from you into heaven, ſhall ſo come in like manner, as ye have ſeen him go into heaven*, Acts i. 11. Our Lord himſelf often ſpoke of it to his diſciples, and with the fulleſt aſſurance of the certainty of the event. *I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myſelf, that where I am, there ye may be alſo*, John xiv. 2, 3. But he never acquaints them with the time: and becauſe, for wiſe reaſons, that is kept ſecret, he frequently exhorts them to watchfulneſs and circumſpection. *Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Bleſſed is that ſervant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find watching. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day, nor the hour, when the Son of man cometh.*

But though the time is unknown, the ſecond coming of their Lord is no leſs the object of the faith of God's people now, than his firſt coming was of the ſaints under former

former diſpenſations: and the fulfilment of ancient predictions, in his firſt coming, confirms the hope of his appearing again. Nor is the great deſign of his coming into this world as yet accompliſhed. He will therefore certainly come once more, to complete the work he has begun.

We alſo know ſome of the circumſtances of his expected coming, which are very different from thoſe of the firſt. Then he was in the form of a ſervant. Hereafter he will appear in the character of the univerſal Lord and Judge: *he will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire: he will come in the glory of the Father, and all the holy angels with him: he will ſit on the throne of his glory, and before him will be gathered all nations.*

Prop. II. When Chriſt comes again, he will be glorified in the happy and advantageous circumſtances of his people. Here we may obſerve two things: firſt, what there will be, at that time, in their circumſtances, which will reflect honour upon him. Secondly, what perfections in him will then be glorified and appear illuſtrious.

1. Firſt, what there will be, at that time, in the circumſtances of his people, that will reflect honour and luſtre upon him. There will be ſuch things as theſe; the perfection of their holineſs, their external glory, and their great number.

1.) One thing in Chriſt's people, which will then reflect honour upon him, is the perfection of their holineſs. They, who then appear among his people, and are owned by him, are ſuch as had believed in him, and ſerved him faithfully in this world. The virtue of theſe, which here had ſome alloys and imperfections, will then be completed. *The church, which he loved, and for which he gave himſelf, that he might ſanctify and cleanſe it with the waſhing of water by the word, will* then *be preſented to him a glorious church, not having ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing, being holy and without blemiſh,* Eph. v. 25—27.

2.) Another thing in his people that will reflect honour upon him is their external glory, or the luſtre of their perſons; their bodies being then raiſed up immortal, and no more liable to death, or diſeaſes. Soul and body are reunited, freed from all the infirmities of ſinful and mortal fleſh. They have enlarged capacities, fitted for the nobleſt ſervices; celeſtial minds, and celeſtial bodies; bodies

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no longer clogs to the ſoul in its divine employments, but made fit for a partnerſhip with it in uninterrupted, endleſs praiſe and happineſs. The repreſentations, which the ſcripture gives us of this glory of the ſaints, are to this purpoſe: *So alſo is the reſurrection of the dead: it is ſown in corruption, it is raiſed in incorruption; it is ſown in diſhonour, it is raiſed in glory; it is ſown in weakneſs, it is raiſed in power; it is ſown a natural body, it is raiſed a ſpiritual body—The firſt man is of the earth earthy, the ſecond man is the Lord from heaven. And as we have born the image of the earthy, we ſhall alſo bear the image of the heavenly*, 1 Cor. xv. 42—49. *We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body*, Philip. iii. 21. So St. Paul. And, ſays another apoſtle: *It does not yet appear, what we ſhall be: but this we know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2.

3.) In the day of his ſecond coming, Chriſt will be glorified in the number and great multitude of his ſaints. He himſelf once ſpoke of his diſciples and people, as a *little flock*, Luke xii. 32. It was ſo then indeed. Few there were that believed in him; fewer ſtill, who had the courage to own him publicly, and before the world. Moſt men were then ignorant of him, or offended at him: and oftentimes his profeſſed viſible people have made but a ſmall and inconſiderable appearance, in compariſon of the reſt of the world: but in that day, the number of his redeemed ones will appear to be a great multitude; when all who have held the faith of Jeſus, or died in the hope and expectation of him, in any age, ſhall be gathered together from all the ends of the earth, and ſhall come from the eaſt and the weſt to meet their triumphant Lord. Says St. John in the Revelation: *After this I beheld, and lo a great multitude, which no man could number, out of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues, ſtood before the throne, and before the lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. And they cried with a loud voice, ſaying: ſalvation unto our God, which ſitteth on the throne, and unto the lamb*, Rev. vii. 9, 10.

If Chriſt's people and followers ſhould not then appear to be ſo numerous, as thoſe who have not known him, or not obeyed him; yet they may, as they certainly will, be a great number, exceeding what the contracted charity, or the melancholy apprehenſions of ſome now admit of and

ſuppoſe. There may be many among his ſaints, not only out of all nations and people, but alſo out of all ſects and parties; ſome of which were far from being very conſpicuous or renowned on this earth.

There will be many of all ranks, of different gifts and attainments: ſome, of great learning, and the moſt exalted capacity; who preferred the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified above all other ſcience, as beſt ſuited to ſecure the practice of virtue, and advance it to the greateſt perfection; and to ſupport the mind under the afflictions of this life. Others there will be, of meaner capacities, unable by the exerciſe of their own reaſon, to trace out the principles and obligations of religion and virtue, or to comprehend the abſtruſe ſpeculations, and profound reaſonings of the philoſophers; who from the doctrine, miraculous works, great example, conſpicuous and well-atteſted death and reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, have learned the nature and obligation of true religion, as conſiſting in the love of God and our neighbour, and the certainty of future recompenſes; and have been engaged thereby to perfect holineſs in the fear of God. Some there will be in this number, who had gone far from God, and been greatly entangled in the ſnares of an evil world, and were in the utmoſt danger of everlaſting perdition; who having been pierced with a ſenſe of ſin, and drawn by the gracious invitations of the goſpel, became ſincere penitents, and eminent ſaints. Others, who having been educated in the principles of the Chriſtian doctrine, and having been from the beginning under the impreſſions of them, continued to walk with Chriſt in white, and kept their garments clean, unſpotted from the world. There will be here a glorious appearance of ſuch as bought the truth, and would not ſell it; who took the kingdom of heaven by violence, and choſe the narrow path of virtue that leads to the ſight of God and the heavenly life: when they, who ſhould have animated and encouraged them by their counſel and example, laid obſtacles in their way, and would have perſuaded them rather to ſeek the eaſe, riches, honours and preferments of this preſent world. Some there will be of large minds, who ſtudied the principles of reaſon and revelation, and were well acquainted with the mind of Chriſt; who here earneſtly recommended general benevolence, promoted peace and friendſhip among men, and happily prevented

vented contentions and diviſions. Theſe will have diſtinguiſhed honour in that day: and ſome others, poſſibly, ſhall not miſs of the divine favour, who from falſe apprehenſions, and a miſtaken zeal, had been here too apt to reject ſome, whom they ſhould have received as brethren in Chriſt, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance. There will be ſome, who in this ſtate of trial had done honour to religion, by a cheerful, as well as ſteady obedience. They had a comfortable perſuaſion of the divine favour and acceptance, and they rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. They could ſay: *The life, which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me*, Gal. ii. 20. They will triumph and exult, when Chriſt, the judge of all, ſhall confirm the teſtimony they had in their minds, that they were the children of God. Others there will be, men of true ſimplicity and integrity, but dejected and low-ſpirited. They hoped, but could never fully clear up to their ſatisfaction, that they loved God; nor arrive at a ſettled perſuaſion, that they were loved of him; who, when the *books ſhall be opened*, will know, to their unſpeakable joy, that *their names* alſo *were written in the book of life*, Rev. xx. 12. There will be a great number, who here on earth were deſpiſed of men, and lived in mean condition; who will be owned by Chriſt for his people, as having been reſigned, contented, thankful in the circumſtances allotted them by Divine Providence. There will be many, who had honoured the Lord with their ſubſtance, who *clothed the naked, fed the hungry, viſited the ſick*, and ſpoke comfortably to thoſe who were caſt down. There will be many who had gone through great tribulation, who laboured and did not faint: a noble and numerous company of martyrs and confeſſors, who took joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, or laid down their lives in teſtimony to the truth.

Will not this multitude of ſuch perſons reflect honour upon him, by whom they were redeemed; through whoſe means they were carried ſafe through the temptations of this world, and were enabled to perſevere to the end, notwithſtanding the difficulties they met with? If it be true, as it certainly is, that *they who are wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs, as the ſtars for ever and ever*, Dan. xii. 3. how glorious is Jeſus,

the ſource of this wiſdom, the ſpring of this zeal for truth and virtue!

2. Secondly, we are to conſider, what perfections in Chriſt will then be glorified, and appear illuſtrious: and it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that his wiſdom, his power, and his faithfulneſs will then be very conſpicuous.

1.) His wiſdom. The preaching of the croſs has appeared fooliſhneſs to many in this world: but then it will be manifeſt, beyond the poſſibility of farther doubt and queſtion, that *the fooliſhneſs of God*, 1 Cor. i. 25. that divine diſpenſation, which many had deſpiſed, was wiſer than all the wiſdom of men. Some indeed, yea not a few, do now perceive and acknowledge it to be a well-laid deſign, admirably ſuited to the weakneſs and degeneracy of the human nature: and they are ready to ſay with the apoſtle: *O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and the knowledge of God!* and that *God hath abounded toward us in all wiſdom and prudence.* But at that time, the contrivance of this diſpenſation will appear ſtill more wonderful. It will be manifeſt, particularly in the great number of the ſaints then collected, and brought together in one, from the ſeveral parts of the world; to whom *Chriſt has been made of God, wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption*, 1 Cor. i. 30.

It is indeed a vaſt and delightful ſcene of contemplation, which will then lie open to the ſaints; to obſerve the original deſign, ſeveral ſteps, continued progreſs, and final completion of the recovery and ſalvation of ſo many frail and ſinful men, by Jeſus Chriſt; and to obſerve the extent of his government of the church, and the world in general, in the ſeveral parts and ages of it, from the time of his exaltation to the right hand of the throne of God, to that great and glorious day, when all mankind are brought before his tribunal.

2.) At that time the power of Chriſt will be glorified. It will appear great and wonderful in the reſurrection of the ſaints, juſt performed by his word. This is what our Lord ſpoke of, as ſo marvellous, in anſwer to ſome cavils of the Jews: *For the Father loveth the Son, and ſheweth him all things that himſelf doth: and he will ſhew him greater things than theſe, that ye may marvel: for as the Father raiſeth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even ſo the Son quickeneth whom he will. ... Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in the which*

*which all that are in their graves ſhall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good unto the reſurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the reſurrection of damnation,* John v. 20—29.

3.) Another perfection, to be glorified at that time, is the truth or faithfulneſs of Chriſt. This is the day for the full accompliſhment of all his promiſes, upon which his people have depended, and by which they have been animated in the whole of their courſe. Here he delivered rules of life, and made gracious promiſes to ſuch as obeyed them. He encouraged men to forſake all earthly goods for his ſake and the goſpel's, aſſuring them of abundant recompenſe hereafter. In his conference with Nicodemus he uſeth theſe expreſſions: *Verily I ſay unto thee: we ſpeak what we do know, and teſtify that we have ſeen,* John iii. 11. In his preaching he publicly declared with the greateſt ſolemnity: *This is the Father's will which hath ſent me, that of all which he hath given me, I ſhould loſe nothing, but ſhould raiſe it up at the laſt day: and this is the will of him that ſent me, that every one which ſeeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlaſting life, and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day,* John vi. 39, 40. Once more, he ſays to his diſciples: *In my Father's houſe are many manſions: if it were not ſo, I would have told you,* ch. xiv. 2. Upon the ground of a clear conviction of his divine authority and character, which he claimed; and a perſuaſion of the truth of all his declarations and promiſes, his people have acted as they have done. They have given themſelves up to him, and obeyed him. They have been induced to ſeek principally ſuch things as are now diſtant and unſeen; and not to prefer, but oftentimes to forego the pleaſures, poſſeſſions and honours of this preſent world, and every thing deſirable therein, in hope of being raiſed up by him to immortal life and everlaſting happineſs. So they have acted: ſo they have believed, and truſted in him: and now his truth is manifeſt in the event. Thoſe things, which were once the objects of deſire and hope, are poſſeſſed and enjoyed. His faithfulneſs was believed before, and there was good evidence of the truth of all he ſaid; and they who depended upon it, acted wiſely and reaſonably: but now it is even ſeen. Not one jot or tittle of his word has fallen to the ground, but all is fulfilled. Not one of thoſe little ones whom men deſpiſed, has periſhed; whom he had aſſured, that it was the good pleaſure of the

Father to give them a kingdom. Not one of thoſe, whom the Father had given him, is wanting, but all his ſheep are placed at his right hand.

His truth and faithfulneſs may be farther illuſtrated, at that time, by the peculiar degrees of honour and glory conferred upon thoſe, whoſe virtue has been eminent, and tried by great difficulties and ſufferings here. Many indeed, and great are the encouragements, which he gave in the courſe of his miniſtry to thoſe who ſhould be eminent, ſteadfaſt and conſtant in virtue; and future rewards will certainly be anſwerable to thoſe encouraging declarations, and the hopes he has raiſed by them. *Bleſſed are ye*, ſays he, *when men ſhall revile you and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all manner of evil of you, falſly, for my ſake: rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven*, Matt. v. 11, 12. When the diſciples deſired to know, who ſhould be *greateſt in the kingdom of heaven*, ch. xviii. 1, 4. he did not deny that there would be diſtinctions therein: but intimates, that he who ſhould be moſt humble, and for the ſake of truth and the good of mankind moſt abaſe himſelf, would in the end be moſt exalted, and be *greateſt in the kingdom of heaven*. When the two diſciples petitioned, *to ſit, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, in his kingdom*, he did not grant their requeſt; aſſuring them it was not a thing to be determined by him, upon the ground of any perſonal regards and conſiderations. Nevertheleſs he adds: *It ſhall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father*, Matt. xx. 23. and he inſinuates to them, that one way of being neareſt to him in his glory, is to *drink of his cup, and be baptiſed with the baptiſm, with which he was to be baptiſed*; that is, to ſuffer in teſtimony to truth, if called thereto. In figurative expreſſions he pronounces a ſpecial bleſſing upon men of uniform virtue and obedience. *Bleſſed are thoſe ſervants, whom the Lord, when he cometh ſhall find watching. Verily, I ſay unto you, that he ſhall gird himſelf, and make them to ſit down to meat, and will come forth and ſerve them*, Luke xii. 37. When Thomas, upon the ground of an overbearing evidence, admitted the truth of his reſurrection, our Lord graciouſly accepted the profeſſion of faith which he made: but at the ſame time, he breaks forth into a ſuperior commendation of ſuch as ſhould be better diſpoſed to truth. *Jeſus ſaith unto him: Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen me,*

*me, thou haſt believed: bleſſed are they which have not ſeen, and yet have believed,* John xx. 29.

Agreeable hereto are many declarations of the apoſtles. *For,* ſays St. Paul, *our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,* 2 Cor. iv. 17. And St. Peter: *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that periſheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praiſe and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt,* 1 Pet. i. 7. that is, they who when tried by difficulties and ſufferings in the cauſe of truth, are not thereby overcome, but ſtill continue faithful, and are only more and more refined and ſanctified, ſhall receive abundance of honour and praiſe at the appearance of Jeſus Chriſt.

Hereby the Lord will be glorified; when the truth and equity of his judgment ſhall be manifeſt in rewards, proportioned to his declarations, and the great hopes he had raiſed in the minds of the ſincere and upright. The cauſe of virtue is then completely vindicated by him. Every inſtance of right conduct is recompenſed: and the moſt eminent virtue, which here on earth is ſometimes expoſed to the greateſt difficulties, and the worſt reproaches, receives an equal reward. This is glorious to the Judge of the world.

Theſe are perfections of Chriſt, which are glorified by the perfect holineſs, external glory, and great number of his people: for, as the apoſtle ſays, *Whether one member ſuffer, all the members ſuffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice in it,* 1 Cor. xii. 26. ſo alſo is Chriſt, the head, honoured and glorified in the honour of each ſaint, much more in the honour and glory of the whole church, which is his body. This is the day, when good men, of all ages and nations, of every rank and condition, of different capacities and attainments, who have lived under the ſeveral diſpenſations of reaſon and revelation, make up one viſible and harmonious aſſembly. Nor is there any longer one member of the church ſuffering, or tempted: all have finiſhed their courſe, and their warfare is accompliſhed. In the ſtile of the Revelation, *they are clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands,* Rev. vii. 9. the enſigns of victory and triumph.

It is then a day glorious to Chriſt, and a day of unſpeakable joy to his people. He muſt be honoured and

revered by thoſe alſo, to whom his appearance is not joyful: for all the unjuſt neglect and contempt of him and his people are for ever confuted and put to ſhame; and a full conviction is wrought in the minds of all, concerning the reaſonableneſs of the gracious promiſes formerly made in favour of virtue, and the great rewards now conferred upon it.

It is, moreover, reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that at this time, Chriſt will be very glorious in the eſteem of the bleſſed angels, and all orders of intelligent beings: for the angels are ſaid to be *miniſtering ſpirits ſent forth to miniſter to them, who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation*, Heb. i. 14. and they *deſired to look into thoſe things*, 1 Pet. i. 12. that were done at the publication of the goſpel. It may be therefore juſtly concluded, that they likewiſe partake in the joy and acclamations of this day; and that in their eyes, as well as in thoſe of his people, Chriſt is glorified: eſpecially ſince they are ſpoken of as preſent at this time, and coming as attendants on the judge of the world, See Rev. v. 11—14.

Prop. III. When Chriſt comes again, he will be admired, particularly, by all them that believe. Three things will appear admirable at that time: Chriſt's perſonal glory, the greatneſs of his love in what he has done for his people, and his goodneſs in the kind reception he gives them, and the great reward he beſtows upon them.

1. Chriſt's perſonal glory. He comes on the clouds, with an innumerable company of the heavenly inhabitants in his train: and many awful appearances there will be to increaſe the grandeur and ſolemnity of that day. There will be alſo the glory of his own perſon, ſuited to his real dignity, and the great characters he ſuſtains, of the Head of the church and Judge of the world. Once, when he was on earth, in the days of his humiliation, he was glorioufly transformed in the view of three of his diſciples: *His face did ſhine as the ſun, and his raiment became white as the light.* The deſcription given of that one tranſient glorification may help us to ſome imperfect idea of the preſent glory of the human nature of Chriſt in his ſtate of exaltation; and of that in which he will appear, when he comes to judge the world. But though we cannot now diſtinctly conceive of it, we may be aſſured it will be ſuch, as will raiſe the wonder of all, and afford every believer a pleaſing ſurpriſe and joy. Each ſaint will have a glory

of

of his own, with which he will be ſatisfied: all will admire, and be delighted with the tranſcendent glory and majeſty of him who is their common Lord and head.

2. Another thing that will be admired at that time is the love of Chriſt in what he has done for his people, in order to bring them to the glorious and happy circumſtances in which they then appear. This was always matter of wonder to thoſe who duly conſidered it. It will hereafter appear more admirable. It was owing to the doctrine taught by him in a mean condition, and farther confirmed by his painful death and glorious reſurrection, that their hearts were won to God and virtue. It was by *looking unto Jeſus, who endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and then ſat down on the right hand of the throne of God*; that they *laid aſide every weight, and ran with patience the race that was ſet before them*, Heb. xii. 1, 2. If he had not firſt overcome, neither had they overcome, as they have done, the allurements and terrors of an evil world. His victory encouraged them, and made them conquerors. So it is in the apoſtle's triumphant challenge: *Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? Shall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution . . . . ? Nay, in all theſe things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us*, Rom. viii. 35—37.

3. Another thing, that will be admired by them that believe, is the goodneſs of Chriſt in the kind and gracious reception he gives them, and the reward he beſtows upon them. This may be argued from the repreſentation, which our Lord himſelf has given of the ſolemn procedure at the end of the world: *Then ſhall the king ſay unto them on the right hand: come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; thirſty, and ye gave me drink; a ſtranger, and ye took me in. Then ſhall the righteous anſwer him, ſaying: Lord, when ſaw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirſty, and gave thee drink?* Matt. xxv. 34—37. It will appear amazing goodneſs in him, to conſider, and reward acts of kindneſs, done to their afflicted and neceſſitous brethren, as done to himſelf; eſpecially as they are conſcious, that the principle of virtue, from which thoſe good works have proceeded, was formed by his care and inſtitution, and was owing to that love, wherewith he firſt loved them, in living a life of ſorrows, and dying a painful death for their ſake.

Thus

Thus we have meditated a while upon the ſeveral parts of this text. And we perceive, the day of Chriſt's ſecond coming will be a day of great ſplendour and magnificence: and ſhall it not be a day of joy unto us? ſhall we not partake in the glory and triumphs of that time? This well deſerves our conſideration. It was a deſirable thing, to ſee the Saviour of the world, when clothed in the ſinleſs infirmities of the human nature: it muſt be much more deſirable, to ſee him coming in his glory: but neither of theſe his comings is of advantage unto all. They were his diſciples only; and ſuch others, as attentively heard his words, and received them into good and honeſt hearts, who were entitled to a bleſſing, as he ſays to them: *Bleſſed are your eyes, for they ſee; and your ears, for they hear*, Matt. xiii. 16. So it will be likewiſe in the time of his ſecond coming. He appears to complete the redemption of thoſe only, whoſe ſalvation was begun here, and who were made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the ſons of God.

This text leads us to two things, neceſſary to our ſeeing Chriſt with joy; that we be ſaints, and believers; or, that we have a faith, which purifies the heart, and produces works of righteouſneſs in our lives. So let us be prepared for the coming of the Lord: and let us be diligent, *that we may be found of him in peace, without ſpot and blameleſs*, 2 Pet. iii. 14. Let us be ſuch in the frame of our minds, and in all our actions, at every ſeaſon, that we may be ready to meet him, whenever he comes. Theſe are they, whom Chriſt pronounceth bleſſed, as before ſhewn. His words at length are theſe; *Bleſſed are thoſe ſervants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find watching. Verily I ſay unto you, that he will gird himſelf, and make them ſit down to meat, and will come forth and ſerve them. And if he ſhall come in the ſecond watch, or come in the third watch, and find them ſo, bleſſed are thoſe ſervants*, Luke xii. 37, 38.

May this be our caſe, as we have reaſon to believe it was that of our honoured paſtor, whoſe death we, and and many others, now lament! At the ſame time we ought to be thankful, that he has been ſo long upheld by his Lord and Maſter in his ſervice, and particularly, as paſtor of this congregation, for the ſpace of forty years and upwards: of which relation to this ſociety, and the harmony that had all along reigned therein, he ſpeaks with ſatisfaction in the preface to his diſcourſes on the

principal repreſentations of the Meſſiah, throughout the Old Teſtament: 'Recommending them particularly to 'thoſe of his own charge, to whom he had then ſtood 'ſo long related, and with whom he had lived in an 'uninterrupted peace, and with many marks of a diſtin-'guiſhing reſpect:' which is to your, as well as his honour. He concludes that preface with theſe words, ſhewing what was the conſtant aim of his labours, and what the reward he moſt deſired: 'Such as they are,' ſays he, 'I make a humble 'ſacrifice of them to the honour of the bleſſed Redeemer, 'and lay them at his feet: having no higher ambition 'in this world, than to ſerve his intereſt, and be accepted 'of him; nor higher expectation and hope, than to be 'with him, and behold his glory.'

His ſermons in the ſtated courſe of his miniſtry were judicious and practical, filled with juſt ſentiments, and texts of ſcripture aptly applied; compoſed with great propriety of expreſſion, and exactneſs of order and method; ſuited to meaner, as well as better capacities; the fruit of much ſtudy, ſerious thought and conſideration. The ſubjects of his preaching were of a large compaſs, taking in the general principles of religion, with the grounds and evidences of them, and the important duties of the Chriſtian life, recommended by forcible motives and conſiderations: not neglecting any of the various wants and exigences of men, but aiming, by proper and well-choſen arguments, to awaken the ſecure, quicken the ſlothful, comfort the afflicted, and ſtrengthen the weak: nor always laying the foundations of religion, but carrying on good beginnings toward perfection. Thus, as a faithful ſteward and wiſe overſeer, he divided to every one a portion. How he performed ſome other branches of his paſtoral office, many of you muſt likewiſe be very ſenſible, and can bear teſtimony to the fidelity and tenderneſs with which he admoniſhed, warned, adviſed, comforted in private, as the circumſtances of things required. His performances at the public ordinations of miniſters were always greatly eſteemed. In funeral diſcourſes, whether for miniſters, or other uſeful Chriſtians, he had a happy art of giving the beſt likeneſs without flattery. His delivery, as you well know, was grave and manly, entirely free from affectation, with very little action, in a word, worthy of himſelf. As his aſſiſtance was much deſired in many other places, and his preaching was generally

generally acceptable; I truſt there are many, in whom he has been, under God, the inſtrument of forming a principle of virtue, and of cheriſhing and improving it by the word of God diſpenſed by him; who ſhall be to him, in the great day, a crown of glory and rejoicing. Notwithſtanding the exactneſs of his own compoſitions, he was a candid hearer of others; and was a true friend, as well as an excellent pattern to younger miniſters, in preaching and in converſation.

In his family he was a watchful guardian, a faithful monitor, an affectionate friend.

He had a great command of his temper and his words. He was ſcarce ever ſeen to be angry. He very ſeldom ſaid any thing to the diſadvantage of any one; and was much more apt to commend, than find fault.

He was a ſteady friend. If any, who ſtood in that relation to him, came into trouble; he did not deſert them, but liberally relieved, and affectionately comforted them, and perſiſted to take care of them under continued diſtreſſes and afflictions; though ſometimes ſome ſuch returns were made, as could not be altogether agreeable.

He was happy in the eſteem and reſpect of great numbers of his brethren in the miniſtry, and many others; men of much reading, ſound judgment, unqueſtioned probity, and eminent in their ſeveral ſpheres and ſtations. Not now to inſiſt on the regard ſhewn him by thoſe of the congregation, to which he was more eſpecially related, and in whom he had much comfort: which was mentioned before.

He ſcarce ever loſt any friendſhip entirely: for being always maſter of himſelf, he never irritated by haſty and offenſive expreſſions the diſpleaſure, which any through prejudice might conceive againſt him: and, as good-will had never ceaſed, nor enmity taken place, on his part, when opportunities offered; (which were not unlikely to happen, conſidering his reputation and influence in the world) he cheerfully performed offices of kindneſs for ſuch perſons, or their friends, and thereby laid them under freſh obligations. Thus he overcame evil with good, and regained the love and eſteem of thoſe, who for a while had been eſtranged from him.

He was a ſincere friend of religious and civil liberty: and was always of a catholic ſpirit, loving good Chriſtians of every communion.

Such

Such were his attainments, that it may be well ſuppoſed he was particularly fitted for the converſation of men of rank, and of extenſive knowledge: but he could condeſcend: and in the ſociety of meaner perſons he was the ſame man; as well-pleaſed, and as free and communicative, as in any other; provided he found an inquiſitive temper, and ſome good underſtanding in the things of religion. In thoſe ſeaſons he appeared very amiable to ſuch as were attentive, and diſpoſed to obſerve.

The beſt judges have acknowledged the pieces publiſhed by him, which conſiſt of ſeveral volumes, and are upon divers ſubjects and occaſions, to be the works of a maſterly hand. How conſtant he was in the public ſervices of his miniſterial office in this place, and how frequent elſewhere, are things well known: and when it is conſidered how laboured and finiſhed all his compoſitions were; and that, beſides, he read much, both in ancient and modern authors; had a numerous acquaintance, and a large epiſtolary correſpondence; and that with care he reviſed many works of his learned friends, and kindly forwarded ſome of them to public view, and performed abundance of other good offices in private, and had a concern in many great and uſeful deſigns of a more public nature; it may be ſomewhat difficult to conceive, how he ſhould have ſufficient time and ſtrength for what he did: but he was bleſſed with a moſt ready apprehenſion, which fitted him for quick diſpatch; and moreover, he loved employment, and could endure long and cloſe application.

But to draw to a concluſion: Dr. HARRIS may be ſaid to have excelled among good men, on account of the number of virtues poſſeſſed by him in a conſpicuous degree; and on account of the great uniformity of his temper and conduct in the ſeveral occurrences of his life. Among great men, in like manner, he had a diſtinction, inaſmuch as there have been few, in whom ſo many accompliſhments have met together and been united. What may ſerve to confirm this part of the character, however exalted it may appear, is his great reputation in the world, which began very early, and continued to the laſt; not ſought by

* Dr. Harris was for a ſhort time Clerk to Mr. Read in Gravel Lane, Southwark. In 1698, the twenty-third year of his age, he was choſen to ſucceed the very eminent Mr. Timothy Cruſoe in the paſtoral

by him, but attending him, as the ſhadow and concomitant of his merit.

By the greatneſs of his capacity he was qualified for the higheſt ſtations in life, and might have ſhone therein: but it is as glorious to deſpiſe great things, as to ſeek and obtain them. Merit is an intrinſic thing, and depends not upon outward advantages: nor is his at all the leſs for chooſing to ſerve God, and abiding in the way moſt agreeable to his own judgment, and endeavouring to be uſeful among thoſe Chriſtians, who were much of the ſame mind with himſelf; to whom he has been an ornament, and will be a laſting honour.

The relation that has ſubſiſted between this excellent perſon and us, is now diſſolved and broken by the ſtroke of death: and it becomes us to ſubmit our wills to the divine will and pleaſure, and to acquieſce in this afflictive and diſcouraging event. But there are alſo other duties incumbent on us. It is a direction of the apoſtle: *Remember them that have had the rule over you, who have ſpoken to you the word of God: and conſidering the end of their converſation*, their ſteadfaſtneſs and perſeverance, *follow their faith*, Heb. xiii. 7. There is honour and reſpect due to the memory of ſuch: and we ought likewiſe to imitate their virtues. We ſhould recollect the inſtructions that have been given us, and continue to follow and obey them. We are to be thankful for the bleſſing we have enjoyed; and are alſo to conſider, that we have had a talent, of which we muſt give an account. If we ſhall be able to give a good account in the end, this will be joyful to thoſe who have been our guides and inſtructors, and to ourſelves. Both they and we ſhall, then, receive a full reward.

paſtoral care of the congregation in Crouched Fryars, London. In 1703, he was intruſted by the executors of Mr. Nathanael Taylor with the publication of the poſtumous papers of that celebrated preacher; to which he prefixed a preface, an example of that excellent manner, by which all his writings are diſtinguiſhed. How great his credit has been of late years, is well known. I add no more. But, for ſome farther memoirs of Dr. Harris, would refer to the funeral ſermon preached by Dr. Groſvenor.

THE

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE AN ARGUMENT FOR THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

# THREE DISCOURSES

## ON ROMANS xi. 11.

[FIRST PUBLISHED IN MDCCXLIII.]

ROM. xi. 11.

*I ſay then, have they ſtumbled, that they ſhould fall? God forbid. But rather through their fall ſalvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealouſy.*

In this context the apoſtle diſcourſeth of an affecting ſcene of things, the reception of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews; the former a juſt occaſion of much joy, the latter of like grief and concern: that they, who had been long favoured and diſtinguiſhed by religious privileges, ſhould fall from them: and, when others received marks of divine favour, and indeed preſſed in for a ſhare in ſpiritual bleſſings, they ſhould be offended at it.

St. Paul has a long argument upon theſe points in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of this epiſtle to the Romans. He enters upon it at the beginning of the ninth chapter in theſe words: *I ſay the truth in Chriſt, and lie not, my conſcience alſo bearing me witneſs in the Holy Ghoſt, that I have great heavineſs, and continual ſorrow of heart. For I could wiſh:* I am almoſt ready to wiſh. He does not ſay, that he actually wiſheth it. *For I could wiſh*, ſays he, *that myſelf were accurſed from Chriſt, for my brethren, my kinſmen according to the fleſh; who are Iſraelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the ſervice of God, and the promiſes; whoſe are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the fleſh, Chriſt came:* and it concludes with a pious acknowledgment, and humble adoration of the wiſdom and equity of Divine Providence; though theſe and other events in this world appear to us, for a time, ſtrange and ſurpriſing. *O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! How unſearchable are*

*are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!—For of him, and through him, and to him are all things. To whom be glory for ever.*

My chief deſign at this time is to obſerve ſome advantages, which Chriſtians have in their argument for the truth of their religion, from the preſent afflictive circumſtances, and low eſtate of the Jewiſh people and nation.

*I ſay then, have they ſtumbled, that they ſhould fall?* As if the apoſtle had ſaid: 'But by this their preſent rejection, 'which I have been ſpeaking of, do I intend to ſay, that 'they have ſo ſtumbled, as to fall; that is, ſo as never 'to riſe again, and never to be again reſtored to proſperous 'circumſtances, as a people?'

Or, according to another interpretation: 'Do I by 'what I have ſaid intend to intimate, that all of them 'ſhould fall, and none believe, and partake of the bleſſings 'of the Meſſiah's kingdom, and the divine favour?'

*God forbid:* or, which would be better, and more proper: by no means, or far be it: for the name of God never is in the original phraſe, by which this emphatical negative is expreſſed. 'No, by no means: that is not 'the caſe, that none of the natural poſterity of Jacob ſhould 'believe, and come into the privileges of the Meſſiah's 'kingdom.'

*But through their fall ſalvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them unto jealouſy.* 'But by the Jewiſh people now 'generally rejecting the Meſſiah, it has ſo happened, that 'ſalvation has been conveyed unto the Gentiles: and here-'in there is not only a benefit to them, in their ſalva-'tion, but alſo to the Jews: for by the Gentiles em-'bracing the goſpel propoſed to them, and coming to 'partake of religious privileges, the Jewiſh people will be 'provoked to emulation: more of them will now believe, 'and be accepted of God, than if the goſpel had not 'been preached to and received by the Gentiles.

'When therefore I ſpeak, as I have done, concerning 'the offence taken by the Jews againſt Jeſus and his goſpel, 'and concerning the divine diſpleaſure againſt them upon 'that account; I do not intend to inſinuate, that the 'poſterity of Jacob are totally and abſolutely excluded: or 'to deny, that ſuch of them, who now, or at any time 'hereafter ſhall believe, will be received and approved.'

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The ſenſe I have given of this text is confirmed by what the apoſtle ſays at the beginning of this chapter, where alſo, in the courſe of his argument, he has theſe like words: *I ſay then, has God caſt away his people? By no means. For I alſo am an Iſraelite, of the ſeed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin*, Rom. xi. 1. 'I reckon myſelf a proof to the contrary, 'and that God is willing to receive any of his ancient people 'the Jews, who believe in Jeſus, and obey the revelation made 'by him.' Then inſtancing in the number of true Iſraelites, ſervants and worſhippers of God in the time of Elijah, no leſs than ſeven thouſand; though the apoſtaſy was ſo general, that Elijah thought he was left alone, he adds: *Even ſo then at this preſent time alſo there is a remnant according to the election of grace*, Rom. xi. 5.

Indeed the Jewiſh people by generally rejecting the goſpel of Chriſt, preached to them with divine authority, had generally excluded themſelves from the privileges of God's people, having refuſed to accept the bleſſings offered to them. What then ſhould be done? Was the Meſſiah of God to have no people, when the Jews rejected him? It was not fit. Since therefore they now ſhew great reluctance to that kind propoſal, the goſpel ſhall be preached to the Gentiles, who will hear and receive it: and when they have received it, they will be of uſe to the Jewiſh people: for they will provoke them to jealouſy, and all good men among them will be diſpoſed to receive the Meſſiah, and from time to time will be brought into his kinghom: till at length, poſſibly, there ſhall be a general converſion of them, and that very much owing to the profeſſion of true religion made by Gentiles. So the fall of the Jews has been the Gentile's ſalvation: the Jews rejecting the Meſſiah haſtened the preaching of the goſpel to the Gentiles: and the Gentiles receiving and maintaining the goſpel will provoke the Jews to emulation, and excite them to receive it, that they alſo may partake in the divine favour and the marks of it.

So the apoſtle argues in this and following verſes: *But through their fall ſalvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them unto jealouſy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminiſhing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulneſs?* that is, their general converſion, or a more numerous converſion of them, than has yet been. *For I ſpeak unto you, Gentiles, inaſmuch as I am the apoſtle of*

*the Gentiles; I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my fleſh, and might ſave ſome of them: for if the caſting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what ſhall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?* Rom. xi. 11—15. Again: *For I would not, brethren, that ye ſhould be ignorant of this myſtery, (leſt ye ſhould be wiſe in your own conceit) that blindneſs in part has happened to Iſrael, until the fulneſs of the Gentiles be come in: and ſo all Iſrael ſhall be ſaved,* ver. 25, 26. *For as ye in times paſt have not believed God, yet now have obtained mercy through their unbelief: even ſo have theſe alſo now not believed, that through your mercy they alſo may obtain mercy: for God has concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all,* Rom. xi. 30—32.

There are therefore two things ſpoken of in theſe and divers other verſes of this chapter: an advantage accruing to the Gentiles through the unbelief and rejection of the Jews: an advantage accruing to the Jews through the belief and reception of the Gentiles.

It is the firſt point chiefly, upon which I ſhall inſiſt, and in the following method.

I. I ſhall obſerve the preſent ſtate of things with regard to Chriſtians, the followers of Jeſus, and the Jews who reject him.

II. I ſhall ſhew what advantages Chriſtians have in the argument for the truth of their religion from the preſent ſtate of things in the world.

III. I intend to mention ſome remarks and obſervations upon this ſubject.

I. In the firſt place I would obſerve the preſent ſtate of things in the world, both with regard to Chriſtians; the followers of Jeſus; and the Jews who reject him.

And the caſe is very obvious, ſuch as every one is able to perceive, upon a little thought and conſideration.

There are now great numbers of men in the world, in various kingdoms, ſtates and governments, in countries near and afar off, profeſſing faith in Jeſus as the Chriſt, who are not the natural deſcendents of Abraham and the ancient patriarchs.

Theſe people called Chriſtians, of Gentile ſtock and original, declare themſelves worſhippers of the one living and true God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, the God of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, the God, who de-

livered

livered the law by Moſes, and often ſpake unto the children of Iſrael by the prophets.

And as they are worſhippers of the one true God, they are likewiſe free from all that kind of idolatry, which once prevailed univerſally in the world, and into which the Jewiſh people themſelves formerly were often ſeduced and perverted. They worſhip not, as Gods, the ſun, or the moon, or the ſtars: nor Baal, nor Saturn, nor any other of the Gods of the people of the Eaſt, or of the Egyptians, or of the Greeks and Romans, or of any of the countries of the Barbarians in the northern parts of the world.

Nor are they only worſhippers of the one living and true God, the God of the people of Iſrael, but they alſo receive the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament, delivered in a ſucceſſion of ages, at divers times, to the deſcendents of Abraham and Iſrael. They believe them to be the writings of men, animated and inſpired by the ſpirit of God, and have them in equal veneration with the Jewiſh people themſelves.

Moreover they highly reſpect and honour not only the patriarchs and Moſes and the prophets, but likewiſe all the worthies of the ancient diſpenſation, who walked with God, and in the main were upright in his ſight, and ſteadfaſt in his covenant.

Theſe Chriſtian people differ indeed from the Jews in receiving a perſon as a great and eminent prophet, whom the Jews reject: but yet their regard for that prophet, whom they call the Chriſt, or the Meſſiah, is very much owing to their reſpect for thoſe ancient ſcriptures, in which they think he is foretold and promiſed.

And though they do not conform to all the ordinances of the law of Moſes, they allow and believe his law and his whole inſtitution to have been of divine appointment, wiſely deſigned, and of great uſe, as the ſtate of things in the world then was. And with cheerfulneſs and zeal they aſſert and maintain againſt all oppoſers the divine authority of that diſpenſation. They are likewiſe ſometimes almoſt compelled to wonder, that the Jewiſh people of old, who had ſuch a law, ſhould forſake God, and depart from his worſhip, ſo often as they did.

And, which is very conſiderable, they do not make void the law of Moſes, but eſtabliſh it. For their religion ſtrictly requires obedience to all the moral laws of righteouſneſs and true holineſs therein delivered, and upon

which the greateſt ſtreſs is there laid: which righteouſneſs is ſo elegantly and copiouſly taught and recommended in the books of Job, the Pſalms, and the Proverbs: in compariſon of which the later prophets openly declared ritual obſervances to be of little value, and without it uſeleſs and offenſive. Inſomuch that the ſubſtance of the Chriſtian religion is no other, than what has been accounted true religion by Moſes, and the prophets, by all the righteous men, and wiſe and pious princes, that ever were.

This is what is inculcated in their religious aſſemblies, and enforced from the conſideration of everlaſting rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate; more forcible motives, than the hope or fear of temporal rewards and penalties in the preſent life.

Nor do they neglect to improve the inſtances of faith and piety recorded in the Old Teſtament: though more eſpecially they dwell upon the ſhining example of perfect virtue in the life and death of Jeſus, their great Lord and Maſter.

As hereby men are trained up in great numbers to true and eminent virtue, they cannot but look upon themſelves as the true Iſrael, *who worſhip God in the ſpirit, and have no confidence, in unneceſſary, ritual appointments,* Phil. iii. 3. And the righteouſneſs, principally required in the law, is better fulfilled by them who have the religion of Jeſus, than it was by thoſe who had only the inſtitution of Moſes, Rom. viii. 4.

And indeed the religion of Chriſtians is that of Abraham, according to which he was juſtified, without the peculiarities of the law of Moſes: and it is a character, which they are pleaſed with, and boaſt of, that through Jeſus Chriſt they are become, according to the ſpirit, the children of faithful Abraham; and are juſtified and accepted of God as he was.

Nor ought it to be forgotten, that as the diſciples and followers of Jeſus do not take upon them the yoke of the ritual ordinances of the law of Moſes, as neceſſary to ſalvation; ſo neither have they introduced any other like ordinances in their ſtead. At leaſt they profeſs, that Jeſus, whom they own for the Meſſiah, has no ſuch ordinances in his religion: excepting two only, both plain and ſimple; one initiatory to a profeſſion of faith in him, and of obedience to his law; the other commemorative

of

of his love, who freely laid down his life, though ſpotleſs and innocent, as a teſtimony to the truth of that important doctrine, which he had taught and recommended to mankind.

Theſe are the followers of Jeſus. Theſe are Chriſtians, who now do, and for a long time have flouriſhed, and been numerous and conſiderable.

In the next place we are to obſerve the ſtate of the Jews; the natural poſterity of Jacob, who reject Jeſus, and do not allow him to be the Meſſiah, the great prophet and deliverer, foretold and promiſed in many parts, and in almoſt every book of the Old Teſtament.

They alſo are in great numbers, ſome in almoſt every province and kingdom of the known world. They are numerous, but not a people. They have a being, but they dwell not in the land of Canaan, which had been given them for an inheritance. They have no power and authority, no empire, no civil government, ſcarce* a right and privilege to poſſeſs the ſmalleſt tract or territory of land in any part of the world.

Nor have they any temple: for their ſtately temple, once glorious in outward appearance, ſtill more glorious for the eſpecial preſence of the Divine Majeſty, and the frequent manifeſtations he there made of himſelf: the temple, I ſay, where their tribes were to aſſemble, where alone, according to the law of Moſes, ſacrifices were to be offered, is in ruins, or rather is no more: without any traces of it remaining, but the remembrance of the place where it once was.

Other tokens of the divine favour are alſo wanting. They have not the Urim and Thummim of the prieſthood, nor any viſion, or prophecy, nor voice or word from God to direct or comfort them. Prophecy and viſion, in ancient times frequent, or even conſtant, are now not only rare and uncommon, but altogether unknown among them. Learned Rabbies, and traditionary teachers they may have: but what prophet can they boaſt of, as theirs, ſince the time of Jeſus; who truly was a Prophet mighty in word and

* If they have a right to purchaſe and poſſeſs lands of inheritance in ſome places, I ſuppoſe in but a few only, and there by ſome ſpecial favour and indulgence.

deed, and, as we ſay, the looked for and promiſed Meſſiah, but deſpiſed and crucified by them?

Such is the ſtate of things in the world, with regard to Chriſtians, the followers of Jeſus; and the Jews, who reject him.

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ROM. xi. 11.

*I ſay then, have they ſtumbled, that they ſhould fall? God forbid. But rather through their fall, ſalvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealouſy.*

II. I AM now in the ſecond place, as formerly propoſed, to ſhew, what advantages Chriſtians have in the argument for the truth of their religion, from this ſtate of things; and particularly from the afflictive circumſtances of the Jewiſh people, who reject the Lord Jeſus, and believe not in him as the promiſed Meſſiah.

We know Jeſus to be the Chriſt, the Son of God, the Saviour that ſhould come into the world, from the fulfilment of many ancient prophecies in his perſon and miniſtry, from the conſideration of the perfection and excellence of his doctrine, the unſpotted purity and holineſs of his life, the proofs he gave of wonderful knowledge and underſtanding: from his many miraculous works, his reſurrection from the dead, and aſcenſion to heaven, and from the mighty works done by his apoſtles, and others, preaching to the Jews and Gentiles, in his name, and under his authority.

Beſide all this, we have, as I apprehend, a great advantage in the argument for the truth of our religion from that ſtate of things, which was formerly taken notice of: and I ſhall now endeavour to ſhew it under the following particulars.

1. It was foretold by our Lord.

2. It is agreeable to many prophecies in the Old Teſtament.

3. The preſent ſtate of the Jewiſh people affords reaſon to believe, that the Meſſiah is already come.

4. The time and circumſtances of the preſent captivity and diſperſion of the Jewiſh people, afford an argument for the truth of the Chriſtian religion.

5. The

5. The ſubſiſtence of the Jewiſh people to this time affords an atteſtation to divers things, upon which ſome evidences of the Chriſtian religion depend.

1. This ſtate of things, with regard both to Jews and Gentiles, was foretold by our Lord: and, as the event has been agreeable to what he ſaid long ago, it ſhews, that he was a prophet. It alſo demonſtrates the truth and juſtneſs of all his claims; not only, that he came from God, but that he was the Chriſt, as he ſaid.

When the centurion had expreſſed a remarkable faith in the power of our Lord, to heal his ſick ſervant at a diſtance, *he ſaid to them that followed: I have not found ſo great faith, no not in Iſrael. And I ſay unto you, that many ſhall come from the eaſt, and the weſt, and ſhall ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. viii. 10—12. See alſo Luke xiii. 29. How unlikely was this! How little proſpect was there at that time, that great numbers of Gentiles in all quarters of the world, ſhould believe in God and his Chriſt, whom he had ſent! But yet that ſaying of our Lord has been abundantly fulfilled. The truth of his words appeared ſoon after, and they have been fulfilling to this day.

The reception of the Gentiles, with the diſlike and reſentment of the Jewiſh people, is evidently repreſented in the parable of the prodigal ſon, who upon his repentance is moſt kindly received by the father: but the elder ſon, meaning the Jewiſh people, the natural poſterity of Jacob, is offended, and will not come in, Luke xv.

The rejection of the Jewiſh people, who had been long barren and unfruitful to a great degree, and were ſtill likely to neglect the beſt means of improvement, is ſet before them by our Lord very intelligibly, though with as little offence as might be; which is agreeable to all the rules both of wiſdom and goodneſs. *He ſpake alſo this parable*, ſays the evangeliſt: *A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard*, Luke xiii. 6, 7. that is, in ſome incloſed ſpot of ground, where it was well ſituated and defended. *And he came, and ſought fruit and found none. Then ſaid he unto the dreſſer of the vineyard: Behold, theſe three years I come ſeeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none. Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*

And in like manner in ſome other parables, repreſenting their great and imminent danger of ruin, and alſo ſetting forth the juſtneſs and fitneſs of the ſentence to be pronounced upon

them, if they ſhould not repent; if they ſhould ſtill continue unfruitful after enjoying the beſt means of improvement, and ſhould withal oppoſe and abuſe the meſſengers of God ſent from time to time to warn and reclaim them. *Then began he to ſpeak unto the people this parable: a certain man planted a vineyard, and let it out to huſbandmen, and went into a far country.—And at the ſeaſon he ſent a ſervant unto the huſbandmen, that they ſhould give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the huſbandmen beat him, and ſent him away empty*, Luke xx. 9—16. In like manner did they unto others, who were ſent unto them. At length the lord of the vineyard ſent his ſon: but him they *caſt out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore ſhall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He will come and deſtroy thoſe huſbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others*, compare Matt. xxi. 33—41.

Our bleſſed Lord, all whoſe other miracles were healing and beneficent, with a view to the advantage of that people, if by any means they might be alarmed and perſuaded, conſtrained himſelf to ſpeak one word of malediction, a ſentence of condemnation upon a barren fig tree, and with ſurpriſing effect. He was going to Jeruſalem: *And when he ſaw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and ſaid unto it: let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever: and preſently the fig tree withered away*, Matt. xxi. 19. A miracle that was emblematical and prophetical, ſignifying the affecting and ſpeedy ruin and deſolation of the Jewiſh nation, if they out-ſinned the day of trial allotted them, and perſiſted to neglect and abuſe the means of ſalvation afforded them.

We have in our Lord's diſcourſes divers predictions of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the calamities attending it: and the event has ſhewn the truth of his prophetical character.

It ſhould be alſo obſerved by us, that thoſe predictions were publicly ſpoken in the hearing of many people; not of the diſciples only: and they were delivered with ſuch marks of affection and tenderneſs, and contained ſo diſtinct and ſo moving a deſcription of impending calamities, that nothing could have been better ſuited and adapted to prevent them, by inducing men to repent: and if they did not repent, he aſſured them, that *then would be great tribulation, ſuch as was not ſince the beginning of the world to that time, no nor ever ſhall be*, Matt. xxiv. 21. And when he was led away to be crucified,

fied, *and there followed him a great company of people, and of women, who alſo bewailed him and lamented him, Jeſus turning unto them ſaid: daughters of Jeruſalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourſelves, and for your children.—For if they do theſe things in a green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?* Luke xxiii. 26—31.

And we plainly perceive by his words, that the deſolation, which he foreſaw, would be of a long duration, as we alſo ſee in the event: which added to his concern for that people. It was not a ſingle judgment, a calamity of one day, though great and terrible, but a long ſcene of affliction and darkneſs, which he foretold and bewailed. *And when he was come nigh, he beheld the city, and wept over it, ſaying: if thou hadſt known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes,* Luke xix. 41, 42. And, *how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings! and ye would not: Behold, your houſe is left unto you deſolate,* Matt. xxiii. 37, 38. Once more, *then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let them which are in the midſt of it,* meaning the city of Jeruſalem, *depart out, and let not them that are in the country enter therein: for theſe be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled—For there ſhall be great diſtreſs in the land, and much wrath upon this people: and they ſhall fall by the edge of the ſword, and ſhall be led away captive into all nations: and Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,* Luke xxi. 21—24.

The great and punctual accompliſhment of theſe and other words of our Lord, concerning the ſad ruin, the wide diſperſion, and long captivity of the Jewiſh people, afford a ſtrong argument for the truth of the Chriſtian religion; and aſſure us, that Jeſus ſpoke with divine authority, and that the doctrine taught by him, and contained in the New Teſtament, the writings of his apoſtles, and their faithful companions, is true and of God.

2. The ſtate of things, formerly obſerved, is alſo conformable to ancient prophecies found in the books of Moſes and other parts of the Old Teſtament.

In thoſe books are contained prophecies of the general converſion of the nations of the earth to the acknowledgment and ſervice of the one living and true God, delivered, when the worſhip of God was confined to the one nation of the Jews alone,

alone, or to a few men only, their patriarchs and anceſtors, and a very ſmall number beſides. The way or means, by which this bleſſing ſhould be conveyed to the world, was alſo intimated. To Abraham it was declared, that in him, that is, through him and his poſterity, all nations, or families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed: that confines the accompliſhment of the promiſe to his family; ſome one or more of which muſt be the author, or authors and inſtruments of this general bleſſing. The ſame promiſe is ſolemnly renewed to Jacob. Gen. xxviii. 14. Afterwards there were prophecies delivered, containing limitations and reſtrictions, relating to the tribe of Judah, and the family of David. The deſcendents of Abraham in general, or many of them, may ſome way contribute to this deſign: but the tribe of Judah and the family of David are often ſpoken of with ſpecial regard. In Iſaiah particularly, it is foretold: *There ſhall come forth a rod out of the ſtem of Jeſſe, and a branch ſhall grow out of his roots.—In that day there ſhall be a root of Jeſſe, which ſhall ſtand for an enſign to the people, to it ſhall the Gentiles ſeek*, Iſa. xi. 1, 2, 11. Again, *I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayeſt be my ſalvation unto the ends of the earth*, ch. xlix. 6. And it is out of the tribe of Judah, and the family of David, that our Lord aroſe; and by him, as is manifeſt, the knowledge of God has been ſpread over the earth; and the promiſe made to Abraham, that *in him all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed*, has been fulfilled.

But beſide this there are intimations given in the Old Teſtament, that when this event ſhould happen, the Jewiſh people would be in ſome circumſtances, which are diſadvantageous.

Obſervable are the words of our Lord, when he foretels the the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. *For theſe be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled*, Luke xxi. 22. It is not improbable, that our Lord has here an eſpecial reference to ſome prophecies in the book of Daniel, relating particularly to the deſtruction of the city of Jeruſalem, which he foreſaw, and was then ſpeaking of; but he might alſo have an eye to ſome other parts of ſcripture: and we may without much difficulty perceive divers things ſaid in the Old Teſtament, which are prophetical, not only of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, but likewiſe of the long captivity and diſperſion, which were to enſue.

Jacob

Jacob foretelling the condition of his poſterity in future times, ſays, *Judah, thou art he, whom thy brethren ſhall praiſe. Thy hand ſhall be upon the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children ſhall bow down unto thee*, Gen. xlix. 8. The tribe of Judah, as we find from the hiſtory of the people of Iſrael, uſually had ſome diſtinction among the reſt. At length David and his deſcendents, who were of that tribe, ſat upon the throne of government among them: and from Judah the kingdom of the two tribes was called: and indeed from that tribe all Iſraelites in general were ſtiled Jews.

It follows in the place juſt cited: *The ſceptre ſhall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come: and unto him ſhall the gathering of the people be*, ver. 10. The ſenſe of which prophecy may be briefly taken in this manner: 'The * royal power and authority, 'which ſhall be eſtabliſhed in the poſterity of Judah, ſhall 'not be taken from them; or at leaſt they ſhall not be deſti-'tute of rulers and governors; no, not when they are in a 'declining condition, until the coming of the Meſſiah: but 'when he is come, there ſhall be no diſtinction between the 'Jews and other nations, who ſhall be obedient to the 'Meſſiah: and after that the poſterity of Judah and people 'of the Jews ſhall have neither king nor ruler of their own, 'but the commonwealth of Judah ſhall loſe all form of civil 'government and authority.'

This we know to have happened about the time of our Saviour's coming. From David to the Babyloniſh captivity that tribe held the ſceptre for ſeveral ages. After ſeventy years captivity the Jews returned to Judea, or the land of Canaan where they lived again according to their own laws: their temple was rebuilt, and they ſacrificed and worſhipped there, for the moſt part, with great freedom, according to the appointments of the law of Moſes. They were a diſtinct people, and had among them civil government and authority: but at the time of our Lord's birth, and afterwards, they were in ſome meaſure ſubject to the Romans: and the Jewiſh power and authority declined, till it was quite aboliſhed and overthrown by the emperors, Veſpaſian and Titus, about forty years after our Lord's aſcenſion: and ſo it has been to this day.

Moſes aſſured the people of Iſrael: *The Lord thy God will raiſe thee up a Prophet, from the midſt of thee, of thy brethren,*

* See Patrick upon the place.

*like*

*like unto me: unto him ſhall ye hearken,* Deut. xviii. 15. And God himſelf ſaid to Moſes: *I will raiſe them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee: and I will put my words in his mouth, and he ſhall ſpeak unto them all that I ſhall command him. And it ſhall come to paſs, that whoſoever will not hearken unto my words, which he ſhall ſpeak in my name, I will require it of him,* ver. 18, 19.

Some underſtand this to be an expreſs prophecy concerning the Meſſiah himſelf, that great Prophet who would be in an eſpecial manner like unto Moſes. Others have ſuppoſed it to be a promiſe of a conſtant ſucceſſion of prophets among them.

Allow this laſt to be the meaning, it implies a command to hear Jeſus, if he were a prophet; and a threatening of puniſhment, if he were not heard and obeyed: and that Jeſus was a prophet, is evident from teſtimonials ſurpaſſing not only thoſe given to other prophets among them, but even to Moſes himſelf. Conſequently diſobedience to him was a thing, for which God would certainly reckon with them.

I ſhall cite a paſſage or two more out of later prophets. In Daniel it is ſaid: *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finiſh the tranſgreſſions, and to make an end of ſins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs, and to ſeal up viſion and prophecy, and to anoint the moſt holy. Know therefore and underſtand, that from the going forth of the commandment to reſtore and to rebuild Jeruſalem unto the Meſſiah, the prince; ſhall be ſeven weeks: and threeſcore and two weeks the ſtreet ſhall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threeſcore and two weeks ſhall Meſſiah be cut off, but not for himſelf. And the people of the prince that ſhall come, ſhall deſtroy the city and the ſanctuary, and the end thereof ſhall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war deſolations are determined. And he ſhall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the midſt of the week he ſhall cauſe the ſacrifice and the oblation to ceaſe: and for the overſpreading of abomination he ſhall make it deſolate, even until the conſummation, and that determined ſhall be poured upon the deſolate,* Dan. ix. 24—27.

Here is a promiſe made to Daniel, that the city of Jeruſalem with its temple ſhould be rebuilt: and that they ſhould for ſome while there worſhip and ſerve God, as we know they did after the return from Babylon. And here is a promiſe of the appearing of the Meſſiah, and a prediction of great deſolation

lation afterwards: which alſo we know to have happened ſoon after the time of Jeſus, who was a great prophet, and anointed of God in a moſt extraordinary manner, and was generally rejected by the people, to whom Daniel belonged, and to whom he propheſied.

In Malachi, the laſt of the prophets of the Old Teſtament, are theſe words; *Behold, I will ſend my meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye ſeek ſhall ſuddenly come to his temple, even the meſſenger of the covenant, in whom ye delight. Behold, he ſhall come, ſaith the Lord of hoſts: but who may abide the day of his coming? And who ſhall ſtand, when he appears? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's ſoap: and he ſhall ſit as a refiner of ſilver,* Mal. iii. 1—3. And afterwards: *For behold the day cometh, that ſhall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea and all that do wickedly, ſhall be as ſtubble: and the day that cometh ſhall burn them up, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, that it ſhall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name ſhall the ſun of righteouſneſs ariſe with healing under his wings, and ye ſhall go forth, and grow up as calves of the ſtall: and ye ſhall tread down the wicked, and they ſhall be aſhes under the ſoles of your feet, in the day that I ſhall do this, ſaith the Lord of hoſts,* Mal. iv. 1—3.

Certainly theſe are not inſignificant words in the mouth of the prophet; and theſe emphatical expreſſions do evidently appear to relate to a great perſon, who ſhould come among the Jews, whilſt their temple was ſtanding: whereas their temple was deſtroyed, and they were led into captivity ſoon after the time of Jeſus our Lord.

John the Baptiſt, who well underſtood theſe prophecies, and knew his own character, ſays therefore: *And now alſo the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and caſt into the fire. I indeed baptiſe you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I.—Whoſe fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor. He will gather his wheat into the garner, but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire,* Matt. iii. 10, 11.

And Simeon, who when he ſaw the child Jeſus at the temple, doubted not but he was the Lord's Chriſt, and ſpoke of him as ſuch, and that he was *a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God's people Iſrael,* Luke ii. 32. ſaid to Mary his mother: *This child is ſet for the fall and riſing of many in Iſrael,* ver. 34.

The

The converſion of the Gentiles, then, and the low condition of the Jewiſh people, are not only agreeable to prophecies of the Lord Jeſus, but likewiſe to many ancient prophecies contained in the books of the Old Teſtament.‡

3. The preſent ſtate of the Jewiſh people, particularly their afflictive circumſtances, afford good reaſon to believe, that the Meſſiah, that great perſon ſpoken of in the Old Teſtament, but ſtill wiſhed for and expected by them, is already come.

For the prophecies concerning him ſpeak of his being of the tribe of Judah, and family of David. He muſt appear therefore, whilſt the regiſters of their tribes and families are in being: but now they are loſt. If any one ſhould now ariſe, claiming that great character; it could not be known what tribe he was of, and therefore there could not be any good aſſurance, that his claim was juſt.

This is an advantage in the argument for the truth of the Chriſtian religion: for we know, that Jeſus was of the tribe of Judah, and family of David. But ſince the long captivity and numerous diſperſions and removals of the Jewiſh people from one place to another, oftentimes under the greateſt difficulties, it is impoſſible, that their regiſters ſhould be preſerved, or the families of particular perſons be known.

Another thing clearly intimated by the latter prophets of the Old Teſtament, is, that the Meſſiah ſhould come, during the time of the temple built after the return from Babylon. God was pleaſed, by the prophet Haggai, to encourage the people to go on in rearing up the temple after this manner: *Thus ſaith the Lord of hoſts. yet once more, it is a little while, and and I will ſhake the heavens and the earth: and I will ſhake all nations, and the deſire of all nations ſhall come: and I will fill this houſe with glory, ſaith the Lord of hoſts*, Hagg. ii. 4, 5. Again, *The glory of this latter houſe ſhall be greater than that of the former, ſaith the Lord of hoſts*, ver. 9.

That temple wanted ſome things, which were in the temple built by Solomon; particularly, the ſymbol of the divine preſence, the cloud of glory overſhadowing the mercy ſeat. By the *the greater glory of the latter houſe* therefore ſeems to be meant the appearance of the Meſſiah, who is Emmanuel, or God with us: in whom the Deity dwelt and manifeſted himſelf in a peculiar manner: by which means alone, that

‡ If any ſhould find this diſcourſe too long for a ſingle reading, here is a proper reſting place.

is, by whoſe preſence alone, this ſecond temple could be rendered more glorious than the former.

The coming of the Meſſiah to that temple is alſo promiſed in Malachi before quoted. *Behold, I will ſend my meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom ye ſeek ſhall ſuddenly come to his temple, even the meſſenger of the covenant, in whom ye delight. Behold, he ſhall come, ſaith the Lord of hoſts,* Mal. iii. 1.

Since therefore the temple, where the promiſed meſſenger of ſo great eminence and diſtinction was to appear, is now no more, but has long ſince been deſtroyed, and continues to be in ruins; we are aſſured, that he is already come: for it is impoſſible for God to fail, or that he ſhould alter the purpoſe he has ſo ſolemnly pronounced and declared.

Have any of the promiſes or threatenings delivered by the prophets failed of accompliſhment? Did not the poſterity of Jacob deſcend into Egypt, a few in number? And were they not brought thence again, a great hoſt, by mighty power and an outſtretched arm, at the time before appointed and promiſed?

Were not the threatenings with regard to Saul, David, Solomon, accompliſhed? Were not the threatenings concerning the ten tribes, and the tribe of Judah, fulfilled? Were not the former, the ten tribes, ſent into captivity, and ſcattered, ſo as to return no more?

And when the kingdom of Judah took not warning by the judgments inflicted upon the kingdom of Iſrael, the threatened captivity was brought upon them: and the promiſe of their return from Babylon was alſo wonderfully and punctually accompliſhed. They ſettled again in the land of Iſrael, they were increaſed and multiplied, and became once more a great people. The temple, which had been laid waſte, was raiſed up, and its worſhip reſtored, according as God had before ſaid by his holy prophets.

Why then ſhould it be thought by any, that the promiſe concerning the coming of the Meſſiah to that temple ſhould not be performed? It muſt have been fulfilled. The deſire of all nations did come to that temple, and the nations have received him, and believed on him, and have partaken of his fulneſs. They have received grace for grace. They have gained through him the knowledge of the one living and true God. He is their God, and they are his people. They worſhip him in ſpirit and truth: and the law of Moſes, introduced

duced ſince the Abrahamic covenant, and ordained for a time only, as to all its unneceſſary and burdenſome appointments, is no longer in force, or of any uſe unto them.

4. The time and circumſtances of the preſent captivity and diſperſion of the Jewiſh people afford an argument for the truth of the Chriſtian religion: for their afflictions appear to have the marks of divine diſpleaſure againſt them for rejecting and crucifying Jeſus, and for perſiſting to reject him and his apoſtles.

Their preſent afflictions began ſoon after, and have continued ever ſince. It was not more than forty years after our Lord's crucifixion, that the people of the Jews underwent the dreadful calamities of the ſiege of their city: when alſo it was taken, and their temple conſumed, and they ſlain, or ſcattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

Nor can we avoid obſerving the eſtate and condition of this people, the poſterity of Abraham, the friend of God; the children of Jacob, whom God preferred to the children of Eſau; whom God had choſen to be his people above all the people of the earth: as Moſes reminds them in that ſolemn and pathetic addreſs, at the end of the book of Deuteronomy: *When the Moſt High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he ſeparated the ſons of Adam, he ſet the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Iſrael. For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance*, Deut. xxxiii. 8, 9.

It is not reaſonable to think, that God would carry it unkindly toward them, or ſtand at a diſtance from them, without ſome juſt ground of offence and provocation.

Moreover we know, that he promiſed to bleſs them abundantly, if they hearkened to his prophets, and walked in the ways he preſcribed them: declaring at the ſame time, that if they were diſobedient, he would not leave them unpuniſhed: *If ye will walk in my ſtatutes, and keep my commandments, and do them*, Lev. xxvi. 3. *I will ſet my tabernacle among you, and my ſoul ſhall not abhor you: and I will walk with you, and will be your God, and ye ſhall be my people*, ver. 11. *But if ye will walk contrary unto me, then will I alſo walk contrary unto you, and will puniſh you*, ver. 23, 24. *And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary unto you in fury, and will chaſtiſe you yet ſeven times for your ſins*, ver. 27. And his treatment of this people in all ages has been agreeable to theſe, and other like declarations.

Since

Since therefore this favourite people, ſo long called by the name of the Lord, and ſo diſtinguiſhed by him, are under tokens of divine diſpleaſure: ſince they are no longer in the land of Canaan, which had been given to them, and lie under many diſadvantages in the places where they live, there muſt be ſome ground and reaſon of it. And a very likely reaſon offers, when we conſider, as before hinted, the time, when the preſent affliction commenced, even ſoon after the appearing of Jeſus in this world.

And we ſhall be confirmed in the ſuppoſition, that this diſperſion is owing to their ſin in rejecting the Lord Jeſus, if we conſider farther, when he appeared, and who he was.

He came at the time appointed for the Meſſiah, when the temple, built after the Babyloniſh captivity, was in its glory, when the regiſters of their families were in being, and when the Jews themſelves and all nations around them were in expectation of ſuch an eminent perſon.

And muſt we not think, that ſince Jeſus anſwered the character of the promiſed Meſſiah, or the Lord's anointed, it muſt be a great and heinous ſin to reject and crucify him? If there be any truth in the evangelical hiſtory, (as certainly it is all matter of fact, and but a part only of the great things done by Jeſus are there related) he was a moſt excellent perſon, and a moſt eminent prophet. Muſt not any people, the Jews eſpecially, be accountable for ſuch a privilege? Muſt not their guilt in rejecting Jeſus appear aggravated, when we conſider that they crucified him, and repented not: though he roſe from the dead, and his apoſtles continued a good while afterwards preaching among them?

It is alſo remarkable, that when Jeſus was condemned as an impoſtor and malefactor, they imprecated the guilt of his death upon themſelves and their children, Matt. xxvii. 25.

And the long continuance of this affliction is very ſtriking, ſo far beyond any thing they had before undergone: and yet they are not guilty of idolatry, as in times paſt: but all falſe gods, and all images in worſhip, are an abomination to them.

When Solomon conſecrated the temple he had built, he prayed: *If thy people ſin againſt thee, and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, ſo that they carry them captive into the land of the enemy, far or near: if they ſhall*

*bethink themſelves, in the land whither they are carried captives, ſaying, we have ſinned, and have done perverſely, we have committed wickedneſs: and ſo return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their ſoul, in the land of their enemies, which led them captive, and pray unto thee:*—then *hear thou their prayer and their ſupplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cauſe, and forgive thy people that have ſinned againſt thee, and all their tranſgreſſions wherein they have tranſgreſſed againſt thee,* 1 Kings viii. 46—50.

And long after this Nehemiah, mindful of the meaſures, which God had openly declared he would obſerve with this people, prays after the ſame manner: *O Lord God of heaven, that keepeſt covenant and mercy with them that love thee;* —*remember, I beſeech thee, the word which thou commandedſt thy ſervant Moſes, ſaying, if ye tranſgreſs, I will ſcatter you abroad among the nations: but if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them: though there were of you caſt out unto the uttermoſt part of heaven, yet I will gather them from thence, and will bring them to the place that I have choſen to ſet my name there,* Neh. i. 5—9.

Since then they ſtill continue, under many diſadvantages, in the diſperſion, which began ſo long ago; it leads us to conclude, that there is ſome ſin they have committed, which they have not repented of, the guilt of which therefore ſtill lies heavy upon them.

St. Chryſoſtom in one of his homilies to his hearers the people of Antioch, diſcourſing upon this very topic, the long duration of the Jews diſperſion and captivity, has this thought: if **** Jeſus had been a malefactor and a deceiver, as the Jews pretended; it might have been honourable, and accounted for righteouſneſs to them, that they put him to death. On the contrary, ſince the crucifixion of Jeſus, they have been chaſtiſed more ſeverely, than when they were guilty of idolatry, and ſacrificed their children to Moloch.

In this long diſperſion, of ſo many ages, it is not unlikely, that divers attempts have been made by them to return into Canaan, and rebuild their temple; and it is well known, that they have formed conſpiracies, and made violent attempts to reſtore their government in the land

**** Vid. Chryſoſt. T. 1. p. 652, 653. Ed. Bened.

of

of Canaan: but they have been always defeated and overthrown.

Deſigns of another kind may have been entered into. One thing is often mentioned by ancient hiſtorians. The Emperor Julian, commonly called the apoſtate, becauſe after having been educated in the Chriſtian religion he turned heathen, about three hundred years after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, formed a ſcheme of rebuilding the temple. Filled with enmity againſt the people whom he had forſaken, but ſtill deſirous to avoid the ſcandal of open perſecution, he tried every method to humble the Chriſtians, and root out their religion. Knowing † the averſion of the Jewiſh people to Chriſtianity, he ſent for ſome of their chief men, and aſked them, why they did not ſacrifice? They anſwered, becauſe they could ſacrifice no where, but at the temple at Jeruſalem, and now they had none. He bid them take good heart, and engaged to build a temple for them. And †† accordingly gave full powers and ſtrict orders for that purpoſe to proper officers, allotting likewiſe large ſums out of the public revenue. But when materials were provided, and they were about to lay the foundations of the intended temple, the workmen were terrified, and ſome of them ſcorched by frequent and repeated eruptions of fire from the earth: as is related by divers authors, who lived at the time, or near it: and particularly by a heathen hiſtorian of good credit, and a friend and admirer of Julian. Undoubtedly ſuch a deſign was formed and defeated.

If they, * who lived about three hundred years after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, thought this captivity of the Jewiſh people long: how much more may we, when it is

† See Socrat. H. E. l. 3. c. 20. Sozom. l. 5. c. 20. Thdrt. l. 3. c. 20. Chryſ. T. 1. p. 580, 646, &c. T. 2. p. 574.

†† Ambitioſum quondam apud Hieroſolymam templum, quod poſt multa et interneciva certamina obſidente Veſpaſiano poſteaque Tito ægre eſt expugnatum, inſtaurare ſumtibus cogitabat immodicis. Negotiumque maturandum Alypio dederat Antiochenſi, qui olim Britannias curaverat pro Præfectis. Cum itaque rei idem fortiter inſtaret Alypius, juvaretque provinciæ rector, metuendi globi flammarum prope fundamenta crebris aſſultibus erumpentes, fecere locum exuſtis aliquoties operantibus inacceſſum. Hocque modo elemento deſtinatius repellente, ceſſavit inceptum. Amm. Marcel. l. 23. c. 1.

* Chryſoſtom and others.

now, not only three hundred, but thrice three hundred years, and almoſt double that number, ſince the commencement of it?

If they who lived above a thouſand years ago obſerved the long continuance of this diſperſion, as exceeding every thing of the like kind that had befallen this people, certainly the continuance of it to this day muſt appear very extraordinary and affecting.

5. The ſubſiſtence of the Jewiſh people at this time affords an atteſtation to divers things, upon which ſome evidences of the Chriſtian religion depend.

For hereby all are aſſured of the antiquity and genuineneſs of the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament. Theſe are received by them, and read in their ſynagogues: and they allow, that therein are contained promiſes of a great and eminent deliverer. None therefore can pretend, that the ſcriptures, ſo often appealed to by Chriſt and his apoſtles, are forgeries of Chriſtians.

Poſſibly, we are not aware, how great an advantage we have, in this reſpect, from the ſubſiſtence of the Jewiſh people, and their ſynagogue worſhip, where the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament are often read.

It is true, the time of Chriſt's coming ſeems to have been a time of greater knowledge, and more general commerce, than that of the deliverance of the Jewiſh people from Egyptian bondage: but a variety of evidence for important facts, ſuch as the coming of Chriſt, and his teaching among the Jews, is not to be deſpiſed, but thankfully accepted. And if the Jewiſh people had been extinguiſhed ſoon after the coming of Chriſt, and the planting his religion in the world; ſome things might have been diſputed by enemies, which now are unconteſtable. Some might have had the aſſurance to deny, that ever there was ſuch a people in the world, or that ever a nation exiſted which conformed to the inſtitutions of Moſes: and they might have formed an argument, which would have affected ſome perſons, little converſant in ancient hiſtory. And our caſe might have reſembled that of the Jewiſh people of old, who were ſometimes obliged to labour in the proof, that ‖ they were not expelled

‖ See Joſephus at the end of his firſt book againſt Appion, and compare Tacitus, Hiſt. book V. near the beginning.

our

out of Egypt, but conducted thence under the eſpecial care of a powerful providence and protection.

But here poſſibly a ſcruple may ariſe in the minds of ſome: and they may ſay, if the ſubſiſtence of the Jewiſh people be ſo much to the advantage of the Chriſtian religion, might it not have been as well for them to have continued in the land of Canaan, maintaining the ancient form of their commonwealth, and living in power and ſplendour, as in ſome times of old?

I anſwer: it was not fit.

1.) For, their rejecting the Meſſiah muſt require ſome tokens of divine reſentment and diſpleaſure. If Jeſus wrought ſuch miracles, as are recorded in the goſpels, and was crucified by the Jews: and if his apoſtles preached in his name, and were abuſed, as the hiſtory of the New Teſtament relates: it was highly proper, that after waiting to be gracious, God ſhould ſend remarkable judgments upon them, if they repented not; which they did not, but went on increaſing in wickedneſs, as we are aſſured by Joſephus, and other hiſtorians.

2.) It was by no means fit, that the ancient power of the Jews ſhould be continued to them, conſidering their rejection of Jeſus, and their enmity to them that believed in him. The oppoſition they would have made to the followers of Jeſus, the ſufferings they would have brought upon them, would have been inſupportable by human nature. By the ſevereſt perſecution within their own territories, and by ſolemn and powerful embaſſies into foreign parts, diſparaging the diſciples of Jeſus and their principles, they would have extirpated them, as ſoon as they were riſen up. We may clearly collect as much from the afflictions and ſufferings, they actually brought upon the apoſtles and other diſciples of Jeſus; though their authority and influence were greatly reſtrained by the ſuperior power of the Roman empire.

3.) If the Jewiſh nation had continued to ſubſiſt in their former power and ſplendour, ſome evidences of the truth of the Chriſtian religion had not been ſo cogent, as they are: for now the temple, built after the return from Babylon, where the promiſed Meſſiah was to appear, is in ruins: therefore he is already come. The Jewiſh tribes and families are confounded, and it is impoſſible, any Meſſiah ſhould ariſe now, who can be known to be of the tribe of

Judah and the family of David. In a word, if the Jewiſh commonwealth and temple ſtill ſubſiſted, all the preceding arguments, taken from their afflictive circumſtances, would be weakened: but that is neither for their, nor our benefit. That it is not for ours, is manifeſt; nor is it for theirs: for it is conducive to their beſt intereſt, that the evidences of Chriſtianity ſhould be ſtrong and affecting; that they may be provoked to jealouſy, and all Iſrael may be ſaved; that is, that the prejudices, which they are ſo apt to indulge, may be weakened and removed; and that all who can be perſuaded, may be diſpoſed to embrace the truth as it is in Jeſus, and receive him as the Meſſiah.

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ROM. xi. 11.

*I ſay then, have they ſtumbled, that they ſhould fall? God forbid. But rather through their fall, ſalvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealouſy.*

III. BEFORE I conclude this argument I chooſe to mention a few remarks and obſervations, which I hope may be of ſome uſe.

1. The argument afforded us for the truth of our religion from the ſubſiſtence and afflictive circumſtances of the Jewiſh people was not abſolutely neceſſary; but yet it was expedient, and is very uſeful.

It was not abſolutely neceſſary: for though the Jewiſh nation had been long ago extinct; that is, though they had not now been a diſtinct people, but had been loſt and mingled with other nations, ſo that no remains of them had been now obſervable, following any of the ordinances of the law of Moſes; yet we ſhould have had ſufficient evidence of the truth of the Chriſtian religion, or that Jeſus is the Chriſt, and his doctrine from heaven. This we could have been aſſured of from our Lord's character, the excellence of his principles, his miracles, his reſurrection, and other particulars, well known, and formerly mentioned.

But yet this argument, from the being and afflictive circumſtances of the Jewiſh people, was expedient, and is very uſeful; as abundantly appears from the conſiderations which

which have been inſiſted on in the diſcourſes upon this ſubject.

2. We may likewiſe obſerve, that ſome evidences of the truth of the Chriſtian religion are not weakened, but do rather gain force by length of time.

A hiſtory of facts may be thought to loſe ſome degree of credibility in a long tract of time: and therefore it might be feared, that the evangelical hiſtory might ſome time ſuffer upon that account: but indeed it is ſo circumſtanced, and has in it ſo many internal characters of truth, and is ſo ſupported by external teſtimonies of various kinds, that its credit muſt remain to the lateſt ages inviolable.

However it is ſufficient, that this kind of evidence remains as it is; but then ſome other evidence advances and gains ſtrength by time.

Chriſt aſſured Peter that he would build his church upon a rock, and *that the gates of hell ſhould not prevail againſt it*, Matt. xvi. 18. The longer Chriſtianity has a being in the world, the fulfilment of that promiſe is the more remarkable, and the foreknowledge of Chriſt the more conſpicuous; eſpecially conſidering what oppoſitions of various kinds, in all ages, are made againſt this doctrine; ſome by force, and ſome by art and ſophiſtry: and conſidering likewiſe the weakneſs and inconſtancy of mankind, and that ſome, who in name are friends, weaken the intereſt they profeſs to uphold.

When a certain woman, not long before our Lord's removal out of this world, opened a very precious veſſel of ointment, and poured it upon his head; ſome had indignation, and ſeemed to think it too great and expenſive a mark of reſpect: but he anſwered them: *Verily I ſay unto you, whereſoever this goſpel ſhall be preached in the whole world, there ſhall alſo that which this woman has done be told for a memorial of her*, Matt. xxvi. 6—13. And every time this portion of ſcripture is read, eſpecially in late ages, it eſtabliſhes the belief of our Lord's great character.

Jeſus often ſpoke of many coming *from the eaſt and the weſt, and from the north and the ſouth, to ſit down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. viii. 11. that is, to ‖ partake of the privileges of the goſpel, and the bleſſings of the Meſſiah's kingdom. So long therefore as there are Gentiles in the world, who thankfully embrace

‖ See Whitby upon Matt. viii. 11, 12.

the goſpel, this declaration is fulfilled. And the longer it is, ſince theſe words were ſpoken, the more are they verified. And every acceſſion to the church of Chriſt from among ignorant and darkened Gentiles is a freſh confirmation of the truth of his doctrine.

The diſperſion of the Jews, the longer it laſts, ſtill more and more does it ſtrengthen the evidences of the Chriſtian religion: it is the more remarkable: it is a plainer and a more affecting token of divine diſpleaſure againſt them. The greater aſſurance does it afford, that the Meſſiah is already come: and the more impoſſible is it rendered for any man to prove himſelf of the tribe of Judah, and the family of David, whence the Meſſiah was to ariſe. For theſe reaſons their preſent diſperſion is prolonged: and may it be duly attended to by all, to whom the conſideration of it may be of uſe!

3. Theſe things ought alſo to be conſidered, as warnings to us.

Paul, the apoſtle more eſpecially of the Gentiles, fails not to make this uſe of the argument he is upon: *And if ſome of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive, waſt graffed in among them, and with them partakeſt of the root and fatneſs of the olive tree, boaſt not againſt the branches: but if thou boaſt, thou beareſt not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt ſay then: the branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well, becauſe of unbelief they were broken off, and thou ſtandeſt by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God ſpared not the natural branches, take heed, leſt he ſpare not thee*, Rom. xi. 17—23.

In the ſubject we have been treating of there is not only an argument for the truth of our religion, but likewiſe an admonition to us to take heed to ourſelves: for from us too the glory may depart, if we improve not our privileges. The ſeven churches of Aſia, in the Revelation, were warned, and moſt of them threatened with the removal of their candleſtick; unleſs they ſpeedily repented, and did the firſt works. Many Chriſtian churches, planted by apoſtles of Jeſus, and watered by their fellow-labourers, have fallen to decay and ruin. The name and title of Chriſtian will not ſave particular perſons in the day of judgment. Nor will the name of Jeſus, or Chriſtian, alone, ſecure churches and ſocieties in this world. There ſhould be not only the leaves of a fair profeſſion, but alſo

fruits

fruits of love and peace, and all the branches of righteouſneſs and true holineſs. Chriſtians ſhould have heavenly minds, and their lives ſhould be adorned with acts of meekneſs, patience, ſelf-denial, and zeal for each other's welfare. With ſuch Chriſt will dwell. They honour him, and he will honour them with a diſtinguiſhed care and protection.

4. From this argument we may be able to form ſome judgment concerning the general converſion of the Jews. It is not a likely thing: if ever it is to be, there does not appear good reaſon to think it nigh.

It is not a likely †‡ thing, conſidering, that their prejudices are ſtill very great and ſtrong, and have been ſo all along from the beginning; notwithſtanding the great care of the apoſtles of Jeſus, and other zealous preachers of the goſpel, to remove them.

If ever there is to be a general converſion of the Jews, there is no good reaſon to think it near at hand. The advantages afforded to believers in Jeſus as the Chriſt, from the diſperſion and afflictive circumſtances of the Jewiſh people, in their argument for the truth of their religion, lead us to this apprehenſion. So long as there remain great numbers of Gentile people unconverted to the faith of Jeſus, who are ſtrangers to God and his Chriſt: ſo long as there is, and is likely to be, a ſtrenuous oppoſition made by many, ſeveral ways, againſt the Chriſtian doctrine: ſo long, it is likely, the Jews will remain, and continue to be a diſtinct people, ſcattered abroad upon the face of the earth: foraſmuch as their ſubſiſtence in that manner tends mightily to awaken men, and to confirm and ſtrengthen divers arguments for the truth of the Chriſtian religion.

Nor is there any injuſtice done them herein: as they at firſt generally rejected Jeſus, they were juſtly rejected and caſt off as a people: but ſtill, by the faith and reception of the Gentiles, they are called upon and excited to believe in Jeſus: and whenever any of them are awakened, convinced, and converted, they ſhall be accepted.

St. Paul's argument in this context leads us into this way of thinking: *Have they ſtumbled, that they ſhould fall? By no means. But rather through their fall, ſalvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealouſy.*

†‡ See Lightfoot's Works, vol. I. p. 375, 376.

And

And his words at the twenty-fifth verſe of the chapter may be reckoned ſtrong to this purpoſe: *For I would not, brethren, that ye ſhould be ignorant of this myſtery, leſt ye be wiſe in your own conceit: that blindneſs in part is happened unto Iſrael, until the fulneſs of the Gentiles be come in:* that is, as an admired expoſitor paraphraſeth the verſe: 'For * to prevent 'your being conceited of yourſelves, my brethren, let me 'make known unto you what has been yet undiſcovered to 'the world; that the blindneſs, which has fallen upon a 'part of Iſrael, ſhall remain upon them but till the time 'come, wherein the whole Gentile world ſhall enter into 'the church, and make profeſſion of Chriſtianity.'

This may be the thing intended by our Lord, when he ſays: *And Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,* Luke xxi. 24.

As for St. Paul's words at the twenty-ſixth verſe, they are underſtood by ſome in this manner: *And ſo all Iſrael ſhall be ſaved:* 'And ** ſo all Iſrael ſhall be converted to the 'Chriſtian faith, and the whole nation become the people of 'God:' that is, when the fulneſs of the Gentiles is come in.

But I rather think the meaning to be: 'In this way, ac-'cording to this method of Divine Providence, all † good 'and well-diſpoſed men, both Jews and Gentiles, will 'be ſaved; that is, will be brought into the way of ſal-'vation, taught by the goſpel; or, will embrace the means 'of ſalvation, propoſed therein; the Jews being all along 'provoked to emulation by the Gentiles, and the Gentiles 'being confirmed in their faith by the circumſtances of 'the Jewiſh people.'

However this ſeems evident, that as in paſt ages the Jews had been of great ſervice in upholding religion in the world, and from them at length it was brought to the Gentiles; ſo, if in the end the Jews are converted to the faith of Chriſt, it will be through the Gentiles: and probably, upon ſome more general converſion of them than has yet been. So ſays St. Paul: *For as ye,* Gentiles, *in time paſt have not believed in God, yet now have obtained mercy through their*

* Locke upon the place.

** Locke as before.

† Παῦλα δε Ἰσραὴλ καλει τὰς πιστευούσας, εἴτε ἐξ ἰουδαίων εἰεν, τὴν φυσικὴν συγγένειαν πρὸς τὸν Ἰσραὴλ ἐχοντες, εἴτε ἐξ ἐθνῶν, κατα τὴν τῆς πίστεως εὐγένειαν αὐτῷ συναπτόμενοι. Theodoret. in loc. T. 3. p. 91. D.

*unbelief:*

*unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy*, Rom. xi. 30, 31.

And possibly, we may now perceive, that some notions concerning the conversion of the Jews are false and groundless, or at best doubtful and uncertain. For some imagine, that upon their general conversion to the Christian faith, they will be established again in the land of Judea, and that Jerusalem, with its temple, will be rebuilt with great splendour and magnificence.

But †‡ that supposition is liable to many difficulties and objections. Should their ancient polity be restored, and they be a distinct people in the land of Israel, separate from all the other people of the earth? The ‖ gospel revelation does not encourage such a state of things: and therefore it is not reasonable to expect it should be brought in by extraordinary interpositions of providence, under the dispensation of the Messiah.

Should they sacrifice again, as in times past? The law of Moses is no longer in force, and the sacrifices appointed therein are below the dignity of the gospel institution.

Moreover our Lord plainly declared, that all distinctions of places should cease under the gospel: and that worship would no longer be peculiarly acceptable at Jerusalem, or any other city.

†‡ See the sentiments of Origen, and Chrysostom, and others, in Grotius upon Luke xxi. 24. And see Lightfoot's Works, vol. I. p. 375—377. and p. 737, 738. What was Eusebius's sentiment upon this point, may be seen in his Commentaries upon the Psalms, not published, till since the time of Grotius. *Διδασκονται ευχεσθαι τυχειν της απο των εθνων συναγωγης, ιν' ηδη ποτε της διασπορας απαλλαγεντες επι το αυτο συναχθωσιν· οπερ ιȣδαιοι μεν φανταζονται μελλειν εσεσθαι εν τῳ παροντι βιῳ, επισταντος αυτοις τȣ ηλειμμενȣ. ημεις δε κ. λ.* Euseb. in Psalm 105. al. 106. ver. 47, 48, p. 690. edit. Montf.

‖ '—Not that Jerusalem should 'be built again, when the fulness 'of the Gentiles is come in, which 'the Jews conceit: nor that then 'the Jews should be unblindfolded, 'and become a gospel-church, as 'the Gentiles had been. For 'what a strange world does such 'a supposal imagine? And how 'often does the gospel gainsay such 'distinctiveness and peculiarity?' Lightfoot, vol. I. p. 377. The same author says, 'That the call-'ing of the Jews shall be in the 'places of their residence among 'Christians: and that their calling 'shall not cause them to change 'place, but condition.' p. 738.

The

The continued ſubſiſtence of a large body of the Jewiſh people in ſeveral parts of the world, and the preſent deſolation of their country, or the ſmall number of inhabitants therein, are thought by ſome to amount to a ſtrong argument, that they ſhall themſelves return thither, and take poſſeſſion of it again. But from what has been now ſaid it appears, that the fore-mentioned ſtate of things anſwers very valuable ends and purpoſes: though the Jewiſh people ſhould never be reinſtated in their ancient inheritance.

It is likely therefore, that whenever there is a general converſion of the Jews to the faith of Jeſus; they will become Chriſtians indeed, and their fondneſs for the rites of the Moſaic law will ceaſe: that they and the Gentiles may become one people, and one ſheepfold under Chriſt, the univerſal Lord of the church, the Saviour, and the Biſhop of ſouls.

Such an event we have good reaſon to wiſh and pray for, that the fulneſs of the Gentiles may be brought in, and that then the blindneſs, which in part has long happened to the Jewiſh people, may be entirely removed.

In the mean time we ſhould both labour for the converſion of ignorant Gentiles, and do what lies in our power to provoke the people of the Jews to jealouſy by the ſimplicity of our worſhip, the purity of our faith, and the goodneſs of our lives.‡

5. We muſt be hence induced to admire the exceeding riches of the wiſdom, and goodneſs of God, who has graciouſly afforded mankind in all ages, helps for knowing the great truths of religion.

God ever ſpoke to all in the voice of reaſon. When that was not duly attended to, and the danger of univerſal ignorance became great; he ſeparated a family, that of Abraham, from the reſt of the world: and of a part of it he made a great nation, to whom he gave a law; who thereby were ſet up as a lamp upon a hill, to lighten the world around

‡ I have not denied, that there will be a general converſion of the Jewiſh people. Nor would I be underſtood to be poſitive, that they ſhall never return to the land of Canaan: though I have mentioned ſome difficulties, attending the ſuppoſition. And if indeed they are ſome time not only to be converted, but alſo reſtored; I am perſuaded, that their reſtoration will be accompliſhed in a manner becoming the divine majeſty, and that all people will rejoice therein. I am moreover of opinion, that if ever this be brought about, their worſhip thenceforward will be entirely ſpiritual and evangelical.

them

them: and among them, by frequent interpoſitions of his wiſe and powerful providence, religion was maintained, and they were kept a diſtinct nation, enjoying many privileges, until the Meſſiah came, and religion was ſpread far and wide in the nations of the earth, according to promiſes made long before. And then, the Jews generally rejecting that bleſſing; God caſt them off from being his people, as they had been, and poured down upon them tokens of his diſpleaſure: yet not deſtroying them utterly, and making uſe of them, even under afflictions, to ſupport the truth of his Son's miſſion and authority, whom they had crucified.

Nor is there herein any injuſtice, or unkindneſs, as has been often obſerved in theſe diſcourſes: for ſtill they are provoked to jealouſy by thoſe who are taken in their room: and in this reſpect they now enjoy an advantage, with regard to religion, beyond what the Gentiles had formerly. For then it was the nation of the Jews only, to whom God was known, and many of the nations of the earth were remote from them. But the unbelieving Jews for the moſt part live among, or near the followers of Jeſus, and have better opportunities to inform themſelves of the principles of their religion, than the Gentiles had of old to know that of the Iſraelites.

And the wiſdom of Divine Providence in the former and the latter diſpenſation is admirable, though above our full comprehenſion: as the apoſtle obſerves at the end of this chapter, addreſſing himſelf to Gentile Chriſtians: *For as ye in times paſt have not believed God, yet now have obtained mercy through their unbelief: even ſo have theſe alſo now not believed, that through your mercy they may obtain mercy: for God has concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counſellor? or who has given unto him, and it ſhall be recompenſed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things. To whom be glory for ever.*

6. We may hence conclude, that *known unto God are all his works from the beginning*, Acts xv. 18. It is an obſervation of St. James at the council of Jeruſalem.

We may infer from the event, that God foreſaw from the beginning the general apoſtacy of mankind. And when he called Abraham, and ſeparated him to himſelf from the reſt of the world, he foreſaw all the conſequences of that gracious purpoſe

purpoſe and choice; that religion would be in ſome meaſure upheld in the world, till the Meſſiah came: and that when he was come, after the ſpace of many ages from the time of the firſt promiſe concerning him, the various ordinances of poſitive appointment, delivered to the Jews by Moſes, which had been of uſe to preſerve them in the land of Judea from mixing with their idolatrous neighbours, till he came, would likewiſe ſerve to keep them a ſeparate people, wherever they lived, for a long ſucceſſion of ages, to bear teſtimony to his ancient covenants with Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob and themſelves: whilſt ſtill they would have opportunities of knowing the religion of the Meſſiah, and whenever their hearts ſhould be touched, they might be again received, and partake in all the bleſſings of his kingdom.

7. It may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that it will be delightful in the heavenly ſtate to know and obſerve the various methods of Divine Providence, relating to his creatures, in the world where we have lived: particularly to obſerve the manifold deſigns of wiſdom and goodneſs with regard to the concerns of religion.

A wiſe and diſcerning perſon has now great delight and profitable entertainment in reviewing theſe works of Divine Providence, as recorded in the ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament: but the diſcoveries in a future ſtate may be much more full and complete, and conſequently more delightful. We may then ſee the overſpreading deludge of ignorance in ſome places and ages, the wonderful ſteps by which light was reſtored, and all the virtue of the inſtruments raiſed up by God, and employed by him; the faithful and diſintereſted zeal, with which they ſerved God, and promoted the welfare of their fellow-creatures; and how even afflictive events ſubſerved beneficial deſigns.

But this review of things will not be pleaſing and comfortable, except in a ſtate of eaſe and happineſs: for ſuppoſing any ſuch extenſive knowledge in regions of deſpair and miſery; it could not alleviate, but muſt aggravate the diſtreſs. It would not be ſatisfaction, but vexation for any one, finally and juſtly rejected of God, to look back on the long ſpace and numerous periods of time, and obſerve the kind proviſions made by the Divine Being for the illumination and ſalvation of men. For ſuch an one, I ſay, to ſurvey the ſcenes of Divine Providence, in ſeveral ages, and obſerve the time and place where he was fixed, having many advantages afforded

forded him, and more in his power; but all abuſed, or neglected; whilſt ſome others, leſs privileged, acted diſcreetly, honoured God, and laid the foundation of future happineſs: to ſuch an one this knowledge would be tormenting and vexatious.

But though ſuch extenſive knowledge ſhould not be the portion of thoſe who are finally ſeparated from God, there will be remembrance of things paſt; what men have done, or neglected to do; what means of knowledge were afforded them in this world, what convictions they had of duty, what helps they enjoyed for ſecuring a virtuous conduct, and ſtrengthening them againſt temptations; and how they failed to improve thoſe many advantages.

How piercing muſt it be in the place of torment, for a deſcendent of Abraham, who lived in the time of our Lord, to recollect the gracious words he heard from his mouth: that though Jeſus taught in the ſtreets of his city, and in the moſt winning manner promiſed everlaſting life to ſuch as believed in him, and obeyed him: and though he performed numerous miracles, healing and beneficial, ſuited to the goodneſs of his doctrine, and tokens of inexpreſſible mildneſs and benevolence: yet he deſpiſed and abuſed this amiable perſon! And though he knew the prophets had ſpoken of a great deliverer to ariſe among them; and it was the prevailing opinion, that was the very time prefixed for his coming; he would not hearken to him, nor regard him, becauſe of ſome groundleſs prejudices, and too ſtrong an affection for worldly poſſeſſions and enjoyments.

In like manner, for certain, to others alſo the recollection of religious privileges, not improved, will be matter of torment and vexation.

Children of pious parents, who *ſet at nought all their counſel, and will none of their reproof!* Prov. i. 25, 30.

Servants, who are averſe to the order and reſtraint of religious families, and offended at daily devotions, and frequent readings of the ſcriptures or books of piety; and chooſe the habitations of the wicked, where there is not ſo much as a form of godlineſs, or an appearance of religion; and prefer the company and manners of the diſſolute, who are a reproach to human nature!

A Chriſtian, partaking in all the ordinances of the goſpel, yet acting contrary to the obligations he is under!

A miniſter

A miniſter in God's houſe, ſhewing to others the way of ſalvation, but not walking in it himſelf!

How grievous muſt the recollection of ſuch advantages be hereafter, if finally abuſed and diſregarded! No conſolation can be given to men then. The ſad reflection on their own folly will be unavoidable and incurable.

May we therefore be wiſe to know and mind the things of our peace now, in this our day. Let us ſecure time for ſerious reflections on our conduct and our advantages: let us compare our light and knowledge with our actions and purpoſes: for between theſe there ought to be an agreement: where much is given, much may be expected: *And the ſervant, who knew his Lord's will, and did it not, will be beaten with many ſtripes*, Luke xii. 47.

Theſe are certain truths: and theſe things will ſome time afford a pleaſing and comfortable, or an afflictive and ſorrowful recollection and remembrance. It is an awful and awakening obſervation of our Lord: *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world: and men loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil*, John iii. 19. If any of us ſhould periſh, have we not reaſon to dread this aggravated condemnation? For we muſt be ſenſible, we have had ſufficient inſtruction to aſſure us, that things above are preferable to things on this earth: and that nothing ought ſo to divert, or engage us, as to prevent our laying up to ourſelves treaſures in heaven, Col. iii. 2. and that we ought ſo to order all our preſent concerns, and the whole of our converſation, as may beſt promote our moſt important intereſt, the everlaſting ſalvation and happineſs of our ſouls.

A SERMON

A

# SERMON

PREACHED AT PINNERS-HALL,

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF THE LATE

LEARNED AND REVEREND JEREMIAH HUNT, D. D.

Who departed this Life Sept. 5, 1744, in the Sixty-ſeventh Year of his Age.

WITH BRIEF MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER.

[FIRST PUBLISHED IN MDCCXLIV.]

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JOHN xiv. 2.

*In my Father's houſe are many manſions. If it were not ſo, I would have told you.*

OUR bleſſed Lord, who had the human nature, with its ſinleſs infirmities, was tender and compaſſionate; and being very ſenſible of the vaſt diſappointment, which his death, eſpecially in the manner it ſhould happen, would be to his diſciples, and the great concern it would occaſion in their minds, upon many accounts, not only forewarns them of it, but ſuggeſts to them likewiſe the beſt grounds of ſupport and conſolation, that they might not be quite overwhelmed with grief in that dark and diſcouraging ſeaſon.

The arguments he propoſed to them are fitted to be of ſignal uſe to his diſciples and followers throughout all ages, in the time of afflictive and melancholy events.

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God: believe alſo in me. In my Father's houſe are many manſions. If it were not ſo, I would have told you.*

In which laſt words two things are obſervable: firſt, a comfortable aſſurance and declaration: ſecondly, an argument, or conſideration, by which the truth and certainty of that declaration is impreſſed on their minds. Let us meditate a while upon each of theſe points, and then apply the whole in ſome reflections.

I. Here is a comfortable aſſurance and declaration: *In my Father's houſe are many manſions.*

By houſe may be meant the univerſe, which is the workmanſhip or building of God. Our Lord will then be underſtood to ſay, that there is another world: there are other abodes, or manſions, beſide thoſe on this earth: and when I remove hence, and am ſeen here no more, I ſhall ſtill exiſt: and when you, or other good men die, there is not a period and final end to your or their exiſtence and enjoyments. There are other, and very comfortable, yea better and more durable manſions, than thoſe on this earth. Very agreeably to this ſenſe and interpretation St. Paul ſays to the Epheſians: *I bow my knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*, Eph. iii. 14, 15.

But interpreters have generally underſtood the word houſe here, in a more reſtrained ſenſe, of heaven: where our Lord was going, whither he would ſhortly aſcend after his death and reſurrection. As the temple was eſteemed by the Jews God's houſe, and our Lord himſelf ſpeaks of it as his *Father's houſe*, John ii. 16. and Jeruſalem is called by him *the city of the great King*, Matt. v. 35. on account of the ſpecial preſence, and the extraordinary manifeſtations of the Divine Being in the temple there; ſo heaven may be fitly ſpoken of in the character of God's houſe, there being the brighteſt appearance of his preſence, and the fulleſt manifeſtation of his glory: though by the perfection of his nature, God, the infinite mind, is every where, and is confined to no particular place whatever: as Solomon acknowledged in his prayer at the dedication of the magnificent temple at Jeruſalem: *Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee*, 1 Kings viii. 27. *How much leſs this houſe, which I have built?* 2 Chron. vi. 18.

When our Lord ſays, *in my Father's houſe are many manſions*; he may intend to declare, as ſome have ſuppoſed, that in heaven are many abodes for good men, and * different degrees of happineſs and glory, in proportion to the advances, which they make in this ſtate, and to the ſervices they perform for the honour of God, and the good of their fellow-creatures.

Or, in heaven there is room for you, and me, and all good men of the ſeveral ages of the world, and diſpenſations of divine providence.

* Multitudinem autem locorum non male veteres intelligunt cum graduum differentiis, &c. Grot. in loc.

'There † ſeems to be an alluſion to the manner of travel-'ling and providing entertainment in the eaſtern countries; 'where they had not ſuch inns as we have, but large houſes, 'or caravanſaries, where were many manſions, in which they 'might lie on carpets, or couches, and provide, and prepare 'their own victuals. When a number of perſons travelled, 'there was a præcurſor, one ‡ of their own company, who '*went before to prepare a place for them, and then came back again, 'and received them*, or * conducted them to the manſions, he 'had prepared for them.'

Our Lord then may be underſtood to ſay to his diſciples: 'You need not be ſo exceſſively grieved and concerned, as you 'appear to be, on account of my departure from you, and 'the difficulties you may afterwards meet with. For it is 'a certain truth, that in my Father's houſe are many man-'ſions, and plentiful accommodations. And though I leave 'you for the preſent, you will throughout your whole life have 'protection and needful ſupplies in all dangers and difficulties. 'I go before you now: but you ſhall follow me hereafter, and 'may be aſſured of a kind reception into the manſions I 'prepare for you.'

*If it were not ſo, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go, and prepare a place for you; I will come again, and receive you to myſelf, that where I am, there ye may be alſo.* And, after his reſurrection: *I aſcend to my Father and your Father: and to my God, and your God*, John xx. 17.

That is the firſt thing in the words.

II. The other thing obſervable is an argument or conſideration, by which the truth and certainty of that declaration is impreſſed upon them.

The argument is friendly and familiar, ſuited to perſons who are treated with intimacy, as the diſciples had been by our Lord, and were not unacquainted with the doctrine he had taught; but knew, that this point, of another life, and

† That is an obſervation of Dr. Hunt himſelf, who often had in his mouth the words of the text and context.

‡ Similitudo ſumta ab uno comitum, qui in itinere prægreſſus ad diverſorium ibi ceteris cubicula aſſignat, et efficit, ut venientibus parata ſint. Grot. ib.

* Continuatur ſimilitudo. Nam ſolent qui primi in diverſorium venerunt ceteris jam adventantibus obviam procedere, et eos introducere, &c. Grot. in v 3.

recompenſes therein, had been much inſiſted on by him. Though therefore the argument be familiar, it is very forcible, and muſt have come with great weight upon their minds.

*If it were not ſo, I would have told you.* The ſum of this argument is: 'I* would not deceive you. If you take 'me for a perſon of ſincerity, as certainly you muſt, you will 'rely upon the truth of what I ſay concerning this matter.'

The argument ſeems to compriſe in it theſe ſeveral thoughts and conſiderations; moſt of which might ariſe in the diſciples minds, and do now readily preſent themſelves to us.

1. 'You know, that I have profeſſed to act with divine 'authority, and that I have in the moſt ſolemn manner pro- 'miſed everlaſting life and happineſs to them that believe 'in me, and obey my precepts. You muſt therefore rely 'upon the truth of this declaration, and the doctrine I 'now remind you of, and ſhould take the comfort of it. 'If you would not caſt upon me the reflection of being 'a deceiver, you muſt receive this propoſition, as moſt true 'and certain.'

You have often heard me ſpeak to this purpoſe: *I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that ſent me. And this is the Father's will, that of all which he has given me, I ſhould loſe nothing, but ſhould raiſe it up at the laſt day. And this is the will of him that ſent me, that every one which ſeeth the ſon, and believeth on him, may have everlaſting life, and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day*, John vi. 39, 40.

Moreover you have received and owned me, as a teacher come from God, yea as the Chriſt, and *having the words of eternal life*, John vi. 68, 69.

After this you cannot but be perſuaded, that I am true and ſincere: I muſt know what is the truth: it is impoſſible, I ſhould be ignorant, whether there is another life after this, or not: and you cannot but think, that what I have ſaid is agreeable to the truth of things.

So John Baptiſt ſaid in his laſt teſtimony to Jeſus: *And what he hath ſeen and heard, that he teſtifies. He that receiveth his teſtimony hath ſet to his ſeal, that God is true*, John iii. 32.

2. 'Conſider, how upon the ground of the expectation 'of recompenſes in a future ſtate, I have taught and required

* Si locus non eſſet vobis, aperte hoc dixiſſem vobis, ut mos meus eſt: ademiſſem vobis ſpem inanem. Grot. in loc.

'men,

'men, in the whole of their life here, not to ſeek principally 'the things of this preſent world, but of another.'

I have taught men, in all acts of worſhip performed to God, and of goodneſs to one another, not to aim at preſent and earthly, but future and heavenly recompenſes. And I have directed them not to *lay up to themſelves treaſures on earth*, liable to waſting and corruption: but rather *to lay up to themſelves treaſures in heaven*, which are ſecure above all accidents; *where neither moth nor ruſt doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and ſteal*, Matt. vi. 19, 20. I have alſo directed you *not to do your alms to be ſeen of men*, but as privately as poſſible, that *your Father, which ſeeth in ſecret, may reward you openly*, in the day of judgment and general retribution, Matt. vi. 1—4.

Yea I have not only taught moderation of affection for worldly riches and reputation; but I have alſo encouraged men to endure neglect, contempt, reproach, pain, and all kinds of ſufferings in the way of truth and righteouſneſs, if need be, with aſſurances of a reward that ſhall be exceeding great. I have pronounced them bleſſed, who ſuffer upon that account, ſaying, *Bleſſed are they which are perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Bleſſed are ye, when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſay all manner of evil of you falſly for my ſake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven*, Matt. v. 10, 11.

Certainly I, who have continually taught you and others in this manner, muſt be ſincere in what I declare, and be fully perſuaded that there is another world, where all good and righteous men, perſevering to the end, ſhall be very happy, and be glorioufly rewarded.

3. Conſider farther, 'the precepts delivered by me are ſuch, 'that obedience to them cannot have its reward in the pre-'ſent world, but in another only.'

I have declared them bleſſed, who are *pure in heart*, Matt. v. 6. and have recommended undiſſembled, unaffected humility and condeſcenſion. I have preſcribed the regulation of thoughts and affections, as well as outward actions: and have directed men to pray to God in ſecret, and to do other good works out of the notice and obſervation of men: all which virtue and goodneſs can have a reward in another, and yet inviſible world only. A truly virtuous and excellent diſpoſition of mind will, as there is opportunity, produce a laudable behaviour: but it is not in the power of men to reward all

good conduct, ſuppoſing they were well diſpoſed to it. Much leſs can men reward ſecret piety, or the virtue of the mind, which is known to God only. Nor does God always interpoſe for the ſecurity, proſperity and honour of his moſt faithful ſervants; but permits virtue to undergo, for the preſent, the ſevereſt trials: and many will be perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake.

As the precepts delivered by me are of this kind, I muſt know, that there is another ſtate, where they who do the things I ſay, ſhall receive a full reward.

4. 'Conſider the methods and arguments which I have 'made uſe of to induce men to believe in me, and become 'my diſciples.'

Have I therein ſhewn any improper regard to my own honour and intereſt in this world? Have I made uſe of any ſpecious and artful methods, to increaſe the number of my followers? Have I invited any into my ſervice by promiſes or intimations of worldly eaſe and grandeur? Have you at any time obſerved me to encourage the hopes of any advantages, but ſuch as flow from true religion, real virtue and righteouſneſs, and from the favour, approbation and bleſſing of God in this world, and another? Have I not often, and openly declared: *He that taketh not his croſs, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me?* Matt. x. 38. And, *Whoſoever he be of you, that forſaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my diſciple?* Luke xiv. 33. When ſome have expreſſed a ready diſpoſition to bear me company, and join themſelves to my train; have I not immediately told them, without reſerve or diſguiſe, how ſlight the accommodations are, with which I am provided? and that the ſon of man has not here one quiet and ſettled habitation of his own? When the rich man, who was alſo a ruler, came to me, ſaying, *Good maſter, what good thing ſhall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* Luke xviii. 18. did I pitch upon ſome eaſy precept, the better to bring in ſuch an one, either for my own, or your preſent advantage? did I not remind him of the commandments of God? And when he anſwered, that he had kept them, did I not ſay unto him: *Go, and ſell all that thou haſt, and give to the poor; and thou ſhalt have treaſure in heaven, and come, follow me?* Whereupon he went away ſorrowful.

This my plainneſs and openneſs in treating men, may fully ſatisfy you of my integrity, and that I act ſincerely, when I aſſure you, that there is another world, beſide the preſent.

5. Recollect,

5. Recollect, 'what has been my behaviour toward perſons of influence and authority in the world.'

Have you obſerved me to ſeek my own, or your honour and intereſt, by gratifying and pleaſing men in power? No, you know very well, that I have openly denounced the diſpleaſure of God againſt the ſcribes and phariſees, upon account of their doctrine and conduct, derogatory to the honour of God, and the intereſt of religion. Inſomuch that even the worſt, and moſt inveterate of my enemies have afforded me the character of an impartial teacher of truth, without undue reſpects to the perſons of any men, Matt. xxii. 16.

6. 'Eſpecially may you perceive by my behaviour toward 'yourſelves, whether I am ſincere, and may be relied upon, 'in what I now ſay.'

When I called you to attend me, I did not invite and draw you by worldly offers. You are ſenſible, that when you obeyed my call, *you left all and followed me*, Matt. xix. 27. Mark x. 28.

The doctrine of the croſs, the practice of ſelf-denial, I have inculcated upon all, eſpecially upon you. I have indeed declared to you, that *the labourer is worthy of his hire*, Luke x. 7. and that in diſcharging your office you will meet with kind and courteous entertainment from worthy perſons. But I have as plainly told you, that many others will treat you with a ſpirit of the bittereſt enmity and diſpleaſure: that they *will perſecute you from city to city*, and that *you will be brought before kings and rulers for my name's ſake*: directing you however *to poſſeſs your ſouls in patience*, Luke xxi. 19. and aſſuring you, that *he who endureth to the end ſhall be ſaved*, Matt. x. 22.

I have likewiſe intimated to you, that you cannot expect better treatment than I have had, if you keep cloſe to my doctrine and example, as you ought: for *the diſciple is not above his maſter: nor the ſervant above his lord*, Matt. x. 28. *And becauſe ye are not of the world, but I have choſen you out of the world, therefore the world*, many therein, *will hate you*, John xv. 19.

You muſt likewiſe be ſenſible, that as I have with much care and tenderneſs cheriſhed and encouraged every good principle; ſo I have alſo freely warned and admoniſhed you, as there has been occaſion.

I have plainly told you, that you are happy, and my diſciples indeed, if you do the things that I have commanded:

and that not calling me Lord, Lord; nor even working miracles in my name, but only doing *the will of my Father which is in heaven*, will entitle you to the rewards of the kingdom, which I have ſo often ſpoken of: and that all others will be rejected by me at the laſt, though they had been familiar friends and acquaintance, *and had eaten and drunk in my preſence*, Luke xiii, 26.

Whatever has been amiſs in you I have reproved and condemned, even the weakneſs of your faith, and the ſlowneſs of your underſtandings, owing to prevailing prejudices: and eſpecially all faulty conduct, proceeding from a worldly frame and too ſtrong affection for earthly things.

When I ſpake to you of my future ſufferings, and thereupon Peter, who before had made a very agreeable confeſſion of my being the Chriſt, the Son of God, began to remonſtrate, ſaying, *Be it far from thee, Lord, this ſhall not be unto thee*, Matt. xvi. 22. did I not turn me about, and, in the preſence of you all, ſay unto him: *Get thee behind me, ſatan, thou art an offence to me: for thou ſavoureſt not the things that be of God, but thoſe that be of men?* ver. 23.

And when you had a ſtrife one with another, who ſhould be the greateſt in the kingdom of the Meſſiah: ſuppoſing it to have in it places of honour and preferment, ſuch as it really has not: did I not ſay unto you: *Unleſs ye be converted, and become as little children, ye ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven?* Matt. xviii. 1—3.

Do you not remember likewiſe what I ſaid to the two ſons of Zebedee, when their mother came to me with that petition, that *they might ſit, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, in my kingdom?* Matt. xx. 20—24.

And have I not told you, that whereas in the kingdoms of this world they who are great exerciſe dominion and authority: *ſo it ſhall not be with you, but whoſoever will be great among you, let him be your miniſter: and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your ſervant*, Matt. xx. 25, 27.

Thus I have treated you from the beginning to this time. I have encouraged you to follow me, and to continue faithful to me, with the hazard of all things: and have directed you not to ſeek great things for yourſelves here by any means, but riches and honour in the kingdom of heaven. And when I now ſpeak to you of another world, and manſions therein: can any of you doubt the truth of what I ſay? How ſtrange an idea muſt you then have of me! how injurious!

But

But far be ſuch a ſuppoſition as this. You are well ſatisfied of my ſincerity: you have had full proof of that, and of my knowledge of all things: you muſt therefore be fully perſuaded, that there are, as I ſay unto you, *manſions in my Father's houſe* for myſelf, and for you, and for all, whom you, in the ſervice to which you have been called and appointed, ſhall be able to bring to true virtue and goodneſs.

7. 'The relation we ſtand in to each other may aſſure you 'of my ſincerity, and that I am to be relied upon in what I 'now ſay.'

Do men uſe to impoſe upon and deceive, and that in matters of importance, thoſe whom they love, and by whom they are eſteemed and beloved? I choſe you out of the whole number of my diſciples, to be uſually with me: and I have taught you in public and in private: I have anſwered your queſtions, and removed your ſcruples: I have treated you as my friends: *for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you*, John xv. 15. And is my affection changed, that I ſhould not *love you to the end* of my life? ch. xiii. 1.

*You* too *have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.* John xvi. 17. You have made a very acceptable profeſſion of faith in me, and reſpect for me. When *many went back, and walked no more with me*; John vi. 66, 67. you would not forſake me, though I left you to your own choice, to abide with me, or *go away*: and hitherto *ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations*, Luke xxii. 28. and have ſhared in the reproach and obloquy, caſt upon me; whereby, as you cannot but know, you have not a little endeared yourſelves to me: and now by your grief for my departure, in the manner I have ſpoken of (though that grief be not duly regulated) you have evidently ſhewn an eſteem and value for me, and a concern for my honour: and can it be thought, that I ſhould intend to delude you? Is it not much more reaſonable to conclude, that the reality is fully anſwerable to the expreſſions made uſe of by me?

8. Once more, 'the circumſtances we are in may aſſure you 'of my being ſincere in what I ſay.'

Dying men have ſeldom any inclination to deceit and fallacy. The near proſpect of death puts an end to ſuch artifices, though they had been practiſed before. Moreover the cheerfulneſs, with which I ſpeak of dying, and ſuch a death as I have in view, may aſſure you, I am well ſatisfied about the

the conſequences of it, as to myſelf. And *if I live, ye ſhall live alſo*, John xiv. 19. If you love one another, as I have loved you, and perform all other things, which I have recommended to you, our intereſts are the ſame. You are not now to go with me, nor to follow me immediately: but you ſhall follow me ſome time hence.

Let not then any afflictive circumſtances in this world deject your ſpirits, or cauſe you to abandon a juſt and well-grounded expectation. My departure is only like that of one, who goes before, to prepare for the reſt of the company. And hereafter, if need be, I will come forth, and conduct you into the manſions, which I now ſpeak to you of.

So did our Lord comfort and encourage his diſciples.

III. Having ſpoken to the two points in the text, I ſhall now add ſome remarks and inferences.

1. 'We may hence conclude, that it is of great importance, to maintain the hope and expectation of another life.'

Our Lord was pleaſed to enforce the conviction and perſuaſion of a future ſtate upon the minds of his diſciples, by the conſideration of his own integrity, of which there were ſo many proofs, and which was abſolutely unqueſtionable.

His apoſtles afterwards ſhew a like earneſt concern to keep up in the minds of Chriſtians a firm perſuaſion and lively hope of another life after this: *Wherefore*, ſays St. Peter, *gird up the loins of your mind, be ſober, and hope unto the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt*, 1 Pet. i. 13. In like manner the apoſtle to the Hebrews: *Caſt not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompenſe of reward: for ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promiſe: for yet a little while, and he that ſhall come, will come, and will not tarry*, Heb. x. 35, 36. And it is with warmth that St. Paul expreſſeth himſelf to the Corinthians: *Now, if Chriſt be preached, that he roſe from the dead, how ſay ſome among you, that there is no reſurrection of the dead? . . . Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*, 1 Cor. xv. 12, 33. Never let us hearken to ſuch ſuggeſtions; for they diſcourage all generous actions. This life, at its beſt eſtate, is then, indeed, altogether vanity: yea this whole ſyſtem of things, and all the deſigns of Providence, would then be mean and inconſiderable, and below the great characters of Creator and Governor of the world.

2. 'We hence learn, how life and immortality may be ſaid to be brought to light in the goſpel.'

Allowing,

Allowing, that a future ſtate of recompenſe, or immortal life, may be ſurely deduced from reaſon, and argued from divers parts of the Old Teſtament, it may be juſtly ſaid to be brought to light through the goſpel; it having there received a great deal of additional evidence. Here we have the ſolemn and expreſs declaration and promiſe of one teaching in the name of God, and proving his miſſion by miracles: and the expectation is confirmed by every part of his doctrine, by the precepts and rules of life delivered by him, by the whole of his behaviour in this world, toward thoſe who were dear to him, and toward others, by his unparalleled diſintereſtedneſs, by his zeal for the glory of God and the welfare of men, and by every virtue of his moſt excellent and exemplary life, and alſo by his death and reſurrection, and by the ſending down of gifts upon thoſe who believed in him.

Moreover here the idea of the future happineſs is improved above all the diſcoveries of reaſon. The body is to be raiſed up incorruptible and immortal: good men ſhall be made like unto the angels: they ſhall ſee God; and they ſhall meet together, and live and reign with Chriſt. Thus is the felicity of the ſaints deſcribed by the apoſtle, at the conſummation of all things: *And ſo ſhall we ever be with the Lord*, 1 Theſſ. iv. 17. In like manner ſpeaks Chriſt himſelf to the diſciples here: *And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myſelf, that where I am, there ye may be alſo.* And thus he prays for them: *Father, I will, that they whom thou haſt given me be with me, where I am, that they may behold the glory which thou haſt given me*, John xvii. 24. By living with him, and *ſeeing him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. they will be brought to a moſt happy reſemblance of him in purity and holineſs; and their now frail bodies ſhall be made *like unto his moſt glorious body*, Philip. iii. 21. This is a very delightful and exalted idea of the future happineſs. How deſirable is it to be with him, who is ſo excellent and amiable! whoſe ſociety on earth was ſo engaging and improving! to be with him not only for a while, but for ever; and to be like him in eternal glory, and the perfection of virtue!

3. 'This doctrine affords ſupport and comfort under all 'the troubles and afflictions of this mortal life, particularly 'the departure of dear and valuable friends.'

Our Lord makes uſe of this argument to pacify his diſciples, who were greatly perplexed and diſtreſſed at the thought of his going away from them. St. Paul improves the ſame argument

argument to the like purpoſe: *But I would not have you 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 which ſleep in Jeſus will God bring with him.... Wherefore comfort one another with theſe words,* 1 Theſſ. iv. 13—18.

It is a happineſs to know good and great men: but then it is afflictive to part with them. However the principles of religion afford us comfort upon this, as well as other occaſions of grief. Though earthly friends die, God lives for ever: and he will be with us, and bleſs us, if we fear and ſerve him. *When father and mother*, and other friends, *forſake us*, we are caſt upon the divine care and protection: and then eſpecially he will *take us up*, Pſ. xxvii. 10, and care for us. As for them, their removal is to their advantage. To *be with Chriſt is far better*, than to abide here, Phil. i. 23. *Bleſſed are the dead, which die in the Lord: they reſt from their labours, and their works do follow them*, Rev. xiv. 13. This we cannot doubt to be the caſe of our late excellent friend.

Shall I now take ſome notice of the gifts beſtowed upon him, the uſe he made of them, the acceptance he met with, and the fruit of his endeavours? Will not this anſwer ſome good ends and purpoſes? May it not aſſuage our grief, increaſe our gratitude to God, excite our emulation, and direct our practice?

Dr. Jeremiah Hunt was born in London, June 11, 1678. His father dying, when he was not more than two years of age; he, with his two ſiſters, was left, under Providence, to the care of a tender mother: who, when he grew up, intended to put him to a trade. But he chooſing to ſerve God in preaching the goſpel, and earneſtly deſiring to continue his ſtudies with that view, ſhe complied with his requeſt: and with the aſſiſtance of her relations, of whom ſhe had ſeveral in good circumſtances, ſhe gave her ſon a truly liberal education.

When he had been ſufficiently inſtructed in grammar learning, he began his academical ſtudies at Mr. Thomas Rowe's, a miniſter in this city. After that he went to Edinburgh, and from thence to Leyden in Holland.

There is ſometimes a happy concurrence of circumſtances for forming and qualifying perſons of elevated minds for important ſervice: ſuch ſeems to have been the caſe here: and, as we may reaſonably think, not without a kind and over-

ruling

ruling Providence: foraſmuch as the gifts, beſtowed upon any men, are not barely for themſelves, nor for vain ſhew and oſtentation, but for the benefit of others.

The profeſſors of Leyden at that time were men of great renown for ability and ſkill in the ſeveral branches of literature: and indeed it is ſo ordered by the wiſdom of the government, that for the moſt part the profeſſors chairs in that univerſity are filled with men, who are an ornament to the republic of letters, and greatly advance its intereſts by their writings and other labours: and there is a great reſort of youth of all ranks, who are deſigned for law or magiſtracy, divinity and medicine; and that not only from the ſeveral cities of the Province of Holland, but from all the Provinces, and from ſeveral parts of Europe; more eſpecially from England, Germany, and the Northern Countries. And many of them come thither with the ſame views, that carry our young Gentlemen over; for completing the ſtudies, which they had begun, and made ſome progreſs in, at univerſities nearer home. Whence it comes to paſs, that there are many, who are not mere novices, but have made ſome conſiderable advances in knowledge: and the quality, eſpecially from Germany, are uſually attended by governors, who are well-bred Gentlemen, and are not only maſters of the ancient learning, but well acquainted likewiſe with modern hiſtory, and the views and intereſts of the ſeveral courts of Europe.

Education in ſuch a place of general reſort is of great uſe: and acquaintance with men of different nations, and remote countries, who bring with them the knowledge they have gained in diſtant nurſeries of learning, though that acquaintance ſhould be ſlight and tranſient only, opens and enlarges the mind, renders men leſs impatient of contradiction, and leſs offended at the different opinions and manners of men, and lays the foundation of many other agreeable advantages to the perſon himſelf, and to thoſe among whom his future lot is caſt.

He alſo met with a competent number of his own countrymen, perſons of good families, ſober, well-diſpoſed, ſtudious: many of whom have ſince made a good figure in life, ſome in the miniſtry, ſome in other ſtations of honour and uſefulneſs.

Moreover, Mr. Millan, the miniſter of the Engliſh church at Leyden, was a man eminent for piety, learning, and a juſt diſcernment of things: and his diſcourſes on Lord's days in the forenoon were, as I have heard, as ſuitable and profitable

fitable for ſtudents, eſpecially for ſtudents in divinity, as the profeſſors † lectures.

Mr. Millan's converſation likewiſe muſt have been of no ſmall benefit to thoſe Engliſh ſtudents, who were ſo wiſe as to deſire and value it: and ſo wiſe Mr. Hunt was, as will appear preſently.

According to the beſt information I have been able to obtain, Mr. Hunt came to Leyden in Auguſt or September 1699, and left it to return home ſome time in the year 1701.

Whilſt he was there, he ſtudied eccleſiaſtical hiſtory and ſacred geography under the very celebrated Frederic Spanheim; and heard the lectures of the other profeſſors on philoſophy, civil law, and divinity; and particularly the very uſeful lectures of Perizonius upon univerſal hiſtory, which held ten months, and were always well attended. 'Here Mr. 'Hunt entered himſelf to be one of the few out of a very 'numerous audience, who were to be publicly examined every 'Saturday, concerning the lectures of the preceding part of 'the week. When he ſo acquitted himſelf, as to give entire 'ſatisfaction and much pleaſure to the profeſſor himſelf, and 'all the ſtudents in general.'

In the month of January in the year $\frac{1699}{1700}$ or thereabout, a Rabbi ‖ from Lithuania opened a lecture for teaching Jewiſh learning. He was reckoned a man of virtue, and very know-

† I once ſuppoſed, from what I had heard occaſionally, that Mr. Millan delivered in thoſe ſermons a ſyſtem of Jewiſh antiquities. But a gentleman, who was then at Leyden, repreſents the ſubject of them in this manner: 'That Mr. 'Millan for many months together 'preached upon the genuinneſs 'and authority of the ſcriptures 'of the Old Teſtament, as they 'appeared from the Maſorite doc-'tors and other Jewiſh writers, &c. 'which afforded much inſtruction 'and entertainment to the Engliſh 'ſtudents.' The gentleman, from whom I have this, was then very young. And it is eaſy to ſuppoſe, that his account is not complete. However it hence appears, that thoſe diſcourſes of Mr. Millan tended to lead his hearers into the knowledge of the ſcriptures, and Jewiſh learning.

‖ 'That Rabbi in the ſummer 'following publicly renounced Ju-'daiſm, and was baptiſed on a 'week-day in St. Peter's church 'at Leyden by profeſſor J. Trig-'land, (who probably was rector 'of the univerſity at that time.) 'The profeſſor Trigland appeared 'to be his good friend, and had 'him often at his houſe.' This information I have received from a gentleman, who was then at Leyden. How that Rabbi behaved, and what became of him afterwards, I have not learned: except that another friend, who was at Leyden ſome time after this, tells me, he left that city, and went into Germany.

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ing in his profeſſion: and not long after he publicly embraced the Chriſtian religion. Five or ſix at leaſt of the Engliſh ſtudents, beſide others, had the curioſity to attend his lecture; one of whom was Mr. Hunt: and Mr. Millan too was pleaſed to join himſelf to their number. The Rabbi having carried them through the Hebrew grammar proceeded to read and explain to them the Miſna, the great repoſitory of the ancient Jewiſh learning: but it was not long, before ſeveral of our young countrymen, diſheartened by the difficulty of the ſtudy, gave out. Mr. Millan however, and Mr. Hunt, and perhaps another, were unwearied and perſevered. Some there were, who could not but wonder at Mr. Hunt's extraordinary diligence in what they deemed a fruitleſs ſtudy: but he was unmoved, and has ſince declared, 'that from 'thoſe lectures he had reaped ſuch pleaſure and improvement, 'as abundantly compenſated all his paſt labour and toil.' For certain this was ‡ a price put into the hand of one, who knew how to make uſe of it, Prov. xvii. 16.

And thus Mr. Hunt, having good natural parts, and being inquiſitive, and thirſting after knowledge, made all the improvement of theſe ſeveral advantages, which his friends at home could wiſh or deſire.

He began to preach, while he was in Holland: the occaſion I take to have been this; there was then a ſmall Engliſh congregation at Amſterdam; being deſtitute of a paſtor, they applied to the candidates for the miniſtry at Leyden for a ſupply. For any one of them to undertake it, would have been too great an interruption in his ſtudies, and an obſtruction to future uſefulneſs. However three of them conſented to preach to them by turns for a while: one of whom was our friend.

And it is not unlikely, that this was the firſt occaſion of his preaching without notes, that being the univerſal cuſtom abroad: but I preſume, that he did not then, any more than

‡ St. Jerom had two Hebrew maſters, firſt, a converted Jew, afterwards another, who retained his Judaiſm. Ad quam edomandam, cuidam fratri, qui ex Hebræis crediderat, me in diſciplinam tradidi. Ad Ruſt. Ep. 95. al. 4. T. 4. p. 774. m. Hebræam linguam, quam ego ab adoleſcentia multo labore ac ſudore ex parte didici.—Ad Euſtoch. Ep. 86. al. 27. p. 686. m. Veni rurſum Jeroſolymam et Bethleem. Quo labore, quo pretio Bar-aninam nocturnum habui præceptorem! Timebat enim Judæos, et mihi alterum exhibebat Nicodemum. Ep. 41. al. 65. ib. p. 342. f. Vid. et adv. Ruf. l. 1. p. 363.

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ſince, write out his ſermons at length; but having with care and diligent examination made himſelf maſter of his text and ſubject, and well digeſted his thoughts, he clothed them in the language, which offered in the delivery: not neglecting however a due care in the preparation, as well as afterwards, to ſecure propriety and perſpicuity of expreſſion.

Which to me appears an excellent method, when there are ſufficient abilities for it; I mean a ſtock of knowledge, readineſs of thought, and a good memory: all which talents fell to the lot of our friend in a high degree of perfection. I have been told, that whilſt he was preaching one of thoſe his firſt ſermons in Holland, he was by ſome means led into a miſtaken computation of the time: and thinking he had not yet filled up the hour, he continued his diſcourſe for ſome good while beyond his firſt intention, and the uſual time, without any diſcernible confuſion, or diſagreeable tautology.

Upon his return to England, he preached three years as aſſiſtant to a congregation at Tunſtead, near Norwich; where he was greatly eſteemed, and earneſtly importuned to ſettle with them: but there were ſome conſiderations, of no ſmall moment, which prevented his complying with their requeſt. However there are ſtill ſome families in that place and its neighbourhood, which to this very day, as I am well aſſured, have a moſt affectionate and reſpectful remembrance of him.

Not long after his coming up to London, in the year 1707, he was called to the paſtoral office in this congregation, which he accepted, and has diſcharged with great reputation, through divine mercy, for about ſeven and thirty years, to the day of his death.

In the year 1729, the Univerſity of Edinburgh, out of a regard to his diſtinguiſhed merit, complimented him with the higheſt honorary title in their gift: a piece of reſpect, not to be ſlighted by any man of letters. Nevertheleſs, ſuch was his modeſty, I believe, it gave more ſatisfaction to his friends, than to himſelf.

His manner of preaching has been ſo remarkable, that I think myſelf obliged to remind you of it ſomewhat diſtinctly: for in the time of his laborious miniſtry among you, he has gone over the Goſpels and the Acts of the Apoſtles more than once. And once at leaſt he has in a like manner explained and improved the epiſtles of the New Teſtament throughout, and in order; and alſo the firſt three chapters of the book of the Revelation. Since that he has preached upon the more

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uſeful and practical parts of the Epiſtles in a way ſomewhat leſs continued. He preached over the whole book of Proverbs, making ſome paſſages in that book his ſubject every Lord's day morning for ſome of thoſe years, in which he preached twice in the day. And afterwards he began, and finiſhed a courſe of ſermons on the principles of religion and the main doctrines of the Chriſtian revelation, and their connection and influence on each other.††

His great concern all along has manifeſtly been to attain the true ſenſe of ſcripture, and faithfully to make known what he judged to be the will of God to thoſe whom he had undertaken to inſtruct and admoniſh. This he did with great impartiality, remarkable diſintereſtedneſs, and inflexible integrity.

If at any time he exceeded himſelf, ſo far as I underſtand, it was, when he was explaining and improving that part of the apoſtolic hiſtory, where mention is made of the leave which St. Paul took of the elders of the church of Epheſus. Acts xx. 17—35. In the courſe of thoſe ſermons there was ſo warm, ſo natural, ſo unaffected and ſolemn an appeal to his ſtated hearers, that he had in his own miniſterial conduct uprightly endeavoured to copy after St. Paul, and follow the example, which he there repreſents himſelf to have given; that though it is now many years, ſince thoſe ſermons were preached; I find they do ſtill make very lively and affecting impreſſions on ſome of you, and thoſe of the beſt proficiency. I preſume, they muſt be remem-

†† I have likewiſe an authentic account of another ſet of ſermons, preached not long after his ſettlement at Pinners-hall. It is the copy of a letter ſent by him to a judicious divine, with whom he had contracted a pleaſing acquaintance, during his ſtay in Norfolk. 'Mr. 'Hunt ſends his learned friend an 'account of his preaching, to be 'approved or diſapproved, and for 'him to let him know what he diſ-'liked. He informs him, that he 'had proved a God, and repre-'ſented the grounds, on which our 'faith in the ſcriptures is founded. 'Then he treated on the attributes 'of God. He had conſidered alſo 'the government of our firſt pa-'rents, the fitneſs of their being 'tried by prohibiting the eating a 'certain fruit, and the conſequen-'ces of it. He had given a ſuc-'cinct account of the religion be-'fore the flood, and the fitneſs of 'tranſlating Enoch. This had been 'the ſubject of his laſt diſcourſe at 'the time of writing this letter: 'at the concluſion of which he aſ-'ſures his friend, that he took all 'the care he could to urge what is 'the laſt end of revealed truth, viz. 'divine temper and life.'

bered by many: and I humbly hope, that few or none, who heard them, will ever forget them.*

Though he ſeldom committed his ſermons to writing, they were not extempore effuſions; but the fruit of ſerious ſtudy, and impartial examination: for he delighted in every part of his work, and in compoſing his ſermons he conſulted the original, and the ancient verſions, not omitting to look into the moſt celebrated critics and commentators. And he carefully conſidered the words themſelves, the connection, and the main ſcope of the writer. Then he endeavoured to chooſe the cleareſt and eaſieſt method. After all this care it is not to be wondered, that his remarks were juſt, and his inferences pertinent; and that his ſermons might be eaſily underſtood, and long remembered by all that were attentive: and indeed there are ſeveral miniſters, as well as private Chriſtians, who have improved their judgment by only hearing him occaſionally.

It was his conſtant care to repreſent the true ſenſe of ſcripture, and the doctrine, which according to the beſt of his judgment was conformable to it: nor could he ever be induced to conceal or diſguiſe what he thought to be the truth, for the ſake of popular applauſe, or to avoid, or ſilence the cenſures of miſtaken and prejudiced men. He might therefore truly ſay with St. Paul, and take the comfort of it: *We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of ſincerity, but as of God, in the ſight of God, ſpeak we in Chriſt*, 2 Cor. ii. 17. And with the ſame apoſtle he might ſay again: *Our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God* (or according to the goſpel of God, and in a manner worthy of the favour we have received, and the high office we have been intruſted with) *we have had our converſation in the world*, ch. i. 12.

In brief, his preaching was ſcriptural, critical, paraphraſtical, and conſequently inſtructive. It was alſo very practical, and ſometimes pathetically ſo at the concluſion.

* 'At another ſeaſon, in ſeveral diſcourſes upon 2 Tim. iii. 10. *but thou haſt fully known my doctrine*, &c. he in a ſummary and paraphraſtical way obſerved St. Paul's doctrine, as repreſented in the Acts of the Apoſtles, and in his own epiſtles: and he ſhewed the occaſion, ſcope and deſign of all St. Paul's epiſtles.' Some of Dr. Hunt's hearers have a diſtinct remembrance of thoſe diſcourſes, and are very thankful for the inſtruction they received by them.

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As his preaching was mightily ſuited to form in men a rational conviction of the truths of religion, and to carry them on to perfection; ſo his audience, though not numerous, has uſually conſiſted of the more knowing and underſtanding Chriſtians. And it muſt be owned, that they do honour to themſelves, who diſcern true merit, and cheerfully encourage an open and ſteady friend to truth and liberty. And they who receive ſuch an one in the name of Chriſt, and honour him for his work's ſake, as bringing with him the doctrine of pure and undefiled religion, eſpecially when under difficulties, are entitled to a like reward with him. So he ſaid to his diſciples, who is truth itſelf, and never encouraged deluſive hopes, or groundleſs expectations: *He that receiveth you, receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that ſent me. He that receiveth a Prophet in the name of a Prophet, ſhall have a Prophet's reward,* Matt. x. 40, 41.

He ever was extremely cautious of aſſuming authority in the church of God. It was his common advice to perſons arrived at years of diſcretion, 'to judge for themſelves, 'and act according to conviction;' which is very natural for thoſe, who make the ſcriptures the rule of their faith, and have with care and diligence formed their own judgment upon them. Herein, then, as well as in other things already mentioned, he ſhewed himſelf a faithful ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt. He remembered, that *one is our maſter, even Chriſt*, and that *all we are brethren*, Matt. xxiii. 8. So did St. Paul: *We preach not ourſelves*, ſays he, *but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, and ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus ſake*, 2 Cor. iv. 5. Which is alſo agreeable to St. Peter's directions to biſhops, that they ſhould not act as *lords over God's heritage, but as enſamples to the flock*. Such he aſſures us, *when the chief ſhepherd ſhall appear, will receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. v. 3.

As yet I have repreſented but a part of his uſefulneſs. His talents for inſtructing and improving the mind were not confined to the pulpit. His converſation alſo was a great bleſſing to many. I believe, there are ſeveral families of God's people, beſide thoſe of his own congregation, where the younger, and perhaps ſome of the elder branches, are not a little indebted to him for a rational religion, and a well-grounded faith in the goſpel.

His religious conferences were oftentimes accompanied with prayer. For as he daily prayed in his own family, ſo he likewiſe frequently prayed in the families of his Chriſtian friends and acquaintance.

Such was the ſtrength of his memory, that this knowledge, though of a vaſt compaſs, was always ready for uſe; whereby he was eminently qualified to be communicative. And, whenever he met with an ingenuous temper of mind, and a diſpoſition to attend, he failed not to bring forth out of his rich treaſure. There are not a few, both near and afar off, men of good underſtanding, of different ages and ſtations in life, who will readily ſtand up, and acknowledge, that there is no man, from whom they have received more uſeful hints concerning the important ſubjects of virtue and religion, than from him.

He has not publiſhed ſo much as might have been expected: however, enough, to ſhew his ſentiments concerning natural and revealed religion, and to juſtify the character I have given him.

So the apoſtles of Chriſt, and their companions, uſually called apoſtolical men, as an ancient writer obſerves,† either wrote nothing at all, or but little: (neither the goſpels, nor the epiſtles of the New Teſtament, being of any great length) yet they have ever been eſteemed the moſt eminently, and moſt extenſively uſeful miniſters of Chriſt's kingdom. They who have received knowledge from him, will communicate it to others, both in public and private, in diſcourſe and writing. Upon the whole, I always eſteemed Dr. Hunt as uſeful a miniſter, as any in his time. Which opinion has been as much founded upon the uſefulneſs of his converſation, as of his preaching and writing.

His ſentiments in religion appear to be very juſt, and to deſerve an attentive regard.

He was of opinion, 'that the facts, upon which the 'Chriſtian religion is founded, have a ſtronger proof, than 'any facts at ſuch a diſtance of time; and that the books, 'which convey them down to us, may be proved to be 'uncorrupted and authentic with greater ſtrength than any 'other writings of equal antiquity.

† Σπουδης της περι το λογογραφειν μικραν ποιουμενοι φροντιδα. Euſ. H. E. l. 3, c. 24, p. 94. D.

'Piety,

'Piety,' ſays he, 'and extenſive virtue, are final in religion. Principles of truth are inſtrumental. What is poſitive is to be regarded only as means.'

Again: 'The principles of truth, relating to natural or revealed religion, and particularly to the Chriſtian doctrine, are to be conſidered as inſtrumental, and deſigned to bring us to ſobriety, righteouſneſs and godlineſs. And are not available to our perfection and happineſs, unleſs theſe are produced by them.'

The reſpect due to moral and poſitive precepts is happily and briefly expreſſed by him in this manner: 'Let || us take care, that we do not raiſe poſitive duties above moral, which are of eternal and immutable obligation, and the end of true religion. And yet let us be careful to obſerve what bears the ſtamp of divine authority: let us not inſolently make a religion for God, but receive it as he has delivered it to us by reaſon and revelation.'

The deſign of the ordinance of the Lord's ſupper has been thus repreſented by him: 'By receiving the ſacrament men do not inliſt themſelves in any party: but only in general profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, and thereby declare their reſolution to purſue ſteadily religious virtue, as the laſt deſign of the inſtitution of Chriſt.'

If it ſhould be aſked, what is meant by religious virtue, ſome other words of his will explain it. 'Virtue is doing what is right, fit, and agreeable to the truth of things. And it becomes religious virtue, when practiſed out of a regard to God: who, as a perfect moral agent, muſt, in conſequence, will, that ſuch creatures as are made capable of it, ſhould conform to what reaſon dictates.'

Our friend, whoſe deceaſe we lament, had a wonderful ſtrength of mind. I remember him to have ſaid to me ſome years ago, though without vanity (from which no man was more free) that he believed, he could with conſideration recollect almoſt all the ſermons he had ever preached. This has been lately confirmed to me, and more diſtinctly, by a common friend, in theſe very words: 'His judgment was ſo exact, that when he had once fixed the ſenſe of a text, his memory would retain it for many years; and he could eaſily, and in a very little time, recollect the method, in which he had treated it, the inferences he had made,

|| See his Sermon upon Penance, p. 37.

'and the whole ſermon. This was ſurpriſing, as he had 'no notes: and yet I have known him preach a ſermon 'upon half an hour's recollection, which he had preached 'about fourteen years before: and he himſelf told me, he 'did not believe he had miſſed three ſentences. This was 'not a peculiar caſe: but he had fixed his ſermons in 'general in his head. What an uncommon ſtrength of 'judgment and memory was this!'

This great capacity had been cultivated with care and diligence: accordingly his acquired attainments were proportionable. As much may be eaſily inferred from what was before ſaid of his preparatory ſtudies. He well underſtood the ſeveral ſchemes of ancient and modern philoſophy. To the very end of his life he continued to read, by way of amuſement at leaſt, the celebrated ancient writers, both Greek and Roman, whether poets, philoſophers, or hiſtorians. Theſe are authors, with which men of the learned profeſſions are generally acquainted. But I preſume, I may ſay, without diſparagement to any, that he was a better judge of their beauties and perfections, blemiſhes and defects, than moſt are. He had alſo read the remains of the ancient Greek mathematicians, which is an uncommon part of literature. He had a good knowledge of the civil law. In early life he was celebrated for ſkill in the Hebrew language and Rabbinical learning. He was well acquainted with eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, and had read the ancient Chriſtian writers. But the Bible was his principal ſtudy: and the knowledge, in which he moſt excelled, was the knowledge of the ſcriptures. Few men, I believe, can be named in any age, who have equalled him therein.

To this laſt particular, more eſpecially, I apprehend to be owing the great contempt he had for infidels, commonly called deiſts; who pretend to condemn revelation, without ever having carefully ſtudied and conſidered it: and though they are apt to give themſelves airs of ſuperior knowledge, he looked upon the whole body of them, as a ſort of men, who have only a very ſuperficial knowledge both of ſcripture and antiquity. To this ignorance of theirs he in part aſcribed their infidelity: for he uſed to aſſert, that all antiquity confirms and corroborates revelation; and he had a ſtrong perſuaſion, that the next age would be as remarkable for enthuſiaſm, as this for infidelity: foraſmuch

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as thoſe two extremes, he ſaid, take turns, and mutually produce, or occaſion each other.

If our friend was a man of great capacity, and various learning; yet ſincere piety, uncommon meekneſs of temper, and mildneſs of ſpeech and behaviour, moſt amiable and unaffected modeſty, and remarkable inoffenſiveneſs and peaceableneſs, are as diſtinguiſhing parts of his character, as learning and knowledge.

He was a tender huſband: as he too was happy in a conſort, who by her prudent management of the affairs of the family afforded him entire liberty to purſue his ſtudies, and diſcharge the offices of his miniſterial function, without diſtraction.

What care he took to inſtil the beſt principles, and impart the moſt uſeful knowledge to his children, as their minds gradually opened, their own conſciences will bear him witneſs: and it is to be hoped (which indeed I have no cauſe to diſtruſt) that their future behaviour in life will ſhew, that his paternal care and concern have not been in vain; and that they will prove every way worthy of ſuch conſtant, familiar inſtruction and example.

The benevolence of his temper, his ſincerity, diſintereſtedneſs, and communicativeneſs, rendered him a moſt deſirable and valuable friend.

He ſympathiſed with the afflicted: and though he was a man of ſtrong reaſon, and had a rightly informed judgment and underſtanding, he did not deny the uſe of the paſſions; which have been placed in us by our Creator, and make a part of our conſtitution.

I have reaſon to think, that he was liberal to the poor to the utmoſt of his circumſtances, if not beyond them. And he has wiſhed, that men of wealth would ſometimes viſit the habitations of the poor and ſick: ſuppoſing, that a near view of their ſcanty accommodations might ſoften their temper, and diſpoſe them to afford all the relief that is in their power.

In his latter years he has been ſeveral times afflicted with ſevere fits of the ſtone and gravel, the acute pains of which he bore with exemplary patience and reſignation. And he had behaved likewiſe with great firmneſs and ſteadineſs under ſome very trying afflictions and difficulties, which he met with in the former part of his life.

For about a year before he died, there appeared in him a viſible decay; and he ſeemed to feel it himſelf: for his prayers and converſation turned much upon his approaching change. He would alſo lament, that he could be uſeful no longer, and was afraid of outliving his uſefulneſs. But when he ſpake of death, it was with great calmneſs and compoſure of mind: and he declared, he was more afraid of the pain of dying, than of the conſequences of death. However in that he was greatly favoured. For about a month before his death, he ſeemed more briſk and cheerful, than he had been for ſome time: and his friends hoped, they might have enjoyed him longer. But as he was walking a little way into the country, to ſee a friend, he had an unhappy fall, which bruiſed his leg. No danger was apprehended at firſt: but on the fourth day it threw him into a fever, the place mortified, and the mortification brought on a lethargy. All proper means were uſed, but in vain. When his friends rouſed him, he anſwered very ſenſibly: but ſoon fell into his dozing again, from which he never awaked. For on Wedneſday morning, a little after nine of the clock, the fifth of this month, without either ſigh, or groan, or the leaſt ſtruggling, he in the moſt eaſy and compoſed manner breathed his laſt. An affectionate friend, who ſtood by his bed-ſide, tells: 'Though he never could bear to ſee any one die 'before, yet he ſaw nothing formidable, or to give him 'any uneaſineſs, except that he was loſing his dear and faithful 'friend.'

Such has been the life, and ſuch the death of our honoured friend. His life has been a courſe of laborious ſervice in the church of God, and an example of uniform, ſteadfaſt, growing virtue; and his end has been peace. If we copy his example, and obſerve the rules of life, faithfully taught, and earneſtly inculcated by him, we may hope to meet him again in a ſtate of perfection and happineſs. With theſe, and ſuch like thoughts and conſiderations, let us comfort ourſelves, and others, who ſympathiſe with us, and mingle their tears with ours; being affected with the loſs, which both we and they have ſuſtained.

4. Laſtly, 'This ſubject is confirming and animating, as 'well as comforting.'

In our Father's houſe are many manſions. There are regions of light and immortality: there is a world, wherein dwells righteouſneſs: where intelligent beings are admitted to the

the ſublimeſt entertainments: where there is no death, nor pain, and where all ſorrow and ſighing are fled away. Foraſmuch as ſuch a joy is ſet before us, let us lay aſide every weight, and perform the ſervices now lying before us with fidelity and diligence.

We have had a new teſtimony to the truth of religion. Our deceaſed friend was *an Iſraelite indeed, in whom was no guile*, John i. 47. Of his ſincerity there were many undeniable proofs, and it was liable to no ſuſpicions. He had as good reaſon, as any, to know, whether virtue has a real excellence, and whether it be recommended by religion, or be the will of God: whether it has any delights and comforts here, and may expect a reward hereafter. He has ſpoken and acted, as if theſe things were true and certain; and, if they were not ſo, he would have told us.

Let us improve this thought for our eſtabliſhment: let us reckon ourſelves obliged to weigh maturely, and recollect frequently, what we have heard from him upon theſe important points, whether in public or private. Far be it, that any of the ſtated hearers, near relatives, or intimate friends of this excellent man, and faithful ſervant of God, ſhould be ſo far miſled by the temptations of the times, as ever to become infidels in opinion, or libertines in practice. I rather hope and believe, that remembering how he taught, and how he walked; and mindful of other helps, ſtill afforded them; not forſaking the aſſemblies of divine worſhip, as is the manner of ſome; but by an open profeſſion of religion animating and confirming each other; and joining with a love of liberty a hearty zeal for true piety; they will withſtand the ſnares of an evil world, and maintain their integrity to the end of life: and ſo be to him a crown of glory, and rejoice with him in the day of the Lord, Heb. x. 23—25.

Finally, *my beloved brethren, let us be ſteadfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: foraſmuch as we know, that our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58.

SERMONS

# SERMONS

## UPON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

VOL. I.

[FIRST PUBLISHED IN MDCCL.]

## SERMON I. THE DUTY OF CONSIDERATION.

PSAL. cxix. 59.

*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies.*

In theſe words two things are obſervable; firſt, the Pſalmiſt's practice: *He thought on his ways.* Secondly, the reſult and conſequence of that practice: *He turned his feet unto God's teſtimonies.*

The text therefore preſents to us theſe two points, conſideration, and the happy effect of it, reformation, or amendment. Theſe will be the ſubjects of the preſent diſcourſe: and this is the method to be obſerved by us:

I. To ſhew, what is implied in conſideration, or thinking on our ways.

II. To obſerve the proper effect thereof, which is amendment.

III. After which, in the way of application, I would recommend the practice of conſideration by ſome motives.

I. I am to ſhew, in the firſt place, what is implied in conſideration, or thinking on our ways.

1. It implies a recollecting, and taking a ſurvey of our paſt conduct, with a view of detecting the ſins and errors of it, as well as obſerving the good we have done.

To think on our ways is to recollect and bring to remembrance the paſt actions of our life, good and bad: more eſpecially our latter, but alſo our former conduct: nor only our outward actions, but likewiſe our thoughts and intentions, the principles and views of our actions, in the ſeveral paſt periods of our life, and the various circumſtances we have been in: how far our behaviour has been ſuitable to the diſpenſations of Divine Providence towards us: what

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we have been, and what we have done: how we have behaved in times of proſperity, or of adverſity: how far we have regarded and performed, or neglected and omitted, the duties owing to God or men, in the ſtations we have been in; by which it may appear, that this is a wide field of meditation, to expatiate in.

2. In the practice of this duty is implied ſerioufneſs and deliberation.

*I thought on my ways.* I recollected them, as juſt ſhewn; and that ſeriouſly and deliberately. I did not beſtow only ſome few ſlight and curſory reflections on myſelf and my paſt conduct: but I acted with ſerioufneſs and deliberation, being ſenſible, it is a thing of no ſmall moment. I allotted ſome time to this work, and called off my thoughts from other matters, to think of myſelf and my ways. I laid aſide other buſineſs, and redeemed ſome time from the hurries of life, for the ſake of this neceſſary review. I deſiſted from farther purſuits, until I had ſurveyed my paſt conduct, and could judge, how far it has been right, or how far wrong: whether I ought to proceed in the preſent courſe, or whether it ought not in ſeveral reſpects to be altered and corrected.

3. *I thought on my ways:* I conſidered and examined them impartially.

This I did, knowing that God ſees all things, and that he is acquainted with all my wanderings. He tries the hearts, and knows all the ways of the ſons of men. He is the beſt judge of integrity, and will approve of it: he is not to be deceived by falſe pretences, and ſpecious appearances. All the actions of my life, and all the purpoſes of my heart, ever ſince I have enjoyed this rational nature, and have arrived to the exerciſe of its powers, have been under his notice: and he diſcerns the preſent frame and actings of my mind.

When therefore I thought on my ways, I reſolved to do it in the fear, and as in the preſence of God. I ſet aſide partial and too favourable regards for myſelf, and reſolved not to heed now the fair, and too agreeable ſpeeches of friends or flatterers: but to know the truth concerning myſelf, and to paſs a right judgment upon my ways.

I examined myſelf, then, and weighed my actions in an equal balance, without a favourable and partial indulgence: but yet, as I was perſuaded I ought to do, without a rigour

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and ſeverity, that has no bounds, and directly, and neceſſarily leads to deſpair and deſpondency: believing, that equity, mercy and compaſſion, are branches of eternal righteouſneſs, and ſome of the glories of that infinitely perfect being, who made the world. He certainly is not ſtrict to mark iniquity: he knows all the weakneſſes and diſadvantages of his creatures, as well as the powers and advantages, he has beſtowed upon them. He does not equally reſent involuntary and undeſigned failings, and deliberate and wilful wickedneſs. He is ever ready to pardon the penitent, and accepts the ſincere and upright, though they are not perfect.

As therefore I would confeſs and acknowledge all the offences I can deſcry, with hopes of finding favour with God; ſo would I humbly rejoice, and take ſatisfaction in every inſtance of virtuous conduct, hoping it may be graciouſly approved of and accepted by him, to whom I am accountable: and who is greater than my heart, and knoweth all things.

4. *I thought on my ways.* It may be herein implied, I have done it frequently.

*I thought on my ways:* This is a practice, which I have ſuppoſed to be incumbent on me. The heat of action, and the hurry and buſineſs of life, occaſion much inconſideration: and various circumſtances there are, which throw us off our guard: and temptations prevail, before we are aware.

Various are the temptations of this world: and my ſtrong affections are apt to carry me beyond the bounds of reaſon. In the multitude of my words, in my many thoughts and actions, I fear there has not wanted ſome, if not much ſin and folly. I have therefore thought it, in the courſe of my life, a fit and proper practice, frequently to review my conduct, and call myſelf to an account, and not to ſuffer any long ſpace of time to paſs, without this exerciſe of my mind.

5. *I thought on my ways:* and when I did ſo, I carefully compared them with the rule of right; the reaſon of things, and the revealed will of God.

As already obſerved, I have recollected my paſt conduct: I have reviewed it ſeriouſly and deliberately; ſincerely and impartially; and frequently, laying hold of all fit opportunities for ſo doing: and whenever I did ſo, it was my concern, carefully to compare my actions by the rule of right; the reaſon of things, and the will of God, as revealed in his word.

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I then obſerved the intrinſic excellence, and the beauty and comelineſs of virtue, and all holineſs: and the real evil and foul deformity of vice. I diſcerned the reaſonableneſs and perfection of God's precepts: that what he commands is fit to be done, and that what he forbids ought to be avoided by every rational being: *All the ſtatutes of the Lord are right*, Pſ. xix. 8. and ſhould be ſteadily regarded by his creatures. I perceived therefore, that all my thoughts and actions, which agreed not with the rule of God's word, were fooliſh and wicked, ſuch as ought to be condemned by me, of which I have reaſon to be aſhamed, and for which I now humble and abaſe myſelf. All ſuch actions have been contrary to the will and pleaſure of my ſovereign, and unſuitable to the dignity of my nature. And all the while I have wandered from the right way of holineſs and obedience to God, I have been weakening and ſinking the powers of my mind, and have more and more indiſpoſed myſelf for the enjoyment of true happineſs.

6. *I thought on my ways:* and when I did ſo, I conſidered the ſeveral advantages I have enjoyed, and the peculiar obligations I have been under: and was thereby led to take notice of the many aggravations of my tranſgreſſions, and my defects.

Every thing contrary to truth, purity and righteouſneſs is evil, in all beings who have reaſon and underſtanding: but the guilt of tranſgreſſors increaſes in proportion to the knowledge they have of the will of God, and the reaſonableneſs and equitableneſs of what is required of them. Some have clearer diſcoveries concerning duty, than others: and by the many bleſſings, vouchſafed them in the courſe of Providence, they have been laid under ſpecial obligations to attend to the indications of the divine mind.

When I thought on my ways, I could not but own this to be my caſe. The divine will, and motives to obey it, have been often ſet before me in a clear and affecting manner. I have had many means and helps for preventing ſin, and ſecuring a virtuous conduct: and the favours of Divine Providence have laid me under ſtrong obligations to improve thoſe helps, and to excel, and be ſteady in virtue.

I ſee reaſon therefore to own, that I have acted againſt convictions of duty, and that by temptation I have been induced to act contrary to reſolutions, formerly made. I can recollect too, that I have not kept that ſtrict watch over myſelf,

ſelf, which I knew to be fit and needful in this preſent world, ſo beſet with dangerous ſnares and temptations.

Upon the whole, in recollecting and reviewing my conduct I diſcerned many things, for which no good excuſe or apology can be made: and therefore I ſaw great reaſon to condemn and blame myſelf on that account. And conſidering the advantages, which I have enjoyed; my many paſt tranſgreſſions, and my ſtill remaining defects are attended with no ſmall aggravations.

7. *I thought on my ways*, and conſidered the rewards and encouragements of virtuous conduct, and ſincere obedience to God: and the ſad conſequences of ſin, and the unavoidable ruin and miſery of ſuch as perſiſt in it.

For a difference there is in things, as I am fully perſuaded, and ſee plain reaſon to believe: and God, the Lord and Governor of the world, is perfectly righteous and holy: and he certainly will ſome time make a difference between the obedient and faithful, and the diſobedient and unfaithful among his creatures. It is altogether fit and reaſonable, he ſhould do ſo: it is impoſſible therefore for me to reconcile the hopes of happineſs with wilful ſin, perſiſted in, and unrepented of. It muſt be confeſſed, and forſaken: or I can never think of finding mercy with God, ſo as to entertain any proſpect of the reward, that ſhall be beſtowed on the righteous.

This is what is implied in the duty of conſideration, or thinking on our ways.

II. Let us now obſerve the proper effect of this practice, which is amendment. *I thought on my ways*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies.*

That is one effect, and advantage of this practice. But it is not the ſole and only one. For to a good man it may be ſometimes the ground and occaſion of peace, joy, pleaſing reflections, and comfortable hopes and expectations, and afford cauſe of thankſgiving to God. It will eſpecially do ſo, at the end of life, to ſuch as have made it a frequent practice, and have thereby been engaged in a ſtrict and ſteady courſe of virtue. Like the apoſtle, they will be able to ſay: *Our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our converſation in this world*, 2 Cor. i. 12. And when he was yet nearer the period of his days on earth, he reflects, and looks forward in this manner: *I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith. Henceforth*

*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, ſhall give me at that day,* 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

This ſatisfaction, we may well ſuppoſe, was ſometimes the reſult of the Pſalmiſt's thinking on his ways. For though he did not always perform agreeably to the obligations he was under, yet he never laid aſide the profeſſion of religion, nor abandoned himſelf to an allowed and deliberate courſe of wickedneſs. So he declares in this Pſalm, ver. 102, *I have not departed from thy judgments, for thou haſt taught me.* And, ver. 22, *remove away from me reproach and contempt:* for *I have kept thy teſtimonies.* And, ver. 165—167, *Lord, I have hoped in thy ſalvation, and done thy commandments. My ſoul has kept thy teſtimonies, and I love them exceedingly. I have kept thy precepts, and thy teſtimonies: for all my ways are before thee.*

But this was one happy effect of ſerious conſideration, or thinking on his ways, that he was better diſpoſed and enabled to amend what had been hitherto amiſs, and to advance in piety. As he ſays, ver. 67, *before I was afflicted, I went aſtray, but now have I kept thy word.* There were errors and faults in his conduct, in the time of eaſe and proſperity, which afflictions had taught him to correct and reform.

So here in the text: *I thought on my ways:* and having on that recollection and review obſerved ſome, or even many defects and tranſgreſſions, *I turned my feet unto God's teſtimonies.* Whatever I diſcerned to be contrary to duty, gave me grief and concern, and I reſolved to do ſo no more. I determined, not to perſiſt in any thing, which I had ſeen the evil of: knowing, that any one ſin, wilfully indulged, is a preſumptuous diſreſpect to the authority of the divine law: and might harden my heart, and extirpate all ſenſe of religion in my mind, until I become totally forſaken of God, and abandoned to all manner of wickedneſs.

Having ſeen my errors, I reſolved to be for the future more exact, careful and circumſpect. And I have actually found, by experience, that this frequent, ſerious and impartial recollecting and reviewing my paſt conduct has been of great uſe to me, and proved an excellent mean of my amendment and improvement.

III. It remains, that in the way of application I recommend this duty of conſideration, or the practice of *thinking on our ways*, by ſome motives.

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1. It is a very fit and proper employment of rational creatures, whilſt in a ſtate of trial: wherein they labour under many frailties and imperfections, and are expoſed to various ſnares and temptations.

What can be more proper for ſuch beings, in ſuch circumſtances, than to *think on their ways?* They are accountable to God. And muſt it not be very becoming them, to ſhew a reſpect to him, and his laws, by frequently conſidering their behaviour: that, if at any time, through ſurpriſe, or any other means, they have been miſled, they may make humble confeſſions of their offences, and reſolve and aim and endeavour to do better in time to come.

2. I obſerve ſecondly, (which follows from what was juſt ſaid) that this practice is very proper for all men.

It is proper for ſuch, as have not yet ſeriouſly devoted themſelves to God and his ſervice: and alſo for thoſe, who are really and ſincerely, but only imperfectly good. It is greatly needful, and of the utmoſt importance for the former, *to think on their ways.* And it may be very expedient and beneficial for theſe laſt likewiſe. The Pſalmiſt ſhews as much by his own example, who ought to be placed in this latter rank. And he may be well underſtood, to intend by this obſervation, to recommend the practice to others.

3. This exerciſe of the mind is oftentimes expreſsly recommended to men by God himſelf, or his prophets, ſpeaking in his name, and by his authority.

In the firſt chapter of the book of Iſaiah God laments and complains, as it were, that *Iſrael did not know, his people did not conſider*, Iſ. i. 3. And earneſtly calls to them, to attend to the end of things. *Waſh ye, make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well. Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord. If ye be willing and obedient, ye ſhall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuſe, and rebel, ye ſhall be deſtroyed: for the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it*, ver. 16—20. They are ſeverely checked and reproved, who go on ſecurely in an evil way: not conſidering, how diſpleaſing ſuch a courſe is to the divine Being. *Theſe things haſt thou done, and I kept ſilence. Thou thoughteſt, that I was ſuch an one as thyſelf: but I will reprove thee, and ſet them in order before thee. Now conſider this, ye that forget God: leſt I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver*, Pſ. l. 21, 22.

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And in the New Teſtament, ſays St. Paul: *Examine yourſelves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your ownſelves,* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. And, *If any man think himſelf to be ſomething, when he is nothing, he deceives himſelf: but let every man prove his own work. Then ſhall he have rejoicing in himſelf alone, and not in another,* Gal. vi. 3, 4. St. John is directed by our exalted Lord, to write in this manner to the church of Epheſus: *Remember therefore, from whence thou art fallen: and repent, and do the firſt work,* Rev. ii. 5. And St. Paul obſerves: *If we would judge ourſelves, we ſhould not be judged,* or condemned, *by the Lord,* 1 Cor. xi. 21.

4. Which brings us to another argument for this practice: that God will hereafter try and judge us, and all men.

There is a day appointed for reviewing the actions of all mankind: and then every one will receive according to what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. This ſhould be of great force to perſuade us to think on our ways now, and ſeriouſly to recollect our paſt conduct; that all inſtances of miſbehaviour may be blotted out, and corrected by the tears of unfeigned and timely repentance, and by hearty reformation and amendment.

5. There is a great deal of reaſon to apprehend, that we ſhall be induced to think on our ways ſome time before our departure out of this world.

If ever we are brought into troubles and diſtreſſes, or have near apprehenſions of death and judgment: then theſe reflections will be unavoidable, and theſe thoughts will diſturb us, when the benefit will be uncertain. It muſt therefore be prudent, to think on our ways in time, freely and voluntarily, and by a ſpeedy and effectual repentance and amendment, to lay a foundation for pleaſing reflections, and comfortable proſpects, in a day of affliction, or at the time of death.

6. Laſtly, let us attend to the great advantages of thinking on our ways.

It is a likely mean of repentance, of amendment, and of improvement in every thing good and excellent: we ſhall then know ourſelves: we ſhall ſee the evil of ſin, and be very ſenſible of the ſad conſequences of continuing therein: we ſhall turn from it, and carefully keep God's commandments, to the end, without any more deliberately and wilfully forſaking, or turning aſide from them.

This is the leſſon of the text, and of what follows: *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies. I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.* Which laſt words, God willing, ſhall be the ſubject of our meditations the next opportunity.

## SERMON II.

### THE UNREASONABLENESS OF DELAYS IN THINGS OF RELIGION.

PSAL. cxix. 60.

*I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*

THIS pſalm is equally admirable for juſtneſs and piety of ſentiment, and for exactneſs and elegance of compoſition. The prevailing principle running throughout, is a high eſteem and veneration for the revealed will of God: which under ſome expreſſion of law, word, ſtatutes, ordinances, teſtimonies, or ſome other phraſe of like import, is mentioned in almoſt every verſe of the pſalm. Notwithſtanding which, and the length of the meditation likewiſe, it is not chargeable either with tediouſneſs, or tautology. But there is a great and ſurpriſing variety, and the attention of the reader is kept up from the beginning to the end.

Indeed the variety is ſuch, that it is ſomewhat difficult to make a ſummary of its contents, or repreſent in brief the ſeveral thoughts, with which it is filled. However it may in general be ſaid, that the Pſalmiſt often profeſſeth the regard he had for the divine law: and he aims to recommend to others the ſerious and diligent ſtudy of it, and a ſincere and conſtant practice of all its precepts, as the only way to true bleſſedneſs. He declares the great and frequent experience he had of ſupport and comfort from it in his diſtreſſes and afflictions. He vows perpetual obedience and conformity to it, notwithſtanding the diſcouragements he might meet with from the world about him, and the multitude, or the greatneſs of tranſgreſſors. He prays alſo for farther inſtruction in God's word, and help to keep it to the end. The pſalm is ſuited to comfort the dejected, to aſſiſt thoſe who aim at the greateſt perfection in virtue, to quicken the ſlothful and indolent, and to awaken ſinners, and reclaim them from their wanderings.

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The words of the text are more eſpecially adapted to ſome of the laſt mentioned caſes.

In the preceding verſe he declares, that he had *thought on his ways:* the reſult of which was, that he was thereby diſpoſed and enabled to amend them: and *I turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies.* He adds here a very happy and commendable circumſtance of that converſion, or alteration for the better: it was ſpeedy, and immediate. *I made haſte, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments,*

Having lately explained and recommended to you the duty of conſideration, or *thinking on our ways:* I now intend to recommend the imitation of the Pſalmiſt in this circumſtance, ſpeedineſs of amendment, wherever any thing has been amiſs. The want of which is, probably, one of the moſt common failings, which men are incident to. There are few, or none, but have ſome convictions of the evil of ſin, and ſome perception and perſuaſion of the excellence and neceſſity of real holineſs. They are aware, that ſin, unrepented of, muſt be of fatal conſequence: and that without holineſs no man can attain to the happineſs of a future ſtate. They intend therefore, and hope, to be truly holy in time. They would not die in ſin, nor continue in it always. No, they propoſe to repent of it, and forſake it. They deſign to humble themſelves greatly for all their tranſgreſſions, and to turn themſelves from them to a ſincere obedience to all God's commandments. But the time for putting theſe reſolutions in practice is not yet come, and they hope, it may be well done hereafter. This is very different from the example in the text. Which that all may be diſpoſed to follow and imitate,

I. I will in the firſt place mention ſome conſiderations, ſhewing the evil of delays in the things of religion.

II. I will conſider thoſe pleas and excuſes, which ſome make for delaying to reform, and their objections againſt immediate compliance with the commands of God.

III. I intend alſo at the end to offer ſome motives and arguments, tending to induce men to perform what is their duty.

I. In the firſt place I ſhall mention ſome conſiderations, ſhewing the evil of delays in the things of religion.

1. A ſinner's delaying repentance and amendment is an act of great imprudence, and ſuch as men are not ordinarily guilty of in other matters.

It is, I ſay, great imprudence, to delay to reform; becauſe it is a thing of the utmoſt importance, upon which depend our

everlaſting concerns, our happineſs or miſery in another ſtate. Is not the condition of an habitual ſinner extremely hazardous? Every one muſt own, that whilſt a man is in any evil courſe, allowed of and indulged, he is under the diſpleaſure of God. And if he die in that ſtate and courſe, he is miſerable beyond redreſs. The only way of averting the diſpleaſure of God, and eſcaping future miſery, is that of ſincere repentance. And how imprudent muſt it be, to defer that a moment? Should not every diſcreet and thoughtful perſon deſire to be in a ſafe condition, rather than in a ſtate of great danger?

Should we not then be all ready to embrace the pardoning mercy of God, now offered to us, by confeſſing and forſaking our ſins, as he requires? He will, then, *receive us graciouſly, and love us freely*, Hoſ. xiv. 2, 4.

2. We ought ſeriouſly to conſider the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of life. Can it be reaſonable, to defer a thing, which we own ought to be done: when we are not certain, that we ſhall have another opportunity of doing it? For we cannot depend upon to morrow, not knowing what the preſent day may bring forth. All do not arrive at old age, or any other of the advanced periods of life. Numberleſs are the dangers, to which we are expoſed. And the ſtrongeſt and moſt healthy may be taken off by ſudden accidents.

Suppoſe, death to make gradual approaches. Yet we are not certain, what pains, what indiſpoſitions they are, that ſhall bring on the diſſolution of ſoul and body. They may be ſuch, as ſhall immediately and utterly unqualify us for ſettling any of our affairs relating to this life, or making any preparations for another. How inconvenient then, how unſafe, how unwiſe muſt it be, to defer this important concern to a diſtant, unknown and uncertain futurity!

3. You defer repenting and giving up yourſelf to God for the preſent, in hopes of doing ſo hereafter. But repentance will be more unlikely hereafter than now.

There cannot, I apprehend, be any reaſon to think, it ſhould be more likely in ſome future time, than the preſent. But there are many reaſons to ſuppoſe the contrary.

You are not ſure of having ſuch calls to repentance, as you now have, even ſuppoſing the continuance of life. You now enjoy means of virtue and holineſs: and earneſt and frequent calls and invitations are made to you. But it may not be always ſo. Your worldly affairs may place you in ſome other ſituation, where the like means are not to be had, which are

now

now afforded you. Or, if the principles of religion do not now make a deep and abiding impreſſion upon your minds, you may be prevailed upon by ſome worldly conſiderations, to forſake and abandon the ordinances of divine worſhip, and all the uſual means of awakening, reforming, and reclaiming ſinners. For theſe and other the like reaſons the ſcripture ſpeaks of *an accepted time*, and a *day of ſalvation*, Iſ. xlix. 8. which it is of importance to improve, and very dangerous to neglect, 2 Cor. vi. 2.

If the ordinary means of holineſs and ſalvation are continued, what reaſon is there to think, that you ſhould be at any time hereafter better diſpoſed to improve them, than you are now? Is there not rather a great deal of reaſon to fear, leſt the heart ſhould contract ſome hardneſs by a long continuance in ſin? And if reaſonable and forcible arguments do not now ſway and prevail, they will be ſo far from influencing more hereafter, that they will affect much leſs than at preſent. Beſides, by delaying and deferring you contract a habit of delaying, and do it with leſs remorſe. Your firſt put-offs and excuſes, perhaps, are not made without a good deal of uneaſineſs: and you are almoſt aſhamed, or even confounded, when you make them: and your heart afterwards ſmites you for it. But having time after time excuſed and deferred compliance with the reaſonable demands that have been made of you: you become more aſſured and confident; and ſuch demands are for the future put off with little or no ſcruple, or concern of mind.

Moreover, it is a vain thing, to imagine, that you may outlive temptations: and that the time may come, when there ſhall be no longer any impediments or obſtructions of repentance and amendment. For there always will be temptations, ſuited to every age of life: which will have a powerful influence upon thoſe, who are not fully devoted to God, and have not attained to the government of their paſſions. If ſenſual pleaſure be a bait, that ſeduces and enſnares men in the early days of life: riches, and honour and preferment are as taking with men of worldly minds, in the more advanced, and the very lateſt periods of life.

4. Late repentance, ſuppoſing it to be ſincere, and available, and accepted of God, muſt be very bitter and ſorrowful.

It cannot be otherwiſe. For you will have little or nothing to comfort you. And you will have a great number, and a long courſe of tranſgreſſions and neglects, to reflect upon with grief and concern. It will be very grievous to recollect many

inſtances of ingratitude to God, who has been very good and gracious to you, who would not think of him, or pay a juſt regard to his reaſonable and holy laws and commandments. You will, then, ſeverely blame and condemn yourſelves for acting contrary to conviction, and for refuſing to hearken to former preſſing and friendly calls and invitations. You will be filled with the utmoſt concern, to think, how you have multiplied tranſgreſſions, and perſiſted therein: thereby offending God, and perhaps grieving men, whoſe comfort and happineſs ſhould have been dear to you. And it is well, if you have not alſo the ſad and bitter reflection to make, that by your ſins, ſome of them more eſpecially, you have been the means of miſleading ſome of your fellow-creatures, and cauſing them to fall and miſcarry, and that finally, and for ever.

5. But late repentance is ſeldom ſincere.

I do not ſay, that it is never ſincere. But there is too much reaſon to think, it is ſeldom ſo. The confeſſions and lamentations of men in ſickneſs, and in viſible danger of death, appear rather forced and unavoidable, than free and voluntary. And very often, when the danger is over, and health and ſafety are reſtored, and the temptions of life return with their uſual force; men ſhew their repentance was not unfeigned and effectual, by returning to their former evil courſes, and by being again entangled and overcome by this world, and the ſnares of it, as before.

6. Conſequently, late repentance muſt be very uncomfortable.

For though it ſhould be ſincere, and accepted of God, you cannot ordinarily have a full and ſatisfactory perſuaſion of it in your minds. Some hope, poſſibly, you may entertain: but it will be weak and languid: ſomewhat between hope and deſpair, a ſad mixture of doubt and fear, whether this late humiliation will be accepted, or not. And foraſmuch as you have not now an opportunity of approving to yourſelves, or others, the truth of your repentance by future acts of ſteady obedience, and that in time of temptation, you muſt go out of the world without that aſſured hope and expectation of a better life, and the heavenly happineſs, which is very deſirable, and neceſſary to give peace in the hour of death.

Theſe conſiderations ſhew the folly and danger of delaying repentance.††

†† If any find this ſermon too long for a ſingle reading, here is a proper pauſe.

II. I would

II. I would now conſider the pleas and excuſes, which ſome make for delaying to reform, and their objections againſt immediate compliance with the commands of God, and againſt forming a preſent reſolution to be immediately religious.

1. Some think with themſelves, and are apt to plead, that a life of ſtrict virtue and ſerious religion is unpleaſant, ſad and melancholy: depriving men of the pleaſures and entertainments of life, and of much worldly gain and profit, which they might otherwiſe make.

To this I anſwer two things.

1.) Allowing the truth of all this, it is not a good and reaſonable ground of deferring to be really good and virtuous, and ſecuring the happineſs of a future life: becauſe things earthly and temporal are not to be compared with things heavenly and eternal. Theſe laſt are greatly ſuperior and preferable in real excellence, juſt value, and length of duration. And therefore, if the poſſeſſions and enjoyments of this world are inconſiſtent and incompatible with heavenly treaſures and enjoyments; they may be reaſonably quitted and reſigned for the ſake of theſe. If both were propoſed and ſet before us: but one, certainly, without the other: there could be no doubt or heſitation, which ſhould be choſen and preferred. Let the path of virtue be ever ſo thorny, ſtrait and difficult: if it lead to eternal life, we ſhould reſolve to enter on it, and perſiſt in it. The reward at the end will crown all our labours, and make full recompenſe for all our ſelf-denial and patience.

2.) But, ſecondly, this is not altogether true. Men have no reaſon to be ſhy of the paths of virtue, as ſad, gloomy and melancholy. Many are the teſtimonies, which wiſe and good men, who have made trial, have born in favour of virtue and real goodneſs. Solomon recommending to men true wiſdom, and the ways ſhe preſcribes and teaches, ſays: *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 16, 17.

Put the caſe of the moſt proſperous ſinner, and the moſt afflicted ſaint, and compare them together. The former will ſcarce have the advantage, as to this preſent life.

It ſhould not be overlooked, nor forgotten, that religion does not deprive men of any of the innocent enjoyments of life, or of any lawful gain and worldly advantage. In the way of virtue many good men find a large ſhare of theſe

things. And whatever they poſſeſs, they enjoy it, without the ſting of guilty reflections, and the remorſe of unrighteouſneſs and oppreſſion. And if at any time, in the courſe of things, they are called to reſign any earthly advantages; their religious principles and virtuous diſpoſitions enable them to do it, without regret, and ſupport them under ſuch loſſes.

It muſt be obvious to all, that the end of ſuch is preferable to that of other men, which is a thing of no ſmall moment. This the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of with the fulleſt aſſurance, and calls upon all men to take notice of it: *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace,* Pſ. xxxvii. 37.

They have alſo many comforts in the way. They have a delightful communion with God in devout exerciſes of the mind, in prayer and praiſe, performed in a ſpiritual manner, accompanied with humility, gratitude; truſt in the divine care and providence, and reſignation to his will. They have pleaſure in the perſuaſion of the divine approbation and acceptance, and the hope of a fuller participation of his likeneſs, and everlaſting felicity in his preſence. And do you not think, the fellowſhip of ſaints may be as comfortable as that of ſinners? or that the converſation of wiſe and virtuous men is as pleaſing, yea more delightful and entertaining, as well as more edifying, than the ſociety of the wicked and profane, or thoſe who have no ſenſe of religion, and mind the affairs of this world only?

Moreover, the way of virtue will grow more and more eaſy, pleaſant and delightful: and that eſpecially, as virtuous habits ſtrengthen and improve. This well deſerves the obſervation of thoſe, who are diſcouraged by diſadvantageous apprehenſions concerning the way of obedience to God's commandments.

Once more, religion, and conformity to its rules and precepts, afford ſupport and comfort under the troubles and afflictions of this life, from which none are exempted: as David ſays at ver. 165 of this pſalm: *Great peace have they that love thy law. And nothing ſhall offend them.*

Upon the whole then, good men, who live in the fear of God all their days, who are upright and conſcientious, ſerious and truly religious, being conſcious of their integrity, and perſuaded of the divine favour, and having hopes of a future recompenſe, have much comfort both in life, and in death:

and

and their way and their condition are preferable to thoſe of other men.

2. Another plea and excuſe made by ſome is to this purpoſe: we do not intend by any means to perſiſt in ſin always: we fully purpoſe and hope to repent of, and forſake it, before we die. And we have ſuch perſuaſion of the grace and mercy of God, that we believe, he will accept of and pardon us, though it be ever ſo late.

But this plea has been conſidered and confuted already, in a great meaſure, under the firſt head, where we ſhewed the uncertainty and unlikelihood of repentance, propoſed to be made ſome time hereafter, and conſequently the folly and danger of deferring it, and neglecting the preſent opportunity. With regard to the other part of this plea, the ground of delaying, here inſiſted upon, *the grace and mercy of God*, I now obſerve theſe following things.

1.) That this way of arguing is extremely diſingenuous. Becauſe God is good and merciful, even to ſinners, when they return to him; you encourage yourſelf in an evil way, and preſume to try the utmoſt of divine patience and mercy: and, as it were, reſolve, at the leaſt, that you will allow yourſelves, for a long courſe of time, to multiply tranſgreſſions of his laws, and offences againſt him. Nor do you think of forſaking thoſe ways that are contrary to his will, and diſpleaſing to him, till near the end of life: when health and ſtrength will be impaired by age, or ſickneſs, or accidents: and you are as unfit for the ſervice of God, as of man, and the enjoyments of life have loſt all their reliſh. Is not this very diſingenuous? a thought unworthy of a rational being?

2.) With regard to the extent of the divine mercy, and the hope of ſharing in it upon the lateſt repentance, ſeveral things may be obſerved.

The mercy of God is certainly very great. Nor does it become us to ſet limits to it. It may be extended to ſome very late, if ſincere penitents. We dare not deny, that whenſoever ſinners forſake the evil of their ways and their doings, he will have mercy upon them, accept them, and pardon them. Nevertheleſs none are in more danger of being excluded, than thoſe, who in the early days of life are favoured with frequent and earneſt calls and invitations, and withſtand them. And there are in ſcripture ſome declarations and threatenings, which are very awful, and affecting.

ing. You know, that a peremptory ſentence paſſed upon the whole congregation of the people of Iſrael, who often repeated their tranſgreſſions. *Becauſe*, ſaid the Lord, *all thoſe men, which have ſeen my glory and my miracles, which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderneſs, and have tempted me now theſe ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice: ſurely they ſhall not ſee the land, which I promiſed unto their fathers*, Numb. xiv. 22, 23. Which event is improved both by the Pſalmiſt, and the Apoſtle in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, as a warning to men, not to provoke the Divine Being by long delays, and repeated acts of diſobedience, and to improve the preſent opportunity, ſaying: *To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation*, Pſ. xcv. 7, 8. Heb. iii. and iv. And men are directed by one of the prophets, in this manner: *Seek the Lord, while he may be found. Call ye upon him, while he is near*, Iſ. lv. 6. And very moving are the warnings and expoſtulations of Wiſdom in the book of Proverbs: *How long, ye ſimple ones, will ye love ſimplicity,... and fools hate knowledge... Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed: I have ſtretched out my hands, but no man regarded: but ye have ſet at naught all my counſel, and would none of my reproof: I alſo will laugh at your calamity, and will mock, when your fear cometh... Then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer. They ſhall ſeek me early*; that is, when diſtreſſes and calamities have befallen them; *but they ſhall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not chooſe the fear of the Lord*, Prov. i. 23—29.

As for the repentance and acceptance of the penitent thief, we do not know, when he repented. The crime, for which he ſuffered, may have been committed by him, and repented of, ſome while before. Suppoſing his repentance to be very late, and very ſudden, on the day of his death only: his caſe is altogether ſingular, on account of his ſuffering with Jeſus. You know likewiſe, that the other malefactor repented not, even then. Moreover the penitent gave extraordinary proofs of the ſincerity of his repentance: under the pains of crucifixion acknowledging the juſtice of the puniſhment he underwent, profeſſing faith in Jeſus, and praying to him, in the time of his loweſt abaſement, when almoſt all the world rejected him, and the diſciples themſelves failed, through the weakneſs of their faith. Above all it ſhould be conſidered, that there is a great difference between his caſe and theirs, who live under the goſpel

goſpel diſpenſation. He had not in early life ſuch inſtructions, ſuch warnings, ſuch calls and invitations, as you have had.

The parable of the labourers hired into the vineyard, at the third, ſixth, ninth, and eleventh hours of the day, does not relate to the ages of man's life: but rather repreſents the diſpenſations of Divine Providence in the ſeveral ages of the world. They who were hired at the eleventh hour are the Gentiles, who had been long without the benefit of revelation. Therefore when aſked, *Why ſtand ye here all the day idle? they ſay, becauſe no man hath hired us*, Matt. xx. 1—16. which ſhews, that the doctrine of this parable cannot countenance delays in things of religion: or encourage thoſe to expect particular calls and invitations in old age, who have been favoured with ſuch advantages, and neglected them, in the time of their youth.

3. Once more, ſome may ſay: we are backward now, in the time of our youth, and the early days of life, to enter upon the ways of religion and virtue: becauſe we fear, we ſhall not perſevere. And if we ſhould finally fall away, our guilt would be increaſed.

To which I anſwer: you are in the right to be ſenſible of your own weakneſs, and the difficulties of a religious courſe of life. For there are difficulties therein. It is a great undertaking, and ſhould be entered upon with mature conſideration. Nevertheleſs, you have no good reaſon to defer, or heſitate in your choice. If you are ſerious and ſincere in the undertaking, your progreſs and perſeverance may be reckoned very likely and hopeful.

They who ſet out in the way of religion, with a mixture of worldly views and expectations, may well fall away, if *tribulation, or perſecution, ariſeth becauſe of the word*, Matt. xiii. 21. But they who have a true principle of virtue, will hold out to the end. *They went out from us*, ſays St. John, *but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us. But they went out, that they might be made manifeſt, that they were not all of us*, 1 John ii. 19.

Obſerve the hiſtory of the Old and New Teſtament. And I preſume, you will ſcarce find any inſtances of total apoſtaſy in men who were once ſincerely good, but many examples of early and perſevering piety. Abraham immediately obeyed the call of God, and went out, not knowing whither

whither he went. And he continued to give frequent proofs of a ſtrong and lively faith. Iſaac and Jacob walked with God all their days. Joſeph was an example of early and conſtant virtue; both in proſperity, and adverſity. Moſes, as ſoon *as he came to years* of diſcretion, *refuſed to be called the ſon of Pharaoh's daughter: chooſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin, which are but for a ſeaſon*, Heb. xi. 23—26. Nor did he ever repent of that choice. Samuel was early dedicated to God, and was eminent for wiſdom and piety all his days to old age. Of Obadiah, chief miniſter to king Ahab, we are informed that he *feared the Lord greatly*, 1 Kings xviii. 3. And we know alſo, that he *feared the Lord from his youth*, ver. 12. I might mention Daniel, the three young men his companions, who perſevered, notwithſtanding great trials: and others, enrolled in the catalogue of worthies, in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, and elſewhere: famous not for one act of faith only, however eminent and diſtinguiſhed, but for a courſe of ſteady virtue and obedience.

If in the New Teſtament we meet with ſome, who believed and followed Jeſus for a time, and afterwards *went back, and walked no more with him*, John vi. 66. it appears evidently, that they went not upon a good foundation at the beginning: but came to Chriſt with worldly views and expectations. And if it be ſaid of Simon Magus, that he *believed*, Acts viii. 13. we know that he never was ſincere: *his heart was not right in the ſight of God*, ver. 21. At the ſame time, there were churches, or ſocieties of men, the greater part of which were faithful, and perſevered under many difficulties and diſcouragements. The apoſtles of Chriſt were for the moſt part, from the beginning, plain, honeſt, upright men. And when he called them, they obeyed without delay. And though they had their failings, one only was loſt. The reſt would not go away: and were, upon the whole, and to the end, an honour to him, and their profeſſion: being perſuaded, that he *had the words of eternal life*, John vi. 68.

You have no reaſon therefore, to be diſheartened. *By taking heed to God's word, the young may cleanſe their way*, Pſ. cxix. and, always keep themſelves pure from the pollutions of an evil world. With the uſe of the appointed means, the ſpiritual life, once begun, will be maintained. And if you watch, and pray, as Chriſt has directed; you ſhall be

be preſerved from great temptations, or ſhall be victorious therein.

III. Let me now propoſe to you ſome motives and arguments, inducing to early piety, and immediate compliance with the gracious calls of God.

1. The whole of our time ought to be employed in the ſervice of God. Nor can we in any part of life knowingly and willingly tranſgreſs any of God's commandments, without contracting guilt. We ought therefore, as ſoon as we are arrived at any maturity of reaſon and underſtanding, to give up ourſelves to God, determining to obey all his laws, and to decline every evil thing. And if we are ſenſible of any acts of diſobedience, already done, they ſhould be repented of, and every ſin forſaken. The reaſon of things teaches this.

2. The word of God teaches the ſame. Addreſſes are there made to the young, as well as to others. The Jewiſh people were commanded to *teach their children diligently* the divine laws that had been delivered to them. The deſign of Solomon in his collection of wiſe maxims was to *give ſubtilty to the ſimple, to the young man knowledge and underſtanding*, Prov. i. 4. And children are to be *trained up in the way they ſhould go*, ch. xxii. 6. How juſt is that admonition! *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay: I have no pleaſure in them*, Ecc. xii. 1. And, *Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might. For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither thou goeſt*, ch. ix. 10.

All which ſhews, that we do not ſatisfy the law of God, nor anſwer the end of our being, by ſome acts of religion near the end of life: but we ought to be truly religious, and ſerve God all the days of our life on earth. We ſhould not, then, content ourſelves with a deſign to be religious hereafter, but reſolve to be ſo now.

3. Conſider, how gracious, how affectionate and compaſſionate are the calls and invitations of God to ſinful men. Says Wiſdom: *How long ye ſimple ones, will ye love ſimplicity? and the ſcorners delight in their ſcorning, and fools hate knowledge! Turn ye at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my ſpirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you*, Prov. i. 22, 23. And ſays God himſelf by his prophets: *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways. For why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael!* Ezek.

xxxiii.

xxxiii. 11. And our Lord in his preaching: *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye ſhall find reſt for your ſouls. For my yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light.* Matt. xi. 28—30. And in his ſtate of exaltation: *Behold, I ſtand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will ſup with him, and he with me,* Rev. iii. 20.

How moving, how affecting is this concern for us! And ſhall any of us reſiſt, and grieve the good ſpirit of God, and ſin againſt our own ſouls?

4. Conſider therefore, farther, that by an early dedication of yourſelves to God, and ſerious piety from the beginning, you will prevent a great deal of ſin, which you might otherwiſe be guilty of, and a great deal of ſorrow and vexation, which that would occaſion either here, or hereafter, in this world, or another.

5. If you begin to be religious in the early part of life, you will, probably, be uſeful in the world, and be the cauſe of much good, both temporal and ſpiritual, to many perſons. You will promote the happineſs of men by kind offices. You may ſtrengthen, encourage, and edify ſome good men: and may reclaim ſome ſinners by your counſel and example.

6. Early, and conſtant, and perſevering piety is very honourable. It is to the advantage of Mnaſon, that he is called *an old diſciple*, Acts xxii. 16. St. Paul ſpeaks honourably of ſome, who *were in Chriſt before him*, Rom. xvi. 7. He humbles and abaſes himſelf, when he ſays: *And laſt of all he was ſeen of me, as of one born out of due time,* 1 Cor. xv. 8. And the *firſt fruits* of any place *unto Chriſt*, Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16, they and theirs, are ſometimes particularly mentioned by him in his epiſtles, and affectionately recommended to the ſpecial regard of others.

7. The coming to a full determination in this point, and turning our feet without delay to God's commandments, will contribute to the comfort and peace of our minds. For we are then fitted for life, and for death: and prepared for all the events of this variable and inconſtant ſtate of things. It muſt be a great advantage, to know, and conſider this: to be able to view death, and all the evils of life, without terror, or much diſcompoſure of mind.

8. Laſtly,

8. Laſtly, they who give themſelves up to God in their youth, and ſerve him faithfully all their days, may hope for ſome diſtinguiſhing honour in the great day of recompenſe. Indeed ſome, who ſet out late, may out-go others, that began more early. They excel, it may be, in perſonal abilities and attainments: by which they are peculiarly qualified for important ſervices in the cauſe of God and religion. But uſually they who begin early, and perſevere to the end, will have the advantage.

And may theſe things be ſeriouſly attended to, and conſidered by all of us! Are we not grieved, that ſome things have been ſo long deferred? Let us not defer any longer. Let not this preſent exhortation be ſlighted, leſt we ſhould not have another. Felix and Druſilla once deſired to hear Paul of Chriſt's doctrine, and Felix trembled. But he deferred for that ſeaſon. And we do not know, that he trembled again: or ever gave Paul another opportunity of entering again upon the like argument, Acts xxiv. 24—26.

Let us then beg of God, *to incline our hearts to his teſtimonies:* and to *teach us his ſtatutes, that we may keep them unto the end.*

## SERMON III.

### THE SEVERAL BRANCHES OF MORAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

### MICAH vi. 8.

*He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

In the preceding verſes a very important queſtion is propoſed: *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the moſt high God?* It is anſwered in the words of the text. What God chiefly requires of men is, that they *do juſtly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with him.*

This is the immediate occaſion of the words. But I preſume it may be uſeful to take a more extenſive and diſtinct view of the preceding context.

The

The chapter begins with theſe words: *Hear ye now, what the Lord ſaith. Ariſe, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controverſy, and ye ſtrong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controverſy with his people, and he will plead with Iſrael,* Micah vi. 1, 2.

It is not unuſual for God to beſpeak the attention of inanimate creatures, and appeal to them for the juſtice of his proceedings, more emphatically to repreſent the ſtupidity and thoughtleſſneſs of men. So by Moſes of old: *I call heaven and earth to witneſs againſt you this day. Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will ſpeak: hear, O earth, the words of my mouth,* Deut. iv. 26.—xxxii. 1. So alſo by later prophets: *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. For the Lord has ſpoken: I have nouriſhed up children, and they have rebelled againſt me,* Iſ. i. 2. ſee alſo Ezek. vi. 2, 3.

It follows in the third verſe of this chapter: *O my people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? Teſtify againſt me.* God condeſcends by the prophet, to expoſtulate with the people of Iſrael. And he gives them leave to come, and make their complaints againſt him, if they had any: and ſhew their reaſons, if they could aſſign any, why they had forſaken him, neglected his laws, and gone after ſtrange gods.

In Jeremiah are ſome appeals to the Jewiſh people very much reſembling this: *Thus ſaith the Lord: what iniquity have your father's found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?* Jer. ii. 5. Again, *Have I been a wilderneſs unto Iſrael, a land of darkneſs?* ver. 31.

Ver. 4. *For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the houſe of ſervants, and I ſent before thee Moſes, and Aaron, and Miriam.*

They had no injuries, or neglects, to complain of. And farther, God reminds them of the benefits he had beſtowed upon them, particularly their remarkable deliverance from the bondage of Egypt: when they were brought out thence, and were formed into a diſtinct nation, and made a great people.

Ver. 5. *Remember now, what Balak, king of Moab conſulted, and what Balaam, the ſon of Beor anſwered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteouſneſs of the Lord.* 'Remember alſo the conſultations and deſigns of Balak againſt 'you,

'you, and how Balaam was conſtrained to bleſs, inſtead of 'pronouncing a curſe upon you: and that though you were 'then brought into an heinous tranſgreſſion, you were not 'utterly cut off and deſtroyed: but I bore with you, and 'preſerved you, until I had brought you into the land of 'Canaan, and given you reſt there. Recollect theſe things, 'that you may be convinced of my righteouſneſs and equity, 'my mercy and compaſſion, my fidelity and veracity, in 'fulfilling the promiſes I had made, and that I have not 'failed to do you good. You will then perceive, that you 'have no juſt ground of complaint againſt me: and that 'if ſome deſirable bleſſings are withheld, it cannot be owing 'to want of goodneſs in me, but it muſt be rather owing to 'ſome failure of duty in you: which is the cauſe of the evils 'you ſuffer, and the ground of the controverſy between us.'

Since the deliverance from the deſigns of Balak is here ſo particularly mentioned, as a very remarkable, and eminent proof of the divine regard; it may be worth while to obſerve, that elſewhere it is alſo mentioned in a very ſpecial manner among other mercies vouchſafed this people in the wilderneſs. *They hired againſt thee Balaam the ſon of Beor, of Pethor, in Meſopotamia, to curſe thee. Nevertheleſs the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam: but the Lord thy God turned the curſe into a bleſſing unto thee, becauſe the Lord thy God loved thee,* Deut. xxiii. 4, 5. And in another place: *Then Balak the ſon of Zippor king of Moab aroſe and warred againſt Iſrael: and ſent, and called Balaam the ſon of Beor, to curſe you. But I would not hearken unto Balaam. Therefore he bleſſed you ſtill. So I delivered you out of his hand,* Joſh. xxiv. 9, 10.

Then, at the ſixth verſe of this chapter we have theſe words: *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the moſt high God.*

After the foregoing pathetic expoſtulation with the Jewiſh people, and the reproof of their ingratitude, they are introduced by the prophet, as anxiouſly inquiſitive, how they might appeaſe the divine pleaſure, avert his judgments, and obtain favour and acceptance. If it were requiſite, they would bring the moſt numerous, and the moſt coſtly offerings.

*Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?* 'Will God accept now of the ordinary ſacrifices,

'ſuch as we offer upon other occaſions, and are required 'in his law?'

Ver. 7. *Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil?* 'Or does he expect a 'more coſtly offering, ſuch as our kings have ſometimes 'made upon extraordinary occaſions? We are ready, if 'that will be accepted, to offer up thouſands of rams, and 'to add in proportion meat-offerings, prepared with oil, 'though it would amount to a very great quantity.'

*Shall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?* 'Or ſhall we offer up our 'own children, as ſome do to appeaſe their deities? We 'are not averſe even to this, though the firſt-born ſhould be 'demanded.'

The anſwer is in the text: *He has ſhewed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* 'This is the moſt acceptable ſervice to God. This 'is preferable to all the ſacrifices before-mentioned. Let 'but theſe things be reſolved upon and performed, and 'the controverſy is removed: the difference is recon-'ciled and made up: the wrath of God is appeaſed, and 'he will ſhew you favour, and bleſs and proſper you.'

This matter is alſo farther illuſtrated in the remaining part of the chapter. *Are there yet the treaſures of wickedneſs in the houſe of the wicked, and the ſcant meaſure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and the bag of deceitful weights?* ver. 10, 11. 'It is in vain to think, I 'ſhould be reconciled to thoſe who continue to practiſe fraud 'and injuſtice: or that I ſhould approve of and bleſs thoſe, 'who perſiſt in their idolatrous worſhip.' And thus the chapter concludes: *For the ſtatutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the houſe of Ahab. And ye walk in their counſels, that I ſhould make thee a deſolation, and the inhabitants thereof a reproach,* ver. 16. That is, the ordinances and practices of Omri and Ahab, two of the moſt wicked of their kings, were ſtill obſerved and followed. And it is plainly declared, that if they perſiſted therein, their ruin was inevitable.

Such is the context: and in this way, I think, the coherence appears clear and eaſy.

I now proceed to explain the words of the text. After which I ſhall add a reflection or two by way of application, and conclude.

I. I begin

I. I begin with a diſtinct explication of the ſeveral particulars in the text.

*He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good.* This ſome underſtand, as if the prophet ſaid: *I will ſhew you,* or *God will now ſhew you by me,* giving the following anſwer to your inquiry.

Others underſtand the original expreſſion exactly, as here rendered in our tranſlation: *He hath ſhewed thee, O man.* Whoever amongſt you make this inquiry, if you think and conſider, may perceive, that God has already taught you, what are the ſervices he requires, and what things are the moſt acceptable to him. He teaches you by your own reaſon, if you will uſe it. He has alſo ſhewed you this in his word, in the law, and in all the revelations he has made unto you.

So in the law of Moſes: *And now, Iſrael, what does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to ſerve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul: to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his ſtatutes, which I command thee this day, for thy good,* Deut. x. 12, 13. Again: *For this commandment, which I command thee this day: it is not hidden from thee, neither is it afar off. It is not in heaven, that thou ſhouldſt ſay: who ſhall go up to heaven for us, and bring it to us? . . . But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayeſt do it. See I have ſet before thee life and death,* ch. xxx. 11, 12.

And the particulars, here inſiſted on, are but the ſum and ſubſtance of the ten laws, or precepts, delivered with ſo much ſolemnity at mount Sinai.

And many of the prophets ſpeak in perfect agreement the ſame with what is here ſaid in Micah. So in Iſaiah: *Waſh ye, make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well. Seek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed. . . . Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord. Though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be white as ſnow: though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool,* If. i. 16, 17. And in Hoſea: *I deſired mercy, and not ſacrifice: and the knowledge of the Lord more than burnt-offerings,* Hoſ. vi. 6.

Therefore what is here ſaid had been before, and often taught, and ſhewn to this people by reaſon, and by other prophets and meſſengers. But God now reminds them of it, and ſhews it them again by this prophet.

*He hath ſhewed thee what is good,* or right: what is in itſelf reaſonable and excellent, uſeful and profitable.

*He hath ſhewed thee, O man,* whoſoever thou art, that makeſt this inquiry, and art deſirous of ſatisfaction, *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?*

Theſe particulars need not to be much enlarged upon. You have often heard them diſcourſed of. A brief explication therefore of theſe words, reminding you of what you know already, will ſuffice.

The ſeveral branches of our duty are ſometimes reduced in ſcripture to the *love of God, and our neighbour.* At other times they are ranged under three general heads. St. Paul ſays: *The grace of God has appeared to all men, teaching us, that we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world,* Tit. ii. 12.

The order likewiſe, in which theſe general branches are mentioned, is varied. Our Lord ſays, that the love of God is the *firſt and great commandment.* And in the law of Moſes, written on two tables, the duties immediately reſpecting God are firſt placed. But in this text it is firſt ſaid, we ſhould *do juſtly, and love mercy:* then, *walk humbly with God.* And in the place juſt cited from Paul, *living godly* is mentioned laſt.

But the order is of little moment. For theſe ſeveral branches of duty can never be ſeparated. And our Saviour having ſaid, that *to love the Lord our God with all the heart and with all the ſoul is the firſt and great commandment,* preſently adds: *and the ſecond is like unto it: thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf,* Matt. xxii. 37—39. And St. John ſays: *He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath ſeen; how can he love God, whom he hath not ſeen? And this commandment have we from him: that he who loveth God, love his brother alſo,* 1 John iv. 20, 21.

The duty of ſobriety is not particularly mentioned in this text of Micah: as it is alſo omitted elſewhere, when our duty is ſummarily comprehended in the love of God and our neighbour. But it is always ſuppoſed or implied, though not expreſſly mentioned. For without it we cannot perform any part of worſhip and ſervice to God in a reaſonable and acceptable manner. And divers inſtances of intemperance are ſocial, and directly injurious to our neighbour:

bour: and others lead to unrighteouſneſs. A prevailing love of this world, an inordinate affection for earthly things, covetouſneſs and ambition, are inconſiſtent both with the love of God, and of our neighbour.

*What does the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly?* This comprehends every thing that is fair and equal between man and man, according to the relations they bear, or the obligations they are under to each other.

In this chapter, preſently after the text, God by his prophet reproves divers things contrary to this branch of duty: without amending of which unrighteous conduct, they could never hope to be accepted of him. *Are there yet the treaſures of wickedneſs in the houſe of the wicked, and the ſcant meaſure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have ſpoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.*

We are to be juſt in our dealings with men, without impoſing on their ignorance, or credulity by unfair artifices or falſehood.

As in our common traffic with men we are to obſerve truth in our words, ſo upon all other occaſions are we to regard the truth of things: not ſaying any thing falſly to the diſparagement of our neighbour, which would be as manifeſt an injuſtice, as the moſt injurious action.

We are alſo ſincerely to purpoſe and deſign what we promiſe: and ſhould to the utmoſt of our power endeavour to be as good as our word.

We are to be faithful in all the truſts repoſed in us, according to the tenour of them, and the will and intention of thoſe who confide in us.

We ſhould likewiſe diligently and prudently provide for thoſe who are under our care, and depend upon us: as we ought cheerfully and honeſtly to yield ſubjection, and obedience, and all fidelity to our ſuperiors and governors, who afford us maintenance, or protection and ſecurity.

It follows next, *and to love mercy*, or goodneſs, and beneficence. When the duty owing to our neighbour is ſummarily deſcribed by loving him, then both juſtice and mercy are ſummarily included in that one word. Here they are mentioned ſeparately, and diſtinctly: and in like manner elſewhere: *Therefore turn thee to thy God. Keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually*, Hoſ. xii. 6. Our Lord

 pronounceth,

pronounceth, a woe on the phariſees, who had omitted judgment, mercy, and faith, or fidelity.

Indeed, ſhewing mercy is doing no more to others, than what we in like circumſtances would that others ſhould do unto us.

However, it takes in ſeveral things, which do not immediately appear to be binding in point of ſtrict juſtice: as providing for, or relieving not only our own relatives, or friends, or ſuch as have laid us under obligations, but ſtrangers likewiſe, if we have power to do it.

Herein is included not only doing what men can ſtrictly claim of us, but ſomething more than that: ſome acts of kindneſs and beneficence: foregoing and quitting our right: and not exacting rigorouſly our whole due.

It includes the guiding and counſelling ſuch as are unexperienced, and ſetting out in the world: accommodating them out of our ſubſtance, that they may enlarge their dealings, and better ſecure a comfortable maintenance for themſelves and their families, and live with credit, and be uſeful in the world: giving time to thoſe who are indebted to us: ſpeaking favourably of other men, and not aggravating every inſtance of imprudence, or miſbehaviour, into an act of heinous, wilful and premeditated wickedneſs: pitying and helping thoſe who are in ſtraits, according to the beſt of our power: though their ſtraits are not entirely owing to unforeſeen accidents, or to the violence or unrighteouſneſs of others, but partly to their own indiſcretion, or negligence, or even extravagance.

It is alſo a part of mercy to extend our views of uſefulneſs, and to plead the cauſe of the injured and oppreſſed: and endeavour to deliver them out of the hands of ſuch as are mightier than they, who have greater power and influence, or more art and management, than moſt of their neighbours.

Theſe, and many other inſtances of mercy there are, which we may be called to. And to neglect, or omit them, when they are in our power, and we have an opportunity of being ſerviceable to the injured, is very unkind: it is unmerciful, it is not doing as we would be done unto.

When Job vindicates himſelf from the charges brought againſt him, he inſiſts not only upon his innocence, but alledges likewiſe inſtances of generoſity and uſefulneſs to others, *I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherleſs, and him*

*him that had none to help him. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. The cauſe which I knew not, I ſearched out. I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the ſpoil out of his teeth,* Job xxix. 12, 15, 16.

And you know, that there are many ſuch exhortations propounded to Chriſtians in the New Teſtament: that *every man ſhould look not on his own things only, but on thoſe of others alſo: that they ſhould rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep: that they ſhould bear one another's burdens, and ſo fulfil the law of Chriſt.*

But I ſhall not farther multiply precepts and directions of this kind, nor inſtance in any other caſes: which the courſe of things will preſent to us, and he who is of a merciful and generous diſpoſition will take notice of, and act accordingly. I ſhut up this article therefore with thoſe words of Iſaiah, containing a deſcription of the different temper and conduct of baſe and narrow, indeed wicked minds, and of ſuch as are truly generous, and public ſpirited. *For the vile perſon will ſpeak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practiſe hypocriſy, and to utter error againſt the Lord,* that is, to pronounce falſe judgments, which are contrary to the expreſs command of God in his law: *to make empty the ſoul of the hungry, and to cauſe the drink of the thirſty to fail. The inſtruments alſo of the churl are evil. He deviſeth wicked devices, to deſtroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy ſpeaketh right. But the liberal,* the merciful, the generous, the bountiful *man, deviſeth liberal things, and by liberal things ſhall he be eſtabliſhed,* Iſ. xxxii. 6—8.

The laſt thing in this text, ſaid to be required of men, is *to walk humbly with God:* or, as the Hebrew is, literally, *and to humble thyſelf to walk with thy God.* In the ancient Greek verſion, made before the coming of our Saviour, it is rendered: *and be ready to walk with thy God.* The meaning, I preſume, in the general, is: 'and to reſolve to obey 'all God's commandments, and to continue and perſevere 'therein always to the end of life.'

I ſhall briefly mention ſeveral particulars, comprehended in this article.

Firſt, it is to reſolve, to worſhip the true God, and him alone. In the text it is the Lord thy God: meaning the God that has made us, and preſerves us: the God that has dealt bountifully with us, who has ſupplied and provided for

us, who has helped and delivered us in times of danger and difficulty.

This, certainly, is one thing intended by the prophet: to engage the people of Iſrael, according to the commandment of the law, as well as the dictates of reaſon, to fear the Lord their God, and ſerve him only: even God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, who had brought them out of the houſe of ſervants, and had ever ſince conferred upon them many favours and benefits.

Secondly, it includes a reſpect to all God's commandments, and a readineſs to ſubmit to his authority in all things, without any exception.

Thirdly, this humbling ourſelves to walk with God, or walking humbly with the Lord our God, includes dependence on him, truſting in him, and committing ourſelves to him: believing, and hoping, that he will continue to protect and defend us, and afford us all thoſe things, which are needful and convenient.

Fourthly, it includes contentment with our ſtate, and worſhipping and ſerving God in a time of affliction and trouble, as well as in a day of eaſe and proſperity: bleſſing him not only when he gives, but alſo when he takes away: and acknowledging the wiſdom and the righteouſneſs of all his dealings with us.

This is implied in devoting ourſelves to his ſervice. Under the former particular I mentioned dependence upon God, and committing ourſelves to him. This contentment under afflictions, now mentioned, when they befall us, in the courſe of divine providence, is acting and exerciſing that dependence, which we have made a profeſſion of, and performing according to the engagements, we have entered into.

Fifthly, to walk with God includes continuance and perſeverance in the ſervice of God, and obedience to his holy laws and commandments, throughout the whole of our life, notwithſtanding the temptations we may meet with, and though others ſhould prove falſe to their engagements, and forſake the Lord their God.

Sixthly, it includes ſerving God with a lowly humble apprehenſion of ourſelves: conſidering the ſins we have been guilty of, the defects of our obedience, the imperfections of the ſervices we perform for the honour of his name, or the good of others: and that when we have acted according

according to the beſt of our ability, we have done no more than our duty, and what we were under many obligations to perform: and humbly and thankfully owning the goodneſs of God in the encouragements he has given us, and the promiſes he has made of accepting our ſincere obedience, and rewarding it greatly beyond its merit.

II. I ſhall now add a word or two by way of application, and conclude.

1. We perceive, that the holy obedience, required of us, is of great extent: comprehending juſtice, mercy, and piety, with the ſeveral branches of each. It can therefore be no very eaſy thing, to be truly religious. It muſt be a difficult, and an high attainment. We have need, as our Lord directs, to ſtrive, to exert ourſelves, and do our utmoſt, to *enter in at the ſtrait gate.* One came to our Lord, deſirous to know what he ſhould do, that *he might obtain eternal life*, and ſaying, that *he had kept all the commandments from his youth.* But Jeſus perceived, that *he lacked one thing*, Matt. xix. And the event ſhewed, that his heart was governed by an inordinate love of this preſent world: and that he was not diſpoſed to do all that is requiſite to ſecure riches in heaven. Let us conſider, and examine ourſelves, whether this be our caſe.

2. Let us ſeriouſly attend to this repreſentation of true religion, and remember, that the things here inſiſted on are of abſolute neceſſity.

There is no making up the controverſy between God and ſinful men, but by repentance and amendment, or a return to real, and univerſal virtue and piety.

The diſpleaſure of God is not to be appeaſed by coſtly oblations. But repent, and turn to the Lord with all the heart unfeignedly: break off every ſinful courſe: ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do well: ſeek judgment, love mercy, humble yourſelves before the Lord your God: and take upon you the obligation of his reaſonable and excellent laws and commandments: then he will receive you graciouſly, and love you freely. All your ſins ſhall be blotted out: they ſhall be as if they never were. They will be remembered againſt you no more.

And all this is of abſolute neceſſity; nothing elſe will avail for our acceptance. We cannot ſubſtitute any thing elſe in the room of true virtue and goodneſs. Long abſtinence, painful mortifications of the body at certain ſeaſons, will not ſuffice:

ſuffice: nor ſome ſhort tranſports of devotion, however warm and lively: nor any zeal for the externals of religion, or for the right faith, and for ſpreading the principles of religion in the world. Nothing but a regular courſe of ſincere and undiſſembled virtue in the ſeveral branches of righeouſneſs, mercy and piety, can recommend us to the favour and acceptance of a wiſe and holy God.

*Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high God? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body, for the ſin of my ſoul?*

Or, ſhall I faſt twice in the week, and pay tithes of all that I poſſeſs?

Shall I confeſs my ſins once, or twice, or every month in the year, to a perſon in holy orders, and ſubmit to all the bodily pains and penances he appoints?

Shall I increaſe the number and length of my prayers to a double, or treble proportion more than ordinary? and hear, or read over an abundance of ſermons, and other treatiſes of religion?

Shall I erect a coſtly and magnificent edifice, wherein men may meet, and unite together in the worſhip of the great God and King of the world?

The point is already reſolved. Natural reaſon and divine revelation agree in one and the ſame anſwer to this ſolicitous and important inquiry. *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?*

I have now explained the words of the text, and added an inference or two by way of reflection. But I propoſe to diſcourſe again upon this ſubject, and farther ſhew the nature and extent, the excellence and importance of virtue, or moral righteouſneſs.

SERMON

# SERMON IV.

## THE NATURE, EXCELLENCE, AND IMPORTANCE OF MORAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

MICAH vi. 8.

*He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

I HAVE already ſhewn the coherence, and diſtinctly explained the ſeveral particulars in the text. It will not be unſuitable to this portion of ſcripture, if we proceed to conſider, in a more general way, the nature, extent, and obligation of virtue. In doing this I ſhall obſerve the following method.

I. I will endeavour to ſhew the nature and extent of virtue, or moral righteouſneſs.

II. I ſhall ſhew the excellence and importance of virtue, or righteouſneſs and true holineſs.

III. After which I ſhall conclude with ſome inferences in the way of application.

But I do not intend a diſcourſe, or diſſertation upon this ſubject, containing abſtruſe and profound notions, for the entertainment of metaphyſical minds, and ſuch as have thought, or read much concerning theſe matters, and have penetrated far into the ſpeculative points of religion. But my intention is to explain this matter, ſo far as I am able, in a clear and intelligible way, for the ſake of meaner capacities, and ſuch as are but little acquainted with theſe points.

For one main reaſon of this deſign is, that I have been apprehenſive, that we, in the modern language of our ordinary diſcourſes, frequently uſing expreſſions not found in ſcripture, are not underſtood by all: and that, whereas we often lay a much greater ſtreſs upon ſome things than others, when theſe alſo are commanded by the Divine Being; the reaſon of this is not perceived, though ſuch conduct be perfectly agreeable to the ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament.

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My aim therefore is to ſet this matter in a clear light, in a few words, that we may be the better underſtood in our ordinary diſcourſes, without repeated explications of the phraſes and expreſſions made uſe of.

I. I begin with ſome obſervations concerning virtue, or moral righteouſneſs.

1. Morality always ſuppoſes rational, intelligent, and free beings. In order to any action being morally good or evil, it muſt be the act of a being capable of diſtinguiſhing things, and of chooſing or refuſing. Such a being, or agent, we ſuppoſe man to be. We perceive ourſelves to have the powers of thinking, underſtanding, reaſoning, chooſing or refuſing. And the ſcripture always ſuppoſeth theſe powers in man. God ſays to ſinful men by his prophets: *Repent and turn yourſelves from all your tranſgreſſions: ſo iniquity ſhall not be your ruin. Caſt away from you all your tranſgreſſions, whereby ye have tranſgreſſed, and make you a new heart, and a new ſpirit: 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*, Ezek. xviii. 30—32. And Moſes reminded the people, who had been long under his care, and to whom he had with divine authority delivered a ſyſtem of laws: *See, I have ſet before thee life and good, and death and evil.... I call heaven and earth to witneſs this day againſt you, that I have ſet before you life and death, bleſſing and curſing: therefore chooſe life, that thou mayeſt live*, Deut. xxx. 15—20. And our Lord ſaid to the Jews, his hearers: *Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life*, John v. 40.

2. The word, morality, is uſed in two ſenſes: the one more reſtrained, the other more comprehenſive. In the reſtrained ſenſe of the word are included ſobriety, juſtice, equity, goodneſs and mercy; or the duties more eſpecially reſpecting ourſelves, and other men, our neighbours. In the more enlarged and comprehenſive meaning of the word are included not only the duties juſt mentioned, but likewiſe the duties owing to God.

This comprehenſive ſenſe of theſe terms and expreſſions, morality, virtue, moral righteouſneſs, as including all the neceſſary duties of a rational being, I take to be the more proper ſenſe and meaning of the terms, as they are generally uſed by wiſe and knowing perſons.

I ſuppoſe this to be evident from theſe two conſiderations: firſt, that we often ſpeak of the moral perfections of God, as diſtinguiſhed

diſtinguiſhed from natural. And when we do ſo, by his moral perfections we mean every kind of perfection, that is virtuous and righteous, or the whole rectitude of the divine will. Secondly, when we ſpeak of moral righteouſneſs, or obedience to rules of moral virtue, as diſtinct from poſitive appointments, and a ritual, ceremonial righteouſneſs or holineſs; we muſt mean our duty to God, as well as to ourſelves and other men: or all virtue, and every duty, which has a foundation in the reaſon of things.

Theſe two conſiderations, I think, evidently ſhew, that this is a common ſenſe of the word. And as the love of God and our neighbour is comprehended in morality, or that which we call moral good, ſo the contrary is moral evil: living in the neglect of any duty toward God or man, or the tranſgreſſion of any reaſonable law or commandment, regulating and preſcribing ſuch duty.

The deſign of this obſervation is to ſhew the ſenſe of ſome terms and expreſſions made uſe of concerning this matter.

We are next to obſerve the nature of morality: or to ſhew, wherein moral good, moral righteouſneſs, or virtue conſiſts, and how it may be known and diſcerned.

3. The things, ſaid to be morally good, are ſuch as are fit and reaſonable in themſelves, according to the caſe and circumſtances, which any being is in, and the relations he bears to others. To mention ſome inſtances. It is, and appears to be, fit and reaſonable, that a rational and intelligent being ſhould preſerve the uſe and exerciſe of his rational powers, and not loſe the government of himſelf by exceſs and intemperance, or by any paſſions and affections, excited by external things, whether good or evil.

It is alſo fit and becoming, that rational creatures ſhould, according to their abilities, humbly praiſe and adore the author of their being: acknowledging the power, wiſdom and goodneſs, of which they ſee manifold proofs and traces in themſelves, and in all things around them: and that they ſhould be thankful to him for all his benefits, and fear and reverence him, and acquieſce in his diſpoſals.

It is likewiſe fit and reaſonable in itſelf, that theſe rational, intelligent beings ſhould bear good will and kind affection to one another: as they all ſhare in the like powers and benefits, and are all expoſed to the like caſualties, weakneſſes and wants, and are dependent upon each other.

All

All theſe things appear on the firſt view to be fit and reaſonable. Moreover moral good and evil are known by their tendencies. All the things juſt mentioned are beneficial, conducive to the perfection, and the happineſs of individuals and ſocieties. And the things contrary to them are, and appear to be evil, inaſmuch as they weaken thoſe who allow of them, and are detrimental to others around them.

We may here obſerve farther, that it is in itſelf fit and reaſonable, that God, the one eternal being, perfect and happy in himſelf, if he form a world, or worlds of beings, ſhould concern himſelf for them, provide for them, and over-rule and direct all things with wiſdom, righteouſneſs and goodneſs.

Thus then, virtue, or moral righteouſneſs, is, and appears to be, in itſelf fit and reaſonable, and has a tendency to promote the happineſs of particular beings, and of ſocieties.

4. This fitneſs and reaſonableneſs of things is itſelf an obligation: or lays an obligation upon every rational being, by whom it is perceived. For whatever is fit, reaſonable and equitable, muſt be right, and the contrary wrong. He therefore that does what is fit, reaſonable, and equitable, and which he diſcerns to be right, approves himſelf, and his conduct, and has ſatisfaction therein. He that does otherwiſe, knows he has done wrong: and, if he reflect, will condemn himſelf.

5. Beſide the forementioned obligation, (of intrinſic fitneſs and reaſonableneſs) there is another, ariſing from the will of God, the creator and the governor of the univerſe, and particularly of his rational creatures. Theſe fitneſſes of things, before-mentioned, are a rule of action to the Deity himſelf. And it muſt be his will, that the fitneſs, or reaſon of things ſhould be obſerved by his rational creatures: or that they ſhould do thoſe things, which are conducive to their own, and each other's welfare.

And when it is conſidered, that moral good is the will of God, and moral evil contrary to his will; even to the will of him who is ſupreme, and Lord of all; it is reaſonable to conclude, that he ſhould beſtow rewards or inflict puniſhments, either now immediately, or hereafter in ſome future time, upon thoſe who obſerve or neglect the reaſon of things and the welfare of their fellow-creatures: that is, who obey,

or

or tranſgreſs the law of nature: which is alſo the law of God, the author of nature.

6. Virtue, morality, or moral righteouſneſs, is a thing of great extent, comprehending every thing that is in itſelf fit and reaſonable: men's duty to God and to each other: the duties of every relation, and the due regulation of thoughts and affections, as well as outward actions.

For in the more ordinary and juſt ſenſe of the expreſſion, as before ſhewn, it takes in every thing that is fit and reaſonable: and therefore muſt include honourable ſentiments, as well as outward worſhip, and reverential expreſſions concerning the Deity. It requires likewiſe kind affections, as well as good offices to men. It comprehends not only ſtrict juſtice, but goodneſs, and mercy, and equity: yea forgiveneſs of injuries and offences, when acknowledged. For this alſo is fit in a world of creatures, that are weak and fallible, and often offend againſt each other, through miſtake, or paſſion.

This law of nature, or reaſon, does moreover teach repentance to all thoſe who offend. For, ſince virtue is right, as before ſhewn, he who has tranſgreſſed, and done what is wrong, muſt turn from his courſe, and amend it. It is the only way of becoming good, and of being accepted in the ſight of the holy, wiſe and impartial ſovereign and judge of all.

7. It is commonly ſaid of the law of nature, that it is of eternal obligation: but yet I would add, that every branch of moral righteouſneſs cannot be practiſed in every ſtate.

The law of reaſon, I ſay, is of eternal obligation: that is, ſuppoſing ſuch caſes and circumſtances, or beings to bear ſuch and ſuch relations to each other; ſuch and ſuch actions will be always obligatory. Suppoſing a world, in which there are parents and children, maſters and ſervants, rich and poor, ſome in proſperous, others in afflictive circumſtances, ſome governors, others governed, and a great variety of other circumſtances ſubſiſting: ſuch and ſuch a behaviour toward each other is fit and reaſonable. And though there be no ſuch beings, with thoſe ſeveral relations; yet it is true, that if there were ſuch beings, ſuch actions would be in themſelves fit and reaſonable. Nor can any authority diſſolve, and ſet aſide their obligation.

Thus theſe things are of everlaſting obligation. But when thoſe relations and circumſtances ceaſe, divers branches

branches of duty muſt ceaſe alſo. So in a future ſtate of recompenſe, for ſuch as have been truly and ſincerely good in this world, many branches of duty, neceſſary here, will ceaſe. Where there is perfect holineſs, and perfection of happineſs, there cannot be the exerciſe of forgiveneſs to offenders, nor of mercy to the miſerable. Nor will there be room for patience under afflictions, and ſuch like virtues which are neceſſary in this ſtate of frailty: though ſtill the love of God, and the love of each other, the great and eſſential virtues with branches ſuitable to a ſtate of glory and happineſs, will be always fit, and reaſonable, and incumbent upon every one.

8. The duties of moral obligation are diſcernible by rational beings, with a due exerciſe of their powers and faculties. For thoſe duties being founded in the powers and circumſtances of thoſe very beings themſelves, and their relations to each other, and being therefore fit and reaſonable in themſelves; they may be diſcerned by ſuch as exerciſe their reaſon, and attend to the nature, and circumſtances of things.

There may be perplexed caſes, when what is duty, what is beſt and fitteſt cannot be determined without ſome difficulty: and the evidence of what is right amounts to no more than probability, or is ſhort of certainty. But the general obligations of virtue, the great branches of duty toward God and men, are diſcernible by ſuch as think ſedately and maturely, as the importance of the thing deſerves.

It is reaſonable to think, it ſhould be ſo. And the Scriptures teach the ſame. For St. Paul ſays: *Becauſe that which may be known of God is manifeſt in them: for God has ſhewed it unto them.* He is ſpeaking of the heathens, who had not the benefit of revelation. *For the inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead. So that they are without excuſe: becauſe that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God: neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their fooliſh heart was darkened,* Rom. i. 19—21. And afterwards: *For when the gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, theſe having not the law are a law unto themſelves: who ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts, their*

*their conſciences alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing, or elſe excuſing one another*, ch. ii. 14, 15.

9. We now perceive the difference between moral precepts, and ritual, ceremonial ordinances and appointments. Moral precepts are fit and reaſonable in themſelves. They are always obligatory, and are diſcernible by reaſon. But none of thoſe properties belong to ritual, or ceremonial ordinances, of which there were many in the law of Moſes, concerning bodily purifications, certain attendances at Jeruſalem, numerous ſacrifices, and the like: and under the goſpel-diſpenſation, baptiſm and the euchariſt. To theſe, I ſay, do not belong the fore-mentioned properties. They are not fit and reaſonable in themſelves. They are not always obligatory. They may be ſet aſide, and others appointed in their room. Nor can they be diſcerned by reaſon. For their obligation depends upon expreſs or poſitive appointment. I ſhall illuſtrate this by two inſtances only.

It was fit, that the people of Iſrael ſhould remember, and be thankful for, their deliverance from Egyptian bondage: but the duty to celebrate a memorial of it by eating the paſchal lamb, owed all its obligation to divine appointment: and another method of commemorating that deliverance might have been ordained.

So likewiſe, ſuppoſing the coming of Chriſt, and his teaching in Judea, and dying, as he did, and riſing again: this great tranſaction, and particularly the great event of his death, ſhould be thankfully remembered by his diſciples and followers: but the way of commemorating it, by eating bread and drinking wine, is of divine determination, and obligatory only by poſitive appointment.

10. The duties of morality, or moral righteouſneſs, are taught and learned two ways, by reaſon and revelation. They are taught by reaſon, as before ſhewn, being fit and equitable in themſelves, and appearing ſo to ſuch as exerciſe their rational faculties. They may be alſo taught and enforced by revelation: as we know they are in the Old and the New Teſtament, by Moſes and the prophets, by Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles.

11. Though ſeveral expreſſions and phraſes, made uſe of by us in diſcourſing on theſe points are different from thoſe which we find in ſcripture, yet there alſo the ſame things are ſaid and taught.

We do not find in ſcripture the words morality and immorality, moral good and evil: very ſeldom that of virtue, never that of vice. Theſe expreſſions are chiefly taken from Greek and Roman authors: and owe their original and uſe, in a good meaſure, to the different way of learning theſe principles, by reaſon, rather than revelation.

The word virtue is indeed ſometimes found in the New Teſtament: but yet very rarely in the ſenſe, we now uſe it in, for holineſs in general, or every branch of good conduct in itſelf reaſonable and excellent. In one place it ſeems to be ſo uſed by St. Paul, in an exhortation to the Philippians: *If there be any virtue, if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things*, Philip. iv. 8. As if he had ſaid: and whatever elſe is virtuous, really good and excellent, and praiſe-worthy, think of it, and attend to it.

And St. Peter in his firſt epiſtle: *But ye are a choſen generation, a peculiar people, . . . that you ſhould ſhew forth the praiſes*, literally, virtues, *of him, who has called you out of darkneſs into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. But though the original word ſignifies, literally, virtues; it does not exactly anſwer to our uſe of it: and ſeems to be well enough rendered in our tranſlation, praiſes.

Again, in the ſecond epiſtle of the ſame apoſtle . . . *through the knowledge of him, who has called us to glory and virtue*, 2 Pet. i. 3. But this text would be more properly rendered: *through the knowledge of him, who has called us by glory and power:* or by his glorious power. Here virtue is equivalent to power. And the meaning is, that God had brought us to partake in the privileges of his church by a glorious diſplay and manifeſtation of his power in ſupporting and ſpreading the goſpel.

Once more, in the ſame context: *And beſide theſe, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge*, ver. 5. But here it is evident, that virtue does not ſignify all virtuous conduct in general, but is put for ſome one virtue, or good diſpoſition only. It ſeems to be uſed in the reſtrained ſenſe of fortitude, courage, or reſolution in the profeſſion of the truth.

There is therefore ſcarce any text in the New Teſtament, where the word virtue is uſed in the general ſenſe, of whatever is virtuous, and excellent, or in itſelf reaſonable; except that one place of St. Paul, before cited from the epiſtle to the Philippians.

But

But though ſeveral terms and phraſes, now uſed by us in ſpeaking of theſe matters, are not found in ſcripture, the ſame things are there ſaid, and there are equivalent expreſſions. Righteouſneſs ſometimes includes both juſtice and goodneſs, and even piety likewiſe. And then it is the ſame as virtue, or morality, or moral righteouſneſs. Says the Pſalmiſt: *A little that a righteous man has*, that is, a good, or virtuous man, *is better than the riches of many wicked*, Pſ. xxxvii. 16. And, *the righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs: his countenance does behold the upright*, Pſ. xi. 7. And in the like manner, very often.

And though we do not find the words virtue and vice, moral good and evil: yet the ſcripture often ſpeaks of good and evil, ſuch good and evil, as are really and intrinſically ſo: by which the characters of men are diſtinguiſhed, rather than by the obſervation of any poſitive appointments and ritual ordinances. *To what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices, ſaith the Lord. . . . Bring no more vain oblations: incenſe is an abomination unto me. . . . Waſh you, make ye clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well. . . . . Seek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed*, Iſ. i. 11, 17. In another place: *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter*, Iſ. v. 20. Our text ſpeaks of juſtice, mercy and piety, as good: that is, intrinſically ſo; good, in a ſuperior degree to all the ſacrifices and oblations before-mentioned.

The deſign of the goſpel diſpenſation is repreſented after this manner: *that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies might ſerve him without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs all the days of our life*, Luke i. 74, 75. In holineſs and righteouſneſs, that is, in a righteous holineſs: as kingdom and glory is glorious kingdom: life and immortality is immortal life. So here, holineſs and righteouſneſs is a righteous holineſs or ſanctity: or in modern language, the practice of virtue, or moral righteouſneſs. For there is a ritual, ceremonial, legal holineſs or ſanctity, conſiſting in a conformity to ritual precepts, the ordinances and appointments of poſitive law. But the deſign of the coming of Chriſt is here, agreeably to innumerable other texts of the New Teſtament, repreſented to be, that we might ſerve God in a righteous ſanctity, or the practice of real holineſs. There is a like expreſſion in the

epiſtle to the Epheſians: *That ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs*, Eph. iv. 24.

And by the prophets, men were often called upon in ſuch expreſſions as theſe: *Amend your ways and your doings*, Jer. vii. 3. and, *Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good*, ch. xviii. 11. and, *Amend now your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God*, ch. xxvi. 13. Which is exactly the ſame, as that they ſhould amend their manners, and return to the ſincere practice of virtue, or moral righteouſneſs.

Though therefore we do not find in the ſcripture all the ſame words and phraſes, which are now frequently made uſe of by us in treating on this ſubject: yet the ſame things are there ſaid, and there are alſo equivalent, or like expreſſions with thoſe made uſe of in modern language.

## SERMON V.

### THE NATURE, EXCELLENCE, AND IMPORTANCE OF MORAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

MICAH vi. 8.

*He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

HAVING explained theſe words, I endeavoured in a late diſcourſe, to ſhew in ſeveral propoſitions the nature and extent of virtue, or moral righteouſneſs.

II. I am now to ſhew the excellence and importance of virtue, or righteouſneſs and true holineſs.

1. This righteouſneſs, as to the main parts of it, has a place in every ſtate and condition: or is of conſtant, perpetual and everlaſting obligation: as has been already ſhewn, it being fit and reaſonable in itſelf. This is one reaſon, why St. Paul gives the preference to charity or love above faith and hope, that the virtue, or principle of love, will ſubſiſt even in the future ſtate: whereas the other two, though very reaſonable and beneficial now, will entirely ceaſe, and be no more, when

when the objects of preſent faith and hope are poſſeſſed and enjoyed. *Charity*, ſays he, *never fails. But whether there be prophecies, they ſhall fail: whether there be tongues, they ſhall ceaſe: whether there be knowledge, it ſhall vaniſh away.* The way and manner of knowing here is ſo ſlow and tedious: the knowledge, we attain in this ſtate, is ſo defective and inadequate, that he ſcruples not to ſay, *it ſhall vaniſh away:* and concludes: *Now abideth faith, hope, charity. But the greateſt of theſe is charity.*

2. Moral perfection, or righteouſneſs, is the glory and perfection of God himſelf: conſequently, it muſt be the chief excellence of all rational beings. I ſay, moral perfection is the glory and perfection of God himſelf. Hereby he is truly excellent and amiable: foraſmuch as beſide his power, knowledge and underſtanding, he is a being of unvariable truth, everlaſting righteouſneſs, inflexible equity, and abundant goodneſs. When Moſes deſired to ſee God, the divine glory and character were repreſented to him after this manner: *The Lord paſſed by before him, and proclaimed: the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth.* Exod. xxxiv. 6. The Pſalmiſt obſerves: *The righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs: his countenance does behold the upright*, Pſ. xi. 7. And in another place: *Rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteouſneſs will he judge the world, and the people with equity*, Pſ. xcviii. 9. In one of the prophets it is written: *Let him that glorieth, glory in this; that he knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exerciſe loving kindneſs, judgment and righteouſneſs in the earth. For in theſe things do I delight, ſaith the Lord*, Jer. ix. 24. Our bleſſed Lord recommends it to us, *to be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect*, Mat. v. 48. that is, to imitate him in truth, righteouſneſs and goodneſs: to aim at a holineſs, reſembling the holineſs of God. And, ſays St. Paul: *That ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs*, Eph. iv. 24.

This clearly ſhews the excellence of real holineſs, that it is the perfection of the divine nature: and that by becoming truly holy, we gain a reſemblance of God himſelf.

3. The excellence and importance of real holineſs, or moral righteouſneſs, are evident from the frequent declarations in ſcripture concerning its abſolute neceſſity to our acceptance with God, and our obtaining the heavenly inheritance. We have ſeen at large, how the neceſſity of this holineſs to accept-

ance with God, is repreſented in this text and context. In the New Teſtament, where future recompenſes are more inſiſted on, it is plainly declared, that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. And *bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God.* And *he that hath this hope in him, purifieth himſelf, as he is pure.*

4. Virtue, or true holineſs, is repreſented in ſcripture as the end of all ordinances, and of all the revelations of God's will made to mankind. *Jeſus Chriſt gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. And *for this purpoſe was the Son of God manifeſted, to take away our ſins*, and *to deſtroy the works of the devil*, 1 John iii. 8. Through the knowledge of Chriſt, God has *given us all things* conducive *to life and godlineſs*, or ſuited to promote a godly life: that we might *be partakers of the divine nature*, 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. And St. Paul expreſsly ſays, that *Charity is the end of the commandment*, 1 Tim. i. 5.

5. This farther appears from the earneſtneſs, with which true holineſs is recommended in every part of the word of God: and from the preference, which is conſtantly given to ſuch holineſs above obedience to ritual ordinances. This is evident to every one, who is at all acquainted with the ſcriptures.

God himſelf ſays, he *deſired mercy, and not ſacrifice: and the knowledge of himſelf, more than burnt-offerings*, Hoſ. vi. 6.

The ſeveral branches of moral righteouſneſs are the things principally inſiſted on by our bleſſed Lord in that, which is called his ſermon on the mount. The like things are alſo earneſtly recommended to Chriſtians in the latter part of all the apoſtolical epiſtles.

Our Lord declared, the love of God and our neighbour, and not ritual ordinances and appointments, to be the ſum and ſubſtance of the law and the prophets. Matt. xxii. 40. It is alſo the ſum of his own doctrine, and of the preaching and writings of his apoſtles.

From all which particulars we evidently diſcern the excellence and importance of virtue, moral righteouſneſs, or righteouſneſs and true holineſs.

III. I ſhall now conclude with ſome inferences by way of application.

1. We hence perceive the ground of the preference, which is always given by wiſe men, and by the ſcriptures, to righteouſneſs

teouſneſs and true holineſs above obedience to poſitive precepts, or ritual appointments. The obligation of theſe is founded in the will of God: but the former are reaſonable in themſelves, having a real excellence. And beſides, they are alſo the will and commandment of God: and his will more eſpecially, above, and in preference to all other laws and commandments.

2. We perceive alſo, why men's characters are chiefly determined by the practice of virtue and true holineſs, or the contrary, and why future rewards and puniſhments are to be diſpenſed accordingly. As our Lord declares, *the wicked will go away into everlaſting puniſhment, and the righteous into life eternal,* Matt. xiii. 49.—xxv. 46. So it will be. And we now perceive, why it muſt, and ſhould be ſo. The righteous have fulfilled the will of God, and performed that obedience, which was the end of poſitive appointments, the others not. The righteous, the virtuous, have acted right, with ſincerity, in their ſtate of trial. They have attained ſome reſemblance of the divine nature, and ſome preparedneſs for the heavenly ſtate, of which the others are deſtitute.

3. What has been ſaid upon this argument may be of uſe to ſhew, the miſtake of thoſe who deſpiſe, and ſpeak lightly of morality. Poſſibly, they do not thereby mean the ſame thing which thoſe do who magnify it and earneſtly recommend it. But they ſhould conſider, that morality, in its more proper ſenſe and meaning, is not merely honeſty in the traffick and commerce of this world; nor is it only outward action. But virtue, or morality, in its comprehenſive meaning, as before obſerved, takes in the love of God and our neighbour, or every thing that is fit and reaſonable in itſelf. Its laws and precepts regulate thoughts, as well as outward actions. It is true holineſs. It is the image of God in man: it is a meetneſs for the rewards and happineſs of another life.

4. We may conclude from what has been ſaid upon this ſubject, that the promoting of virtue, or righteouſneſs and true holineſs, or a right moral conduct, will be one great deſign of any revelation that comes from God: foraſmuch as theſe things are truly excellent, and uſeful in their natural and genuine tendency. And ſince theſe things are always obligatory, it is very probable, that one great deſign of revelation will be to perfect men in virtue, or moral righteouſneſs, to encourage and enforce that righteouſneſs by new and

powerful motives and arguments, and to deter men from the contrary unrighteouſneſs. And, as before obſerved, we do evidently perceive this to be the great deſign, the ſum and ſubſtance of the law, the hiſtorical writings, the book of Job, the Pſalms and Prophets of the Old, and of the Goſpels, the Acts, and the Epiſtles of the New Teſtament.

5. He that has ſome juſt ſentiments of God, and a ſerious regard to moral obligations, is in a great meaſure fitted and prepared for revelation. For he muſt be diſpoſed to pay a regard to one who ſpeaks in the name of God, and gives proof of a divine commiſſion by works of mighty power, and teaches a doctrine enforcing real holineſs. This is what our Lord declares, when he ſays: *If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine; whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of myſelf*, John vii. 17. And when one had acknowledged, *that there is one God, and that to love the Lord with all the heart, and his neighbour as himſelf, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and ſacrifices*; he declared, that he was *not far from the kingdom of God*, Mark xii. 32—34. This is what he teaches alſo, when he ſays: *No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath ſent me draw him*: and, *every man that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me*, John vi. 44, 45.

6. From what has been ſaid, it appears to be a dreadful thing, for any man to leſſen the obligation of virtue and true holineſs, or moral righteouſneſs: or to abate men's regard thereto by any means whatever, or with a view to any particular and favourite ſcheme of his own, or of other men's invention. Our bleſſed Lord has declared, that ſuch *ſhall be called the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. v. 19. And he freely reproved the ſcribes and phariſees, who taught for doctrine the commandments of men, and made void the law of God by traditions, which they received, and recommended, Matt. xv. 16.

7. We are likewiſe carefully to avoid miſrepreſentations of the Divine Being, and to be very cautious of admitting any principles, derogatory to the moral perfection and righteouſneſs of God, the creator and the governor of the world. We are not only to be concerned for the honour of God, as perfect in knowledge and power: but we ſhould alſo maintain his moral perfection, as a being perfectly true, righteous, good, merciful. Are theſe perfections in ſome men? Would men want what is their greateſt glory and excellence, if they ſhould

ſhould be arbitrary and unequal? And can we ſuppoſe, the divine government to want juſtice and equity? Are great and good men merciful and forgiving? And can we deny thoſe properties to God, the ſource of all being and perfection? It is eaſy to obſerve, that in ſcripture the greatneſs and majeſty, and the goodneſs and mercy of God, are often joined together. *Thus ſaith the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity: I dwell in the high and holy place: with him alſo, who is of a humble and contrite ſpirit.... For I will not contend for ever. Neither will I be always wroth. For the ſpirit ſhould fail before me, and the ſouls that I have made,* Iſ. lvii. 15, 16. And Elihu ſtrongly argues: *Far be it from God, that he ſhould do wickedneſs, and from the Almighty, that he ſhould commit iniquity.... Yea ſurely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment,* Job. xxxiv. 10, 12.

8. We may hence infer the difficulty of deſcribing particularly and exactly the ſervices and enjoyments of good men in the heavenly ſtate. They will be then perfect in holineſs, and complete in happineſs. Conſequently a love of God and fellow-creatures will abide, and be in great perfection. But many branches, various exerciſes of virtue, neceſſary and reaſonable on earth, can have no place in heaven, where we are to be as the angels of God.

Particular deſcriptions therefore of the future happineſs of good men, however agreeable and entertaining, will be for the moſt part conjectural and uncertain. We know enough from reaſon and ſcripture, to fill us with great hopes and expectations, and inſpire us with the utmoſt zeal and diligence in perfecting holineſs. The future happineſs is, we know, the perfection of ſoul and body: it is freedom from all the imperfections of this condition. It is immortality, everlaſting life, a glorious kingdom, a crown of glory that fadeth not away, an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, reſerved in heaven. We are then to ſee God, and to be like unto Jeſus Chriſt. But it is obſervable, that neither Jeſus Chriſt, nor his apoſtles, have delivered particular and preciſe repreſentations and deſcriptions of the glories of the other world, or of the ſervices and enjoyments of good men therein. And St. Paul, who was caught up into the *third heaven and paradiſe,* 2 Cor. xii. 3—5, abſolutely declines a repreſentation of the things he had ſeen and heard, and conſiders them as unſpeakable.

9. By

9. By what has been ſaid we may be led in ſome meaſure to the knowledge and underſtanding of thoſe words of St. Paul: *Then cometh the end, when he ſhall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father: when he ſhall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. And when all things ſhall be ſubdued under him, then ſhall the Son alſo himſelf be ſubject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all,* 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.

Notwithſtanding theſe expreſſions of the apoſtle, certainly, Jeſus Chriſt, the ſecond Adam, will continue to be the head of his church and people, and the glory of the human nature, and will in all things have the pre-eminence, 1 Cor. xv. 45. There will for ever be given to him honour, reſpect and gratitude, for what he has done for us. His people will be with him. And his preſence with them will be a main ſource of their happineſs. For, as St. Paul ſays: *So ſhall we ever be with the Lord,* 1 Theſ. iv. 17. And our Lord prayed, ſaying: *Father, I will, that they alſo, whom thou haſt given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold the glory, which thou haſt given me,* John xvii. 24.

The meaning of that paſſage I apprehend to be this: that the deſign of Chriſt's undertaking is then accompliſhed. And as the motives and arguments taken from his life on earth, from his death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion, were eſpecially ſuited to a ſtate of weakneſs and imperfection, temptation and affliction: thoſe motives and conſiderations will then in a great meaſure ceaſe. And the people and followers of Jeſus, brought to a ſtate of perfection, will for the future be entirely governed by the reaſon of things, and the will of God. Yet ſtill they will be for ever thankful for the goſpel diſpenſation, and for all the condeſcenſion and humiliation of the Lord Jeſus, and for his after exaltation: by which their hearts were won to God, and they were eſtabliſhed, and upheld in the practice of virtue, under all the difficulties they met with here, until they were brought to glory.

10. Though duties of moral obligation have the preference above others, yet poſitive appointments, of divine authority, are not to be omitted or neglected. Theſe alſo have their uſe, and are expedient in the preſent ſtate of things. They were wiſely appointed, and therefore ought to be ſubmitted to and obeyed. It is our Lord's own determination upon the point: *Theſe ought ye to have done:* meaning the weightier

weightier matters of the law: *and not to leave the other undone,* Luke xi. 42.

11. Finally, let us not reſt ſatisfied with obſerving poſitive appointments, or with any external performances, or the profeſſion of the principles of religion, or a partial obedience: but let us ſincerely do the whole will of God, ſo far as we are acquainted with it.

It may afford matter of ſorrowful thought and conſideration, that ſo many are far from that righteouſneſs, which is recommended both by reaſon and revelation: that ſo few are eminent therein: and likewiſe that there are others, whoſe character is but doubtful, both to themſelves and others.

However, our main buſineſs is not to lament, or aggravate the faults or defects of others: but to amend our own. And ſince there is reaſon to fear, that many will hereafter ſeek to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and ſhall not be able: ſince we have the proſpect of a reſt remaining for the people of God, let us take heed that we fail not thereof.

If any are able to aſſure their hearts before God, as ſincere and upright, and have a comfortable hope of the future heavenly inheritance reſerved for his children: let them take the comfort of it. If ever we attain that felicity, we ſhall have clearer apprehenſions of theſe truths, than now we have, and ſhall be ennobled by them. Now *we know* but *in part,* and *propheſy* but *in part,* and are ſanctified but *in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part,* all imperfection, of every kind, *ſhall be done away,* 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

## SERMON VI.

### WISDOM ATTAINABLE BY THOSE WHO SEEK IT.

PROV. viii. 17.

*I love them that love me. And they that ſeek me early, ſhall find me.*

THE book of Proverbs is a large collection of excellent rules, maxims and obſervations, for directing the conduct of men of every age, and almoſt every circumſtance and condition

dition of life. A particular regard is herein had to perſons of tender age, unexperienced, and entering into the world. Counſels are delivered with much affection and earneſtneſs. The ſame things are repeated, and inculcated again and again. The attention of men is excited by frequent repreſentations of the importance of right conduct, and of the ſnares they are expoſed to, by which they are in danger of being miſled to their utter ruin.

More effectually to recommend the reaſonable and uſeful counſels and obſervations here propoſed, they are often delivered in the name of Wiſdom. Wiſdom herſelf is introduced, as teaching theſe things. So at the beginning of this chapter: *Doth not Wiſdom cry, and underſtanding put forth her voice? She ſtandeth in the top of high places, by the way, in the places of the paths: . . . Uuto you, O men, I call: and my voice is to the ſons of men.* And, as an encouragement to all to hearken to her, and purſue the rules ſhe lays down, ſhe ſays in the words of the text: *I love them that love me: and they that ſeek me early, ſhall find me.*

If it were a thing of any moment, I might juſt obſerve to you, that what in our Engliſh tranſlation is rendered, ſeek early, is but one word in the original. The Hebrew therefore might be as well rendered, they that ſeek me, ſhall find me. However, our tranſlators have not done much amiſs in adding ſomething concerning the beſt manner of ſeeking wiſdom: or in expreſſing what may be ſuppoſed to be implied in the word. *I love them that love me: and they that ſeek me* early, or diligently, *ſhall find me.*

Without any farther preface, I would now immediately lay down the method in which I intend to diſcourſe on theſe words.

I. In the firſt place I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, how we are to underſtand the word wiſdom, as uſed in the book of Proverbs.

II. I ſhall ſhew, what is comprehended in wiſdom.

III. I ſhall conſider, what is to be underſtood by loving wiſdom, and ſeeking it.

IV. I ſhall obſerve the encouragement, here ſet before men, to ſeek wiſdom: they ſhall find it.

V. And then conclude with directions for the right manner of ſeeking it.

I. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, how we are to underſtand the word wiſdom as uſed in the book of Proverbs.

Hereby

Hereby ſome have underſtood a real perſon, and even a divine perſon. And this their opinion is founded chiefly, I think, upon ſome expreſſions in this eighth chapter. As ver. 15. *By me kings reign, and princes decree juſtice. By me princes rule, and nobles, and all the judges of the earth:* And eſpecially thoſe words in ver, 22, 23. *The Lord poſſeſſed me in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old. I was ſet up from everlaſting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.*

But the meaning of theſe words I take to be this: 'that 'God himſelf is wiſe, and before he created the world, he had 'wiſdom in himſelf: and that the laws of righteouſneſs, and 'the rules of right conduct, are everlaſting and unchangeable.'

It is agreeable to the ſtile of this book, not to underſtand by wiſdom a real perſon, but an attribute, or property clothed with a perſonal character, or a feigned perſonage introduced. In like manner it has been very common for polite writers, to introduce juſtice, or virtue, or wiſdom, or prudence, delivering rules and counſels to men, or reproving their folly and extravagance. Sometimes they are repreſented looking down, at other times coming down from heaven to viſit the abodes of mortals: or, in the ſtile of the Proverbs, men, the ſons of men: calling aloud to them, dehorting them from their evil ways, and perverſe wanderings, and inviting them into the paths of truth and happineſs; which reaſon, and the conſiderations of their own true intereſt preſcribe to them.

The perſonage introduced in this book in the name and character of wiſdom is repreſented to be a queen, or a wealthy matron or lady: for her ſervants, or attendants, are maidens. She is brought in as a matron, living in great credit. Her houſe is a ſpacious and lofty building, adorned with a magnificent portico at the entrance, conſiſting of ſeven, or many pillars. She there makes an entertainment, and invites people to come and partake of her proviſions; that is, to hear and receive the rules and principles of knowledge and virtue.

This is beautifully expreſſed at the beginning of the ninth, the following chapter: *Wiſdom has builded her houſe: ſhe has hewn out her ſeven pillars: ſhe has killed her beaſts: ſhe has mingled her wine: ſhe has alſo furniſhed her table: ſhe has ſent forth her maidens: ſhe crieth upon the higheſt places in the city,* Prov. i. 21. Or, as in another place: *She crieth in the chief place of concourſe, in the openings of the gates. In the city ſhe uttereth her words:* that is, in the moſt public and frequented places,

places, where there is uſually the greateſt reſort of people: *Whoſo is ſimple let him turn in hither.* She rejects not the weakeſt, and the moſt deluded. If they will but attend, ſhe will teach them what is fit and becoming: *Whoſo is ſimple, let him turn in hither. As for him that wanteth underſtanding, ſhe ſays to him: come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forſake the fooliſh, and live; and go in the way of underſtanding.*

This ſtately dwelling, or palace of wiſdom, where men may receive inſtruction, is alluded to at ver. 34th of this chapter: *Bleſſed is the man that heareth me: watching daily at my gates, waiting at the poſts of my door.*

Moreover wiſdom is uſed in this book, as equivalent to underſtanding or inſtruction. *Doth not wiſdom cry? and underſtanding put forth her voice?* Prov. viii. 1. *Happy is the man that findeth wiſdom, and the man that getteth underſtanding,* ch. iii. 13. And, *Take faſt hold of inſtruction. Let her not go. Keep her, for ſhe is thy life,* ch. iv. 13 If underſtanding and inſtruction are not perſons, what reaſon is there to think that wiſdom is ſo?

And agreeable to this account is that affectionate counſel: *Say unto wiſdom, thou art my ſiſter: and to underſtanding, thou art my kinſwoman,* ch. vii. 4.

The opinion therefore, that wiſdom is a real perſon, or a diſtinct ſubſiſtence, and intelligent being, appears to be without foundation. It is much more reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that wiſdom is only a fictitious character, or perſonage introduced, in order to recommend to men more effectually, and with greater advantage, thoſe rules of righteouſneſs which it is of the higheſt importance they ſhould regard.

II. I would now ſhew what is comprehended in wiſdom.

By wiſdom, in general, we are to underſtand the principles of order and proportion, both in the natural and the moral world: or the laws and rules of exact order and porportion in the things of nature, and the rules of diſcreet and virtuous conduct among rational and intelligent beings. This is the moſt general and comprehenſive meaning of the word wiſdom. And it is plainly uſed in this ſenſe in the book of Proverbs, particularly in this chapter.

1. It includes, I ſay, the rules and principles of beauty, order and proportion in the things of nature: according to which rules God made the world, and diſpoſed and adjuſted the ſeveral parts of it. So in the 27th and following verſes of

of this chapter: *When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he ſet a compaſs upon the face of the depth: when he eſtabliſhed the clouds above: when he ſtrengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the ſea his decree, that the waters ſhould not paſs his commandment; then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.* That is, all God's works of creation were performed in wiſdom: and it was his will and pleaſure, to direct and command all things, according to the moſt perfect rules of order and proportion. The ſame thing is expreſſed elſewhere after this manner: *The Lord by wiſdom has founded the earth: by underſtanding has he eſtabliſhed the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew,* ch. iii. 19, 20. This exquiſite order and proportion in the ſeveral parts of nature are beautifully and forcibly deſcribed in the prophet Iſaiah. *Who has meaſured the waters in the hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with the ſpan, and comprehended the duſt of the earth in a meaſure, and weighed the mountains in ſcales, and the hills in a balance?* Iſ. xl. 12.

2. But though wiſdom comprehends in it the rules of beauty and perfection, order and proportion, in natural things; yet you cannot but be ſenſible, that what Solomon in this book chiefly enlarges upon, and moſt earneſtly recommends, is right conduct. Nor does he here ſpeak of the ſacrifices of beaſts, and offerings of the fruits of the earth, nor of external waſhings and purifications: the methods of which may be various, where no one of them is of abſolute neceſſity: But the things he inſiſts upon are the rules and principles of virtuous conduct: which are right and reaſonable in themſelves, and always and univerſally obligatory.

And becauſe theſe moral rules and principles are the ſubjects of his diſcourſe, therefore the leſſons, which wiſdom teaches and recommends, are repreſented and characteriſed, as right things, as proclaimed in the moſt public places, and as everlaſting, or in being before the world was.

Theſe rules and counſels of wiſdom are ſaid to be right and excellent. Thus at the ſixth verſe. *Hear, for I will ſpeak of excellent things: and the opening of my lips ſhall be right things.* 'The rules, which I deliver: the things, I recommend to men, are right, and fit. Their reaſonableneſs and 'uſefulneſs cannot be conteſted or gainſayed.'

They are alſo repreſented, as proclaimed in places of the greateſt reſort, and indeed in all places: becauſe they are obvious

obvious to men's reaſon and underſtanding: and there are not a few, who ſpeak of them, and recommend them to others, who are leſs knowing: and becauſe the judgment and conſcience of all men in general aſſent to them, and not ſeldom put them in mind of them. This is the deſign of thoſe expreſſions at the beginning of this chapter, and of other like expreſſions elſewhere. *Does not wiſdom cry, and underſtanding put forth her voice? She ſtandeth in the top of the high places, by the way, in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.* And ver. 8, 9. *All my words are in righteouſneſs. There is nothing froward or perverſe in them. They are plain to him that underſtandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.* Every where her reaſonable precepts are ſounding in men's ears, and demanding attention and regard.

They are alſo always obligatory. And therefore are ſpoken of as ancient, eternal, and unalterable rules and maxims. ver. 22—26. *The Lord poſſeſſed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was ſet up from everlaſting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth... While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the higheſt part of the duſt of the world.*

Theſe are general characters and properties of the rules and principles of wiſdom, relating to the moral conduct of men.

And it ſhould be obſerved, that wiſdom with her principles, contains the rules and maxims of all right conduct, with diſſuaſives from every evil thing; particularly, wiſdom includes theſe ſeveral things:

1.) *The fear of God*, the firſt principle, and the moſt important branch of religion: which is much ſpoken of, and greatly recommended in this book of Proverbs, and in the book of Eccleſiaſtes, another work of the wiſe man, containing obſervations upon human affairs, and upon the divine providence and government of this world. *The fear of the Lord*, ſays he, *is the beginning of wiſdom*, Prov. ix. 10. *and the knowledge of the holy is underſtanding. The fear of the Lord is ſtrong confidence*, ch. xiv. 26. *Let not thy heart envy ſinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long*, ch. xxiii. 17. *Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man*, Eccl. xii. 13. the ſum and ſubſtance of his duty, and his main intereſt and concern.

2.) Wiſdom, with its principles and maxims, includes the rules and laws of ſobriety and moderation for all earthly things.

*The*

*The knowledge of the Lord is to hate evil. Pride and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate,* Prov. viii. 13. And you know very well, that there are in this book many earneſt diſſuaſives from all manner of exceſs and intemperance, and every thing contrary to purity. Ambition, vain conceit, immoderate love of pleaſure and riches, haughtineſs of ſpeech and countenance, ſloth and idleneſs, are here alſo condemned and expoſed: and humility, modeſty, diligence, and a teachable and inquiſitive temper, are frequently recommended.

3.) Wiſdom includes righteouſneſs and equity toward other men. So this book begins: *The proverbs of Solomon: ... to know wiſdom and inſtruction, to perceive the inſtruction of wiſdom, juſtice and equity.* At the twentieth verſe of the eighth chapter: *I lead in the midſt of the way of righteouſneſs, in the midſt of the paths of judgment.* And in the twenty-firſt chapter is that excellent remark: *To do juſtice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord, than ſacrifice,* ch. xxi. 3.

4.) Beſide all theſe things, wiſdom includes prudence, or a becoming regard, and diſcreet concern for our own intereſts. So Solomon in this chapter, drawing the character of wiſdom, introduces her, ſaying: *I wiſdom dwell with prudence. I find out knowledge of witty inventions,* ch. viii. 12. Many are the prudential directions and cautions, which are inſerted in this collection of wiſe and judicious maxims and obſervations. And the importance and the advantage of prudence are often ſhewn. It is ſaid: *The ſimple believeth every word: but the prudent looketh well to his going,* Prov. xiv. 15. Agreeably to which the Pſalmiſt obſerves: *A good man will guide his affairs with diſcretion,* Pſ. cxii. 5. or, as in the margin of our Bibles, with judgment, which is the ſame thing.

5.) Wiſdom includes the laws of civil government, tending to the good order, peace and proſperity of large bodies and ſocieties of men. Thus it is expreſsly ſaid in this chapter: *Counſel is mine, and ſound wiſdom. I am underſtanding. I have ſtrength. By me kings reign, and princes decree juſtice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth,* ver. 14, 15.

This is wiſdom. It contains the principles of beauty, order and proportion in the things of nature, and all the branches of good conduct in men: particularly the fear of God, or a ſerious and awful, yet delightful and cheerful

reſpect for the Divine Being, and ſincere gratitude for all his benefits: ſobriety, or the government of ourſelves, and a juſt moderation of our affections for ſenſible things: juſtice, judgment and equity toward others: diſcretion in the management of our own affairs: and the juſt and equitable laws of civil government.

III. We ſhould now conſider, what is to be underſtood by loving wiſdom, and ſeeking it.

And hereby nothing more is meant, than a deſire to be wiſe, and endeavours to attain to wiſdom. To love wiſdom is to eſteem and prize it: to be perſuaded, that its principles and rules muſt be right: and to be deſirous to know and be acquainted with them, and the reaſons of them: together with a ſincere purpoſe, and firm reſolution of mind, to walk by them, and make them the rule of our action. Such will uſe the means of improvement. The thoughts of ſuch will be much about this matter. They will hearken to inſtruction, and attend to their teachers. They will be inquiſitive, and obſerve, and lay up, and meditate upon what they have heard. They will not be averſe to counſel, or even reproof. This is ſeeking wiſdom. Such are very likely to ſucceed in their purſuit, and to obtain their wiſhes and deſires.

IV. Which brings us to the next point, the encouragement here afforded, and ſet before men, in theſe expreſſions: *I love them that love me: and they that ſeek me ſhall find me.*

Three things may be reckoned to be implied in this encouragement. Such ſhall attain to the knowledge of the principles of wiſdom. They ſhall become wiſe, and act wiſely and virtuouſly. They will have all the advantages, which are annexed to the knowledge and obſervation of wiſe counſels and maxims.

1. They who love wiſdom, and ſeek it, will attain to the knowledge of its rules and principles, and the ways it recommends. It is the deſign of the undertaking in this book of Proverbs, as declared at the beginning, (as it is alſo the deſign of all other like attempts) *to give knowledge to the ſimple, to the young man knowledge and diſcretion.* And in this eighth chapter: *All the words of my mouth are in righteouſneſs. They are all plain to him that underſtandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.* That is, the knowledge of them is eaſy to be attained by thoſe who are attentive.

And

And they who have ſo much underſtanding, as to prize wiſdom, will ſoon perceive, how right and reaſonable all its rules and precepts are.

Again, in the ſecond chapter of this book: *My ſon, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; ſo that thou incline thine ear unto wiſdom, and apply thy heart to underſtanding: yea if thou crieſt after knowledge, and lifteſt up thy voice for underſtanding: if thou ſeekeſt for her, as for ſilver, and ſearcheſt for her, as for hid treaſure:* that is, if thou be ſincere and diligent in ſeeking after wiſdom, as what thou eſteemeſt very valuable: *then ſhalt thou underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. Then ſhalt thou underſtand righteouſneſs, and judgment, and equity, yea every good work.*

They who ſeek knowledge and underſtanding, who are ſincerely deſirous to be informed in the principles of wiſdom, will certainly become acquainted with all the rules and precepts, which are of general importance, and ſuited to their rank and condition.

2. If you love and ſeek wiſdom, you will become wiſe, diſcreet and virtuous, and make its maxims the rule of your conduct. So Solomon ſays in the juſt cited ſecond chapter of this book: *When wiſdom enters into thy heart, and knowledge is pleaſant to thy ſoul; diſcretion ſhall preſerve thee, underſtanding ſhall keep thee: to deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that ſpeaketh froward things: who leave the paths of uprightneſs, to walk in the way of darkneſs.*

He who loves wiſdom, and labours ſincerely to be acquainted with its principles, and perceives how right, and reaſonable they are, muſt be diſpoſed to obſerve and follow them: and will be prepared for, and fortified againſt the enticements of ſinners, and the ſpecious pretences of thoſe who ſpeak froward and perverſe things.

3. Another thing included in this encouragement is, that they who love and ſeek wiſdom, ſhall have the many advantages that are annexed to the knowledge, and practice, or obſervation of wiſe rules and maxims. This muſt be implied in the expreſſions here uſed of wiſdom's *loving them that love her*, and being *found of them that ſeek her.* She will favour, prefer and advance ſuch, and cheerfully beſtow upon them all the gifts and bleſſings, which are in her diſpoſal, and which indeed are great and manifold.

Theſe are oftentimes affectionately ſet before men, in a variety of expreſſions, in order to determine their right choice: which cannot but be much for their benefit.

*My ſon, forget not my law: but let thy heart keep my commandments. For length of days, and long life, and peace ſhall they add unto thee. Let not mercy and truth forſake thee. Bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thy heart. So ſhalt thou find favour and good underſtanding,* or acceptance, *in the ſight of God and man,* Prov. iii. 1—4. And afterwards: *Happy is the man that getteth underſtanding. For the merchandiſe of it is better than the merchandiſe of ſilver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies. And all the things thou canſt deſire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her, and happy is every one that retaineth her,* ver. 13—18.

Again; *Keep my commandments, and live. Get wiſdom, get underſtanding. Forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forſake her not, and ſhe ſhall preſerve thee. She ſhall bring thee to honour, when thou ſhalt embrace her. She ſhall give to thy head an ornament of grace. A crown of glory ſhall ſhe give unto thee. Hear, my ſon, and receive my ſayings: and the years of thy life ſhall be many,* Prov. iv. 4—10.

Peace and tranquillity is one great advantage, mentioned in the paſſages already cited. Again it is ſaid: *Thou ſhalt walk in thy way ſafely, and thy foot ſhall not ſtumble. When thou lieſt down, thou ſhalt not be afraid: Yea thou ſhalt lie down, and thy ſleep ſhall be ſweet. For the Lord ſhall be thy confidence, and ſhall keep thy foot from being taken,* ch. iii. 23—26.

And though it be true, that a *little, which a righteous man has, is better than the treaſures of many wicked,* Pſ. xxxvii. 16. yet virtue and diſcretion do alſo tend to ſecure a competence: and often add, or give, great abundance: as it is ſaid in a place before cited: *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour,* Prov. iii. 16. And, *Through wiſdom is an houſe builded, and by underſtanding it is eſtabliſhed. And by knowledge ſhall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleaſant riches:* that is, with all things both for uſe and ornament. *A wiſe man is ſtrong: yea a wiſe man increaſeth ſtrength,* Prov. xxiv. 3—5.

All theſe bleſſings are often, and with great aſſurance, ſpoken of, as advantages, uſually attending wiſdom: or as

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the happy lot and portion of thoſe who value and ſeek it, and obſerve and obey its rules and directions; health and long life, riches and honour; that is, a competence, and ſometimes abundance, and credit and honour therewith; ſafety and ſecurity, peace and quietneſs, and great ſatisfaction of mind.

V. I ſhall conclude all with ſome directions concerning the right manner of ſeeking wiſdom. Seek it early, diligently, and with continuance, and decline the ſociety of thoſe who reſpect not the laws of wiſdom.

1. Seek wiſdom early, or without delay: now, immediately, apply yourſelves to the ſtudy of the principles of wiſdom, the rules of right conduct. Attend to the inſtructions given you, ſuitable to your age and condition, by thoſe who are knowing, and are concerned for your welfare and proſperity, both in ſoul and body. And now, immediately, form in your minds a fixed purpoſe and reſolution of living and acting by thoſe rules which appear juſt, wiſe and reaſonable.

2. Seek wiſdom diligently. Let not time run waſte, without employment. Let not whole days be loſt in ſloth and idleneſs: but be concerned to make daily improvement in ſome part of uſeful knowledge. Let the rules and maxims of wiſdom be thought of, and meditated upon early and late. Let her principles be familiar to your minds, and always entertaining and delightful. So will they occur to you, when they ſhould be brought into action, and when you are in danger of being ſeduced to act contrary to them.

3. You muſt alſo endeavour to continue in this your love and affection for wiſdom, and careful attention to her, becauſe of our natural weakneſs and inconſtancy, and becauſe there are temptations and tempters: and you are in danger, if you are off your guard, of being miſled by the enticements, or the provocations of thoſe you meet with.

4. Therefore let me add: decline as much as poſſible familiarity and intimacy with thoſe who ſhew no reſpect to the laws of wiſdom: who have little or no worth: who poſſeſs, indeed, the human ſhape and intellect, but aim at no improvement: who raſhly and inconſiderately venture to make a jeſt of ſin, and deſpiſe wiſdom, becauſe it is too high for them: who are pleaſed with the worthleſs traſh of ſenſual enjoyments: but have no taſte of perfection and beauty, order and proportion, and the principles thereof, either in the natural, or the moral world: whoſe views and proſpects are narrow and confined, low and baſe, like the *very beaſts that periſh*, Pſ. xlix.

12, 20. minding nothing but preſent objects: neither looking forward to future time, nor obſerving the conſequences and tendencies of things preſent. Reckon yourſelves to be above ſuch contemptible people; and diſdain to follow either their counſel or their example.

Theſe are they that love wiſdom. Theſe ſhe loves. They that ſo ſeek her ſhall find her, and be bleſſed with all the precious things in her gift.

Let not, then, any immoderate love of pleaſure, or eaſe, or much riches, or high honour and preferment, enter into the mind, to damp this reaſonable principle, this excellent and becoming, this virtuous and hopeful diſpoſition, the love of wiſdom. But let this always be the prevailing, the governing, influencing principle of your minds. *Exalt wiſdom and ſhe will promote you.* Eſteem and ſtudy her rules and maxims, conſtantly obey her precepts, and decline not from her paths. *She will, then, bring you to honour, and crown you with durable riches and righteouſneſs.*

## SERMON VII.

### LITTLE CHILDREN BROUGHT TO CHRIST.

MATT. xix. 13, 14, 15.

*Then were there brought unto him little children, that he ſhould put his hands on them, and pray. And the diſciples rebuked them. But Jeſus ſaid: ſuffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them.*

It was now near the concluſion of our Saviour's miniſtry and life on this earth. He was in a place beyond Jordan, from whence he went up to Jeruſalem, where he ſuffered.

This particular hiſtory being related by three evangeliſts, it is likely, that it contains ſomething which may be of uſe for our direction or encouragement. St. John indeed has not taken any notice of it. But you are ſenſible, that he had ſeen the three former goſpels before he wrote: and therefore he very rarely gives an account of ſuch things, as had been ſufficiently related already by one or more of the other evangeliſts.

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In St. Mark's goſpel this hiſtory is recorded after this manner, ch. x. 13. *And they brought young children unto him, that he ſhould touch them. And his diſciples rebuked thoſe that brought them.* 14. *But when Jeſus ſaw it, he was much diſpleaſed, and ſaid unto them: ſuffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of ſuch is the kingdom of God.* 15. *Verily, I ſay unto you: whoſoever ſhall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he ſhall not enter therein.* 16. *And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and bleſſed them.*

St. Luke ſays, ch. xviii. 15. *And they brought unto him alſo infants, that he would touch them. But when the diſciples ſaw it, they rebuked them.* 16. *But Jeſus called them unto him, and ſaid: ſuffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of ſuch is the kingdom of God.* 17. *Verily, I ſay unto you: whoſoever ſhall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, ſhall not enter therein.*

Theſe are the accounts which the evangeliſts have given us of this matter,

I ſhall endeavour to make an improvement of this hiſtory by conſidering theſe ſeveral particulars:

I. Who were now brought to Chriſt.

II. For what end they were brought to him.

III. The reception he gave them; which at the very firſt view may be perceived to be kind and gracious.

IV. The declaration made concerning them, that *of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven*, or *the kingdom of God.*

I. The firſt particular to be conſidered by us is, who were now brought to Chriſt.

In St. Matthew they are ſtiled little children. In one place of St. Mark we have, in our verſion young children: but in the original it is ſtill one and the ſame word; which therefore throughout thoſe two evangeliſts ſhould be uniformly rendered little children.

In St. Luke they are called infants: a word, which, as the critics in the Greek language ſay, comprehends any children from the time of their birth, till they are four years of age. It is the ſame word, which we have in another text: *Knowing, that from a child thou haſt known the holy ſcriptures*, 2 Tim. iii. 15.

That theſe were little children may be inferred from a circumſtance mentioned in St. Mark, that Jeſus *took them in his arms.*

Their tender age may be argued likewiſe from hence: that it is not ſaid of Chriſt, that he taught them, or aſked them any queſtions.

I chooſe not to argue from the expreſſion of their being brought to Chriſt: not thinking it ſufficient to prove, that they were carried in arms. For the phraſe may be uſed of ſuch as are led, conducted, guided to a place or perſon.

Upon the whole, we may conclude, I think, that they were what they are called by the evangeliſts, little children, or infants. None of them were arrived to the full exerciſe of reaſon: and ſome of them might be carried in the arms of their friends.

II. The next particular to be conſidered by us is, what views they had who brought theſe little children to Jeſus: or, for what end they were brought to him.

It does not appear, that they were brought to Jeſus, to be healed by him of any ſickneſs, or weakneſs, which they were afflicted with: for there is nothing of that kind hinted in any of the evangeliſts, though no leſs than three of them have recorded this hiſtory. And, if that had been the caſe, the diſciples, it is likely, would not have rebuked the perſons who came with theſe children. For before now there had been ſuch applications made to our Lord by many perſons, not only for themſelves, but for others alſo: for their friends, or their children, or their ſervants.

For what end and purpoſe, then, may ſome ſay, ſhould theſe little children be brought to Jeſus? who were ſo young, as to have little or no exerciſe of reaſon and underſtanding, and muſt therefore have been incapable of receiving inſtruction.

That we may the better anſwer this inquiry, we ſhould attend to the evangeliſts' expreſſions. St. Mark ſays, *they brought little children to Jeſus, that he ſhould touch them:* St. Luke: *they brought unto him alſo* or even *infants, that he ſhould touch them.* But in our text, in St. Matthew, it is: *that he ſhould put his hands on them, and pray.* And it is likely, that this is the meaning of all the evangeliſts: it having been common among the Jews, to lay the hand upon thoſe whom they bleſſed: or for whom they prayed to God, that he would bleſs them. So, when Jacob bleſſed the two ſons of Joſeph in Egypt, a little before his death, he laid his hands upon each of them, Gen. xlviii. 14.

Theſe perſons therefore, here ſpoken of, brought theſe *little children* to Jeſus, that he *might lay his hands upon them, and bleſs them.* They had a high opinion of the piety of Jeſus, and of his intereſt in the divine favour. Probably they were diſciples, or believers, ſuch as took Jeſus for a prophet, and even

even the great prophet, who was to come, the Meſſiah. And they were deſirous that their children ſhould receive a bleſſing from him.

Some may be apt to think, this muſt have been a ſuperſtitious, and fond conceit of theſe perſons. To which I would anſwer, that, probably, it was not entirely ſo. For in that caſe Jeſus would not have ſhewn them ſuch regard. It cannot be thought, that our Lord would countenance an action, that was altogether unreaſonable, and quite deſtitute of all good foundation. And ſuppoſing, that there was a mixture of ſome wrong views in this conduct, the Lord Jeſus was more gracious, than to reject theſe perſons, or condemn their deſign upon that account. The twelve diſciples had not been perfectly diſintereſted, or free from all ſecular views, in coming to him, and following him. Yet he was well pleaſed with their attendance on him: and he promiſed them a reward for it, if they continued to act as diſciples, with ſincerity: though they ſtill wanted a ſinleſs perfection, and had not a wiſdom void of all defects, Luke xxii. 28—30.

III. The third thing is the reception he gave theſe children: which at the very firſt view, we plainly perceive to be kind and gracious.

The diſciples rebuked thoſe who brought them. They turned them away, as impertinent and troubleſome. They refuſed them admiſſion to the preſence of their Maſter, and reproved their deſign in coming to him. But when Jeſus perceived what had been done, he was much diſpleaſed, and ſaid unto them: *Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not*; nor their friends, who would bring them to me. And thoſe in particular, who were now brought to him, he received. Some of them he *took up into his arms*, and affectionately embraced them: on all he *laid his hands, and bleſſed them.*

How he bleſſed them, or prayed for them, the evangeliſts have not ſaid particularly: but we may reaſonably conclude, that he offered up to the Father ſome prayers for them, ſuited to the doctrine taught by him.

Poſſibly he preſented ſome requeſts, agreeing with the prayer he had given to his diſciples.

Or, he prayed for them, 'that they might know God, and 'him whom he had ſent, ſo as to obtain everlaſting life.'

Or, 'Father, ſanctify theſe little children through thy truth: thy word is truth.'

Or,

Or, 'I pray not, that thou ſhouldſt now take them to thy-'ſelf out of this world, though it be a world of ſnares and 'ſorrows: but I pray, that thou wilt keep them from the evil 'of the world. Father, keep through thy own name theſe 'little ones, which have been now brought unto me.'

In ſome ſuch way as this, we may ſuppoſe, he bleſſed theſe little children, or prayed for them, and recommended them to God; that is, in a manner becoming his affectionate concern for their real welfare and everlaſting happineſs, and his near relation and intimate union with the Father.

IV. The fourth and laſt thing to be obſerved by us is Chriſt's declaration concerning theſe little children: *Of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven.*

So here in St. Matthew. But in the two other evangeliſts the expreſſion is: *Of ſuch is the kingdom of God.* Which two expreſſions are equivalent, denoting one and the ſame thing; the goſpel diſpenſation, the ſtate of things under the Meſſiah, or the church and kingdom of God on earth, in which men are prepared for the heavenly ſtate, the church and kingdom of God above: therefore John the Baptiſt ſaid: *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, Matt. iii. 2. ch. iv. 17. And ſo Jeſus preached likewiſe.

*Of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven:* that is, of ſuch conſiſts the kingdom of heaven. Or, to ſuch belongs the kingdom of heaven, with its privileges: ſuch as theſe are the members and jubjects of God's church and kingdom on earth, and heirs of his kingdom in heaven, with all its riches and glory.

The chief difficulty is to determine the meaning of the word ſuch: there being, as it is thought, an ambiguity in that expreſſion. And it may be queſtioned, whether we are hereby to underſtand: of ſuch as reſemble theſe little children is the kingdom of heaven: or, of ſuch little children as theſe. I ſhall therefore obſerve to you, how theſe words are paraphraſed by ſome pious and learned expoſitors of ſcripture.

Upon theſe words an * ancient writer obſerves: 'Chriſt 'does not ſay, of theſe, but of ſuch is the kingdom of 'heaven: that is, of perſons of ſimplicity, who are inno-'cent, and free from vice and wickedneſs.' A modern writer † explains the words in this manner: 'Of theſe, and

* Theophyl. in Evang. p. 112. † Luc. Bru. ap. Pol. Syn.

'ſuch

'ſuch like. Chriſt does not exclude children, when he 'includes the adult, who are like them.' Another learned interpreter † of our time thus paraphraſeth the words of the text. 'Do not hinder little children from coming to 'me. For it is theſe, and men qualified like theſe, with 'innocence, humility, and a teachable diſpoſition, free 'from all prejudices, and cuſtoms of ſinning, that are 'the only fit perſons to be made members of my church on 'earth, and inheritors of the kingdom of God in heaven.'

And we are farther aſſured, that our Lord intended to ſay: 'Of ſuch as are like theſe little children is the kingdom 'of heaven;' becauſe he does expreſsly recommend reſemblance in what follows in St. Mark and St. Luke. *Verily, I ſay unto you: whoſoever ſhall not receive the kingdom of heaven, as a little child, ſhall not enter therein.* And I think, the other ſenſe, though not ſo certain, ought not to be quite ſet aſide: that is, 'to theſe, and ſuch little children, (as well as thoſe who are like them) belongs the kingdom of heaven.'

However, it is fit we ſhould conſider what Chriſt recommends in theſe words, and wherein they who are adult, and grown up to years of underſtanding, ought to reſemble little children. Let me mention three or four things: freedom from prejudice, or openneſs to conviction: freedom from pride, or humility: freedom from worldly affections, or indifference to earthly things: and finally, freedom from cuſtom of ſinning, or innocence.

1. One thing obſervable in little children is freedom from prejudices, or openneſs to conviction; which is one great part of a teachable diſpoſition. Indeed, they do not know the truth. But then, neither are they prejudiced againſt it: and by that means they are ready to receive it, when propoſed to them. This is a property which all ought to aim at, and to preſerve ſo long as they are imperfect in knowledge. The want of this temper hindered the Jews from receiving Jeſus, and the truths he taught. They had a prejudice, a falſe and groundleſs notion, that the expected Meſſiah would be an earthly prince and powerful monarch, and would ſet up a worldly kingdom on this earth; in the civil advantages of which his ſervants and followers ſhould partake: whereas it was a ſpiritual empire in the hearts, and over the lives of men, and a kingdom of righteouſneſs that he was to introduce,

† Dr. S. Clarke.

in

in order to prepare men for the ſervices and enjoyments of the heavenly life.

It muſt be of great advantage, to be free from that prejudice, or any other like it: and to be determined to quit any notion, when good evidence to the contrary is produced.

2. Another thing obſervable in children, and in which others ought to reſemble them, is freedom from pride, or humility. This temper alſo renders men teachable and tractable, and ſuſceptible of improvement in knowledge and virtue: whereas conceit is a moſt effectual bar to improvement of every kind. They who are opinionated of their knowledge and wiſdom, or of their eminent character, and noble exploits and ſervices, will not bear to be admoniſhed, nor ſubmit to receive new truths and farther diſcoveries, how well ſoever recommended.

Here we cannot avoid recollecting thoſe words of our Lord, where he expreſſeth his cheerful acquieſcence in the ſucceſs of his miniſtry, and ſays: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth: becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes,* Matt. xi. 25.

*Hid from the wiſe and prudent*: not from thoſe, who were really ſo: but from thoſe who were ſo eſteemed by many, and who were opinionated of their own knowledge and wiſdom, and their reputation in the world: whilſt the doctrines and truths of the goſpel were underſtood, believed, and embraced by babes: men of inferior ſtation and condition, meaner attainments, and leſs conceited of themſelves, and perhaps deſpiſed by others. But not being greatly conceited, they hearkened to inſtruction, and diſcerned, and embraced the truths taught and propoſed to them.

3. Another thing obſervable in children is freedom from earthly affections, or indifference about the great things of this world: ſuch as riches, honour and preferment. This is ſo obvious, not only in little children and infants, but in all very young perſons in general, that parents, and others of experience in life, are oftentimes not a little concerned at it, leſt they ſhould not duly regard their temporal intereſts. And they think it expedient to ſhew them the uſe and value of theſe things, and by frequent obſervations infuſe at leaſt a ſmall degree of ambition, and ſome worldly mindedneſs into their conſtitution.

But our bleſſed Lord, without undervaluing or depreciating any of the comforts of this life, recommends, and highly eſteems,

eſteems, as you well know, a judicious contempt of all earthly things, and a determined preference of truth and integrity, the favour of God, and a title to the heavenly happineſs, above all earthly honours, poſſeſſions and enjoyments. And he often declares, that he who is not willing to part with what he has of theſe things for his ſake, if the circumſtances he is brought into ſhould require it, cannot be his diſciple, or approve himſelf a lover of truth.

The neceſſity of reſembling little children in indifference to riches, or in a freedom from inordinate affection for them, is illuſtrated by a hiſtory, which follows the text, of the rich man, who when directed by Chriſt, to go, and ſell what he had, and give to the poor; aſſuring him withal, that then he ſhould have treaſure in heaven; *went away ſorrowful, for he had great poſſeſſions.*

The neceſſity of reſembling little children in freedom from ambition, or an immoderate deſire of grandeur and preferment, Chriſt taught his own diſciples in particular. For, when they had aſked him, *who ſhould be greateſt in the kingdom of heaven*, ſuppoſing, the kingdom of the Meſſiah would have in it much honour and power, *he called a little child unto him, and ſet him in the midſt of them, and ſaid: verily, I ſay unto you: except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whoſoever therefore ſhall humble himſelf, as this little child, the ſame is greateſt in the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xviii. 1—4.

4. Another thing, in which others ought to reſemble little children, is freedom from cuſtom of ſinning, or innocence. Little children, and infants, ſuch as moſt, or all thoſe were, who were now brought to Chriſt, are univerſally allowed to be free from actual ſin. They have as yet made no wrong choice: they have done no evil thing. And others, who have ſinned, in order to partake of the kingdom of God, are to become like them, by waſhing away their ſins with the tears of unfeigned ſorrow, by reformation and amendment, by ceaſing to do evil, and being free from the habitual and allowed practice of all iniquity.

Of ſuch as theſe conſiſts the kingdom of heaven. To thoſe who in theſe things reſemble little children belongs the kingdom of God. Such will receive the goſpel. They will come into the kingdom of the Meſſiah. They will continue true members and faithful ſubjects of it, and finally inherit all the glory and happineſs of the kingdom of God above.

V. Having

V. Having conſidered theſe ſeveral particulars, let us now make a farther improvement in ſome reflections.

1. The doctrine of this text may afford comfortable thoughts concerning ſuch as die in infancy, or in very early age, before they have done good or evil. Chriſt, ſpeaking of little children, ſays: *Of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven.* If he do not clearly ſay, of theſe, and ſuch like children, yet he certainly ſays, of ſuch as reſemble them is the kingdom of heaven. And if we ſhould not ſuppoſe him to ſay expreſsly more than that, yet it is ſufficient to fill us with comfortable apprehenſions concerning thoſe, who are removed hence in very early life. For it cannot be eaſily admitted, that they ſhould periſh everlaſtingly, who are ſet before others, as emblems of ſimplicity, innocence and humility, and patterns of imitation and reſemblance.

To theſe do not belong the characters of thoſe, whom Chriſt will bid depart from him. They are not workers of iniquity. They have not refuſed to entertain and relieve the afflicted and perſecuted followers of Jeſus on earth. He has declared, that *they who do not receive the kingdom of heaven, as a little child, ſhall not enter therein.* And can it be thought, that little children ſhall be excluded?

2. This text teaches us to be cautious, how we diſparage the human nature, and ſay, that it is in its original conception corrupt, depraved and defiled. Our Lord ſeems not to have acknowledged any original depravity of our nature: for he recommended a reſemblance of little children to his diſciples, and others. And when little children were brought unto him, he expreſſed affection for them. He embraced them, and bleſſed them, and ſaid, *Of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven.*

They who vilify nature, do, in effect (though perhaps unwittingly, and undeſignedly) reproach the Author of nature.

Solomon, after an attentive ſurvey of the affairs of this world, and particularly the many diſorders therein, was fully perſuaded of this truth: *This only have I found*, ſays he, *that God made man upright. But they have ſought out many inventions*, Ecc. vii. 29.

St. Paul, when he proves all men, both Jews and Gentiles, *guilty before God*, Rom. iii. 19. alledges not their bad nature, but their evil practices.

Some indeed are early drawn aſide into evil courſes by the ſnares of this world; which occaſioned the Pſalmiſt to ſay hyperbolically

hyperbolically of ſome wicked men: *They are eſtranged from the womb. They go aſtray as ſoon as they are born*, Pſ. lviii. 3. And in like manner David, after the commiſſion of the great ſins he had fallen into, recollects alſo his paſt ſins, and ſays: *he had been ſhapen in iniquity, and in ſin did his mother conceive him*, Pſ. li. 7. that is, he laments his too great propenſity to ſome ſins, and humbly owns, that even in early life he had done things, which he ought to repent of, and blame himſelf for. But he is here ſpeaking of himſelf, or his own particular conſtitution, not of all men in general.

The ſcripture does not aſcribe the difficulty of reforming great ſinners to the badneſs of their nature, but to the evil habits they have contracted: repreſenting it as very unlikely, that they ſhould *do good, who had been accuſtomed to do evil*, Jer. xiii. 23.

St. Paul reminds the Epheſians, that once, in their Gentile ſtate, *they were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*, Eph. ii. 1. Which expreſſion, however, can never be applied to infants. And with the apoſtle, a life in ſin is not life but death. As he ſays elſewhere: *She that liveth in pleaſure, is dead, while ſhe liveth*, 1 Tim. v. 6. And what follows, ſhews, that he means practice of ſinning, or actual and wilful ſins. *Wherein*, ſays he to thoſe Epheſians, *in time paſt ye walked, according to the courſe of this world*, Eph. ii. 2.... He proceeds: *Among whom alſo we all*, we Jews alſo, for the moſt part, and generally, *had our converſation in times paſt, in the luſts of our fleſh, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh, and of the mind: and were by nature*, in our former ſtate, before we were enlightened by the goſpel, *children of wrath*, deſervedly expoſed to puniſhment, *as well as others*, ver. 3. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in ſins, has quickened us together with Chriſt....And hath raiſed us up together, and made us ſit together in heavenly places in Chriſt*, ver. 4, 5, 6. The whole context ſhews, that the apoſtle is not ſpeaking of puniſhment due to natural corruption, but to actual ſin. Nor does he ſay: and indeed we all are, but *were by nature children of wrath*. So we were, when we *had our converſation in the luſts of our fleſh*. But God in his great mercy had through Jeſus Chriſt delivered the Epheſians, and others, from that ſtate of ſin and miſery.

We are weak and frail, and liable to temptations. But we can eaſily conceive, how God may treat ſuch creatures wiſely and equitably. He will ſhew his diſpleaſure againſt the

the preſumptuous, and even the careleſs. And he will reward the obedient, the careful and watchful. But we are not able to conceive, how God ſhould reject and condemn any for what is not owing to choice, but nature.

Some men will confeſs the corruption of their nature. But I apprehend, it muſt be truer humility, for a man ſeriouſly, and ſincerely, without reſerve, to confeſs all his ſins in thought, word and deed, againſt God and his neighbour. The former is only an acknowledgment of ſuppoſed corruption, common to all. And may be attended with ſpiritual pride, and ſcornful diſdain of others. But to confeſs ſincerely all our own ſins and faults is true humility. This humility is a virtue in ſuch creatures as we are, and the ground of other virtues. It is alſo acceptable to God. And *whoſoever confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſins, ſhall have mercy*, Prov. xxviii. 13.

3. This hiſtory teaches us the right of young perſons, to be preſent at the worſhip of God: and ſeems to hold forth the duty of thoſe under whoſe care they are, to bring them early to it. Some brought little children to Chriſt, that he might lay his hands on them, and bleſs them. And he received them, and did as he was deſired. Though children do not underſtand every thing that is ſaid, yet they have ears to hear, and eyes to ſee, and will obſerve. And gradually a reverence for the Divine Being, and an apprehenſion and perſuaſion of inviſible things, will be formed in their minds, and ſuch principles implanted in them, as will bring forth good fruit.

4. We may infer from this hiſtory, that it is not below perſons of the greateſt eminence for wiſdom and piety to ſhew affection and tenderneſs for little children. Jeſus Chriſt is a good pattern for imitation in all his condeſcenſions. And his diſciples ſhould do, as he has done. Let us receive kindly, and, as we are able, recommend to the divine favour and protection ſuch little children, as Jeſus himſelf, when on earth, received and bleſſed.

5. We hence learn, that all of us arrived to years of knowledge and underſtanding ſhould ſee to it, that we bear a reſemblance to little children. For of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven.

Let us be always like them in freedom from prejudices, being open to conviction, diſpoſed to learn, and make farther improvement by all diſcoveries propoſed to us.

Let

Let us reſemble them alſo in humility, or freedom from pride, and high conceit of ourſelves: which obſtructs improvement, excites to a haughty and imperious behaviour, and diſpoſes to ſtrife and contention, anger and reſentment.

Let us reſemble them in indifference about worldly things, or a freedom from an inordinate affection for riches, honour and preferment, pre-eminence and authority.

Laſtly, let us reſemble them in innocence, being as free from all evil practices as poſſible.

In a word, according to this obſervation of our Lord, we ſhould always endeavour to be, in many reſpects, what we once were, and what we ſtill ſee little children to be. So ſhall we do no evil. So ſhall we be Iſraelites indeed, in whom is no guile.

6. This hiſtory affords encouragement to young perſons arrived to the uſe of reaſon and underſtanding to come to Chriſt, and offer up themſelves to God in and through him. Jeſus received the little children, who were brought to him; and he propoſed them to others as patterns of reſemblance, they being free from cuſtoms of ſinning. But after all, they were rather emblems of virtue, than virtuous themſelves. Much more then will they be received by him, who being ſtill without guile, have an actual propenſity and diſpoſition to virtue and goodneſs. If you ſhould neglect yourſelves, when you have attained to the uſe of your rational powers, and are entering into the world; bad principles and habits will grow up, like weeds in a rich ſoil, of which no care is taken: and you will ſoon loſe all that innocence and ſimplicity, which endears little children to the Lord Jeſus.

Let me therefore propound to you the few following counſels and directions.

1.) Be induced to give up yourſelves to God with deliberation, and with all the ſerioufneſs and ſolemnity you are able, engaging and reſolving, that you will not ſin againſt him, or do any thing contrary to his holy commandments, ſo far as you are acquainted with them. Such a fixed and deliberate purpoſe and reſolution of mind, once formed, may be of great and laſting advantage to you.

2.) Be diligent, and improve your time for gaining knowledge. You are not to be like little children in every thing. You ſhould reſemble them in innocence: but in *underſtanding you are to be men*, 1 Cor. xiv. 20. Beſide attending to the inſtructions you receive, in order to qualify you for ſome

honeſt and reputable employment, whereby you may gain a ſubſiſtence, without being burdenſome to any, and may be uſeful to others: as you have opportunity, employ yourſelves in reading the ſcriptures, eſpecially the hiſtory of the Patriarchs in Geneſis, and the Pſalms, the Proverbs, the Goſpels, and the Acts of the Apoſtles: and indeed all the books of the New Teſtament, and alſo other uſeful and inſtructive books. You may likewiſe endeavour to improve by converſation with perſons of ſobriety and diſcretion, and, if it may be, of ſuch as are ſomewhat advanced above you in years and knowledge. Hereby the mind will be enlarged. You will gain generous ſentiments. Your uſefulneſs, when you are ſettled in the world, will be more extenſive. You may have the greater influence and reputation. And you will certainly lay a foundation for a great deal of entertainment and ſatisfaction within yourſelves, which ſome others want.

3.) Pay a regard to every branch of duty: not doing one thing, and neglecting others, as many do, but, aiming at every part of holineſs. You know that St. Paul ſays: *The grace of God which bringeth ſalvation teaches us to deny all ungodlineſs, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world*, Tit. ii. 11, 12.

Live godly: fear and reverence the Divine Majeſty in your thoughts. Frequent the aſſemblies of divine worſhip, and forſake them not; as ſome do, who fancy themſelves wiſer than others, without really being ſo.

Live ſoberly: govern your affections, and take care not to be led by evil examples to any exceſs, or indulgence, contrary to ſtrict ſobriety.

Live righteouſly: do to others, as you would others ſhould do unto you. Attend much to relative duties. Behave as you ought to ſuperiors, equals, inferiors, agreeably to your rank and ſtation. It is eaſy to perceive from the epiſtles of Chriſt's apoſtles in the New Teſtament, that much of religion lies herein: and that they are very imperfect Chriſtians, who are defective in relative duties.

4.) Be perſuaded to accuſtom yourſelves to private prayer. This may be underſtood to be included in a preceding direction. Nevertheleſs I have choſen to mention it here particularly and expreſsly. Pray, as you are able. Uſe the compendious prayer, which our Lord taught his diſciples: or ſome other prayer, ſuited to your age and condition. What you want, aſk God for. Look up to him, and humbly intreat his

his gracious and watchful care and protection. Say: 'O 'Lord, I am thine. Thou haſt made me, and I have pro- 'miſed to ſerve thee. Thou knoweſt my weakneſs, and all 'the ſnares and dangers that ſurround me. Do thou keep 'me from evil, and vouchſafe unto me all thoſe good things, 'which are needful and convenient for me. I would acknow- 'ledge thee in all my ways: do thou direct my ſteps. Grant, 'that I may ſeriouſly attend to, and carefully improve all 'the means and helps which thou affordeſt me for obtaining 'true holineſs, and for perſevering therein, notwithſtanding 'the temptations I may meet with. May I cheerfully per- 'form all the duties and ſervices, owing from me to thoſe 'to whom I ſtand related, and with whom I converſe, or have 'any dealings. And may I ſo ſerve and honour thee on 'earth, as that I may be received in thy due time to the joys 'of thy heavenly and eternal kingdom.'

5.) Once more, ever remember the importance of right conduct. This is not a matter of indifference, or of but little moment. But all depends upon it. Good and evil, life and death are ſet before you; therefore chooſe the one, and refuſe the other. Sin is a root of bitterneſs. It yields bitter fruit, torment and vexation of mind. But *the fruit of righteouſneſs*, or virtue, *is quietneſs and aſſurance for ever*, Iſ. xxxii. 17.

Moreover, it ſhould be conſidered, that *you have been brought to Chriſt*, and inſtructed in the principles of religion. If after you have had ſome knowledge of the way of righte- ouſneſs, you ſhould turn from it, your caſe would be extremely ſad and deplorable. But I truſt, you ſhall not fall away, but perſevere to the end, and at laſt be placed at the right hand of the Judge of the whole earth, and, together with others, hear that gracious ſentence and invitation: *Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, Matt. xxv. 34.

# SERMON VIII.

## THE HAPPINESS OF HAVING RELIGIOUS PARENTS, AND OTHER PIOUS RELATIVES.

2 TIM. i. 5.

*When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith, that is in thee: which dwelt firſt in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice: and I am perſuaded, that in thee alſo.*

THE enſuing diſcourſe is chiefly intended for the benefit of my younger hearers. And upon occaſion of this text I would propound theſe ſeveral obſervations.

I. It is an advantage to be deſcended of pious parents, and other religious anceſtors.

II. It is commendable in children to attend to the inſtructions, and imitate the virtues of their parents, and other religious anceſtors.

III. They are to be blamed, who degenerate from the virtues of their family.

IV. Children have a right to excel their parents in ſuch things as are good and praiſe worthy.

V. It is a great and ſingular happineſs, where there is a general agreement and harmony, as to things of religion, among friends and relatives, and the ſeveral branches of a family.

I. It is an advantage to be deſcended of pious parents, and other religious anceſtors.

This is evident at firſt ſight. If piety, or any virtue be preferable to irreligion, and to vicious diſpoſitions and practices, it muſt be an advantage to be related to ſuch as are religious and virtuous. It cannot but be a privilege, to deſcend from thoſe, who have a knowledge of God, and ſome juſt apprehenſions of his perfections, and a ſerious ſenſe of religious things upon their minds. For thereby they are reſtrained from what is evil: and are obliged, engaged, and excited to that which is good. Moreover all the behaviour of ſuch perſons and their treatment of others, eſpecially of thoſe who depend upon them, is pleaſing, deſirable, and agreeable.

They

They therefore who have pious parents enjoy a kind and mild treatment, which many others want.

There is a benefit likewiſe in the inſtructions received from ſuch. For they who are themſelves pious and religious, will *teach their children, and their houſhold after them, to keep the way of the Lord,* Gen. xviii. 19. You therefore, who are deſcended from pious parents, have heard of the eternal and unchangeable exiſtence of God, the maker of all things. You have been informed of the goodneſs and bounty, the mercy and loving kindneſs of God to all his creatures, eſpecially thoſe that fear and ſerve him: and that as he has all power in heaven and earth, he is able to defend and uphold all his ſincere worſhippers, and to reward ſuch as diligently ſeek and ſerve him.

You who are born of Chriſtian parents have heard of the love of Jeſus Chriſt in dying for us. You have heard of the mean birth, and humble life of Jeſus, who has moſt clearly taught the way of ſalvation. You have been acquainted with the promiſe he made of everlaſting happineſs to thoſe who ſincerely obey the rules of life delivered by him, who love God with all the heart and ſoul, and their neighbour as themſelves, and who perſevere in the profeſſion of truth, and the practice of virtue, notwithſtanding worldly difficulties and diſcouragements.

You have likewiſe ſuch a knowledge of the wonderful works he wrought, that you cannot doubt of the truth of his words. For no man could do ſuch works, unleſs God was with him. His cures of the ſick and infirm, and that by a word, and inſtantly, and raiſing the dead, are undeniable proofs, that he ſpake in the name of God, or that the Father had ſent him, and that the whole of his doctrine is true, and from heaven.

You have alſo been inſtructed in the hiſtory of his reſurrection and aſcenſion, and the mighty works that were done by the apoſtles of Jeſus after he had left this world, when they preached the doctrine they had received from him. And you have no doubt, but he will come again in glory, to judge the quick and the dead, and to give to all men according to the things done by them in this their ſtate of trial.

By the advantage of your birth you have been favoured with the knowledge of divers maxims and obſervations of unqueſtioned truth and certainty, and of great uſe to the right conduct of life. You have been told, that a little with

the fear of God, is better than great revenues without it, or than the riches of many wicked: that the fear of God, a ſenſe of his care and providence, hope in his promiſes, eſpecially the great promiſe of eternal life to the truly pious and virtuous, will afford great peace and ſatisfaction at all times: that theſe diſpoſitions will increaſe the happineſs of outward proſperity, and abate the bitterneſs of all worldly afflictions.

To have been early inſtructed in theſe things is a great benefit. How deplorable is the caſe of thoſe who are ignorant of them!

One thing more I ſhall mention here, that to your deſcent from religious parents, poſſibly, you owe divers temporal advantages. Solomon ſays: *The curſe of the Lord is in the houſe of the wicked: but he bleſſeth the habitation of the juſt*, Prov. iii. 33. From the uſefulneſs, and honourable, and diſcreet behaviour of your anceſtors, you have inherited credit and reputation. And to their frugality, diſcretion, diligence, ſobriety and other virtues, you may reckon yourſelves indebted for the competence, or the abundance of the good things you poſſeſs and enjoy: which, otherwiſe might have been ſquandered away in luxury and exceſs.

II. They who have this advantage ought to improve it. And it will be commendable in them to attend to the inſtructions, and imitate the virtues of their religious parents, and other pious anceſtors.

St. Paul eſteemed it matter of much joy and thankſgiving, that he had *ſerved God from his forefathers with a pure conſcience*, 2 Tim. i. 3. He ſpeaks to Timothy in the way of commendation, when he ſays, *that he was perſuaded, the ſame faith dwelt in him, which had firſt dwelt in his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice.*

There is an obligation to attend to wiſe and wholeſome inſtructions, from whomſoever we receive them: and to follow the good examples we ſee in any. But there is a more eſpecial obligation, to hearken to, and follow pious parents. This is ſuppoſed in divers pathetic admonitions, which we meet with in ſcripture. So in thoſe ſolemn words of David: *And thou Solomon, my ſon, know thou*, own and acknowledge, fear and worſhip, *the God of thy father*, and *ſerve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.... If thou ſeek him, he will be found of thee: but if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off for ever*, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. And ſays the wiſe ſon of king David, at the beginning of his book

of

of Proverbs, or collection of wiſe ſayings and obſervations: *My ſon, hear the inſtruction of thy father, and forſake not the law of thy mother*, Prov. i. 8. Again: *My ſon, keep thy father's commandment, and forſake not the law of thy mother. Bind them continually upon thy heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goeſt, it ſhall lead thee: when thou ſleepeſt, it ſhall keep thee: and when thou walkeſt, it ſhall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light, and reproofs of inſtruction are the way of life*, chap. vi. 20—23.

III. They are to be blamed, and their caſe is to be lamented, who degenerate from the wiſdom and piety of their religious anceſtors.

For it is a great advantage to have had ſuch good inſtructions, and to have ſeen good examples in the early part of life. And it implies ſome faulty diſpoſition not to follow them. There muſt be, ſurely, ſome want of capacity, not to perceive and admire the beauty of good examples: and ſome perverſeneſs of temper to act contrary to them.

This is often one article of accuſation againſt the Jews, and aſſigned as a reaſon of calamities brought upon them, that they had *forſaken the God of their fathers*. When God appeared to Solomon after the dedication of the temple, there were affecting warnings, as well as gracious promiſes delivered to him and his people. They are to this purpoſe: *For now I have choſen and ſanctified this houſe, that my name may be there for ever. And mine eyes, and my heart ſhall be there perpetually. . . . But if ye turn away, and forſake my ſtatutes and my commandments, which I have ſet before you. . . then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land, which I gave them. . . . And this houſe, which is high, ſhall be an aſtoniſhment to every one that paſſeth by it. Becauſe they forſook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worſhipped and ſerved them*, 2 Chron. vii. 16—22.

That is what is frequently meant in the Old Teſtament by *forſaking the God of their fathers*; namely, leaving and abandoning his worſhip, and going after other gods, and worſhipping idols. But as the guilt of idolatry was more eſpecially aggravated in that people, who had known the true God, and been inſtructed in his worſhip: ſo in like manner is any departure from God aggravated in thoſe, who have been inſtructed in the principles and duties of true religion. And they who have been early taught the way of righteouſneſs, and

ſeen examples of virtue, if they turn from the holy commandment delivered to them: if they forſake the ſtatutes and judgments of the Lord, and are ſeduced into the ways of ſin and iniquity; they are very blame-worthy, and their condition is very pitiable.

IV. Children may, and have a right to exceed and excel their parents and anceſtors in thoſe things, which are good and praiſe-worthy.

They are not reſtrained from this by any rule of reaſon, or any revealed and written law of God. If their progenitors have been wicked and irreligious, they are not obliged to follow them. They may not do ſo, upon any conſiderations whatever. Nor are they who are ſincerely, but imperfectly good, to be imitated in their faults, or defects.

Any truth, that appears clearly revealed, ought to be embraced and profeſſed, whether it had been before entertained by thoſe we reſpect or not. And the commands of God ought to be obeyed, however others may contradict and gainſay. Paul, when it pleaſed God to reveal his Son in him, did not conſult with any man, whether he ſhould be a diſciple of Jeſus or not. It became thenceforward his duty, though not his intereſt to preach the goſpel as he did.

The truth of this obſervation appears from the caſe of Timothy in the text. Lois and Eunice were Jeweſſes, of the poſterity of Jacob. When the goſpel revelation was propoſed to them, they received it, as the mind of God, and profeſſed it. This is the *unfeigned faith that firſt dwelled in them.* And Timothy was to be commended for following them therein. He was in the right to receive a doctrine, that appeared excellent, and well ſupported; as being the fulfilment of ancient prophecies, and confirmed by miracles; though his father, as it ſeems, did not embrace this faith. For if he had, it is likely that St. Paul would have mentioned him here likewiſe. Nor does St. Luke in his brief hiſtory of theſe perſons in the Acts give any intimation of it. All he ſays of Timothy's father is, that he was a *Greek, well reported of by the brethren,* or Chriſtians, *that were at Lyſtra and Iconium,* Acts xvi. *beg.*

Here then we perceive, that Timothy is juſtified, and even commended for chooſing the principles of true religion: though he had not the leading, or the concurring authority and example of his father. From a child he had known the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament, having been inſtructed in them

them by his mother and grandmother of the poſterity of Jacob, and by profeſſion of the Jewiſh religion. And from the beginning he paid a great regard to thoſe ſcriptures, till at length he alſo became a diſciple of Jeſus, and embraced the faith of the goſpel.

And it is evident, that perſons of mature age are obliged to receive what appears to be truth after ſerious and ſufficient examination, and to do what they are convinced is the will of God: whether their parents conſent or not. For there is a ſuperior obligation to truth, and the will of God, to which all are ſubject.

If there be any defect of knowledge in thoſe to whom any are obliged, they may endeavour to be better informed in the principles of religion, and the grounds of them. There may be occaſion for them to be more open and explicit in the profeſſion of religion, than thoſe that went before them. They may aim at the ſtricteſt regard to the will of God, and excel in moderation and charity toward others. If they, by whom they have been brought up, appear to them moroſe and ſevere, and to ſtretch their authority beyond the bounds of reaſon: nothing hinders, but that they may aim at eſcaping that miſtake, and exceed them in mildneſs and gentleneſs. There can be no good reaſon aſſigned, why children ſhould not be better than their parents, if they are able: ſtill preſerving a humble and dutiful reſpect to a ſuperior relation, which is a neceſſary part of true goodneſs, without which they cannot excel.

V. It is a great and ſingular happineſs, when there is a general agreement and harmony in things of religion among friends and relatives, and the ſeveral branches of a family.

This happineſs is not univerſal. It was not the caſe in this family. Nevertheleſs, it does not appear, that Timothy's father obſtructed thoſe who depended upon him in following their own convictions: nor that he hindered them from embracing any farther diſcoveries. Nay it does not appear, that he oppoſed his ſon Timothy's undertaking the office of an evangeliſt, and accompanying the apoſtle Paul in his journies for promoting the goſpel.

However, upon ſome occaſions, there will be not only differences of ſentiment, but much animoſity in families, on account of the principles of religion. Says our Lord: *Suppoſe ye that I am come to ſend peace on earth! I tell you, nay; but rather diviſions: for from henceforth there ſhall be five in one houſe divided,*

*divided, three againſt two, and two againſt three. The father ſhall be divided againſt the ſon, and the ſon againſt the father: the mother againſt the daughter, and the daughter againſt the mother*, Luke xii. 51—53.

Sometimes children are diſobedient, ſtubborn, and refractory. They forſake the guides of their youth, and are a grief of heart to thoſe who have the moſt tender affection for them, and ſhew a wiſe concern for their true intereſt. They will not ſubmit to authority, nor hearken to reaſon. They will not be perſuaded by the moſt earneſt and affectionate importunity to attend to the things that make for their welfare here or hereafter.

On the other hand, ſometimes the progreſs of virtue is obſtructed or diſcouraged by ſuperiors in age and ſtation: and the ſerious and well-diſpoſed bring upon themſelves hardſhips, by being more than ordinarily diligent and inquiſitive in things of religion. Their ſuperiors are not duly apprized of the rights of conſcience: and the ſmalleſt difference of opinion is thought to deſerve the keeneſt reſentment. They who are the moſt ſincere in their regard to the general obligations of religion, and moſt dutiful and reſpectful to their parents, from a principle of conſcience, are nevertheleſs diſcouraged, becauſe of difference in opinion upon ſome ſpeculative points. This is an evil: and it is a trial, which the virtue of ſome meets with.

There are alſo happy and deſirable caſes. When children readily receive the great truths and doctrines of religion, and the grounds of them, from their parents or other inſtructors: when they embrace the commandment, and walk therein, that they may live. This is moſt agreeable to thoſe who have been concerned for them, and have laboured for their welfare. It muſt likewiſe be exceeding comfortable to thoſe younger perſons, or others in a ſtate of dependence, upon whom the principles of religion have made a deep impreſſion, to be encouraged and animated in their religious ſtudies and inquiries by thoſe whom they love, honour and eſteem.

In a word, it is a very agreeable circumſtance, contributing as much to the happineſs of this ſtate of imperfection, as any thing that can be thought of: when there is agreement between friends and relatives in the great things of religion, with forbearance, as to differences about leſſer matters: when real holineſs and true virtue have the higheſt regard: and difference of opinion about things of ſmall moment, whether proceeding

proceeding from want of underſtanding, or from greater meaſures of light and knowledge, produce no alienation of affection. For ſuch a ſituation every one who enjoys it, ought to be thankful. To be at liberty to do what our conſcience dictates, without moleſtation from others, is a delightful privilege. Such have the perſuaſion of the divine favour and acceptance, and enjoy alſo the good will, approbation and encouragement of earthly friends. This makes duty eaſy. If it had been otherwiſe, they could not have drawn back. They would have been obliged for the ſake of Chriſt and his kingdom, to forſake father and mother, and all worldly poſſeſſions. But they have both the favour of God and of men; or at leaſt the favour and good will of thoſe whom they moſt eſteem.

I have mentioned theſe things as uſeful hints. Parents uſually love thoſe children beſt that advance themſelves in the world. But true virtue and goodneſs ought to be the greateſt recommendation: nor ought any advances therein to be diſcouraged.

APPLICATION. I hope the words of the text may be applied to you, my friends. I have no reaſon to doubt, but that the unfeigned faith which firſt dwelt in your pious parents, is in you alſo, according to your years, and upon the ground of a rational evidence and conviction: and ſuch a conſideration gives joy and ſatisfaction.

But there can be no harm in recommending to you to cheriſh, maintain and improve the principle of goodneſs. I apprehend, that what has been now ſaid, muſt have excited in you thankſgivings to God for the advantage you have had of a religious education: and that you have renewed your reſolutions to improve it. And it is indeed prudent, to be very ſerious and deliberate in reſolving to walk with God, and perſevere in the way of his commandments all the days of our life. You ſhould continue in the uſe of all the means of your eſtabliſhment: and ſhould carefully decline the ſnares that are dangerous to your virtue. If unawares you meet with them, and ſinners entice you to evil; reſolutely withhold your conſent, and withſtand their enticements and ſolicitations.

You need not to be told, that children of ſuch parents, of ſo many prayers, of ſuch hopes and expectations, cannot ſin at ſo eaſy a rate as others. In every ſtep you ſhould take, in the way of folly and ſin, you would meet with checks and rebukes.

And

And if you ſhould break through, and harden yourſelves againſt all the remonſtrances of your enlightened conſcience and underſtanding, the iſſue would be unutterable remorſe and anguiſh.

But this, I truſt, ſhall not be your caſe. Your goodneſs, I hope, ſhall not be like a *morning cloud, or the early dew, that ſoon paſſeth away*, Hoſ. vi. 4. but rather be as the *dawning light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day*, Prov. iv. 18.

May you then willingly admit and entertain the wholeſome inſtructions of thoſe who wiſh you well: and may you in the way of virtue ever have countenance and encouragement. But if you ſhould meet with obſtacles, may you ſurmount them, and be faithful to God. And having experienced ſome good portion of peace in the way of God's commandments on earth, may you and yours partake with all the people of God in the full rewards and everlaſting joys of religion and virtue, which are ſure, and are reſerved for the world to come.

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## SERMON IX.

### THE VIRTUE AND BENEFIT OF EARLY PIETY, OR FEARING THE LORD FROM THE YOUTH.

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1 KINGS xviii. 12.

*. . . But I thy ſervant fear the Lord from my youth.*

THOUGH this good character be here given by the perſon himſelf, we are not immediately to admit the ſuſpicion of pride and vanity. What he ſays is only for the ſake of ſelf-preſervation. If we never commend ourſelves for a leſs weighty reaſon, we ſhall not incur the juſt cenſure of boaſting and vain glory.

The perſon is Obadiah, whoſe hiſtory we have in the former part of this chapter. He is now ſpeaking to the prophet Elijah: and the thing happened in the time of the long dearth in the reign of Ahab king of Iſrael.

At the beginning of the chapter it is ſaid: *And it came to paſs after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in*

*in the third year, ſaying: go, ſhew thyſelf unto Ahab, and I will ſend rain upon the earth. And Elijah went to ſhew himſelf unto Ahab: and there was a ſore famine in Samaria. And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his houſe.*

Some have put the queſtion, whether this be the ſame as Obadiah the prophet. But it does not appear that this perſon had at all the prophetical character. And Obadiah, whoſe ſhort book of prophecies we have among the leſſer prophets, near the end of the Old Teſtament, ſeems to have lived a good deal later than the reign of Ahab.

It follows in verſe third and fourth: *Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly. For it was ſo, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and gave them bread and water.*

By prophets, as is generally ſuppoſed, we are not here to underſtand inſpired perſons, with a ſpecial commiſſion from God: but men educated in the ſchools of the prophets. Theſe Jezebel looked upon as her enemies, becauſe they oppoſed her idolatrous worſhip, and taught the people the true religion. And, poſſibly, ſhe ſuſpected them of favouring the intereſts of the kingdom of Judah, where was the appointed place of worſhip for all the tribes of Iſrael.

It was therefore an act of great piety, and much reſolution in Obadiah, in a time of ſuch danger, to protect thoſe prophets. *He hid them by fifty in a cave, and gave them bread and water:* that is, all needful proviſions, ſending them meat and drink privately every day.

Ver. 5, 6. *And Ahab ſaid unto Obadiah: go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks. Peradventure we may find graſs to ſave the horſes and mules alive, that we loſe not all the beaſts. So they divided the land between them, to paſs through it. Ahab went one way by himſelf, and Obadiah went another way by himſelf.*

Obadiah was the only perſon in the ſervice of Ahab, whom he could confide in upon this occaſion. It is a proof of the great regard, which even this wicked prince had for him. And it affords good reaſon for us to ſuppoſe, that Obadiah had been wont to behave with ſingular fidelity, and uncommon diſcretion, in all affairs in which he was employed.

Ver. 7—12. *And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him. And he knew him, and fell on his face, and ſaid: Art thou my Lord Elijah?* He was not a little ſurpriſed to meet Elijah, who for ſome time had lived very privately out of the reach

reach of Ahab. *And he anſwered him: I am. Go tell thy Lord: behold, Elijah is here. And he ſaid: what have I ſinned, that thou wouldſt deliver thy ſervant into the hand of Ahab, to ſlay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my Lord has not ſent to ſeek thee. And when they ſaid, he is not here; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And thou ſayeſt: go, tell thy Lord, behold, Elijah is here. And it ſhall come to paſs, as ſoon as I am gone from thee, that the ſpirit of the Lord ſhall carry thee whither I know not. And ſo when I come, and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he ſhall ſlay me.*

The meſſage, with which Elijah ſent Obadiah, would be very grateful to king Ahab, who had earneſtly ſought for him. But Obadiah, ſuppoſing, that the prophet could not appear before Ahab with ſafety, feared, leſt by divine direction he ſhould, when he was gone away, remove to ſome other place. He excuſeth himſelf therefore from delivering this meſſage. And he pleads with the prophet, that he ſhould not expoſe him to ſo imminent danger of death, by provoking the diſpleaſure of Ahab. Thus he ſpeaks in the text, and the words following: ver. 12—16. *But, I thy ſervant, fear the Lord from my youth. Was it not told my Lord, what I did, when Jezebel ſlew the prophets of the Lord; how I hid an hundred men of the Lord's prophets, by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? And now thou ſayeſt: go, tell thy Lord: behold, Elijah is here: and he ſhall ſlay me. And Elijah ſaid: as the Lord liveth, before whom I ſtand,* or whom I ſerve, *I will ſhew myſelf to him this day. So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah.*

*But I thy ſervant fear the Lord from my youth.* Or, *But thy ſervant feareth the Lord from his youth.* Which is a more literal tranſlation: for the word I is not in the original.

I. I now propoſe firſt to explain the words, and ſhew what is implied *in fearing the Lord from the youth.*

II. Secondly to ſhew the virtue of ſo doing.

III. And thirdly the benefit of it.

I. I would ſhew, what is implied in *fearing the Lord from the youth.*

It may include theſe four things, believing in God: worſhipping him, and making an open profeſſion of religion: obſerving the precepts of true religion, or making the will of God,

God, ſo far as we are acquainted with it, the rule of our conduct: and doing this conſtantly from early age.

1. Fearing the Lord implies believing in God: or, that Jehovah, the Lord, is the one living and true God. *He that cometh to God*, ſays the apoſtle to the Hebrews, *muſt believe, that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*, Heb. xi. 6. So much Obadiah intends here to ſay of himſelf: that he always had a perſuaſion in his mind, that there is a God, and one God: which one God he believed to be the God of the patriarchs, the God who protected them, and whom they owned and ſerved; the God that brought Iſrael out of Egypt, and delivered his laws and ſtatutes to them by the hand of Moſes.

He believed God to be the creator of the heavens and the earth, the ſea and all things that are therein. His own reaſon led him to conceive of God in this manner. The books of Moſes, that great prophet of the people of Iſrael, and moſt eminent ſervant of the true God, confirmed the belief of this truth. The creation of the world is related at the beginning of the writings of that lawgiver. And this notion of God is inſerted diſtinctly in one of the ten commandments, the fourth in order, delivered with ſo great ſolemnity. He therefore, who in the preface to thoſe commandments ſays: *I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt*, is the creator of the whole world, and conſequently the rightful Lord and diſpoſer of all things therein.

This one conſideration of God, as creator, would lead the thoughtful and pious perſon, here ſpoken of, to diſtinct apprehenſions of every attribute and perfection, every notion and character of the Deity, that renders him the proper object of worſhip, obedience, truſt and confidence. He was perſuaded, that to God belongs power, and that he is able to do whatever he pleaſeth in heaven and on earth. He knew what David inculcated upon his ſon Solomon, that God *ſearcheth all hearts, that if men ſeek him, he will be found of them, and that if they forſake him, he will caſt them off for ever*, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. or, as the apoſtle in the words before cited, *that God is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.*

2. In fearing God the Lord, is implied worſhipping him, or making an open profeſſion of true religion. Obadiah ſo feared the Lord, as to worſhip him, and no other. It was known to Ahab, and to all his people in general, eſpecially

cially thoſe who were in the chief city, and at court, that he feared the Lord.

He worſhipped and ſerved God according to the rules of reaſon, and the directions of the law of Moſes, the revelation that had been made to the people of Iſrael. It was the firſt of the principal commandments of that law. *Thou ſhalt have no other gods before me.* The next commandment is: *Thou ſhalt not make unto thyſelf a graven image, the likeneſs of any thing. Thou ſhalt not bow down thyſelf to them, and ſerve them.* And according to thoſe laws, given to the people of Iſrael by Jehovah, as their king and governor, he who worſhipped any other God was to be cut off from his people. This perſon reſpected thoſe laws, and the ſanctions by which they were enforced: and though many did not regard them, he did. He was perſuaded, that God was able to reward the obedient and puniſh tranſgreſſors.

In the following chapter Elijah, lamenting his caſe, ſays, he *only was left*, 1 Kings xix. 14. But God aſſures him, that *he had left to him ſeven thouſand in Iſrael, all the knees that had not bowed unto Baal*, ver. 18. Obadiah was one of theſe, but more known, as a worſhipper and ſervant of the true God, than many of that number.

3. Fearing the Lord implies obſerving the precepts of true religion, or making the will of God, ſo far as we are acquainted with it, the rule of our conduct.

This is an ordinary meaning of the fear of the Lord in ſcripture. It includes all religion in general. At leaſt obedience is repreſented as ſo connected with fearing God, as to be a neceſſary concomitant, or immediate effect of it. For it is ſaid, that *the fear of the Lord is to depart from evil*, Prov. viii. 13. Again, *By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil*, ch. xvi. 6. And, *Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty*, or concern *of man*, Ecc. xii. 13.

So Moſes inſtructed the people under his care: *Now theſe are the commandments, and ſtatutes, and judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you: that thou mighteſt fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his ſtatutes and commandments, which I command thee*, Deut. vi. 1, 2.

For certain, religion, or the fear of God, is not a ſpeculative ſcience. It lies not barely in admiring thoughts and ſublime conceptions of the Deity. God is not only a being of great power and underſtanding, but he is alſo a righteous, holy being; true, gracious, merciful. And a true worſhipper

of

of God is led to an imitation of him in thoſe perfections. All hopes of his favour depend upon a conformity to him therein. And truth, righteouſneſs and goodneſs are the great things in thoſe laws which have been delivered by his authority.

Such an one the perſon in the text evidently was. There was no one beſides, in whom Ahab could ſo ſafely confide for an upright and conſcientious diſcharge of any office and commiſſion in which the welfare of his kingdom was concerned.

4. It is here alſo ſaid of Obadiah, that he feared the Lord from his youth; that is, from very early age to that time. As ſoon as he was arrived to a full exerciſe of his reaſon, and came to be ſenſible of moral obligations; he had by his own voluntary and ſedate judgment and choice ſignified his approbation of the great truths, and principles, and precepts of religion. From the beginning he had been perſuaded, that the Lord Jehovah is God alone; and all his days he had worſhipped and ſerved him as the one true God, and loved him with all his heart and ſoul: eſteeming his ſervice the moſt honourable, the moſt delightful, and the moſt profitable ſervice which any creature can be engaged in. He had likewiſe in the whole courſe of his life had a ſtrict and conſcientious reſpect to the great rules of right and wrong. Such had been his early reſolution and practice: and the reſt of his life to that time was of the ſame tenour.

I preſume I do not put too much into the deſcription of this property, fearing the Lord; or the character of the perſon here ſpoken of. I have ſtudiouſly avoided ſo doing. We are not obliged to conceive of Obadiah, as perfect, or without ſin: but he was upright, he truly feared God, and ſincerely reſpected all his laws. He had been free from great tranſgreſſions: and the failings, or offences of a leſſer kind, which he had been ſurpriſed into, were not allowed of, nor perſiſted in.

This is what is implied in fearing God from the youth.

II. In the next place we are to obſerve the virtue of this.

1. It was partly owing to a quick diſcernment of the truth and value of things. The things of religion were controverted in his time. The grounds and reaſons of the worſhip of Jehovah and Baal were debated. Or, if the idolatrous worſhip of Baal was not begun in Iſrael, in his early youth: it is, nevertheleſs, likely that there were ſome queſtions

put concerning the high places ſet up by Jeroboam, who had been followed in ſome meaſure by all, or moſt of the ſucceeding kings of Iſrael. Obadiah ſoon diſcerned the merits of the controverſy. By the help of a good underſtanding he readily perceived, who ought to be worſhipped as the true God, and what is the moſt acceptable way of worſhipping, and wherein true religion principally conſiſts.

2. He gave a ſerious attention to the things of religion, and carefully weighed and examined them. His right choice was not ſolely owing to a quick underſtanding and ready apprehenſion. But he uſed diligence and application. He perceived religion to be a weighty concern, and he beſtowed many ſerious thoughts upon it. He was early ſenſible, that a right determination at firſt would have a great effect on the reſt of his life.

If he had the advantage of good inſtructions from the beginning, he did not neglect them, but attended to them, meditated upon them, and let thoſe things which appeared reaſonable ſink down in his heart. Moreover, as he had opportunity, he ſtudied the laws of God, recorded in thoſe ſcriptures, which were in the hands of the people of Iſrael. And he read with a mind open to conviction, reſolving to receive what appeared to be the will of God, and act according to it: whether it ſhould be for his own preſent intereſt, and tend to his promotion and advancement in the world or not. By this means his judgment was well informed, and his reſolutions ſettled upon a firm foundation.

I make no ſcruple of mentioning this particular here; for I think there is good ground for it. Without this, it is not eaſy to conceive how Obadiah's conduct ſhould have been ſuch as it was.

And certainly this ought to be obſerved by young perſons. It is deſirable, to underſtand ſome art or buſineſs, by which men may ſubſiſt in the world. It is alſo deſirable, to underſtand the things of religion. They who have a quick apprehenſion, have a great advantage, provided they apply their thoughts this way. Nevertheleſs, there are few or none, but may attain to a competent knowledge of the great truths and obligations of religion, and the grounds of them; if they are attentive, and ſeriouſly inquiſitive about them. Moſes reminds the people of Iſrael: *The commandment, which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it afar off: but it is nigh thee, that thou*

*mayeſt*

*mayeſt hear it and do it*, Deut. xxx. 11, 12. The revelation of the goſpel, ſuperadded to that of the law, is not deſigned to make the principles of religion more abſtruſe and difficult: but more eaſy, more intelligible, more affecting, which muſt be for the good of all men.

3. Obadiah's fearing the Lord from his youth was partly owing to a fixed purpoſe and reſolution of acting according to the rule of right; and that no temptations of any kind ſhould induce him to act contrary to his ſedate judgment.

We may well put this into the character we are obſerving. In the courſe of his life there had offered to him temptations of various kinds: ſome ſuited to youthful affections, others more eſpecially ſuited to the common and prevailing paſſions of mature age. But in every ſtage of life his conduct had been uniformly religious: and though he lived at a time, when multitudes did evil, he had not followed them. Though the way of religion was then a ſtrait path, and almoſt deſerted, his feet had not declined from the way of it. We cannot but conclude from hence, that the reſolution of Obadiah was very firm.

4. We do alſo reaſonably ſuppoſe, that this ſteady good conduct was not without conſtant circumſpection and watchfulneſs. Indeed, we are all encompaſſed with ſnares, which makes it needful to be upon our guard. Undoubtedly this perſon had *kept his heart with diligence*, Prov. iv. 23. He had attended to the frame of his mind. He uſed his beſt endeavours to maintain the fervour of his love to God, and a ſincere reſpect for his laws. His mind was carefully kept free from ambition and covetouſneſs: and he looked with a jealous eye upon every thing and perſon, that tended to abate his zeal for God and religion, and leſſen his abhorrence for that which is evil.

This temper of watchfulneſs he had preſerved always, by which means he had been greatly aſſiſted in fearing God from his youth.

III. In the third place I ſhould ſhew the benefit of ſo fearing the Lord. But I need not enlarge, having had frequent occaſions to touch upon this point.

1. They who fear the Lord from their youth up, enjoy the pleaſure and comfort of a religious life: which is no ſmall advantage. For, as Solomon ſays of wiſdom, *her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 17. Such have the ſatisfaction of approving themſelves to God, and doing

the things that pleaſe the Sovereign of the world. Their minds are rightly diſpoſed, and their conduct approves itſelf to their own judgment. And they avoid the bitterneſs of that repentance, which is neceſſary for thoſe who have greatly ſtrayed from wiſdom's ways.

2. They who fear God from their youth may, and often do become eminent in piety. Their continued practice of virtue renders them perfect in it. So was this perſon. It appears from the account which we have of him here. The writer of this hiſtory in the book of Kings obſerves it to his honour expreſsly: *Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly.* His virtuous habits were confirmed, and almoſt above temptation. He had a poſt of high honour: but he poſſeſſed it without any ſinful compliances. Nor did he at all conceal his regard for God and true religion: but was known to be a worſhipper of the God of heaven. When his prophets, who were moſt zealous for God, and taught the people the knowledge of him, were in danger; at the hazard of all his own intereſts, he took care of them: he hid them from their perſecutors, and provided for them. At the ſame time his diſintereſtedneſs and integrity in public affairs, and the diſcharge of civil offices, was ſo conſpicuous, that he was chief miniſter to a prince, who was an enemy to his religious principles. By which we perceive, that Obadiah knew how to give to Cæſar the things that are Cæſar's, without denying to God what was due to him. In a word, this perſon, who had *feared God from his youth,* was now eminent in the various parts of good conduct, and ready to every good word and work.

3. They who fear God from their youth, eſpecially, if it be with much ſteadineſs, are uſeful in the world many ways. Such men promote the good of ſociety in their ſeveral ſtations. They alſo adorn, and recommend religion to others. By their means ſome are brought into a good liking of its ways: or are induced to conſider and examine its pretenſions, till they find them juſt and reaſonable. Others are confirmed, and they perſevere with joy and reſolution. It is very likely, that many pious Iſraelites were animated and encouraged by the example of Obadiah: though their circumſtances were ſuch, that they could not all act with the ſame openneſs that he did. They were obliged to greater privacy. But yet they did not bow the knee to Baal, or render him any act of homage.

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4. They who fear God from their youth have the happineſs of being always prepared for the various events of providence. If they are removed hence, their end is peace, and their reward is ſure. If they live, they go on to perform the duties of life: and are the beſt qualified of any men to bear the troubles and afflictions of this ſtate with a calm and compoſed mind, and comfortable truſt in God. For *God is their refuge, and their portion in the land of the living*, Pſ. cxlii. 5. *They have none in heaven but him. Nor is their any upon earth, whom they deſire in compariſon of him. And when fleſh and heart fail, God is the ſtrength of their heart, and their portion for ever*, Pſ. lxxiii. 25, 26.

Application. What has been now obſerved ſhould induce all, whatever is their age of life, to fear the Lord.

They who are in early age have encouragement to give up themſelves to God now, without delay, and to fear and ſerve him henceforward all the days of their life. There is great virtue in ſo doing. And it will be attended with very deſirable advantages. None will diſcourage them from being early in this deſign. They who have feared God from their youth, will readily aſſure them, that it is the wiſeſt thing that can be done. They who are now ſerious and religious at length, after trying the ways of ſin, will likewiſe aſſure them, that if they neglect the preſent opportunity, and defer to come to a full determination, and form effectual reſolutions of obedience to all God's commandments; that delay will ſome time be matter of grief and bitter lamentation.

This diſcourſe then may be conſidered as an invitation to young perſons, to be truly religious without delay: to weigh and conſider the things of religion ſeriouſly, and to determine accordingly: to *remember now their Creator in the days of their youth*, Ecc. xii. 1. and to ſerve him conſtantly with inviolable fidelity.

But it ſuggeſts no diſcouragements to others, who have as yet deferred. It does indeed ſhew, in ſome meaſure, the evil of procraſtination. But it does not inſinuate, that there is no hope or remedy for thoſe who have long delayed.

They who have feared God from their youth have ſome diſtinction. They were early wiſe, and they have proceeded in wiſdom's paths. But they are not taught to boaſt, or

ſay ſcornfully: they are not, as other men. They likewiſe have failings: and do own, that if God were ſtrict to mark iniquity, they could not be juſtified in his ſight. Their hopes therefore are founded in the mercy of God. They believe, and it is what they would recommend to the conſideration of others: that *with God there is forgiveneſs, that he may be feared*, Pſ. cxxx. 4. and ſerved by ſuch weak and fallible creatures as we are.

Goodneſs is as certainly a property of the Deity, as any other. If ſinful men *forſake the evil of their ways, and* unfeignedly *return to God*, they will find reſt for their ſouls: for *he will have mercy upon them, and will abundantly pardon*, Iſ. lv. 7.

## SERMON X.

### A FUTURE STATE PROVEABLE BY REASON.

PSALM. lxxxiv. 11.

*For the Lord God is a ſun and ſhield. The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

*The Lord God is a ſun.* He is not only glorious and excellent in himſelf: but from him iſſue ſtreams of knowledge and wiſdom, joy and comfort. Whatever the ſun is to the material world, that God is in the moſt eminent manner to his people.

He is alſo *a ſhield*. God is not only a light to guide and direct, but likewiſe a ſhield to protect and defend. He can ſecure us in the midſt of dangers, and defend from the violent and artful deſigns and attempts of enemies.

*The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly.* He will beſtow every kind of good, both favour and honour. Nor will he give ſparingly; but will plentifully enrich, and abundantly bleſs them that walk uprightly.

By which uprightneſs is not meant abſolute perfection, but ſincerity; ſerving God in truth, and with a willing mind: and having a reſpect to all his commandments: not only obſerving, very punctually, ordinances of poſitive appointment,

appointment, and the ſtated ſeaſons of public worſhip: but living in the practice of all righteouſneſs. It is, to be faithful to God in all circumſtances, in proſperity and adverſity, and in the general tenour of our life and converſation. Such as theſe God will abundantly bleſs.

Having thus briefly explained theſe words, I ſhall mention ſome obſervations.

I. Here is a property of the Divine Being, which deſerves our ſerious attention. As God is full and perfect in himſelf, ſo he favours, and has a ſpecial regard for righteous and upright men.

The Pſalmiſt, and other good men, who lived under the Moſaic diſpenſation, did, poſſibly, expect temporal advantages for the truly religious, more than it is reaſonable for us to do under the goſpel. But in general the obſervation muſt be right: the truth of it may be depended upon, and ought to be maintained in all times: that *God loveth righteouſneſs: his countenance beholds the upright,* Pſ. xi. 7. Theſe he approves and favours; whilſt he is diſpleaſed with ſuch as wilfully tranſgreſs, or contemptuouſly neglect and diſregard his holy laws.

II. We ſhould improve this truth for our eſtabliſhment in the ſteady and delightful practice of all holineſs.

Virtue, real righteouſneſs, has an intrinſic excellence: it is fit in itſelf, and very becoming. But we ought to take in every other conſideration that tends to ſecure the practice of virtue, and perſeverance therein, in this ſtate of temptation. We ſhould ſtrengthen ourſelves by a reſpect to the divine will, as well as by a regard to the reaſon of things.

When we do ſo, mindful of the divine authority, deſirous of his favour, and fearing his diſpleaſure, we may be ſaid to walk with God. There will be then a comfortable fellowſhip between God and his rational creatures. We ſteadily and conſcientiouſly eye his commands. He graciouſly approves us, and the way we are in: and will manifeſt himſelf favourably to us.

III. We may hence receive encouragement to truſt in God, and ſerve him faithfully in every circumſtance of life, even though we are in ſome difficulties and troubles, as the Pſalmiſt now was.

For virtue, though well-pleaſing to God, may be tried and exerciſed. The reward is ſure, though deferred: and

it may be the greater in the end, if by afflictions it be refined, improved and perfected.

IV. This text may teach men to be cautious, how they injure, offend, or grieve any ſincere and upright perſons whom God approves.

It is ſpoken of as a remarkable inſtance of the folly of bad men: *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people, as they eat bread, and call not upon God!* Pſ. xiv. 4.

We ought to be careful, how we offend any walking in the way of righteouſneſs: though they appear to us to be miſtaken in ſome things. It muſt be imprudent to oppoſe thoſe, who have God for a ſun and ſhield. At the ſame time it appears to be our duty, to uphold to the utmoſt of our power the cauſe of the righteous. This ſeems to be what David engages to do, if ſettled in peace and proſperity. *O my ſoul, thou haſt ſaid unto God: thou art my Lord. My goodneſs extendeth not unto thee, but unto the ſaints, that are in the earth, even to the excellent, in whom is all my delight,* Pſ. xvi. 2, 3. 'I have always truſted in God: and it has 'been my unfeigned deſire to ſerve him. Not that I there- 'by merit of him. Nor is he advantaged by my ſervices. 'But I ſhall think it a happineſs, if ever I have it in my 'power, to protect and encourage upright men, whom 'I ſincerely love and eſteem.'

V. We are alſo led to obſerve upon theſe words, that from the divine perfections may be argued a future ſtate of recompenſes.

This obſervation I intend to enlarge upon.

1. In the firſt place I ſhall propoſe an argument for a future ſtate from reaſon.

2. I ſhall conſider ſome objections againſt this doctrine.

3. I will endeavour to anſwer divers inquiries relating to this matter.

4. And then conclude with ſome inferences.

1.) The argument from reaſon in behalf of a future ſtate of recompenſes is to this purpoſe.

It appears to us agreeable to the perfections of God, that he ſhould ſhew favour to good and virtuous men. But it is obvious to all, and more eſpecially evident to careful obſervers, that good and bad men are not much diſtinguiſhed in this world. This, I ſay, is obvious to all, and eſpecially manifeſt to thoſe, whoſe obſervations are of the greateſt compaſs: who have conſidered the conſequences of

virtue

virtue and vice, relating to this life: who have compared the conduct of good and bad with the proſperous or afflictive circumſtances they have been in: who have taken notice of the rules and maxims, the ſucceſſes and diſappointments of the great and ſmall, the high and low of mankind.

How frequent and copious upon this head is Solomon, who had himſelf enjoyed ſo much power and grandeur, and had been very curious in his remarks upon men and things! *All things have I ſeen in the days of my vanity. There is a juſt man that periſheth in his righteouſneſs: and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedneſs*, Ecc. vii. 15. And, *there is a vanity, which is done upon the earth, that there be juſt men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked*, ch. viii. 14. *And there be wicked men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous. No man knoweth love or hatred by all that is before him. All things come alike to all. There is one event to the righteous, and the wicked: . . . to him that ſacrificeth, and to him that ſacrificeth not. As is the good, ſo is the ſinner. . . . This is an evil among all things that are done under the ſun. There is one event unto all*, ch. ix. 1—3.

And afterwards: *This wiſdom have I ſeen under the ſun: and it ſeemed great unto me. There was a little city, and few men within it: and there came a great king againſt it, and beſieged it, and built great bulwarks againſt it. Now there was found in it a poor wiſe man: and he by his wiſdom delivered the city. Yet no man remembered that ſame poor man*, ver. 13—15. If the place had been ſaved by ſome rich citizen, the performance would have been applauded: and honour, and many diſtinguiſhing advantages would have been heaped upon him. But the great and eminent wiſdom of the poor man was deſpiſed and forgotten, becauſe of his mean condition. Such is the partiality of men! ſuch their reſpect for outward appearances! So that ſuitable recompenſes are not to be looked for from fellow-creatures, in proportion to virtue, or wiſdom, from any conſiderations whatever, either of gratitude, or intereſt.

Theſe and other things ſaid by Solomon, are not propoſed with a view to diſparage the divine government. For, notwithſtanding all theſe diſorders and inequalities in the preſent ſcene of things, he is perſuaded of the righteouſneſs, and of the remunerative, rewarding providence of God in due time. For which reaſon he ſhuts up his book with that important advice: *Let us hear the concluſion of the*

*the whole matter. Fear God, and keep his commandments. For this is the whole of man:* his whole duty, or his whole intereſt and happineſs. *For God will bring every work into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* And indeed, in the courſe of his obſervations, in that work, he more than once aſſerts the righteouſneſs of God, and his favourable reſpect to good men. *Though a ſinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged: yet ſurely I know, that it ſhall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him,* viii. 12.

I forbear to recite any paſſages at length from any of the Pſalms: in which the proſperity of bad men, and the afflictions and ſufferings of the righteous are taken notice of. See Pſ. xvii. and lxxiii.

With regard then to this inquiry: whether the reaſon of men, or light of nature, teaches a future ſtate of recompenſes: we may put the iſſue upon this one queſtion: *Can we maintain the perfections of God, and the wiſdom of his government, upon the ſuppoſition, that there is to be no future ſtate of recompenſe for good or bad?* Would it be agreeable to his wiſdom, his righteouſneſs, and goodneſs, *that all things ſhould always come alike to all? and that there ſhould be finally one and the ſame event to the good and the bad?* If it be not, then we may be aſſured, there is another ſtate after this. For we are perſuaded of the perfection of the Deity. We have antecedent proof of this in the reaſon of things. God is as certainly wiſe, and holy, as he is knowing and powerful. It may be righteous and equitable, to permit virtue to be tried with afflictions and ſorrows for a while: but it cannot be conſiſtent with the perfection and rectitude of the Divine Being, the creator and governor of the world, to ſuffer good men to periſh finally in their righteouſneſs.

It may be ſaid, that virtue has a reward in this world. For it is in itſelf an excellence and perfection: and cannot but be choſen by every rational and conſiderate perſon. And, if it be choſen and prefered, it muſt be an advantage, and contain in itſelf its own reward.

And it muſt be owned, that virtue is excellent, and therefore is approved. But yet it is expoſed to many difficulties in this world, where iniquity is frequent: where there is abundance of partiality, and ingratitude, and perpetual emulation and contention: where ſucceſs and proſperity are not annexed to any good diſpoſitions, nor to the moſt valuable ſervices. As Solomon ſays: *Wiſdom is better*

*than*

*than weapons of war. But one ſinner deſtroyeth much good,* Ecc. ix. 18.

Nor can it be allowed to be fit, that he who has a ſtrict regard to the reaſon of things, who conſcientiouſly endeavours to perform his duty to God and man, and laments all the neglects and tranſgreſſions, which at any time he falls into, ſhould upon the whole, and in the end, at the moſt, have only ſome ſmall degree of happineſs above thoſe, who without reluctance break through all the obligations of reaſon and religion. Would this be anſwerable to the deſcriptions of the divine perfection, ſometimes given by wiſe and good men? Would it be ſuitable to the inſtruction in the text, and the conſequence thence deduced? *The Lord God is a ſun and ſhield. The Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hoſts, bleſſed is the man that truſteth in thee.*

Man is the moſt excellent part of this lower creation. His rational faculties give him a vaſt ſuperiority above the reſt of the beings on this earth. Nevertheleſs, he is on ſome accounts the leaſt provided for of any, if there be no future ſtate: and his rational powers the leaſt of all taken care of. He has a diſcernment between good and evil: and a power of chooſing the one, and refuſing the other. He is therefore the ſubject of moral government, and accountable to his Creator, who is all-knowing, and all-powerful. But this moral government of the Divine Being would be very imperfectly adminiſtered, if there are to be no other diſtinctions made between good and bad, than thoſe in this preſent life.

Suppoſing ſuch a being formed, as juſt deſcribed, he will certainly be rewarded or puniſhed, according to his choice and conduct. As that is not done now, it is reaſonable to expect, that it ſhall be done hereafter, in another ſtate.

A learned writer diſcourſing on this very point, has this obſervation. 'Were * there to be no life hereafter, every 'man would undoubtedly be happy or unhappy here in 'proportion to his virtues and vices. All the events and 'diſpenſations of Providence would turn upon this hinge, 'and the bleſſings of heaven be diſtributed by this rule. 'But ſince we find it in fact very much otherwiſe, the 'doctrine before us ſeems as clear and certain, as that 'God *loveth righteouſneſs, and hateth iniquity.*'

* Five Sermons, &c. p. 84, 85.

What

What encouragement would there be, to deny preſent appetite and inclination? or to forego private intereſt for the ſake of the public? What inducement could there be, with preſent ſelf-denial, to ſeek the happineſs of particular perſons, if there be no future recompenſes?

What profit could there be of the ſtudy of virtue? What inducement to advance therein, if the progreſs of it is to come to an end at death, and can laſt no longer, at the utmoſt, than the period of this very ſhort and uncertain life? What benefit has ſuch an one from his labour and application in the higheſt deſign conceivable? What profit has he of his labour, who has contemplated the divine perfections, who has conſidered the reaſon of things, the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of its contrary: who has moderated and ſubdued his affections, till he has gained in a great meaſure the conqueſt of anger, ill-will, envy, and every paſſion, or degree of it, that is unworthy his nature? What profit, I ſay, is there of this labour and increaſe, if this noble deſign is to come to an end at the period of this mortal life?

This might be an indelible blemiſh on the divine government, if it could be ſuppoſed. For it is as eaſy for God to raiſe to another life, or to continue the rational life, the thinking power, as to beſtow it at firſt.

This argument therefore for a future ſtate, which reaſon affords from the conſideration of the divine perfections, and the circumſtances of things in this world is concluſive.

It is alſo obvious. And accordingly different recompenſes for good and bad, in another ſtate after this, have been the general belief and expectation of all nations and people upon the face of the earth. And hereby ſome have been animated to great and generous actions: and have been induced, with much diſintereſtedneſs, to promote religious truth, and virtuous conduct among their fellow-citizens and countrymen: and have at length freely and deliberately ſubmitted to ſufferings from over-ruling power and malice: when by compliance with the majority, and recanting the principles they had recommended, they might have ſaved themſelves, and obtained preferment.

2.) I ſhall now conſider objections.

Obj. 1. It may be ſaid: did not ſome of the ancient heathens, and particularly ſome of the philoſophers, diſpute or deny this doctrine?

To

To which I anſwer, that ſome perſons entering far into abſtruſe and metaphyſical ſpeculations about the Deity, and matter, and the human ſoul: and taking offence at the vulgar, prevailing ſentiments concerning future rewards and puniſhments, as low and mean, might diſpute the truth of this expectation, or admit of doubts about it. But that future recompenſes were the common belief of heathen people, is evident from many ancient writings ſtill extant. And if ſome, and thoſe of reputed knowledge and learning, did by ſome diſcourſes weaken this expectation, it does not follow, that there was no good foundation for it in reaſon. For it is not uncommon for men, by prejudice and falſe reaſonings, to be miſled againſt evidence: as we ſtill ſee among Chriſtians. The Sadducees in our Saviour's time denied the reſurrection of the body, and all rewards after this life. But yet it cannot be ſaid, that the Jewiſh people at that time had no good reaſon to expect another life after this.

Obj. 2. St. Paul ſays, that Jeſus Chriſt *had aboliſhed death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the goſpel*, 2 Tim. i. 10. True. But theſe expreſſions are to be underſtood comparatively, not abſolutely: as if a future ſtate of immortal life had been altogether hid from men, till the coming of Chriſt. For it is certain, that among the Jews at leaſt there were expectations of a reſurrection, and of eternal life. And the apoſtle to the Hebrews ſpeaking of the ancient patriarchs, ſays: *they confeſſed, that they were pilgrims and ſtrangers on the earth: and looked for a city which has foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God*, Heb. xi. 10, 13. The meaning therefore of that text is, in general, that the doctrine of a future ſtate had been ſet in a much clearer light by the goſpel than before.

Obj. 3. St. Paul writing to the Chriſtians at Epheſus, who were once in the darkneſs of heatheniſm, reminds them: *that at that time they were without Chriſt, being alienated from the commonwealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers from the covenants of promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 12.

But theſe expreſſions ſhould not be underſtood abſolutely, as if thoſe perſons had not, and could not have any knowledge of God, or hopes from him. For in the epiſtle to the Romans the apoſtle ſays of gentile people, that *whereas they knew God, they glorified him not as God*; and that *they knew the judgment of God*, though they did not act accordingly, Rom. i. 21,

i. 21, 32. Therefore thoſe Epheſians alſo, before their converſion to Chriſtianity, were without God, and without hope, comparatively. They had not that knowledge, and that hope, which they now had through the goſpel, nor which the Jews had; they having been, in their gentile ſtate, ſtrangers from the covenants of promiſe, delivered to that people.

Obj. 4. Still it may be urged: would it not be more for the honour of the goſpel, to ſuppoſe, that a future ſtate is an entirely new diſcovery? Would it not tend to induce people, who have only the light of nature, to embrace the Chriſtian religion, if they were told, that they have not any ground at all for the belief of a future life, and that revelation alone can give men hopes of it?

I anſwer: no. This would not be of uſe. If you met a heathen, who already had an apprehenſion of future recompenſes for good and bad: [which is certainly the general expectation of all people upon the face of the earth: though their ideas may be low and imperfect, yet however ſomewhat inviting and agreeable for the good, and diſagreeable and frightful for the bad:] would you venture to tell him, that he has no foundation for ſuch a belief? and that it is to be had from the goſpel only? I think, we ſhould be cautious of ſaying any thing, which would tend to diminiſh in men honourable apprehenſions of the Deity.

It cannot but be of advantage for men to have honourable ſentiments of God, as a being of wiſdom, power, righteouſneſs, goodneſs and equity. Otherwiſe, what reaſon can they have to receive a revelation, which may be depended upon as true and genuine?

And it muſt always be ſufficient to induce men to receive a revelation, to ſhew them, that it has unconteſted marks and evidences of a divine original, from miraculous works performed in ſupport of it: and that it affords men many advantages, ſuperior to thoſe of the light of nature.

Accordingly, St. Paul was not wont to deny or conteſt, but to improve the natural notions which men had of religion. This we perceive in his diſcourſe at Athens, ſaying: *God that made the world, and all things therein, does not dwell in temples made with hands: neither is he worſhipped with men's hands, as if he needed any thing:* and, that *he is not far from every one of us,* Acts xvii. 24, 25. *For in him we live, and move, and have our being. As certain alſo of your own*

*own poets have ſaid: for we are alſo his offspring. Foraſmuch then, as we are the offspring of God; we ought not to think, that the Godhead is like unto gold, or ſilver, or ſtone, graven by art and man's device,* ver. 27—29. And in another diſcourſe to heathen people he ſays: *God had not* in former times *left himſelf without witneſs,* though he had not given them an expreſs revelation, *foraſmuch as he did good, and gave us rain, and fruitful ſeaſons, filling our hearts with food and gladneſs,* chap. xiv. 17.

And it ſeems to me, that St. Paul often argues the truth and certainty of future recompenſes in a rational way, much in the ſame manner that we have now done, from the conſideration of the preſent ſtate of things, and the perfections of the Divine Being: *Seeing it is a righteous thing with God, to recompenſe tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled, reſt with us, when the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from heaven . . . to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the goſpel,* 2 Theſſ. i. 6, 7. This, he ſays, is a righteous thing with God: that is, it is reaſonable, and fit, and becoming the divine perfection.

And in the epiſtle to the Hebrews it is ſaid: *He that cometh to God, muſt believe, that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him,* Heb. xi. 6. Which is as much as to ſay, that there can be no religion without believing, that God is, and that he is a rewarder of virtuous and upright, and an avenger of evil men. If therefore the light of nature does not teach theſe principles, there can be no natural religion: and they who have not the benefit of revelation, are excuſable in their irregularities. But that is contrary to the apoſtle's long and full argument at the beginning of the epiſtle to the Romans. Where he ſays: *That which may be known of God is manifeſt in them: . . . For the inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made. So that they are without excuſe: becauſe that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God,* Rom. i. 19—21. And again: *As many as have ſinned without law,* that is, who have not had the benefit of revelation: *ſhall alſo periſh without law,* chap. ii. 12. They ſhall not be judged by a revealed law, but by the laws and rules of reaſon only.

3.) In the third place I propoſed to take notice of ſome inquiries, relating to this matter. But they ſhall be theſe three only, as of ſpecial moment.

Queſtion

Queſtion 1. What notion could men form of the future recompenſes of good and bad by the light of reaſon?

I anſwer: it is highly probable, that their ideas would fall much ſhort of thoſe which revelation is able to afford. But, in general, men might refer themſelves to the judgment of God, as equitable and impartial. They would, it is likely, ſuppoſe the virtuous to be ſeparated from the wicked: and whilſt theſe are puniſhed with a variety of torments, they would conceive the virtuous to be diſpoſed of in ſome delightful regions, and abodes, enjoying intellectual entertainments, or the pleaſures of the mind: improving themſelves and one another in agreeable converſation, and contemplating the Deity, the all-perfect mind, and thoſe works of his, with which they are acquainted, and continually advancing in the diſcovery of truth, and the improvement of virtuous habits.

Q. 2. Does reaſon afford any ground to ſuppoſe, that the future ſtate of happineſs for good men will be eternal, or of perpetual duration.

I think it does. For life, which is to come to an end, is not a reward for a rational being, who aſpires to immortality. The period in view, though at the diſtance of many years, or ages, as we now compute time, would blaſt every enjoyment, and reduce the happineſs of the moſt agreeable ſituation to nothing, and render it mere vanity and emptineſs.

Moreover, we ſuppoſe, theſe beings, in a ſtate of recompenſe, to be paſt a ſtate of trial, and to be ſo confirmed in virtue, and to be ſo much out of the way of temptations, as to be in little or no danger of tranſgreſſing any reaſonable laws, and of thereby offending God. What reaſon then can be aſſigned, why they ſhould be removed, or their condition be altered for the worſe?

Once more: theſe virtuous beings, once placed in a ſtate of great advantage, will be continually improving in knowledge and virtue. The temper of the mind, and their adorations, and all their ſervices, will be more and more perfect and delightful; and alſo more acceptable to the Deity. Their love of God is continually growing more and more ardent, and their deſire toward him more ſtrong and vehement. How contrary to reaſon is it to ſuppoſe, that theſe ſo improved beings ſhould be at length deſtroyed or annihilated, with the approbation and by the almighty power of God!

As the learned writer, before cited, ſays: 'The † longer

† As before, p. 95. 'virtuous

'virtuous men live in ſuch a ſtate, the fitter they muſt be for 'life: and therefore we may preſume, the leſs will be the 'danger of extinction. Their faculties muſt grow, their capa-'cities enlarge, and all their improvements increaſe, through 'every part of duration. Great advances muſt be ever 'made in knowledge, virtue and happineſs. They muſt be 'continually more and more capable of contemplating, ad-'miring and enjoying the Author of all good, and the foun-'tain of all perfection. To imagine, after this progreſs, and 'theſe exaltations of nature, that God ſhould cut the thread 'of their exiſtence, and put an end to their being, is to 'ſuppoſe him acting, ſo far as we can judge, contrary to 'the reaſon of things, and the chief ends of the creation.'

Q. 3. Does reaſon teach us to hope, that good men may paſs directly into a ſtate of happineſs after death? Or, does it not leave room to apprehend, that imperfectly good men muſt after this life undergo ſome farther trial for their purification, before they enter upon a ſtate of unmixed happineſs, free from all grief and pain?

Here, I apprehend reaſon to be at a loſs: and that it muſt leave this point undecided. All that can be done is for men, in that caſe, to reſign themſelves to God, and refer themſelves to his equitable judgment and diſpoſal: hoping, and believing, (if they have here endeavoured to approve themſelves to him by an upright converſation) that he will not leave them utterly to periſh: and that he will ſome time, either immediately after death, or after ſome farther trials and purifications, admit and advance them to a condition of much comfort and joy.

I preſume, this may be a juſt ſolution of this queſtion. We may be confirmed in it by the conſideration, that the doctrine of tranſmigrations has been very common among thoſe who have had no other inſtruction than the light of nature.

4. I ſhall now conclude with the four following reflections.

1.) We hence perceive, that we have great reaſon to be thankful to God for the revelation of the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. Wherein there is ſo clear and affecting evidence of another life, ſuited to the capacities of all men: and alſo a juſt and attractive repreſentation of the glory and happineſs of it. A future ſtate, as aſcertained, and deſcribed in the goſpel,

affords the beſt ſupport under the afflictions, and the beſt aſſiſtance againſt the temptations of this world.

2.) This diſcourſe may confirm our faith in the goſpel revelation, and the aſſurances it gives of everlaſting happineſs for them that walk uprightly, or that believe in Jeſus Chriſt, and obey his commandments.

Chriſtians, who exerciſe their rational powers, and perceive the principles of revelation to be reaſonable, cannot but be firmly eſtabliſhed in the belief of them. They have the evidence of a two-fold argument: reaſon, and divine authority. Though the repreſentation, which revelation gives of the future happineſs for good men, ſurpaſſeth all that mere reaſon could encourage to hope for: that creates no difficulty. The thing is received with ready aſſent. God does not appear worſe, but better, more gracious, more bountiful, than the reaſon of men alone preſumed to think. And the mind being enlarged by the diſcoveries of revelation, it cheerfully admits the nobleſt and moſt delightful idea of the future recompenſes.

3.) This argument may deſerve the ſerious conſideration of thoſe who reject revelation.

For whether there be any revelation from God or not; there will be a reckoning, and ſuitable retributions after this life. Reaſon teaches as much beyond the poſſibility of a fair confutation, or well grounded doubt and queſtion. You will come into judgment after death, and receive according to the things done in the body. Let not then any ſhyneſs of that awful proceeding, which the goſpel ſpeaks of, in a general day of judgment, form any unhappy prejudice in the minds of any. For reaſon itſelf teaches, that the actions of men will paſs under a review, either in public, in one general judgment, or in particular: and that a retribution will be made accordingly.

Let all therefore attentively conſider the evidences of the goſpel revelation. For if it be atteſted by good evidence, and ſhould be rejected by men, to whom it is propoſed; this is one thing, of which they will give an account.

4.) Laſtly, the argument from reaſon in behalf of future recompenſes, may be made uſe of as a warning to ſome weak and inconſiderate Chriſtians: and eſtabliſh the perſuaſion, that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee God*, or attain to happineſs in a future ſtate.

The cogent argument for a future ſtate, now propoſed, is founded upon the divine perfections. God is not here, in this

this world, an avenger of evil, or a rewarder of good, ſo fully as is reaſonable to expect. Conſequently there will be another ſtate, and farther recompenſes for good and bad, according to their works here. No revelation therefore can propoſe an act of grace for obſtinate and impenitent ſinners. Reaſon and Revelation concur, and are entirely harmonious. Both ſay: *There is no peace to the wicked.* And: *It ſhall be well with the righteous.* But revelation excels in the juſtneſs of its deſcriptions of the miſery of the one, and the happineſs of the other.

## SERMON XI.

### THE GOSPEL THE TRUE WAY OF SALVATION.

ACTS xvi. 31.

*And they ſaid: believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved, and thy houſe.*

THESE words contain an anſwer to a very important queſtion: *What muſt I do to be ſaved?* And we have reaſon to think, that it is here rightly anſwered. It does therefore deſerve our ſerious and attentive obſervation.

St. Paul was now at Philippi, a Roman colony, and large city in Macedonia; where he preached the goſpel, without any very great moleſtation that we know of, till he healed the indiſpoſition of the maiden, ſaid to have a *ſpirit of divination*: by whom ſome artful men had made profit, pretending to anſwer the curious inquiries of people concerning divers matters. Theſe, now deprived of farther gain in that way, raiſed a clamour againſt the apoſtle, and thoſe with him, ſaying, that *they troubled the city, and taught cuſtoms contrary to their laws, as Romans.* And they ſo far incenſed both the people and the magiſtrates, that Paul, and Silas one of his fellow-labourers, *were beaten, and thruſt into priſon.* But there being in the night an earthquake, which was plainly miraculous: the priſon being ſhaken, the doors opened, and the fetters of all the priſoners looſed, whilſt yet no one eſcaped: the keeper of the priſon, who before had heard

ſomewhat of Paul and Silas, and had ſome general notion of their doctrine, now terrified, and perceiving this extraordinary event to be a divine interpoſition in their favour, put to his priſoners, with ſolicitude, and with reſpect and eſteem, hoping for a full and ſatisfactory anſwer, that momentous queſtion: *Sirs, what muſt I do to be ſaved?*

We need not, I think, heſitate to underſtand this queſtion in the moſt comprehenſive ſenſe. This perſon could not be ignorant of the general principles of religion, ſo far as uſually known by heathen people, living in the politer cities of Greece, and the Roman empire, who all had ſome notions of a future ſtate. Moreover, Paul and his fellow-labourers had been ſome time at Philippi. And the young woman beforementioned, had followed them in the ſtreets of the city, many, that is, ſeveral days, crying aloud: *Theſe men are ſervants of the moſt high God, which ſhew unto us the way of ſalvation.* When therefore the keeper of the priſon ſays: *Sirs, what muſt I do to be ſaved?* the queſtion cannot be reckoned leſs important for the meaning, than that put to our Saviour by the young man among the Jews, related in the goſpels: *What ſhall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* Matt. xix. 16. and Mark x. 17. And it is put, as it ſeems, with a better temper than that was.

The anſwer to that inquiry is in the text. *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved*: that is, 'Believe 'in Jeſus Chriſt as a divine teacher, and receive the doctrine 'taught by him, and you will know, how you may be ſaved. 'Obſerve and follow the precepts and rules of that doctrine, 'and you will obtain ſalvation.'

The former may be thought the primary and moſt obvious meaning of the words: but the latter is alſo implied. The queſtion is: *What muſt I do to be ſaved?* The anſwer is: *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: and thou ſhalt be ſaved.* That is, you will know what you ought to do in order to obtain ſalvation: you will have all the means of ſalvation, every thing requiſite for your direction and aſſiſtance. Conſequently, if you obſerve and follow the rules contained in the religion of Jeſus Chriſt, you will be ſaved.

There are therefore three things to be ſpoken to. Firſt, the direction here given: *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Secondly, the benefit propoſed and annexed thereto: *And thou ſhalt be ſaved.* Thirdly, the connection between faith in Jeſus Chriſt and ſalvation, with the evidence of it.

I. In

I. In the firſt place I ſhould ſhew, what is meant by *believing on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

One thing plainly implied is, believing him to be a divine teacher ſent from God: and that he is the Chriſt, or the Meſſiah, the great perſon ſpoken of by the prophets, and whom God had promiſed to ſend. This we may learn by comparing ſome texts in the goſpels.

In the ſixteenth of St. Matthew is an account, how our Lord aſked the diſciples concerning the opinions, which men had of him, and then their own. And when Peter anſwered, for himſelf, and the reſt: *Thou art the Chriſt, the Son of the living God*; he commended him, and declared him bleſſed.

Again, John vi. 68, 69. *Peter anſwered, and ſaid: Lord, to whom ſhould we go? Thou haſt the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are ſure, that thou art that Chriſt, the Son of the living God.*

John xi. 37. Martha ſays: *Yea Lord, I believe, that thou art the Chriſt, the Son of God, which ſhould come into the world.* And at ver. 41, 42. of the ſame chapter, our Lord having, at the grave of Lazarus, addreſſed a particular thankſgiving to the Father, adds: *And I know, that thou heareſt me always: but becauſe of the people that ſtand by, I ſaid it: that they might believe, that thou didſt ſend me.*

John xvi. 30. the diſciples ſay: *By this we believe, that thou cameſt forth from God.* And in the following chapter, our Lord, in his prayer and thankſgiving to the Father, ſays: *This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent.* And of the diſciples he ſays: ver. 8. *They have ſurely known, that I came out from thee: and have believed, that thou didſt ſend me.*

John vi. 28, 29. *Then ſaid they unto him: what ſhall we do, that we may work the works of God? Jeſus anſwered, and ſaid unto them: this is the work of God, that ye believe on him, whom he hath ſent.*

And it is often taken notice in the goſpels, that many believed on Jeſus, but the phariſees believed not: that is, they did not receive him as a prophet, or the great prophet that was to come into the world.

2. Another thing, included in faith in Chriſt, is believing his words, receiving the doctrine taught by him, or believing the Chriſtian religion.

This is ſo cloſely connected with the foregoing particular, that they ſeem to be both one and the ſame: and, certainly

are inſeparable. He who believes, that Jeſus is ſent of God, and the Chriſt, muſt believe that his words are true. However, I preſume, it is not amiſs to obſerve this diſtinctly.

Our Lord, who, as before ſhewn, often ſpeaks of believing in him, *whom God had ſent*, does alſo frequently ſpeak of believing, or receiving *his words*. For he had a doctrine. He was a prophet, or *a teacher ſent from God*. And receiving his doctrine is believing in him. What it was, we perceive from the hiſtory of his life, written by the evangeliſts. In general, it was: *repent*. Or, *repent, and believe the goſpel*. And to ſuch as received, and obeyed that doctrine, he promiſed everlaſting life.

John vii. 16, 17. *Jeſus anſwered them, and ſaid: my doctrine is not mine, but his that ſent me. If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of myſelf.* John xiv. 24. *The word, which you hear, is not mine: but the Father's which ſent me.* Many of the Jews could not receive his words, becauſe of their prevailing prejudices, and carnal affections. Of the diſciples he ſays: *I have given unto them the words, which thou gaveſt me: and they have received them, and have believed, that thou didſt ſend me*, John xvii. 8. Again he ſays: *The words that I ſpeak unto you, they are ſpirit, and they are life*, chap. vi. 63. And becauſe he had the *words of eternal life*, ver. 68. the diſciples believed in him, and determined to abide with him. And knowing the truth and importance of the doctrine, taught by him, he declares: *Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me and my words*, now, *of him alſo ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels*, Mark viii. 30.

Believing in Chriſt is often expreſſed by coming to him. John v. 40. *Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.* And Matt. xi. 28, 29. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden . . . . take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye ſhall find reſt for your ſouls.* The meaning of which can be no other, than that men ſhould become his diſciples, ſubmit themſelves to his inſtructions, and embrace the doctrine taught by him with divine authority.

They who believed in Jeſus, as ſent from God, and received his doctrine as a rule of life, became his diſciples: a word that includes all his followers in general, and is equivalent to believers: though the twelve, whom he alſo named apoſtles, are ſometimes called his diſciples, by way of

of eminence and diſtinction. But in the general, all who owned him for their maſter in things of religion, are his diſciples. As the diſciples of Moſes, or Plato, or Ariſtotle, are ſuch as take them for their maſters, and receive their ſcheme of religion, or philoſophy as true: ſo it is here, as we perceive from the ſtile of the Goſpels in many places. *And when it was day, he called unto him his diſciples: and of them he choſe twelve, whom he named apoſtles*, Luke vi. 13. Joſeph of Arimathea is called a *diſciple of Jeſus*: Matt. xxvii. 57—John xix. 38, that is, he was one who believed in him as a great prophet, even the Meſſiah, and received his doctrine as true, and from heaven. In the debate between the Jewiſh Rulers, and the man born blind, whom our Lord had miraculouſly healed, after many inquiries and anſwers, they ſaid to him again: *What did he unto thee? how opened he thy eyes? He anſwered them: I have told you, and ye did not hear. Wherefore would you hear it again? Will ye alſo be his diſciples? Then they reviled him, and ſaid: thou art his diſciple. But we are Moſes's diſciples*, John ix. 26—28. And long before this: *The diſciples of John, and of the Phariſees, faſt: but thy diſciples faſt not*, Mark ii. 18.

That word is often uſed in the Acts as equivalent to believer. *In thoſe days when the number of the diſciples was multiplied, there aroſe a murmuring of the Grecians againſt the Hebrews. Then the twelve called the multitude of the diſciples unto them*, ch. vi. 1, 2. *And the word of the Lord increaſed, and the number of the diſciples multiplied in Jeruſalem greatly*, ver. 7. *Now there was at Joppa a certain diſciple named Tabitha*, ch. ix. 36. Ananias, at Damaſcus, by whom Paul was baptized, is ſaid to be *a diſciple*, ch. ix. 10. Mnaſon is called *an old diſciple*, ch. xxi. 16. I alledge but one place more. *And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to paſs, that a whole year they aſſembled with the church, and taught much people. And the diſciples*, or believers, *were firſt called Chriſtians at Antioch*, ch. xi. 26.

This then, is faith in Jeſus Chriſt. To believe in him is to receive him as a divine teacher, and his doctrine as true: or to embrace the religion of Chriſt, and become his diſciples and followers.

But, then, two things are here ſuppoſed: Firſt, that men be inſtructed in the things concerning the Lord Jeſus, or be taught his doctrine. And ſecondly, that they attend to it, and underſtand it. As St. Paul ſays; *How ſhall they*

*believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how ſhall they hear without a preacher?* Rom. x. 14. So here. They ſaid: *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: and thou ſhalt be ſaved, thou and thy houſe. And they ſpake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his houſe.* And doubtleſs he attended diligently. It is true of him, which is ſaid of Lydia. *She heard us: whoſe heart the Lord opened, that ſhe attended to the things that were ſpoken of Paul,* Acts xvi. 14.

For this reaſon, that men might know the will of God, our Lord went over the *cities* and *villages* of the land of Iſrael, Matt. ix. 35.—Mark vi. 6. 56.—Luke xiii. 22, preaching the doctrine of the kingdom, laying hold of every opportunity, and affecting occurrence, to excite attention: calling to men, to hearken and underſtand, ſpeaking in a familiar manner, ſometimes uſing well-contrived parables and ſimilitudes, teaching the word to all ſorts of men, as they were able to bear it, in their ſynagogues, at the temple, at the houſes of Phariſees, when they made entertainments, and much company was preſent.

For this end he ſent forth the twelve, and the ſeventy, to go over the land of Iſrael, and prepare men for him: and afterwards he enlarged the commiſſion of the twelve, *to go and teach all nations.*

II. In the next place we are to conſider the benefit propoſed to them who believe in Jeſus: *And thou ſhalt be ſaved:* or, you ſhall know, what you ought to do in order to be ſaved: and if you obſerve it, you will obtain ſalvation.

This is evidently the deſign of the words, as they ſtand here in connection. And it is confirmed by other texts. Cornelius, at Ceſarea, was directed by an angel, *who ſhould tell him words, whereby he and all his houſe ſhould be ſaved,* Acts xi. 14. Our Lord tells the Jews: *Theſe things I ſay, that ye might be ſaved,* John v. 34. Zachariah prophecying over John the Baptiſt ſays: *Thou ſhalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of ſalvation, by the remiſſion of their ſins,* Luke i. 77. And the evangeliſt Mark aſſures us, that after his reſurrection our Lord ſaid to the apoſtles: *Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized ſhall be ſaved. And he that believeth not ſhall be damned,* Mark xvi. 15, 16.

III. We ſhould now obſerve the truth and certainty of this: that he who believes in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, ſhall have knowledge of the way of ſalvation: or know what he ought

to

to do, in order to be ſaved. And if he attend to the inſtructions contained in the doctrine of Chriſt, he ſhall be ſaved.

1. This is evident from the doctrine itſelf: for it teaches men how they may approve themſelves to God, the creator and governor of the world: on whom we depend for all our happineſs both here and hereafter.

Men are here taught to repent, and then to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, or to walk becoming the character of Chriſt's diſciples. Upon theſe conditions they are aſſured of forgiveneſs of paſt ſins, and the favour of God.

Men are inſtructed to love God with all the heart, and their neighbours as themſelves: and to do to others as they would that others ſhould do to them. They are required to be holy in all manner of converſation: to abſtain not from ſome ſins only, but from all: to perfom all the duties of their ſtation and condition. And they are inſtructed to be careful about the frame of their minds, and to govern their thoughts and affections.

Are not theſe, and other things contained in the goſpel of Chriſt, excellent rules? Is not this true religion? Does it not appear very likely and reaſonable, at firſt ſight, and after mature conſideration, that this ſhould be the right way of men's approving themſelves to God? and that ſuch ſhould be prepared for a future happineſs? They who have this perfection of ſincerity, though not the perfection of innocence, cannot be finally rejected of God; but will certainly be accepted and rewarded by him.

2. We know, that this is the way of ſalvation from many expreſs aſſurances of Chriſt and his apoſtles.

John iii. 16. *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth on him, might not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* Ver. 24. *He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that ſent me, hath everlaſting life, and ſhall not come into condemnation,* ch. viii. 12. *Then ſpake Jeſus unto them again: I am the light of the world. He that followeth me, ſhall not walk in darkneſs: but ſhall have the light of life.* And ſays John the apoſtle and evangeliſt, near the concluſion of his goſpel: *Theſe things are written, that ye might believe, that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name,* John xx. 21.

Therefore the will of God, taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles, is called the *word of life,* Philip. ii. 16. And *the word*

*of*

*of truth, the goſpel of our ſalvation*, Eph. i. 13. Soon after the aſcenſion of Jeſus, the apoſtles were impriſoned by the Jewiſh rulers: but were delivered by an angel, who ſaid, *Go, ſtand and ſpeak in the temple to the people, all the words of this life*, Acts v. 20. And they who rejected this doctrine are ſaid to *judge themſelves unworthy of everlaſting life*, ch. xiii. 46.

3. We are farther aſſured of the truth of what our Lord and his apoſtles taught from the confirmation given to their doctrine, by the miracles wrought by them: works of divine power, and manifeſt tokens of the divine preſence with them, and concurrence with them in their deſign.

No men could do ſuch things, *if God was not with them*, John iii. 2. Our Lord was a prophet, *mighty in word and deed, before God and all the people*, Luke xxiv. 19. Or as St. Peter ſays, at the houſe of Cornelius, a gentile. *God anointed Jeſus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghoſt, and with power: who went about, healing all that were oppreſſed of the devil. For God was with him*, Acts x. 38. He had *the ſpirit without meaſure*, John iii. 34. And from him alſo the apoſtles received grace, to accompliſh the miniſtry aſſigned to them. They were enlightened themſelves, and they taught the truth to others with perſpicuity. *The Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word with ſigns following*, Mark xvi. 20.

Beſide their miraculous works of divine power, we might obſerve their divine temper: the ſpotleſs innocence of Jeſus, and the ſhining virtue of his apoſtles: their meekneſs, patience, indefatigable and diſintereſted zeal. Whence we may be aſſured, they thought as they ſaid: and were firmly perſuaded, that the word they taught was from heaven, and that whoſoever received it and obeyed it would be ſaved.

4. They who receive this doctrine are in the way of ſalvation: for it contains motives and conſiderations of great moment, to induce men to follow and obey its precepts.

Here life and immortality are ſet in a clear and engaging light. We are mightily animated and encouraged by the perfect example, the willing death, and the triumphant reſurrection and aſcenſion of Jeſus Chriſt. And in the glory ſet before us, by him and his goſpel, there is what may overbalance all the influence of preſent and ſenſible things, and aſſiſt us in overcoming this world, and all its temptations.

5. To which I may add one conſideration more, as an evidence of this truth: this doctrine contains ſome inſtructions, which muſt be of ſingular uſe to us in our preſent circumſtances. Here

Here are not only the neceſſary, reaſonable precepts of true holineſs: but alſo ſome excellent directions, very expedient for us in our ſtate of frailty: whilſt we are imperfect, and are ſurrounded with ſnares. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation, and be not overcome of evil. Let your loins be girded, and your lights burning: and ye yourſelves like unto men, that wait for their lord. Continue to work out your ſalvation with fear and trembling. Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace.*

Theſe conſiderations amount to a full proof of this truth: and ſhew, that they who attend to this doctrine cannot fail of ſalvation. The rule is right and infallible, if obſerved. And it is of ſuch a nature, that they who know it, and think of it, muſt be forcibly engaged to act according to it. As St. Paul ſays: *The goſpel of Chriſt is the power of God unto ſalvation, to every one that believeth,* Rom. i. 16.

## SERMON XII.

### THE GOSPEL THE TRUE WAY OF SALVATION.

ACTS xvi. 31.

*And they ſaid: believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: and thou ſhalt be ſaved, and thy houſe.*

In diſcourſing on theſe words, I have already ſhewn, what is to be underſtood, both here and elſewhere, by believing in Jeſus Chriſt: or the nature of faith in him. Next, the benefit here propoſed and promiſed, which is ſalvation. And thirdly, the connection between faith in Jeſus Chriſt and ſalvation, with the evidence of it.

IV. I now intend to mention ſome inferences by way of application.

1. We perceive from the hiſtory before us, that affecting, awakening occurrences in life are ſometimes of great uſe to men.

The keeper of the priſon at Philippi by the ſhaking of the priſon, and the looſening of the bands of all under his charge, was brought into great diſtreſs of mind: ſuppoſing that the priſoners

priſoners had eſcaped, and fearing the diſpleaſure of his ſuperiors. But that diſtreſs was uſeful. He was brought to ſerious thoughts of religion, and a concern for eternal ſalvation, and how to obtain it.

The Lord was pleaſed to render the converſion of Saul very affecting, who was to be an inſtrument in converting many others, and who was likely to meet with many difficulties in the diſcharge of the office, for which he was deſigned. As he was journeying to Damaſcus, Acts ix. in the company of others, with a deſign to apprehend all whom he ſhould find there, that called upon the name of Jeſus: *ſuddenly there ſhined round about him a light from heaven, inſomuch that he fell to the earth: and then heard a voice ſaying unto him: Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me? And he ſaid: who art thou, Lord? And the Lord ſaid: I am Jeſus, whom thou perſecuteſt. ...And he trembling and aſtoniſhed, ſaid: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Much after the ſame manner with the goaler at Philippi: *Sirs, what ſhall I do to be ſaved? And the Lord ſaid unto him: ariſe, go into the city: and it ſhall be told thee, what thou muſt do....* And *Saul aroſe from the earth.... And they led him by the hand, and brought him to Damaſcus. And he was three days without ſight: and neither did eat nor drink.*

Poſſibly ſome appearances leſs lawful, ſome means leſs awakening than theſe, might have been ſufficient to work upon Saul, and convince him of his ſin. Somewhat leſs than all this might have ſufficed to induce him to become of a perſecutor a preacher of the goſpel: nevertheleſs we may reaſonably think, that every part of that remarkable tranſaction was wiſely ordered. It was ſuited to make deep impreſſions on Saul, and would be of laſting uſe to ſecure his future ſteadineſs, faithfulneſs and zeal.

In a like manner, ſtill, remarkable occurrences in life, whether ſignal deliverances or afflictive events, though not miraculous, may be overruled by Divine Providence for reclaiming men from a ſinful courſe of life, or for alarming good men, fallen into negligence and ſecurity.

2. We may collect from this hiſtory, that the Chriſtian religion does not condemn or forbid the exerciſe of any employments and offices, that are neceſſary and uſeful in this world.

This perſon, after his converſion to Chriſtianity, ſeems ſtill to have continued in the office of keeper of the priſon at Philippi. He believed and had been baptized. And after this,

this, *when it was day, the magiſtrates ſent the ſerjeants, ſaying, let theſe men go. And the keeper of the priſon told this ſaying to Paul: the magiſtrates have ſent, to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace.* The order of the magiſtrates was ſent to him; and he delivered it to Paul and Silas. He was therefore ſtill in his former office. Nor does it appear that St. Paul had enjoined him to quit it.

Whilſt therefore no ſinful compliances are inſiſted upon as qualifications, any uſeful and neceſſary office may be diſcharged by a Chriſtian.

3. We cannot but obſerve here a juſt character of the Chriſtian religion. It is the doctrine of ſalvation: it teaches men what they ought to do to be ſaved.

We have formerly ſhewed the connection between faith in Jeſus Chriſt and ſalvation; nevertheleſs it is fit to make this remark here. Jeſus is eminently the Saviour. He *ſaves his people from their ſins*, Matt. i. 21. He *delivers from the wrath to come*, 1 Theſſ. i. 10. and will beſtow eternal life upon them that obey him. Says the angel to the ſhepherds near Bethlehem: *I bring you good tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people: for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord*, Luke ii. 10, 11. and his goſpel is called *the ſaving grace of God*, Tit. ii. 11.

Such then is the word taught by Chriſt. It is the doctrine of ſalvation. It is not a ſcheme of natural philoſophy, teaching the ſeveral orders and powers of inviſible beings; or the hidden nature, and various properties of material things. It is not a ſyſtem of civil policy and government. It is not the art of fine ſpeaking and rhetorical diſcourſe. But it teaches men of every rank and condition the duties of their condition, and the ſeveral branches of piety: what they ought to do to be ſaved: how they ought to walk that they may pleaſe God. It affords directions and aſſiſtances for perſevering in virtue: for reſiſting and overcoming temptations, ſo as that they may maintain their integrity to the end, and have peace in death, and inherit everlaſting life.

4. The Chriſtian doctrine is fitted to awaken, convince, and reform men of every temper, and every ſtation in life.

We have a proof of it in the converſion of this perſon, who had been employed in an office which is apt to render men rough and untractable; which is, perhaps, more eſpecially fit for ſuch tempers; and is alſo likely to cheriſh ſelf-confidence, fierceneſs and auſterity of behaviour.

Such

Such an one is the convert in the text. We ſee what he once was; how he was affected, and how he was changed and reformed. Paul and Silas, having been accuſed before the rulers of Philippi, were beaten by their order: after which the ſame rulers caſt them into priſon, *charging the goaler to keep them ſafely. Who having received ſuch a charge, thruſt them into the inner priſon, and made their feet faſt in ſtocks.* He readily executed a ſevere ſentence; and, poſſibly, added to the rigour of it. *And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and ſang praiſes to God, and the priſoners heard them. And ſuddenly there was a great earthquake, ſo that the foundations of the priſon were ſhaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every man's hands were looſed. And the keeper of the priſon awaking out of his ſleep, and ſeeing the priſon doors open, drew his ſword, and would have killed himſelf.* Here we ſee the raſhneſs and reſolution of a man of ſtrong paſſions. *But Paul cried with a loud voice, ſaying, do thyſelf no harm; for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and ſprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and ſaid, ſirs, what muſt I do to be ſaved?* Now he is affected to a great degree, and in good meaſure humbled and ſoftened. Senſible of his ignorance and guilt, he inquires how he may be ſaved: and he is open to conviction. When the truth is propoſed to him, he embraceth it, and practiſes compaſſion and tenderneſs, to which he had hitherto been a ſtranger. *And they ſaid unto him: believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved, and thy houſe. And they ſpake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his houſe. And he took them the ſame hour of the night, and waſhed their ſtripes: and was baptized, he and all his ſtraightway.* How obedient is he to the heavenly, ſaving doctrine of the goſpel! *And when he had brought them into his houſe, he ſet meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his houſe.* How great is this change!

Indeed, the doctrine of the goſpel, ſetting before men the evil of ſin, the neceſſity of holineſs, the future miſery of the wicked, the glory of heaven for the righteous, and the grace of God to all that repent: and ſpeaking of theſe things clearly and ſtrongly, in a manner unknown to reaſon, and the law of Moſes is adapted to make impreſſions upon all who are capable of thought and conſideration.

And thus, as *Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners*, 1 Tim. i. 15. and *to call men to repentance*, Matt. ix. 13. he does

does by his doctrine effectually bring them to repentance, and ſaves them from their ſins.

5. The Chriſtian religion, and they who are animated by its principles, are concerned for the welfare of men of every age and every condition.

This perſon ſaid to Paul and Silas: *Sirs, what muſt I do to be ſaved? And they ſaid: believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; and thou ſhalt be ſaved, and thy houſe. And they ſpake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his houſe:* ſome, very probably, in early age, ſome of very mean condition, hired ſervants, and bondſmen, ſlaves for a time, or for life: but all rational, accountable beings, capable of ſalvation, and formed for everlaſting life, if they do not render themſelves unworthy of it. And Cornelius, of Ceſarea, was directed by an angel, to ſend for Peter: who would tell him words, whereby he and all his might be ſaved.

6. We learn from this hiſtory, as well as from divers other things in the book of the Acts, and from other parts of the New Teſtament, that the Chriſtian doctrine, or the great things of religion, may be taught and underſtood in a ſhort ſpace of time.

It could be only ſome general knowledge of the doctrine of Paul, which this perſon had before. But now upon ſome ſhort diſcourſes and arguments of the apoſtle, he becomes a believer, and is baptized. So likewiſe Lydia *attended to the things that were ſpoken of Paul:* and ſhe and her houſehold were baptized forthwith. And upon Peter's firſt ſermon at Jeruſalem, after our Lord's aſcenſion, *they that gladly received his word, were baptized. And the ſame day were added to them about three thouſand men,* Acts ii. 41. Afterwards, *Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Chriſt unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto thoſe things which Philip ſpake; hearing and ſeeing the miracles which he did.... And there was great joy in that city.... And when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jeſus Chriſt; they were baptized, both men and women,* ch. viii. 5—12. Not long after this, Philip by divine direction meets the chamberlain and treaſurer of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, a proſelyte of the Jewiſh religion, who had been up at Jeruſalem to worſhip: and Philip preached Jeſus unto him. After a ſhort converſation, travelling in the chariot, he is convinced, and propoſes to be baptized. Philip ſaid: *If thou believeſt with all thy heart, thou mayeſt. He anſwered, and ſaid: I believe*

*lieve that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God. Then Philip baptized him*, ver. 26—38.

It ſeems therefore, that the Chriſtian religion may be ſo ſet before men, as that they ſhall in a ſhort time attain to a competent knowledge of it, and believe upon good grounds. And it muſt be agreeable, to think, that the knowledge of the doctrine of ſalvation, in which all men are concerned, is not a very abſtruſe and difficult ſcience, but eaſy, and upon the level with ordinary capacities.

Indeed, where there are ſtrong prejudices and worldly paſſions prevailing greatly, as in moſt of the Jews in our Saviour's time, the beſt inſtructions will have little effect. But where men are well diſpoſed, the Chriſtian religion and its evidences may be ſoon perceived and underſtood, if rightly propoſed. This is manifeſt from the inſtances in the Acts, juſt mentioned: and from many ſincere converſions, and numerous churches formed by the apoſtles in divers places in a ſhort ſpace of time.

However, in ſuch a world as ours, where there are temptations of no ſmall force, and numerous amuſements and avocations, it is requiſite that we carefully attend to *the things which we have heard*, Heb. ii. 1. and often meditate upon them. Nor ſhould we forſake the aſſemblies of Chriſtians, but ſtir up one another to love and good works. ch. x. 24, 25.

Moreover ſome will teach things which they ought not, for the ſake of private intereſt: and there is danger, if we are not upon our guard, leſt ſome articles ſhould be mixed with the pure and uncorrupted doctrine of the goſpel, that tend to enervate its purifying and ſanctifying influences.

And we ſhould go on to perfection, and improve in religious knowledge and uſeful gifts, that we may be able to inſtruct and admoniſh others.

St. Paul, as we all know, cultivated the good principles which he had planted in the minds of men. He was greatly ſolicitous for their welfare, and apprehenſive leſt by ſome means they ſhould be ſeduced and perverted from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt. He therefore ſent to them ſome of his fellow-labourers, in whom he could confide, to ſtrengthen and comfort them: or by perſonal viſits, or by epiſtles, reminded them of the truths he had taught; exhorting them to be *ſteadfaſt in the faith*, and to adorn it by a holy converſation: *Beſeeching and exhorting them by the Lord Jeſus, that as they had received*

*received of him, how they ought to walk and to pleaſe God, ſo they would abound more and more,* 1 Theſſ. iv. 1.

7. We are hence enabled to form a juſt eſtimate of the conduct of thoſe who receive, and of thoſe who reject the goſpel.

For the doctrine of the goſpel is a kind propoſal and gracious meſſage from God to mankind, by Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles, and others after them, inſtructing men in the way of ſalvation; teaching them how they may obtain eternal life, and ſurmount and overcome every obſtacle in the way to it.

They therefore who receive and obey it act wiſely. They conſult their preſent peace, and ſecure to themſelves the happineſs of a better life.

What then do they who reject it? As St. Luke ſays of ſome: *they rejected the counſel of God againſt* or toward *themſelves*, Luke vii. 30. It becomes us to be cautious how we cenſure particular perſons: remembering St. Paul's advice: *judge nothing before the time*, 1 Cor. iv. 5. God only knows the hearts of men, and all their peculiar circumſtances. But where the goſpel is propoſed in truth and ſimplicity, men had need to take heed how they reject it: and ſhould at leaſt afford it a ſerious attention and impartial examination.

8. It follows from what has been ſaid, that we, to whom the doctrine of the goſpel has been preached, and who have received it as the word of God, know the way of ſalvation, and may obtain eternal life if we uſe due care and diligence.

And, certainly, we ought ſo to do; and not neglect any of the rules and precepts that have been delivered to us. The profeſſion of Chriſtianity will not ſave us. Chriſtians, ſo called, if they are wicked, are not in the way of ſalvation: for they do not the things which their religion teaches they ought to do in order to be ſaved. They are condemned, and excluded from happineſs by the very rules and laws of that religion which they profeſs to receive as divine. Such therefore are ſtill *in the gall of bitterneſs, and bond of iniquity. They have no part or lot in this matter. Their heart is not right in the ſight of God*, Acts ix. 20—23. And they cannot but know, that they ſhould immediately repent and ſeek forgiveneſs of God; or they periſh for ever, and their ruin will be great and terrible.

9. We have here a good argument to be ſteadfaſt in the truth as it is in Jeſus, and to let his word abide in us.

For it is the word of life. It is the doctrine of ſalvation. Does it want any thing to complete that character? Is there any other word equal to it? Is it not ſtrict to a great degree? Are not its rules and precepts reaſonable and excellent? And does it not afford the beſt arguments that can be deviſed, to promote and ſecure that univerſal holineſs, which it requires.

Indeed, it is ſuppoſed, in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, that *ſome may fall away, who were once enlightened, and have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,* Heb. vi. And St. Peter makes the ſuppoſition, *that ſome, who have eſcaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, may be again entangled therein, and overcome,* 2 Pet. ii. 20. And St. Paul with grief ſpeaks of *many, who ſo walked,* as to ſhew themſelves *enemies of the croſs of Chriſt,* Philip. iii. 18.

But theſe inſtances do not invalidate the truth of God, nor the power of the goſpel of Chriſt: which does very forcibly *teach us to deny all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world,* Tit. ii. 12. St. Paul therefore was not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt: knowing it to be *the power of God to ſalvation, both to Jews and Gentiles.* And he therefore glories in it, becauſe *thereby the world had been crucified to him, and he to the world.* St. James makes no heſitation to exhort men, to *receive with meekneſs the engrafted word, which is able to ſave their ſouls,* Jam. i. 21.

Let us then eſteem the doctrine of the goſpel, as a very precious advantage, teaching us how to act, ſo as to approve ourſelves to God: how to perform the duties of our ſtations: how to improve the mercies and afflictions of this ſtate, ſo as that we may lay up a good foundation againſt the time to come, and obtain everlaſting life.

Happy diſcoveries are pleaſing and entertaining to men, whilſt new and freſh: but they are really a good foundation of laſting joy. We have reaſon always to rejoice, and think ourſelves happy, that we have the knowledge of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt, and the way of ſalvation through him. It was the abiding frame of the apoſtle Paul. And after that the goſpel had coſt him much of thoſe things which are highly eſteemed by the moſt, he declares, that he *counted all things* baſe and contemptible, *for the excellence of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus his Lord,* Philip. iii. 8.

10. Finally,

10. Finally, this ſubject puts us in mind of the importance of our preaching and hearing.

Says St. Paul to Timothy: *Take heed to thyſelf, and to thy doctrine. Continue in them. For ſo doing, thou ſhalt both ſave thyſelf, and them that hear thee,* 1 Tim. iv. 16. This is the deſign of our preaching: to teach men the way of ſalvation, and to perſuade them to walk and perſevere therein. Such therefore muſt be the uſual topics of our diſcourſe, as explain the certain principles, and enforce the great duties of religion. And ſuch things ought to be carefully attended to.

And when men receive the truth in the love of it, and come under the power of it: when their affections are ſet upon things above: and they can be contented in every condition: when men live in love and friendſhip: and their moderation is conſpicuous: and they are ready to offices of goodneſs of various kinds, to all men: this is the beſt recompenſe, the moſt deſirable fruit of well meant endeavours, to inſtruct men in things of religion: greater than applauſes for elegance of ſpeech, and exactneſs of method, or any thing elſe that can be named. Such hearers are an honour to their inſtructors. And if they who ſpeak, and they who hear, are ſaved in the day of the Lord, they will be mutually a crown of glory and rejoicing, when the moſt ſplendid, and the moſt durable things of this earth are no more.

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## SERMON XIII.

### THE GOOD EXERCISE OF FAITH.

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1 TIM. vi. 12.

*Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life: whereunto thou art alſo called, and haſt profeſſed a good profeſſion before many witneſſes.*

THERE are ſome texts of ſcripture, that at firſt appear plain, and eaſy to be underſtood: which yet are ſomewhat difficult and obſcure, and the preciſe meaning is not readily apprehended. And ſometimes we are liable to be diverted from the right meaning by a tranſlation. Which is not always owing to the miſtake of the tranſlators of the bible: but

rather to some defect in modern languages, which want words corresponding to the ancient original.

Of this we seem to have an instance in the present text. *Fight the good fight of faith.* Many may be apt to think, that the apostle's metaphorical expressions are taken from wars and battles: and that he here recommends to Timothy, to behave as a valiant soldier in the service of the gospel. And they may be the more induced to this apprehension by some other exhortations to Timothy, where the allusion is manifest. *This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, . . . that thou mightest war a good warfare,* 1 Tim. i. 18. And, *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,* 2 Tim. ii. 34. Moreover St. Paul has made use of the same allusion in an exhortation to Christians in general: *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God. . . . Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness: and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one: and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God,* Eph. vi. 13—17.

Nevertheless it appears from the original words,* that the apostle alludes not here to the life of a soldier engaged in wars; but rather to the games, at that time very famous among the Greeks, and in some parts of Asia, which had learned the Greek customs: and, indeed, almost all over the Roman empire. In which games there were contentions in the way of racing, on foot and in chariots, and in the way of combat. And the present text is rather to be explained by that in the ninth chapter of the first to the Corinthians, than by that before cited from the epistle to the Ephesians. The passage is to this purpose: *Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize. So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it, to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly: so fight I, not as one that beateth the air,* 1 Cor. ix. 24—26. Where the apostle alludes to two of the exercises of those games, running and boxing.

* Αγωνιζε τον καλον αγωνα της πιστεως.

Such

Such is the figurative expreſſion in the text: and perhaps the alluſion might be made more manifeſt, and the ambiguity in ſome meaſure avoided, if the original were rendered; *Exerciſe the good exerciſe of faith.* The word here rendered fight, is the ſame with that which is rendered *ſtriving for the maſtery* in the paſſage juſt quoted from the firſt to the Corinthians. Every † *one that ſtriveth for the maſtery*, or every one that ſtriveth in the games, *is temperate in all things.* And we have the ſame expreſſion again in another place, where St. Paul ſays, *I* ‡ *have fought a good fight*, 2 Tim. iv. 7. or, I have exerciſed a good exerciſe. He had himſelf done what he here exhorts Timothy to do.

It is not unuſual with the apoſtle to compare, and very elegantly, the Chriſtian courſe, that is, the life of private Chriſtians, or of thoſe who are in ſome office in the church, to a warfare, and to a contention in the public and celebrated games, then in uſe among the people moſt renowned for politeneſs: in which games ſome of the moſt diſtinguiſhed citizens of thoſe places entered themſelves. And theſe two alluſions are joined together by him in a text, in part quoted already. *Thou therefore endure hardneſs, as a good ſoldier of Jeſus Chriſt. No man that wars, entangles himſelf in the affairs of this life; that he may pleaſe him, who has choſen him to be a ſoldier. And* ‖ *if a man ſtrive for the maſtery, he is not crowned, unleſs he ſtrive lawfully*, 2 Tim. ii. 3—5.

The general deſign of the exhortation is: "Exerciſe the 'good exerciſe of faith, ſo as to obtain the prize of eternal 'life, to which thou art called in the goſpel: and for obtain-'ing which, thou haſt engaged to exert thyſelf, by that good 'profeſſion, which thou haſt already made in the preſence of 'many witneſſes, or ſpectators.'

In farther diſcourſing on theſe words I ſhall obſerve this method.

I. I ſhall ſhew what is meant by *exerciſing the exerciſe of faith.*

II. Why it is called a good fight or exerciſe.

III. And then conclude with a practical application.

I. I would conſider, what is meant by *exerciſing the exerciſe of faith.*

† Πας δε ο αγωνιζομενος. ‡ Τον αγωνα τον καλον ηγωνισμαι.

‖ Εαν δε και αθλη τις ε στεφανιται, εαν μη νομιμως αθληση.

Some have hereby underſtood contending for the truth of the goſpel, maintaining, and propagating it in the world. But that, I think, is but one part of the exerciſe, or contention here ſpoken of. For Timothy appears to me to be here as much, or rather more exhorted as a Chriſtian, than as an Evangeliſt.

By the fight of faith I ſuppoſe to be intended, the fight of the goſpel: or that fight and exerciſe, which the goſpel requires: or which Jeſus Chriſt teaches and recommends in the goſpel.

And by the fight, or exerciſe of faith, I would underſtand the practice of all virtue, a courſe of holy obedience to the dictates of reaſon, and the commands of God. The connection aſſures us of this. St. Paul had argued againſt the ſelfiſh deſigns of ſome, and ſhewn the evil of covetouſneſs. Whereupon he adds: *But thou, O man of God, flee theſe things: and follow after righteouſneſs, godlineſs, faith, love, patience, meekneſs,* 1 Tim. vi. 11. *Fight the good fight of faith.* Or, exerciſe the good exerciſe of the goſpel. Which is alſo agreeable to another exhortation in the ſecond epiſtle to this ſame perſon, 2 Tim. ii. 21, 22.

This exhortation is fitly addreſſed to private Chriſtians, as well as to a miniſter of the goſpel: whilſt at the ſame time different ſtations and circumſtances will infer, in ſome reſpects, different duties and obligations.

'The fight of faith, as * one expreſſeth it, includes an 'open profeſſion, and ſtrenuous defending the doctrine 'of faith, and making it good by a life ſuitable to the 'rule of faith.'

This open profeſſion, and zealous defence of truth, accompanied with a ſuitable practice of virtue, may be fitly compared to the exerciſes in the Olympic games, becauſe of the difficulty of the performance. There is a neceſſity, that we be temperate in all things, watchful and circumſpect. And we may meet with oppoſition and diſcouragement. And as in thoſe exerciſes there was a crown or garland propoſed to thoſe who excelled, ſo a life of holineſs here, will be rewarded with glory and happineſs hereafter.

Theſe reſemblances are the foundation of this compariſon, and of thoſe alluſive exhortations, which we meet with in the New Teſtament. The word exerciſe, fight or ſtrife,

* Pool's Annotations.

ſeems

seems particularly to have a reference to the opposition we may meet with in the practice of virtue. In the games alluded to there was always a contention. So are we likely to meet with things, that will try our strength, and oblige us to exert ourselves to the utmost. Not only in times of persecution, but in all seasons there are difficulties attending a sincere profession of religious truth, and a steady practice of virtue. Hopes of preferment in times of ease and prosperity may be as dangerous, and ensnaring as fears of death, or of the loss of goods, in a time of persecution. Yea both these temptations usually meet. The strictly conscientious must in most times forego some advantages, which might be obtained, and incur some inconveniences, which might be avoided by compliances, not reconcilable with religion and virtue.

St. Paul therefore here requires, and earnestly exhorts Timothy, to *exercise the good exercise of faith:* that is, to be steady and resolute, and hold out in the open profession and zealous defence of the plain truth of the gospel, and the practice of all the duties of righteousness, meekness and charity: and to shun every thing contrary to them: so acting according to the directions of the gospel, or the doctrine of faith, without being moved by hopes of worldly ease, wealth, honour and authority: and likewise without being terrified by threats of adversaries, and fears of any temporal evils, which he might be in danger of; as that he might not fail of obtaining that eternal life, which is proposed, as the reward of constancy and perseverance.

This exhortation is much the same with that at the beginning of the twelfth chapter to the Hebrews. With which therefore I conclude this head. *Wherefore, seeing we are encompassed with so great a cloud of witnesses; let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset us. And let us run with patience the race set before us: looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame: and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

II. In the next place we are to consider, why this is called a good exercise. The apostle had some reasons for adding that character. Very probably the word is expressive and emphatical. We should therefore try to discover the design of it.

1. It is good, as it is innocent.

This could scarce be said of the exercises in the games of Greece. For, notwithstanding the many allusions to them in the books of the New Testament, it is not the design of the sacred writers, to recommend, or justify those diversions. They only intend to recommend to Christians that zeal, diligence, activity and perseverance, in the cause of truth and virtue, which they shewed who had a part in those exercises. But those persons might not be altogether innocent in the principle they acted upon, nor in all their actions. Their principle might be ambition or vainglory. And in some of their combats the action might be detrimental to the antagonist.

But the exercise of faith is perfectly innocent. It proceeds from no bad principle. It is injurious to none. The principles it maintains and contends for, are certain truths, built upon sure evidence. And they have no bad tendencies. The principles of the gospel inspire not men with any hurtful designs. The actions, which they recommend, are all reasonable and beneficial. Nor are they who exercise in this exercise moved by envy, and ill-will to any: nor yet by an exorbitant love of gain: nor by pride, or ambition of worldly honour.

2. It is good; inasmuch as it is worthy and important, not mean and trifling.

The celebrated contentions, to which the apostle alludes, though in so much repute, were trifling, in comparison of this exercise of faith. They consisted chiefly in the show of bodily strength, and some skill in matters of small moment. But they who exercise the exercise of faith are employed in matters of great value. The principles, which they maintain; and resolutely refuse to deny, are truths of great importance. And they are engaged in designs and actions of much moment; governing the affections, with regard to all the sensible things of this life, and ordering the whole of the conversation, according to the rules of right reason. This is much more considerable than all the exploits of the Grecian combatants.

3. Consequently, the exercise of faith is a good exercise, as it is very honourable.

Though Christians were then had in contempt, and their faith was ridiculed: the apostle calls the *exercise of faith*, that is, steadiness in the profession of truth, and the practice of virtue, a good exercise. It is a thing of more true honour

honour than the combats, so much applauded at that time in many parts of the world. It is a thing of vast difficulty. And it depends upon a very noble resolution and firmness of mind. The greatest offers, which the world can make, and the worst evils, which it can inflict, are oftentimes set before men, to induce them to desert the interest of known truth, and transgress the rules of virtue: and their compliance is solicited with long and tiresome importunity, and all the arts, most suited to gain the consent against the convictions of conscience: or to silence its dictates and remonstrances. To be fixed and immovable in the way of virtue upon such occasions is very honourable. Yea not only for men thus to exert themselves on some special and extraordinary occasions, as the Olympic combatants did in the time of their solemnity, and the preparatory exercises, possibly, of some few months or years continuance: but to maintain and carry on this exercise of faith, a steady regard to the principles and rules of the gospel throughout the whole life, in the various and trying occurrences of it, amidst allurements and discouragements. This is truly honourable and commendable.

4. The exercise of faith is a good exercise, with regard to its event, as it has a good reward annexed to it.

That reward is now distant, and out of sight. It is not bestowed here. But it is very sure: and it is great and transcendent. In allusion to the custom of the Grecian games, the apostle sometimes calls the reward of virtue a crown: but he gives it the preference greatly above the crowns, or garlands of the Olympic victors. And we ought to do the same: though we should take in other advantages annexed to it; some distinguished honours and privileges in the cities where they dwelt. *Now they do it*, says he, *to obtain a corruptible crown: we, an incorruptible*, 1 Cor. ix. 25. And St. Peter assures the elders, who behave well, that, *when the chief shepherd shall appear, they shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. v. 4.

That is justly stiled a good exercise, which has a good reward annexed to it.

5. It is a good exercise, as all who perform it, are entitled to the reward of eternal life.

This is a singular advantage, peculiar to the exercise, which has been instituted by the Lord of all: men, however willing and large-hearted, being obliged to limit the recompenses,

recompenses, which they propose to such as they would encourage, according to the proportion of their small abilities. This circumstance is particularly taken notice of in a text before cited. *Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all: but one receiveth the prize. So run, that ye may obtain*; that is, that ye may all obtain, 1 Cor. ix. 24.

In those Olympic exercises, whether of race or combat, one only in each received a prize, even the victor. But in the Christian race and combat every one is victor who performs well. Every one that denies himself, and, notwithstanding the temptations of this world, is steady in the profession of truth, and the practice of virtue is a conqueror, and shall receive a crown of righteousness from the righteous judge.

6. Once more, the exercise of faith is a good exercise, on account of the supports and encouragements afforded to those who undertake it.

They are encouraged by the greatness of the reward proposed to them by him, who is able to do more than we think or conceive. They are also animated by the example of many, who have overcome in this combat: and especially by the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been tried, as we now are: and who has power to grant to *them who overcome, to sit with him in his throne, even as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father in his throne*, Rev. iii. 21.

Moreover, all success in this exercise, every act of self-denial, every instance of steadiness amidst temptations, and in opposition to the adversaries of our virtue, when reflected on, casts light and joy on the mind, cheers and refreshes, and inspires with renewed ardour, and strengthens for farther difficulties. As the apostle says: *For which cause we faint not: but though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day: . . . whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things seen are temporal: but the things not seen are eternal*, 2 Cor. iv. 16, 18.

III. It remains only, that I conclude, as at first proposed, with some inferences, by the way of a practical application. They will be these two.

1. We are here reminded, that a life of religion and virtue has, in this world, its difficulties.

It is no very easy thing, to be steady in the profession of truth, and the practice of virtue. They who expect

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to find every thing ſmooth and eaſy in this way, and look for no oppoſition or diſcouragement, will be diſappointed. For the life of a Chriſtian, as we have ſeen, is compared in ſcripture to a warfare, a race, a combat. It is a contention, an exerciſe that requires a good deal of reſolution, and will try all our ſtrength and ſkill.

2. Nevertheleſs there is encouragement to hold on therein. For it is a good exerciſe. It is innocent and honourable, and will have a great reward hereafter, and has at preſent its joys and ſupports; which are not ſmall, but very exhilerating and ſtrengthening.

It is not a little pleaſing to hear it called a good exerciſe by thoſe who have made trial of it. St. Paul, who was ſo great a maſter therein, who knew all its difficulties, who had met with good report and ill report, who had been in perils of every kind, who had been as laborious and diligent as any in the ſervice of the goſpel: in a word, he who knew by experience, how much it might coſt men, calls it a good exerciſe. He recommends it to others as ſuch. And near the period of his life he ſays with exultation and triumph: *I have exerciſed a good exerciſe: I have finiſhed my race: I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs*, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. This is very encouraging to all who are well diſpoſed.

And let us conſider what the apoſtle adds in this exhortation to Timothy; that he had made a good profeſſion; which may be alſo ſaid of moſt of us. We have been taught, and we have acknowledged the principles of the Chriſtian religion: and we have engaged to fulfil its obligations. Let not expected good fruits be loſt for want of perſeverance. How great is the reward ſet before us! How great will be the honour and the joy to receive a crown of righteouſneſs from the righteous Judge! How ſad, how afflictive beyond all expreſſion, to loſe this reward! It is propoſed to us. We may obtain it: but we muſt now work the works of righteouſneſs, and perſevere therein. Whenever ſloth and indolence, wearineſs and fainting of mind, are ready to prevail and gain ground on us; let us recollect this, or ſome other like quickening admonition of holy ſcripture: *Exerciſe the good exerciſe of faith. Lay hold on eternal life.* And, *Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not*, Gal. vi. 9.

SERMON

# SERMON XIV.

## THE POWER AND EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S DOCTRINE.

JOHN xv. 5.

*For without me ye can do nothing.*

OUR Lord in this context compares himself to a vine, and his followers to branches. Some think that these words were spoken upon occasion of things recorded in the other gospels, after eating the paschal supper, and Christ's instituting a memorial of himself, to be observed among his people: where he speaks of *the fruit of the vine*, Matt. xxvi. 29. Mark xiv. 25. Others think that our Lord was now retired with the disciples to the mount of Olives, which is said to have abounded with vines. Whether either of those conjectures be right or not, unquestionably the affecting discourses recorded here, and in the adjoining chapters, are such as our blessed Lord had with his disciples at the paschal supper, and after it, the night in which he was betrayed, and a little before he was taken from them. Those discourses had made deep and lasting impressions upon the minds of the apostles. We may suppose, that St. John had often repeated them in his public preaching, and in conversation, in the history he had given of his Lord and Master by word of mouth. And now that he was induced to publish a written gospel, in which he designed to insert some particulars, omitted by the former evangelists; he determined to record those discourses somewhat at length: being persuaded that they would be of signal use to all that would seriously attend to them.

Ver. 1. *I am the true vine:* a right and generous vine. Or, as the phrase is in one of the prophets, *a noble vine*, Jer. ii. 21. In this gospel of St. John, our Lord, at several places, stiles himself *the true light, the true bread, the good shepherd.* He is all these by way of excellence. He is himself faithful: his words are most true and sure: and his doctrine is most excellent and powerful; suited to cherish the

the ſpiritual life, and to afford genuine fruits of righteouſneſs and true holineſs.

*And my Father is the huſbandman:* or the proprietor, who cultivates it in the beſt manner.

Ver. 2. *Every branch in me, that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth,* or pruneth *it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* 'All who 'make a profeſſion of faith in me, are diſciples by name, 'and viſible members of my church. But there are me-'thods of Providence, that will ſhew, who are true and 'ſincere. In time of temptation, when any extraordinary 'offers of worldly good, or dangers of evil, are preſented; 'ſome will fall away, whilſt others will be purified and 'improved by the ſame events.'

Ver. 3. *Now ye are clean, through the word, which I have ſpoken unto you.* 'As it is meet for me to encourage, as 'well as to warn and admoniſh you; I readily own, that 'you have received my word, and have ſhewn a great regard 'to it. And it has had good effects upon you.'

Ver. 4. *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, unleſs it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* 'And I recommend it to you, as what will 'anſwer the beſt purpoſes to retain your preſent eſteem and 'affection for me, and regard to my words.'

Ver. 5. *I am the vine: ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit. For without me ye can do nothing.* 'Let me inculcate this upon 'you under the ſimilitude, which I have mentioned. You 'will find the caſe to reſemble that of a vine and its 'branches. If you are my diſciples indeed, and through-'out: if you always maintain your reſpect for me, and con-'ſider my words as true and divine, the rule of your con-'duct, and the ground and meaſure of your hopes; you 'will abound in the practice of all virtue, and will be ſtead-'faſt and unmoved. But if you neglect me, and my words; 'you will not any longer bear that good fruit, but will 'be like a branch, cut off and ſeparated from the root.'

*Without me:* is the ſame as ſeparated from me. In the margin of ſome of our bibles the phraſe is rendered *ſevered from me.* Which is the meaning of the expreſſion: though the literal rendering may be, *without me,* or *out of me.*

Ver. 6. *If a man abide not in me, he is caſt out as a branch, and is withered: and men gather them, and caſt them into the fire,*

*fire, and they are burned.* 'If you caſt off your regard for 'me, and for the truth and ſimplicity of my doctrine; you 'will reſemble a branch, ſeparated from the root: which 'ſoon withers, and becomes fit for nothing, but to be 'burned. So you, not bringing forth fruits of true holi-'neſs, or bearing nothing to perfection, will be worthleſs 'and contemptible.'

Which is agreeable to what is ſaid in another goſpel, under a different ſimilitude. *Ye are the ſalt of the earth. But if the ſalt have loſt its ſavour, wherewith ſhall it be ſalted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be caſt out, and to be trodden under foot of men,* Matt. v. 13.

*He that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth fruit. For without me ye can do nothing.*

The general meaning is: 'Whereas by a cloſe adherence 'to me, and my words, you may excel in virtue, and per-'ſevere therein: if you ſhould forſake me, or abate in your 'reſpect for me and my doctrine; you will do nothing con-'ſiderable, and may become deſtitute of all true worth.'

I ſhall now endeavour farther to illuſtrate this text in ſome propoſitions: and then add two or three remarks by way of application.

I. The propoſitions for illuſtrating the text are theſe.

Prop. 1. Our Lord does not here intend to ſay, that without the knowledge of him and his religion, no man can ever do any thing that is good, or right, or virtuous, and acceptable in the ſight of God.

Indeed it is hard to think, that rational and intelligent beings ſhould be deſtitute of all power to do that which is good. It is not reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that God ſhould form any intelligent beings deſtitute of ſuch a power: or that he ſhould ſuffer them to fall into ſuch incapacity, whilſt they are in a ſtate of trial, and their everlaſting intereſts are depending. And there are many things in ſcripture, either ſaid occaſionally, or on ſet purpoſe, from which we can conclude men to have this power.

Says St. Paul to the Romans: *For when the gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law; theſe having not the law, are a law unto themſelves. Which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts: their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, ... either accuſing, or elſe excuſing them,* Rom. ii. 14, 15. They diſcerned ſome things to be good and right, others wrong and evil. When they did the one, they

they were well ſatisfied with themſelves: when the other, their conſcience accuſed them of evil. That text ſeems manifeſtly to teach, that heathens had knowledge of things praiſe-worthy, and otherwiſe: and that they had power to chooſe the one, and decline the other.

It is true, the apoſtle ſays in the ſame epiſtle, that *all the world was become guilty before God*, ch. iii. 19. The meaning of which appears to be, that there was a great degeneracy in the world, both amongſt Jews and Gentiles: that there was great need of the goſpel, to reclaim and reform men: and that there are none perfectly righteous, and free from all ſin; wherefore all ſtand in need of the pardoning mercy of God. But he does not ſay, I apprehend, of every individual among Jews and Gentiles, who had not the knowledge of Chriſt and his goſpel, that there were none ſincerely good and virtuous: none, who had that righteouſneſs and integrity, which a good, and gracious, and holy God will accept and reward.

There are in the goſpels inſtances of perſons, not within the pales of the Jewiſh church, who gave proofs of a good diſpoſition, and were commended, and accepted by the Lord Jeſus. In like manner, it is not impoſſible, but that ſtill ſome, not acquainted with the Chriſtian religion, may do what is good and virtuous.

A Roman centurion, quartered in one of the cities of Galilee, ſent to Jeſus, ſaying, *Lord, my ſervant lieth at home ſick of the palſy, grievouſly tormented*, Matt. viii. 6. But when Jeſus was coming toward him, recollecting that it had not been uſual for Jews to converſe with him, and perſuaded of the great power of Chriſt, he ſends him a ſecond meſſage, ſaying, *Lord, I am not worthy, that thou ſhouldſt come under my roof. Speak the word only, and my ſervant ſhall be healed.... When Jeſus heard it, he marvelled, and ſaid to them that followed: I have not found ſo great faith, no, not in Iſrael.*

The woman of Canaan is another remarkable inſtance. She cried, ſaying, *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou ſon of David. He anſwered, I am not ſent, but unto the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael*, Matt. xv. 22, 24. But at length her importunity was ſo great, and the truth of her faith ſo manifeſt, that our Lord ſaid to her: *O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*

Cornelius,

Cornelius, after our Lord's aſcenſion, is another Gentile, without the limits of the Jewiſh church, who performed commendably. *There was*, ſays St. Luke, *a certain man in Ceſarea, called Cornelius, a centurion of the band, called the Italian band: a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his houſe: who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway*, Acts x. 1, 2. An angel appeared to him about the ninth hour of the day, or three in the afternoon, when day-light is clear, who ſaid unto him: *Cornelius, thy prayers and thy alms are come up for a memorial before God.* This perſon, though ſtill a gentile, was approved of God. He was ſincere and upright, according to the light which he had: and his prayers and alms were good works, which God accepted. And he is pitched upon to be the firſt gentile, who, with his family, ſhould have afforded to them the greater advantages of the knowledge of the goſpel, or way of ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt, and be received into the Chriſtian church, or among the diſciples of Chriſt, without ſubjection to the law of Moſes: which had been hitherto the way of admiſſion into the Jewiſh church, the only people who were profeſſed worſhippers of God.

We might farther argue from things ſaid by our Lord to the Jews. *Jeſus anſwered them: my doctrine is not mine, but his that ſent me. If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of myſelf*, John vii. 16—18. Where our Lord ſpeaks of men doing the will of God before they believe in him. And his intention is, that upright and honeſt men, who have an unfeigned regard to the will of God, ſo far as they are acquainted with it, and have an opportunity of knowing it, according to the diſpenſation they are under will be diſpoſed to believe in him. They who at that time were free from prejudices would ſoon diſcern, that divine atteſtations were afforded to him: and would own, that the doctrine taught by him was true, and from heaven.

Prop. 2. I would obſerve ſecondly: that our bleſſed Lord does not intend to ſay, that no men, not even his diſciples, can do any good thing without immediate and effectual impulſes and impreſſions from him: but the ability to do good, which he here ſpeaks of, is to be underſtood as aſcribed to his word and doctrine, or the principles taught by him: without a regard to which, he ſays, men would do nothing.

God

God may give ſpecial aids to men, whenever he thinks fit: but they are not always neceſſary; nor always to be expected. And that our Lord rather ſpeaks of his word and doctrine, than of himſelf perſonally conſidered, is evident from his manner of ſpeaking in many places.

Our Lord in this context does ſeveral times ſpeak of his diſciples *abiding in him, and he in them,* as neceſſary to their bearing fruit: but he chiefly intends a ſtrict and ſteady regard to his word, and the influences of that upon their minds. This appears from many texts. Ver. 3. *Now ye are clean through the word, which I have ſpoken unto you.* Ver. 7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you; ye ſhall aſk what ye will, and it ſhall be done unto you.*

*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you.* This latter expreſſion explains the former: or it may be taken a little otherwiſe, as if he had ſaid: 'If you continue to believe 'in me, and to pay a ſteady regard to my doctrine, you 'will be highly acceptable to God.'

Again: *I have manifeſted thy name unto the men, which thou gaveſt me out of the world:... and they have kept thy word,* John xvii. 6. *I have given them thy word. Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth,* ver. 14, 17. In the word of God are contained thoſe ſanctifying, ſtrengthening influences, which are needful for us, and are ſo powerful and effectual.

To which we might add other texts from the ſame goſpel. *Verily, I ſay unto you: he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that ſent me, hath everlaſting life, and ſhall not come into condemnation: but is paſſed from death to life,* John v. 24. *Then ſaid Jeſus unto thoſe Jews which believed on him: if ye continue in my word, then are ye my diſciples,* ch. viii. 31. In this chapter, where is the text, he ſpeaks of *abiding in him.* There it is, *if ye continue,* or abide, *in my word.* They are both one and the ſame, as is manifeſt: and may alſo appear farther by comparing a place in St. John's firſt epiſtle: *But whoſo keepeth his word, in him, verily, is the love of God perfected. Hereby know we, that we are in him,* 1 John ii. 5.

Our Lord having ſpoken of himſelf as the living bread that came down from heaven, ſays, *He that eateth me, ſhall live by me,* John vi. 51. But afterwards, for preventing offence, and making himſelf clear, he explains the meaning of thoſe expreſſions. *When Jeſus knew in himſelf, that his diſciples murmured at it, he ſaith unto them: the fleſh profiteth*

*nothing. The words that I ſpeak unto you, they are ſpirit, and they are life,* ver. 61, 63.

This ſhews, that when our Lord ſpeaks of himſelf, he often means the word taught by him.* And we need not ſuppoſe him to ſay, that no man can do any good thing, without immediate impulſes from him. Nor have we reaſon to think that this is the ordinary way of inducing men to that which is good, or that ſuch impulſes are always neceſſary.

That men may be good and virtuous, it muſt be their own choice. So far as men are paſſive, and are acted upon, they are not agents.

Without power to do good or evil, men cannot be moral and accountable beings, and be brought into judgment, or receive according to their works.

If you ſhould ſay, that men cannot improve the outward advantages afforded to them, nor hearken to the divine calls, nor act according to the light vouchſafed to them, you would juſtify them, and lay the blame of their wrong conduct upon God himſelf.

God, in the prophets, laments the refractory temper of the Jewiſh people, and reproves them for it: *Now becauſe ye have done all theſe works, ſaith the Lord: and I ſpake unto you, riſing up early, and ye heard not: and I called, but ye anſwered not, therefore I will do unto this houſe, which is called by my name, . . . as I have done unto Shiloh,* Jer. v. 13, 14. ſee alſo ver. 25, 26.

But if they had no ability to do good, they might have ſaid, 'We would have anſwered thee, when thou calledſt: 'and would have obeyed thy ſtatutes: but we had no power 'of our own, and thou didſt not work effectually in us, and upon us.'

But that is a vindication, which no man can bring to God. For our Lord ſays to the Jews: *Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life,* John v. 40. And lamenting the ſad caſe of the city of Jeruſalem, he ſays, *How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings? and ye would not!* Matt. xxiii. 37.

* 'I can do all theſe things, through 'Chriſt, who ſtrengtheneth me, [Phil. 'iv. 13.] that is, through the di- 'rections of Chriſt, and through 'the arguments and motives of 'the Chriſtian doctrine.' Dr. Jer. Hunt's Sermons, vol. III. p. 188.

And

And in this fifteenth chapter of St. John: *If I had not come, and ſpoken unto them, they had not had ſin: but now they have no cloak* or excuſe *for their ſin.* And afterwards: *If I had not come, and done among them the works that no other man did, they had not had ſin,* John xv. 22, 24. that is, no ſin in compariſon of what they now have; which ſhews, that men may improve by advantages: and therefore, where much is given, there much may be reaſonably required.

All which things are ſo clear, and do ſo manifeſtly depend upon the ſuppoſition of men having a natural power in them to do good or evil; that it may be wondered it ſhould be queſtioned: and to conteſt and deny it, ſeems to be contrary to all ſenſe and reaſon: and to overthrow all notion of duty and obligation.

Againſt ſo clear texts as have been now produced, and againſt ſuch cogent arguments, it muſt be in vain to alledge texts, which, probably, in their true meaning, do not at all contradict theſe things.

Our Lord ſays: *No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath ſent me draw him,* John vi. 44. But thoſe words do not import immediate impulſes: the meaning is, 'no 'man will come to me and receive my pure, ſublime and ſpiri-'tual doctrine, unleſs he have firſt gained ſome juſt apprehen-'ſions concerning the general principles of religion. And if 'a man have ſome good notion of God, and his perfections, 'and his will, as already revealed, he will come unto me.' If any man be well diſpoſed: if he have a love of truth, and a deſire to advance in virtue and religious knowledge, he will readily hearken to me and believe in me.

That this is the meaning, may with high degrees of probability be concluded from other texts, in which our Lord tells the Jews: *If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of myſelf,* John vii. 17. And, *Had ye believed Moſes, ye would have believed me,* ver. 46. and from many other texts to the like purpoſe. It is alſo evident from the words next following thoſe, which we are conſidering. *It is written in the prophets: and they ſhall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me,* John vi. 45. which is ſaying, in other words, what was juſt obſerved by us: that if any man by ſerious conſideration, and particularly by attending to former revelations, has gained juſt apprehenſions of God, he will come unto me,

and ſubmit himſelf to be my diſciple, to be farther inſtructed by me.

Would any ſay, that the neceſſity of immediate and particular influences from Chriſt himſelf is implied in this context: where he ſays, that *he is a vine*, and his diſciples *branches*, and that their bearing fruit depends as much upon influences from him, as the life and vigour of branches depend upon the ſap derived from the root of a tree? It would be eaſy to anſwer, that the argument in the text is a ſimilitude, not literal truth. Neither is Chriſt, literally, a vine: nor are his diſciples, ſtrictly ſpeaking, branches. Men have a reaſonable, intellectual nature, above animals and vegetables. They are not governed by irreſiſtible, and neceſſary, or mechanical powers. But it is ſound doctrine, and right principles, particularly the words of Chriſt, which are the words of God, that are their life, and may, and will, if attended to, powerfully enable them to practiſe good works, and to excel, and perſevere therein. Which brings me to the third and laſt obſervation for illuſtrating this text and context.

Prop. 3. They who underſtand, and have a ſtrict regard to the true doctrine of Chriſt, the principles of the goſpel, will be able to practiſe good works, and abound therein, and be ſteady under difficulties: whereas, if they ſhould diſregard it, or corrupt it, they would perform nothing conſiderable and excellent.

I think this muſt be allowed to be the deſign of this context: and I need not enlarge much farther.

Every conſiderate perſon may perceive, that the goſpel, as it teaches and inculcates univerſal holineſs and virtue; ſobriety, righteouſneſs, and godlineſs; ſo it ſets before men the ſtrongeſt arguments, or affords the beſt helps for attaining real excellence. True religion and virtue are taught by Jeſus Chriſt in all their ſublimity and perfection: the worſhip of God in ſpirit and truth: doing good from a principle of love to God, a deſire of his favour, and hopes of rewards from him, without views to worldly honours and advantages: reſignation to the diſpoſals of Providence: maintaining the truth in all circumſtances: of which virtues the Lord Jeſus himſelf was a conſpicuous and perfect example: who alſo, after he had died in teſtimony to the truths taught by him, was raiſed from the dead, and exalted to glory. And all who follow him ſincerely are to be made

made perfect and happy, like him, and to be for ever with him.

They who attend to this muſt be diſpoſed to do ſomewhat conſiderable. And, if they ſhould meet with temptations, they will be able to ſurmount them.

Accordingly, the apoſtles of Jeſus, who did *abide in him*, and retained his words, did bear much, and good fruit. Their conduct was excellent and exemplary. And they could endure ſhame and all manner of ſufferings for his name's ſake, and in hope of partaking in the recompenſes of his heavenly kingdom.

Under what diſcouragements Peter with the eleven firſt preached the goſpel at Jeruſalem, and under what diſcouragements it was profeſſed by their firſt converts, and by many others afterwards, the hiſtory in the Acts, and other things in the epiſtles of the apoſtles, plainly ſhew.

And the power and efficacy of the divine word are atteſted to by every part of ſcripture.

Says holy David: *Wherewith ſhall a young man cleanſe his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word*, Pſ. cxix. 9. And, *Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not ſin againſt thee*, ver. 11.

The word of God is repreſented as the great mean of forming, and of cheriſhing and improving good diſpoſitions. The Chriſtians, to whom St. Peter writes, *had purified themſelves in obeying the truth*: And had been *born again, not of corruptible ſeed, but of incorruptible*, even *by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever*, 1 Pet. i. 22, 23. And he exhorts them, *as new-born babes, to deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby*, ch. ii. 2. And St. James: *Receive with meekneſs the ingraffed word, which is able to ſave your ſouls*, Jam. i. 23.

What St. Paul ſays at Miletus to the elders of Epheſus, is very obſervable: *Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am free from the blood of all men: for I have not ſhunned to declare unto you the whole counſel of God. . . . And now, brethren, I recommend you to God, and to the word of his grace: which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are ſanctified*, Acts xx. 26, 27.

How earneſt, and how frequent that apoſtle is in exhorting Chriſtians to retain the pure goſpel of Chriſt, in order to their eſtabliſhment and increaſe in virtue, is well known to all men. He and Barnabas viſited the churches which

they had planted, *confirming the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith*, Acts xiv, 22. And to the Colossians he writes: *You that were sometime alienated, . . . hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblamable, and unreproveable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard*, Col. i. 21—23.

II. I shall now mention two or three remarks briefly, by way of application.

1. We may hence infer that, generally speaking, sad will be the condition of those, who having once known the doctrine of the gospel, afterwards forsake and disown it, and wilfully act contrary to its holy laws and commandments.

The apostles of Christ in their epistles make the supposition of such instances, and speak of them with much concern, as past hope. It would be exceeding difficult *to renew them again to repentance*, Heb. vi. 6. and *it had been better for them, not to have known the way of righteousness, than to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them*, 2 Pet. ii. 21.

2. This discourse of our Lord with his disciples should induce us to a strict regard to his genuine doctrine.

This is the best way to be steady and eminent in things excellent and commendable. We have not seen Christ; but we have good reason to believe in him and love him. His words and his works, and all his transactions on this earth for our welfare have been carefully transmitted to us. We should abide in him: and endeavour to know more the power of his death and resurrection, and all the forcible considerations which his doctrine contains to the practice of virtue and perseverance therein.

3. We here see cause to lament the degeneracy of Christians, and the absurdities that have been introduced into the Christian profession.

Says God with regard to the Jewish people: *I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed. How then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me!* Jer. ii. 21. The statutes delivered to the people of Israel were good and right. The laws of moral righteousness had the preference: and the others were wisely ordained at that time, and suited to answer valuable ends. Nevertheless they diverted to idolatry, or made additions of human observances, to the great detriment of true piety. The doctrine of Jesus is excellent

excellent and important: and yet numberless superstitions and absurdities have been graffed in. Whence comes this? It is because men do not attend to their true interest; because they do not love truth and simplicity: and so it has been from the beginning. *God made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions*, Ecc. vii. 29.

We should not be offended. The fault is not in the doctrine itself: nor has Providence been wanting in any thing requisite for the good of men. And our Lord foresaw and foretold what has since happened. Good grain was sowed in the field: but whilst men were negligent, an enemy has cast in tares, which have sprung up and mingled with the good corn, Matt. xiii. 24, 25.

This should excite our care and diligence: and with a sincere love of truth we should study and endeavour to understand the religion of Jesus Christ. It is not, in its original form, the most mysterious, loaded with doctrines hard to be believed; either almost or quite contradictory. The worship which it teaches is not the most showy and pompous that ever was contrived; consisting of a long and tedious ceremonial, in which a hypocrite might be as exact and punctual as any man: but it is undissembled virtue, from a respect to God, and hope of his favour.

If all men would receive this excellent doctrine, and come under the power of it; the world might be happy, and our life here on earth easy and comfortable. But as such an agreeable scene has not yet appeared, and we are not able to reconcile all men to truth and virtue; the knowing, and pious, and zealous for God will often meet with difficulties: but then here comes in to their aid the prospect of a great joy set before them. Hence this struggle and contention, this holy warfare: which we must resolve upon if called out to it, and should acquit ourselves like men. Here is a difficulty. But this contention gives occasion for the exercise and improvement of virtue; and so lays the foundation of transcendent glory and happiness hereafter. And *our light affliction, which is but for a moment*, according to the sublime apprehensions of the apostle, *worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

# SERMON XV.

## A RECOMMENDATION OF THINGS VIRTUOUS, LOVELY, AND OF GOOD REPORT.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things.*

In these words, and those which follow, we have the concluding exhortations and advices of the apostle to the Christians at Philippi. They are brief and concise, yet full and comprehensive: and in them, if any thing of moment had been hitherto omitted, every branch of conduct that has in it any real excellence, or outward comeliness, would be included: and the well-disposed and intelligent Philippians would bring it to mind.

The words of the text may be partly explained in this short paraphrase: 'Finally to conclude and sum up all, my 'brethren, whatever *things are true*, or sincere: *whatever* '*things are honest*, or grave and venerable: *whatever things* '*are just*, or righteous between man and man: *whatever* '*things are pure*, or chaste: *whatever things are lovely*, agree-'able and amiable: *whatever things are of good report*, ge-'nerally well-spoken of and commended: *if there be any* '*virtue, if there be any praise*: and whatever is virtuous and 'reasonable, worthy of praise and commendation: *think of* '*these things*: such things do you attend to, and reckon 'yourselves obliged to observe and practise.'

In farther discourling on this text I shall

I. Shew, what is meant by *thinking of these things.*

II. I shall endeavour to explain and illustrate the several particulars here mentioned.

III. After which I intend to add some reflections by way of application.

I. I would shew what is meant by *thinking of these things.*

And

And doubtleſs every one preſently perceives, that the apoſtle does not barely intend meditating on them, and contemplating them in a ſpeculative way, but in order to practiſe. This muſt be the deſign of ſuch an exhortation as this. And it is rendered more manifeſt by the immediately following words. *Thoſe things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and ſeen in me, do. And the God of peace ſhall be with you.*

*By thinking of theſe things,* it is likely the apoſtle means the examining and obſerving the reaſonableneſs and fitneſs of them: ſeriouſly attending to the ſeveral branches of each particular here mentioned: not omitting to take notice of every thing implied and contained therein: obſerving how far each of theſe things may be eſpecially ſuited to their ſeveral ſtations and characters: accounting themſelves under an indiſpenſible obligation to practiſe them as occaſions offer: and likewiſe ſtudying and contriving, how they may be beſt able to ſhew an exact and cheerful conformity to ſuch a direction as this, and guard againſt every thing contrary to it.

II. In the next place I ſhall endeavour to explain and illuſtrate the ſeveral particulars here recommended.

The firſt is *whatever things are true.* And it ſhould be obſerved, that this comprehenſive word *whatever* is prefixed to every particular. It is uſed for the ſake of brevity. St. Paul deſigned not to enumerate the ſeveral parts of each character here mentioned. But he deſires, that his Chriſtian friends and brethren would themſelves obſerve and attend to every thing included in them.

*Whatever things are true,* or ſincere. There is a truth of words and actions. We are to be ſincere and upright in our profeſſion of religion, in the worſhip of God, and in our dealings with men. We ſhould be what we appear to be; and be far from deſiring or aiming to be eſteemed what we are not, when there is any the leaſt hazard of any damage or injury, thereby accruing, either to religion or to men.

*Whatever things are true, think of theſe things.* Reckon yourſelves obliged to every branch of truth and ſincerity. Shew a love of truth in your ſtudies and inquiries. And when you are upon good grounds convinced of the truth of any principles, be not ſhy of owning them upon proper occaſions.

Never diſown or deny the truths you are convinced of, for any worldly conſiderations whatever. As you have taken upon you the name of Chriſtians, ſteadily acknowledge and profeſs the

the principles of that doctrine. Forſake not the aſſembling of yourſelves together, nor be moved from your ſteadfaſtneſs by the reproaches, or other ill treatment, which you may meet with.

Let your worſhip of God be ſincere and fervent. Never appear before him with your body only: but always worſhip him in ſpirit and truth.

In your converſation and dealings with men, whatever is your ſtation and character maintain your integrity. Be faithful and upright in your words and actions, in your profeſſions of reſpect and eſteem, in your promiſes and contracts: that no one may have cauſe to ſuſpect or doubt of your ſincerity, and all men who have dealings with you may be readily diſpoſed to confide in you. And never let any be diſappointed, or have reaſon to complain of falſhood, and to repent of the truſt they have repoſed in you.

*Whatever things are honeſt.* In the margin of ſome of our bibles the original word is rendered venerable. And in divers places our Engliſh tranſlation has the word grave, inſtead of that in the text. Among the qualifications of a biſhop this is one, that *he rule well his own houſe, having his children in ſubjection with all gravity .... Likewiſe muſt the deacons be grave .... Likewiſe muſt their wives be grave, not ſlanderers, ſober, faithful in all things,* 1 Tim. iii. 4, 8, 11. In the epiſtle to Titus. *But ſpeak thou the things that become ſound doctrine, that the aged men be ſober, grave,* Tit. ii. 1, 2. And, *In all things ſhewing thyſelf a pattern of good works, in doctrine ſhewing uncorruptneſs, gravity, ſincerity,* ver. 7.

Theſe inſtances may help us more diſtinctly to conceive the deſign of the apoſtle in this place, where the ſame word is rendered honeſt. It ſeems, that he intends to recommend to Chriſtians a concern for their character, a care ſo to behave, as to ſecure to themſelves ſome degree of reſpect and eſteem: that they ſhould avoid unbecoming levity in word, action, habit, and outward behaviour, which tends to render men deſpicable: whereby they appear weak, mean, and of no conſequence in the eye of others.

Doubtleſs the practice of this rule muſt be different and various, according to men's ſeveral characters and ſtations in the world. We perceive from the texts juſt cited, that gravity is more eſpecially recommended to the aged, and to thoſe who have the honour of ſome office or truſt in the church. But here St. Paul gives this advice to Chriſtians in

in general, to reckon themſelves obliged to whatever things are honeſt, grave, or venerable.

It is not needful, nor ſcarce proper, to be very particular in ſuch a direction as this. Every one who thinks, as St. Paul here deſires all Chriſtians to do, may be the beſt judge, what is moſt ſuitable to his own ſtation and character. However, ſuch a hint as this in the text may be of uſe to awaken the attention of every one, and induce men to conſider, what does beſt become them, in their ſtations, and what tends to diminiſh them in the eſteem of others. It may be of uſe to excite men to labour after ſome uſeful qualifications, and to be furniſhed with ſome valuable branch of knowledge. It may raiſe a deſire of weight and ſolidity. It tends to caution men againſt extravagant and exceſſive mirth. In a word, whatever is becoming, and is rather ſuited to ſecure reſpect, than expoſe them to contempt and ſcorn: and whatever tends to make others wiſer and better, rather than what tends to divert and pleaſe them: ſuch things men ſhould think of, and reckon themſelves obliged to.

*Whatever things are juſt.* A comprehenſive rule. And yet its ſeveral branches of duty are ſo obvious, as to be generally known and underſtood. There is no neceſſity therefore to enlarge in the enumeration of the ſeveral parts of righteouſneſs to be done, or unrighteouſneſs to be avoided. The great difficulty is, to bring men to an equitable temper and diſpoſition of mind: and to ſubdue ſelf-love and partiality, or an improper affection for worldly things, and their own particular intereſts: which often miſlead them, and cauſe them to act contrary to the plaineſt rules. Our bleſſed Lord therefore compriſed and recommended this branch of duty in that one convincing and perſuaſive rule: *All things whatever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo unto them.*

At other times, however, both Chriſt and his apoſtles have inſiſted on particular duties, and enforced them with very moving conſiderations.

Here the direction is general. *Whatever things are juſt, think of them.* So conſider this point, that you may perform all acts of juſtice, and avoid every thing unjuſt, unfair, unequal.

May not a regard to this rule induce ſome to caution and circumſpection in their dealings, and to avoid extending their

their commerce beyond the meaſure of their ability? Should not wiſe and equitable perſons take heed, not ſo much as to run the hazard of ruining thoſe who depend upon them, or deal with them, or truſt them? The wiſeſt and beſt of men are liable to unavoidable and unforeſeen accidents. But the thinking on whatever things are juſt might diſcourage ſome ſchemes and projects, which are as likely to miſcarry, as to ſucceed: and if not ſucceſsful, may reduce a man beyond the poſſibility of his returning to all what he has received.

The thinking of this part of duty may alſo be of uſe to diſcourage and prevent an expenſive courſe of life, beyond the proportion of a man's income and ſubſtance. For is he to be reckoned juſt, who conſumes in luxury, and exceſs of any kind, not only his own patrimony, but likewiſe the right and property of other men?

Might not a reſpect to every thing that is juſt be of extenſive uſe, and vaſt advantage to mankind? and prevent diſtreſſes and inconveniences, inexpreſſible and innumerable!

*Whatever things are juſt, think of them.* Avoid leſſer as well as greater acts of injuſtice. Think what is juſt and equitable toward thoſe of your own family, whether relatives, ſervants, or dependents: what is fair and equitable in the way of commerce with other men your equals: what is juſt and due to ſuperiors and governors: what regard you ought to have for the welfare of the public ſociety, of which you are a part, in whoſe proſperity you are intereſted, by the powers of which you are protected in your commerce, and the ſecure poſſeſſion of your property. Says St. Paul to the Romans: *Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, cuſtom to whom cuſtom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another*, Rom. xiii. 7, 8.

*Whatever things are pure*, or chaſte, *think of them.* Reckon yourſelves obliged to all purity, in body and mind, in thought, word, and action, in every ſtate, and in every age, and part of life, and in every circumſtance, upon every occaſion. Think and conſider, how you may beſt be able to preſerve that purity, which is acceptable to God, for the honour of religion, and your own peace and comfort. Think and conſult with yourſelves, how you may avoid temptations, and how you may reſiſt and overcome them, if you ſhould unexpectedly and ſuddenly meet with them. Meddle not with

with writings, where a proper decorum is neglected, or in which, under ſpecious appearances, the worſt and moſt dangerous poiſon is inſinuated. Never be preſent at indecent ſhews and ſpectacles, much leſs be at any time delighted with them, or applaud them. Decline reſolutely, and with the utmoſt care, enſnaring and vicious converſation. So far from tempting and enticing others, or contributing by any means whatever to their being enſnared, and deluded from the paths of ſtrict ſobriety; do what lies in your power as you have opportunity, by the moſt proper and likely, the moſt effectual, the moſt acceptable, or leaſt offenſive methods, not only to preſerve your own purity, but alſo to ſtrengthen the wiſe and holy reſolutions of others; that they may be ſteadfaſt in their purpoſe, overcome in a time of temptation, and paſs through the world pure and unſullied.

*Whatever things are lovely*, or amiable. So the original word ſeems moſt properly to ſignify. But herein, very probably, is included what is loving and friendly. For ſuch things are uſually lovely, and agreeable in the eye of the world.

All ſuch things the apoſtle deſires his Chriſtian friends at Philippi to think of: to *follow after the things that make for peace*, Rom. xiv. 19. among themſelves and others. Says the Pſalmiſt, *How good, and how pleaſant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* Pſ. cxxxiii. It is not only a great happineſs to thoſe perſons themſelves, but it is likewiſe agreeable to others to behold and obſerve.

It is not unlikely, that the apoſtle intends here ſome exalted acts of virtue, care of the ſick, bounty to the neceſſitous and indigent, readineſs to appear in the behalf of ſuch as are injured by prevailing power, endeavours to clear up doubtful points, and vindicate innocence, accuſed, cenſured, and reproached.

The Philippians, very probably, would be led by this advice, to think of benevolence toward each other, and toward their fellow-chriſtians, and alſo toward other men, their Heathen and Jewiſh neighbours: a readineſs to do good to them, when they had opportunity and ability, and their ſervices and kind offices would be accepted.

Herein may be alſo included ſteadineſs in the faith, and in the profeſſion of the truth, free from any appearance of obſtinacy, and without unreaſonable ſcorn and diſdain of others of different ſentiments: a readineſs to give a reaſon

of

of their belief and hope to all who demand it: and doing it with meekneſs and modeſty.

Hereby may likewiſe be intended condeſcenſion upon many occaſions, forgiveneſs of injuries, meekneſs and gentleneſs, mildneſs in precepts and reproofs, and doing every thing, ſo far as may be, in the moſt acceptable and agreeable manner.

Once more: *Think of whatever things are lovely.* Shew an affable carriage to all men. And if any of you have it in your power to be extenſively uſeful, manifeſt cheerfulneſs of mind, in ſuch good deſigns as you engage in, and promote them to the utmoſt.

*Whatever things are of good report,* or well ſpoken of, and generally commended.

But hereby the apoſtle intends thoſe things only, that are juſtly commended, or are really commendable. It can never be imagined, that he adviſes any Chriſtians to pay ſuch deference to prevailing cuſtoms, as to approve of any thing that is in itſelf evil. No: Chriſtians were at that time few in number, in compariſon of others, and were obliged to be ſteadfaſt in the faith, whatever others might think or ſay of it. And at ſome ſeaſons, and in ſome places, there are ſome ſo degenerate and corrupt, as to vilify thoſe who join not with them in ſhameful practices. *For the time paſt of our life may ſuffice us,* ſays St. Peter, *to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we walked in laſciviouſneſs, luſts, exceſs of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it ſtrange, that you run not with them to the ſame exceſs of riot, ſpeaking evil of you,* 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4. Nevertheleſs there are ſome branches of virtue and real goodneſs, which are generally approved, and well ſpoken of. St. Peter himſelf ſuppoſeth as much in another exhortation. *Having your converſation honeſt,* or good, fair, and unſpotted, *among the gentiles: that whereas they ſpeak againſt you, as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they ſhall behold, glorify God in the day of viſitation,* 1 Pet. ii. 12.

This particular may in ſome meaſure coincide with the preceding. Such things as are amiable, taking and agreeable, will be generally commended. In both, eſpecially the latter, I apprehend the apoſtle to recommend ſome ſublime acts of virtue and goodneſs, which depend upon much ſelf-denial, and conſiſt in diſcreet compliances, and a departing from our juſt right upon ſome occaſions, for weighty

weighty reaſons and conſiderations, and out of a regard to the honour of religion, or with a view to the welfare and advantage of ſome particular perſons, or the good of ſociety in general.

There are particular directions in ſome other epiſtles, which may be recollected by you, and may illuſtrate this general advice, and help us to diſcern what is included in it.

In an argument, which the apoſtle has in the epiſtle to the Romans, he ſays, *Let not then your good be evil ſpoken of*, Rom. xiii. 16. The Chriſtian liberty, or freedom from an obligation to obſerve a diſtinction of meats, and ſuch like indifferent things, was, in the general, good and reaſonable. Yet he adviſes, not to aſſert it always, but to decline the ſo doing, when there ſhould be a manifeſt danger of offending a weak and ſcrupulous perſon, ſo as to cauſe him to fall. Whereby it might happen, that what was good would be evil ſpoken of.

Another particular, which I ſuppoſe may ſuit this general direction, is that in the firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians. *I ſpeak to your ſhame. Is it ſo, that there is not a wiſe man among you, that ſhall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, becauſe ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather ſuffer yourſelves to be defrauded?* 1 Cor. vi. 5--7. Thoſe perſons had not a due regard to the circumſtances of things. Contention and ſtrife are unreputable among friends and relatives, and thoſe who are of the ſame religious ſociety and communion. It would therefore have been a good work, if ſome, who were of the beſt capacity and underſtanding among the Chriſtians at Corinth, had endeavoured to reconcile diſagreeing parties, and to induce them to make up their differences in an amicable way. And it might have been fit and commendable, ſuppoſing untractableneſs and obſtinacy on one ſide, if the other would for peace ſake quit a part of his right, or what might be juſtly claimed by him.

And there may be many occaſions, wherein this direction will take place and be obligatory. A true Chriſtian, and a wiſe man, will often think of thoſe things that are of good report, and will reſign ſomewhat, and comply againſt his own particular intereſts, when ſome valuable purpoſes are to be ſerved thereby.

The

The laſt clauſe in the text is: *If there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe.* In which two particulars it may be either ſuppoſed, that the apoſtle would ſummarily comprehend every thing already mentioned: or, that he would be underſtood to ſay: 'And if there be any thing elſe that is virtuous 'and praiſe-worthy think, of it, and reckon yourſelves obliged 'to it.'

One thing, which I apprehend to be deſigned and implied, both here and elſewhere, is diſcretion or prudence: which, certainly, is praiſe-worthy, for the honour of particular perſons and ſocieties, and religion in general.

You are to condeſcend very often; but yet it muſt be ſometimes without familiarity. You are to reprove with mildneſs; but yet you are not to connive at faults that are manifeſt. You are to be kind and charitable; but yet you ſhould not be impoſed upon. And it will neither be for your credit, nor for the credit of religion, to maintain the robuſt and ſtrong in ſloth and idleneſs. You are to comply; but ſtill you muſt conſider, when, to whom, and how far. You are to be courteous and affable and condeſcending: but yet you ſhould keep the dignity of your character. You ſhould forgive, if men repent and acknowledge their fault: and you ſhould pray for them that perſecute you, and ſpeak evil of you. But you are not obliged to confide in all without diſcrimination, nor to put truſt in thoſe who ſhew enmity to you. There is a neceſſity of weighing circumſtances, and calmly conſidering perſons, tempers, times and ſeaſons. We ſhould join thoſe two conſiderations, and obſerve thoſe two properties: *if there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe: whatever things are true, and of good report.* Meekneſs is a virtue. But it is apt ſometimes to invite injuries. He who by an imprudent exerciſe of what he calls meekneſs, neglects his own ſafety and ſecurity from unreaſonable men, and thereby often brings troubles upon himſelf, and thoſe concerned with him, conſults not his own credit, nor the credit and reputation of the religious principles he profeſſes.

Theſe are the ſeveral branches of virtue and goodneſs, which the apoſtle here recommends. And they ſhould be thought of by all in the ſenſe and manner before explained and deſcribed. For the exhortation is addreſſed to all. Every one ſhould think of what ſuits his ſtation and condition. The biſhops or overſeers, and the deacons in this church, to whom the apoſtle was writing, were to attend to and perform the duties

duties of their offices. The rich and the honourable were in like manner to perform the duties of their circumſtances and ſtation: they ſhould endeavour to be uſeful in the world, and think of every thing that is good and laudable. The poor likewiſe were to think of what ſuited them, and be reſigned, contented, humble, induſtrious, faithful, thankful. For ſuch things are virtuous, and praiſe-worthy in them. Such is the exhortation to the Chriſtians of that time: and it is to be attended to by the followers of Jeſus in every age.

III. I ſhall now conclude with a few inferences by way of application.

1. We hence learn, that there are ſome things, which are fit and excellent in themſelves, true, juſt, and virtuous.

2. We alſo perceive hence, that the Chriſtian religion teaches and recommends every branch of virtue and goodneſs: and that Chriſtians ought to reckon themſelves obliged to every thing that is true, juſt, lovely, of good report, virtuous and commendable, according to the ſtations they are in.

3. The Chriſtian doctrine does not exclude, or altogether neglect and overlook any reaſonable argument to the practice of real duty. Indeed many precepts are delivered in the ſcriptures, both of the Old and New Teſtament, in an authoritative way, as the will of God, and with promiſes of happineſs, or threatenings of woe and miſery, which none but God can perform and accompliſh. Nevertheleſs arguments from the internal excellence, or the apparent comelineſs of things, are not entirely omitted. Nor ought they to be overlooked or ſlighted by us. The apoſtle here adviſes, and directs: *If there be any virtue, if there be any praiſe, think on thoſe things.*

4. We cannot eaſily forbear obſerving, that this exhortation of the apoſtle is not only excellent for the ſenſe, but engaging alſo for the manner of addreſs. He treats the Philippian Chriſtians, as men of underſtanding. And without a prolix enlargement propounds it to them to think of, and reckon themſelves obliged to, *whatever things are true, honeſt, virtuous and praiſe-worthy.* The ſame things are now in a like manner propoſed to you. The fewer words are uſed in recommending them, the more do you think of them: that you may be fully ſatisfied of their reaſonableneſs, and be ever ready to practiſe them as occaſions require, in the moſt agreeable and acceptable manner.

# SERMON XVI.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR WORDS.

MATT. xii. 36.

*But I ſay unto you, that every idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.*

In the preceding part of this chapter ſeveral things are related, which may be reckoned to have given occaſion for what is here ſaid. To obſerve thoſe particulars therefore may conduce very much to the better underſtanding of our Lord's deſign in theſe words.

One thing, related at the beginning of this chapter, is our Lord's going through fields of corn, and the reflections caſt upon the diſciples by the phariſees for *plucking ears of corn* on the ſabbath day, together with his vindication of the diſciples from thoſe reflections.

Afterwards is an account of our Lord's meekneſs in withdrawing from the phariſees, who ſought to apprehend him, with a general character of the mildneſs of his miniſtry.

After which, notice is taken of a miracle wrought by the Lord Jeſus, and the falſe and injurious charge of the phariſees, that *he caſt out dæmons by Beelzebub, their prince:* and the reproof of thoſe, who therein had blaſphemed the Holy Ghoſt. Which ſin he declares would not be forgiven, *neither in this world, nor in that which is to come.* And then he adds theſe general obſervations in his teaching: *Either make the tree good, and its fruit good: or elſe make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt. For the tree is known by its fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye being evil ſpeak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh. A good man out of the good treaſure of his heart bringeth forth good things. And an evil man out of the evil treaſure bringeth forth evil things. But I ſay unto you, that every idle word which men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.*

I. In

I. In explaining and improving this text I would firſt conſider, what our Lord calls an *idle word.*

II. In what ſenſe our Lord is to be underſtood: and how we can be juſtified by our words, when good: and condemned by them, when they are evil.

III. I ſhall inquire into the reaſon of this ſentence of juſtification, or condemnation.

IV. And then, in the fourth and laſt place, I intend to conclude with ſome remarks, by way of application.

I. In the firſt place, we will conſider what our Lord calls an *idle word.*

And here it muſt be owned, that there is ſome variety of explication among pious and learned interpreters.

Some by idle word underſtand the ſame as unprofitable. They think this to be the beſt interpretation, and that the word ought not to be reſtrained to falſe and injurious words, ſuch as are ſpoken of in the preceding context. They judge our Lord to argue from the leſs to the greater, to convince the phariſees, how dreadful an account they muſt give of their blaſphemous and reproachful ſpeeches: when all men muſt give an account even of uſeleſs words, which they ſpeak to no good purpoſe, but vainly; without reſpect either to the glory of God, or the good of others, or their own neceſſary and lawful occaſions.

So ſome. Others hereby rather underſtand falſe, reproachful, hurtful words: the word vain, or idle, according to the Hebrews, being often uſed for deceitful, falſe, lying. The third commandment in the Law of Moſes is thus expreſſed: *Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.* Thou ſhalt take care, never to make uſe of the name of God to atteſt and ſupport a falſhood. When Pharaoh iſſued a ſevere order againſt the Iſraelites, to increaſe their labour, it is added: *And let them not regard vain words,* Exod. v. 9. or falſe and deceitful ſpeeches. Hoſea, ch. xii. 1. *Ephraim feedeth on the wind, and followeth after the eaſt wind. He daily increaſeth lies and deſolation.* In the ancient Greek verſion, the ſtile of which is often very agreeable to that of the writers of the New Teſtament, the text is rendered in this manner: *Ephraim daily increaſeth vain and unprofitable things.* And Micah, ch. i. 14. *The houſe of Achzib ſhall be a lie to the kings of Iſrael.* In the ſame ancient verſion it is, *ſhall be vain to the kings of Iſrael.* Habb. ii. 3. *For the viſion is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it ſhall ſpeak, and*

*not lie.* In the ſame ancient Greek verſion, *it ſhall not be in vain.* And St. Paul, *Let no man deceive you with vain* or falſe *words: for becauſe of theſe things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of diſobedience,* Eph. v. 6.

And the coherence likewiſe countenanceth this ſenſe: for of this ſort are the words ſpoken by the phariſees. At the beginning of the chapter they are related to have caſt reflections on Chriſt's diſciples, to prejudice their character without reaſon. Afterwards they are ſaid to have blaſphemed our Lord's miracles, done by the finger of God, aſcribing them to the prince of evil ſpirits. And our Lord, repreſenting the real guilt, and great malignity of that ſin, does alſo take notice of ſome other reproachful ſpeeches concerning himſelf, which ſeem to have been more eſpecially perſonal. *Wherefore I ſay unto you: all manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men: but the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven unto men. And whoſoever ſpeaketh a word againſt the Son of man, it ſhall be forgiven; but whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come,* ver. 31, 32. Where by *ſpeaking againſt the Son of man,* ſeem to be intended thoſe falſe characters given of our Lord by ſome, of his being *a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and ſinners:* conſiſting of falſe and injurious repreſentations of ſome part of his conduct, and embraced by ſome who were little acquainted with him or his works.

We might farther argue, that this is the deſign of our Lord from what is ſaid at ver. 34, 35: *How can ye being evil ſpeak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh. A good man out of the good treaſure of his heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treaſure bringeth forth evil things.* Whereupon follow the declarations and obſervations of the text.

All this may well incline us to think, that by idle words our Lord does not mean thoſe words which are inſignificant and unprofitable, and have no immediate tendency to promote ſome good; but rather ſuch words as are evil, falſe, injurious and detrimental to men's perſonal characters, or to the intereſts of religion.

II. Secondly, we are to conſider, how men can be juſtified by their words, if they are good; and how they can be condemned by them, if evil.

It is what our Lord here declares expreſsly and ſtrongly. And the juſtification, or acquittal, and the condemnation or cenſure, relate to the ſolemn tranſactions of the great day; when men's characters and ſtates ſhall be finally and for ever determined; and not barely to any ſentences of applauſe or diſgrace in this world. Theſe are our Lord's expreſſions: *But I ſay unto you, that every idle word which men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give account thereof in the day of judgment: for by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified; and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.*

But how can this be? Are there not other things that will be taken into conſideration in the day of judgment beſide men's words? Yes, certainly. According to the doctrine of our Saviour, there are evil thoughts and evil actions as well as evil words, which ſhall be examined into, cenſured, and puniſhed. And there are good thoughts and uſeful works, which are highly acceptable in the ſight of God.

The deſign of our Lord therefore is, to aſſure men, that their words alſo are of great importance. Men are often apt to be very heedleſs in this reſpect. They indulge great freedom of ſpeech, not being duly apprehenſive of the conſequences of good or bad words. And our Lord, upon the phariſees reviling his miracles, takes occaſion to diſcourſe upon the point, and delivers this doctrine: that men's words will come into conſideration in the day of judgment. Whatever ſome may think, or endeavour to perſuade themſelves, this is the judgment of God: their words are of no ſmall moment. God obſerves them now, and will call men to an account for them hereafter: and ſometimes their words alone may be found ſufficient to decide men's characters.

III. Which brings me to the third particular, to ſhew the reaſonableneſs of juſtifying or condemning men by their words.

One reaſon is, that a great deal is in the power of the tongue. Good or bad diſcourſe has a great effect and influence on the affairs of the world. As St. James ſays, *the tongue*, though *a little member, boaſteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, ... and ſetteth on fire the whole courſe of nature*, Ja. iii. 5, 6. The abuſe of the tongue in falſe and injurious ſpeeches is often prejudicial and ruinous to the good character and proſperity of particular perſons, and to the peace and quietneſs of whole ſocieties. *The words of a tale-*

*bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermoſt parts of the belly*, Pr. xviii. 8. St. Paul exhorts: *Wherefore putting away lying, ſpeak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, be put away from you with all malice*, Eph. iv. 25. alſo ver. 31, 32.

Falſe and injurious words are evil and vicious. And there is virtue in good words: in vindicating the characters of the injured, pleading the cauſe of the oppreſſed, reconciling differences, recommending peace and friendſhip, and forwarding any good and uſeful deſigns.

Solomon ſays: *A man ſhall be ſatisfied with good by the fruit of his lips. And the recompenſe of a man's hands ſhall be rendered unto him*, Pr. xii. 14. that is, the author of good counſel and advice, whether in private or public concerns, will reap advantage by it. And a man ſhall be recompenſed for good words as well as for good actions.

Again: *A man ſhall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the ſoul of the tranſgreſſors ſhall eat violence*, ch. xiii. 2. that is, he who gives men good and faithful counſel, or he who ſpeaks well of others, as they deſerve, will have a benefit by it. And they alſo who injuriouſly calumniate and revile others: or who deceive men by their ſpeeches, ſhall in the end ſuffer the like evils which they bring upon others.

Good words then are virtuous, and evil words are unrighteous: and oftentimes, even in this world, meet with ſuitable recompenſes of peace, comfort and credit on the one hand; of trouble, vexation, reproach and diſgrace on the other.

But there is another thing ſtill more material, which may fully ſhew the juſtneſs of our Lord's declaration, and the reaſonableneſs of men being hereafter juſtified or condemned by their words: for, as men's words are, ſo are their hearts. Their ſpeeches ſhew the real, habitual frame of the mind. Our Lord ſays as much in this context: and therefore he himſelf leads us to this true ground and reaſon of his declaration. *Either make the tree good, and its fruit will be good*: or *elſe make the tree corrupt, and its fruit will be corrupt: for the tree is known by its fruit.* The evident deſign of which inſtance is to teach thoſe to whom our Lord was ſpeaking, that men's words, as well as their actions, ſhewed their real temper. *O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, ſpeak good things?* ver 34. You yourſelves are an inſtance of it. The evil affections of covetouſneſs and ambition prevail in your breaſts: and whilſt they

they do, you will not ſpeak right things: *For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh. A good man out of the good treaſure of the heart bringeth forth good things.* If a man's mind be filled with juſt ſentiments, and pious affections, and uſeful deſigns, his words will ſhew it. They will be ſuch as ſhall tend to promote and recommend religion and virtue, and to encourage good and upright perſons. *And an evil man out of the evil treaſure bringeth forth evil things.* A man of an evil mind will ſhew it in his diſcourſes. With reaſon therefore does he add, *that men will be juſtified or condemned by their words:* for their words ſhew their inward temper, and what are the prevailing habits of their minds: in ſhort, what men themſelves are.

This may be made farther manifeſt by obvious inſtances. Irreligious diſcourſes ſhew a man not to be religious. Falſhood and lying in a man's dealings declare him to be covetous and unrighteous. Detraction and calumny demonſtrate a man to be deſtitute of true love for his neighbour. Arrogant and vainglorious expreſſions flow from pride in the heart: and frequently men's words, as well as actions, ſhew that they have in them neither the fear of God nor a love for men.

Several things in the preceding context, if reviewed, will confirm this point.

The firſt is that of the phariſees reflecting upon the diſciples for gathering, when hungry, ſome ears of corn on the ſabbath-day. Wherein they ſhewed a malicious diſpoſition: the law diſpenſing with the bodily reſt of the ſabbath upon divers occaſions; and they themſelves approving of it in many caſes. By thoſe reflections they ſhewed a greater regard to ſome poſitive appointments, than to the eternal laws of equity and righteouſneſs. Therefore our Lord ſays to them: *If ye had known what that meant, I will have mercy and not ſacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltleſs.*

The reflections upon our Lord's perſon and character were of a like kind: *when they ſpake evil of the Son of man,* and repreſented him as *gluttonous, and a wine-bibber,* though he was guilty of no exceſs. Thereby they ſhewed a want of reſpect to truth, and of love for their neighbour. So likewiſe when they called him *a friend of publicans and ſinners,* becauſe he was ſometimes in company where they were: inſinuating thereby, that he countenanced their unrighteous actions and wicked lives; whereas he vouchſafed to be preſent with them for no other end, but to reform and amend them: and he

reproved what was amiſs in every one; and expreſſed favour toward none but thoſe who ſhewed a regard to real holineſs. And the pleaſure he had in the repentance of ſinners was no other than is to be found in the pureſt ſpirits in heaven. In theſe reflections therefore they betrayed a want of a due regard to truth, and to the good name and credit of men.

Their reviling our Lord's miracles, and aſcribing them to the power of Satan, and a combination between him and the kingdom of darkneſs, ſhewed an inveterate, malicious diſpoſition: for our Lord's doctrine was pure and holy; and it was impoſſible that evil ſpirits ſhould encourage it. Miracles they allowed, in other caſes, to be a proof of the divine approbation and concurrence. It was therefore owing to prevailing pride, ambition, covetouſneſs, envy and malice, that ſuch words proceeded out of their mouths.

In a word, their many hard ſpeeches and falſe reflections upon Jeſus and his diſciples, ſhewed that they had not the love of God in their hearts, and that they were deſtitute of all religious diſpoſitions of mind. Our bleſſed Lord ſays at ver. 30. *He that is not with me is againſt me, and he that is not with me ſcatters abroad.* The tendency of my doctrine is ſuch, ſo holy, ſo reaſonable, ſo directly for the glory of God, ſo manifeſtly ſuited to promote and ſtrengthen the intereſts of true religion in the world. And the works I do are ſo great and conſpicuous, that every one who ſees them, or hears of them, muſt heartily approve of my deſigns, if he love religion and virtue. And if any man, acquainted with my teaching and conduct aſperſe me, and revile my works, with a view to diſparage the doctrine, and hinder men from receiving it; he manifeſts that he has not at heart the honour of God and the cauſe of religion; but only ſome private intereſts of his own, or of ſome ſect or party.

Theſe things we know our Lord often told the Jews plainly, that *they did not hear his word, becauſe they were not of God:* that *they did not believe, becauſe they ſought honour one of another, and not that honour which cometh from God only.* And their injurious reflections upon him, and his doctrine, and his works, and his diſciples, proceeded from the like bad diſpoſitions, and ſhewed that they were deſtitute of religion, and under the power of vicious habits.

By their words then men may be condemned; for they ſhew what men really are.

By

By their words alſo men may be juſtified: ſome by their diſcourſes tending to the honour of God, and the good of men: recommending with mildneſs, yet aſſiduity, as occaſions offer, the great principles of religion, and the important branches of true holineſs, vindicating men's characters unjuſtly traduced, ſhewing the reaſonableneſs of mutual love and forbearance among men of different ſentiments: embracing all opportunities for withdrawing men from ſin and folly, and bringing them to a diſcreet and amiable behaviour: I ſay, by theſe and ſuch like good fruits, ſome ſhew, that the tree is good. They are good men, and out of the good treaſure of the heart they bring forth good things.

This point alſo might be farther illuſtrated by ſome particular inſtances in the goſpels. Our Lord ſays: *Whoſoever therefore ſhall confeſs me before men, him will I confeſs alſo before my Father which is in heaven*, Matt. x. 32. And ſome there were in his time who made ſuch profeſſions of their faith in him, or ſo pleaded his cauſe, as to ſhew by thoſe words their good diſpoſitions: in like manner as the phariſees, by their falſe and injurious reflections, ſhewed the bad diſpoſitions of their minds.

When Peter anſwered, and ſaid, *Thou art the Chriſt, the Son of the living God*, Matt. xvi. 16. our Lord declared him bleſſed. At another time, when many forſook him, and walked no more with him, and he aſked the diſciples, whether they alſo would go away, Peter anſwered, *Lord, to whom ſhould we go! Thou haſt the words of eternal life. And we know, and are aſſured, that thou art the Chriſt, the Son of the living God*, John vi. 68. Peter thereby ſhewed a good and virtuous diſpoſition of mind. Though he was not perfect, and upon ſome occaſions manifeſted an undue affection for earthly things; yet he had a ſuperior and prevailing regard for things divine and heavenly.

Nicodemus too ſhewed himſelf a good man by his words. He was ſincere, though defective. He came to Jeſus by night, and made an honeſt profeſſion: *Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God. For no man can do theſe miracles that thou doeſt, except God be with him.* John iii. 2. Some good while after this, when the council had ſent forth officers to take Jeſus, and they returned with a great character of him and his diſcourſes, and the phariſees were thereupon offended. *Nicodemus ſaid unto them: doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he does?* John vii. 50,

50, 51. He had a ſincere reſpect for the rules of juſtice and equity, as he plainly manifeſts by that apology, ſpoken at the hazard of his credit among men.

The man born blind, whoſe hiſtory is related in the ninth chapter of St. John's goſpel, ſhewed an honeſt and virtuous mind by his words. His eyes had been opened on a Sabbath day. The phariſees pretended to take offence at that circumſtance, and examined the man about his cure: who gave them a clear and diſtinct account, how his eyes had been opened. After much diſcourſe they ſay unto him: *We know, that God ſpake unto Moſes. As for this man, we know not from whence he is. He anſwered, and ſaid unto them: why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is. And yet he has opened my eyes. Now, we know, that God heareth not ſinners. But if any man be a worſhipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began, was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.* This reſolute defence of the character of Jeſus, in the view of much diſgrace, and particularly of excommunication, which he afterwards underwent, manifeſted a grateful, and virtuous, and religious diſpoſition of mind. Men therefore may be juſtified by their words.

IV. Nothing now remains, but that I mention a remark or two by way of application.

1. No one may hence infer, that he may be ſaved by a fair profeſſion of religion without good works.

Our Lord aſſures us, that men's words will be taken into conſideration in the day of judgment. And by them they may be acquitted or condemned. But other things will be conſidered alſo, both thoughts and outward actions. And if men are juſtified by their words, it is, when they are virtuous, and ſhew a good habit and diſpoſition of mind. And when good words proceed from a good mind, they will not be alone. There will be good works, as well as good words.

2. We have here a mark, which may be of good uſe for determining our ſincerity or inſincerity.

This is a thing, about which ſometimes we would be glad to be ſatisfied. Men may in a good meaſure judge of us by our words. But we can better judge concerning this matter ourſelves: becauſe upon recollection we may know, what are our more ordinary diſcourſes. And thereby we may judge of the temper of our minds, and what is the

*abundance*

*abundance* of our hearts. Are our diſcourſes generally unprofitable, uncharitable, cenſorious, or worſe, tending to excite vicious inclinations and propenſities, or to leſſen the obligations and evidences of religion? Our words then ſhew, we are not good men, and by our words we may be condemned. On the other hand, are we often engaged in ſuch diſcourſes as tend to the edification of others? or are they calculated to improve ourſelves, that we may receive inſtruction, and confirmation in truth and virtue? We have reaſon to be pleaſed with ſuch an evidence of a religious temper of mind.

3. The doctrine of this text teaches us to be careful of our words. For they will be taken into account in the day of judgment.

Whatever be the direct meaning of the expreſſion idle, we ought not to make it a foundation of needleſs ſcruples: as if we were reſtrained from that mirth which is innocent, and conſiſtent with ſobriety, and diligence in our callings; and only tends to refreſh our ſpirits, and fit for more important buſineſs. At the ſame time the obſervations of our Lord in the text and context plainly teach us the moment of our words, and that they are of greater conſequence than ſome imagine. We ſhould therefore be careful, that our words be not ſuch as tend to the detriment, but to the good of our neighbour: that they do not favour irreligion and wickedneſs: but that we take the ſide of religion and virtue in our diſcourſes. Let us cheerfully applaud the well meant endeavours of all men. Let us acknowledge and encourage meekneſs, modeſty, and other amiable virtues in thoſe, who are not of our mind in ſome ſpeculative points. Nor let us juſtify, but rather condemn and diſcountenance pride, conceit, cenſoriouſneſs, rigour and uncharitableneſs in thoſe who are of the ſame ſentiments with us. By ſuch words we may be juſtified. They ſhew a religious and virtuous mind. They may not be approved by all men: but they will be remembered by the equitable judge in the great day of account.

And indeed this declaration of our Lord may be reckoned very gracious and encouraging. There are words, as well as works, that ſhall be rewarded. And there is a fitneſs in it, as we have ſeen. For by our words we may do a great deal of good. And if from our hearts we deſign, and actually do by our diſcourſes honour God, ſerve religion, and good men, or reclaim the bad, and turn the feet and hearts of

ſinners

ſinners to righteouſneſs; ſuch words ſhall be joined with good works, and add to the recompenſes of the future life.

4. Laſtly, we may hence diſcern, that the Lord Jeſus was a moſt excellent perſon, and is entitled to the eſteem, reſpect, and gratitude of all ſincere friends of religion and virtue.

It is one part of his excellent character, that *never man ſpake like him*, John vii. 46. And he was ever ready to good words. Every where he inſtills good doctrine. He embraceth every opportunity to inculcate the principles and duties of religion, the love of God and our neighbour. He taught not only at the temple, and in the ſynagogues, but in every other place, and in every company that was favoured with his preſence. He preached the goſpel to the poor, as well as to the rich. And the moſt weighty things are often ſpoken by him in a free and familiar manner. A large part of his inſtructive, edifying, enlivening diſcourſes, recorded in the goſpels, were delivered in converſation with his diſciples or others: and always free from partiality and oſtentation: ſeeking not his own glory, but the glory of him that ſent him, and the benefit of thoſe to whom he was ſent, and with whom he converſed.

## SERMON XVII.

### THE DIFFICULTY OF GOVERNING THE TONGUE.

JAMES iii. 2.

*If any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body.*

St. James is much in correcting the faults of the tongue. Poſſibly the Jewiſh believers, to whom he writes, were too liable to be infected with the faults very common at that time in the reſt of their countrymen, who had an impetuous and turbulent zeal: who were conceited of themſelves and deſpiſed others: and were impoſing and uncharitable. That may be one reaſon, why this writer inſiſts ſo much, and ſo frequently upon this matter.

In

In the very firſt chapter ver. 19. he exhorts with affectionate earneſtneſs: *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be ſwift to hear, ſlow to ſpeak, ſlow to wrath.* And again, ver. 26. *If any man among you ſeemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, deceiving his own heart, that man's religion is vain.* In this chapter he enlargeth upon the point. Some of his expreſſions are extremely ſtrong, ſaying, that *the tongue can no man tame:* Ja. iii. 8. meaning, however, no more than that it is very difficult for a man to govern his own tongue, or to teach others that ſkill. For we are not to ſuppoſe, that he intends to ſay, that it is altogether impoſſible. This may be inferred from his exhortations. He would not be at the pains to admoniſh and argue as he does, if there were no hopes of ſucceſs. He would not, then, have ſaid: *My brethren, let every man be ſwift to hear, ſlow to ſpeak.* He would not have argued, and ſhewn the inconſiſtency of *bleſſing God*, and *curſing men*, Ja. iii. 9. nor have added: *My brethren, theſe things ought not ſo to be*, ver. 10. Such admonitions and reproofs are delivered upon the ſuppoſition of the happy effects of great care in this matter. And here, in the text, it is admitted, that ſome may, and do attain to a great degree of perfection in this reſpect.

We are not to ſuppoſe, then, that St. James deſigns to ſay, the government of the tongue is abſolutely impoſſible. Much leſs are we to think, that he intends to cenſure the faculty of ſpeech, when he ſays, *the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity*, Ja. iii. 6. No! he only aims, by emphatical expreſſions, and pathetic arguments, to correct the abuſes of it: which were very great and frequent, as it ſeems among the Chriſtians to whom he writes, as well as among many other perſons. David ſometimes ſpeaks of his tongue, as *his glory*, it being fitted to celebrate the praiſes of God. Indeed the communication, which we have with each other, and the many advantages of ſociety depend upon it. And the organs of ſpeech are admirable. The diſpoſitions made for it are beyond the diſcription of the moſt eloquent tongue, and above all the force of human language. Nor is it at all ſtrange, that the thing formed ſhould not be able to comprehend, or fully commend the wiſdom and ſkill of its former.

St. James begins this chapter with a caution againſt affecting the office and character of a teacher, as was very common among the Jewiſh people, and againſt exerciſing it with too great rigour and ſeverity. *My brethren, be not many*

*many maſters, knowing, that we ſhall receive the greater condemnation*, if we offend, which it is very difficult to avoid: *for in many things we all offend. If any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body.* 'But if there be any man among you that does not offend 'in ſpeech, he is an excellent man, and able to manage 'all the other parts of the body:' or, as ſome thereby underſtand, the whole church, the body of Chriſtian people among whom he reſides. 'He is qualified for the office and 'ſtation of a teacher of others, and is likely to be very uſe-'ful and ſerviceable therein.'

In farther diſcourſing on this text I ſhall obſerve the following method.

I. I ſhall ſhew ſomewhat diſtinctly the difficulty of governing the tongue.

II. I ſhall propoſe ſome motives and conſiderations, tending to engage us to do our beſt to govern the tongue.

III. I intend to lay down ſome rules and directions which may be of uſe to aſſiſt us in obtaining this excellence and perfection.

I. In the firſt place I would ſhew the difficulty of governing the tongue, the point ſo largely inſiſted on, and ſo emphatically repreſented in this chapter.

The difficulty of this will appear by theſe particulars: the great number of thoſe who offend in word, the many faults which the tongue is liable to, and the ſprings and cauſes of tranſgreſſions of this kind.

1. The difficulty of governing the tongue may be argued from hence, that great numbers of men offend in their words.

There are many who ſcarce ſet any guard upon their expreſſions, as if their tongue was their own, and ſubject to no law, and they had a right to annoy others at pleaſure. Yea ſome who have had the character of goodneſs, have tranſgreſſed here by falſhood, or haſtineſs of ſpeech, or other ways. An offence of this kind is taken notice of in Moſes himſelf, who was ſo remarkable for meekneſs. *They angred him alſo at the waters of ſtrife, ſo that it went ill with Moſes for their ſake; becauſe they provoked his ſpirit, ſo that he ſpake unadviſedly with his lips*, Pſ. cvi. 32, 33. referring, probably, to what is recorded in Numb. xx. 10. *And Moſes and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he*

*be ſaid unto them: hear now, ye rebels: muſt we fetch you water out of this rock?*

But I need not inſiſt farther on this particular; though it may be of ſome uſe to ſatisfy us of the difficulty of governing the tongue, that men of excellent characters, who have been almoſt faultleſs in other reſpects, have been ſurpriſed into ſome offences of this ſort.

2. Another thing which ſhews the difficulty of governing the tongue, is the many offences it is liable to.

I need not enumerate them all; but it is very obvious that they are numerous. Some are guilty of a light and frequent uſe, or bold profanation of the name of God. Others are murmurers and complainers: and becauſe every thing in the world is not to their mind, they take great liberties in complaining of the methods of Providence, or the conduct of their ſuperiors and governors.

There are obſcene diſcourſes, called by the apoſtle *corrupt* and *filthy communication*, Eph. iv. 29. Col. iii. 8. which ought not to proceed out of the mouth of a Chriſtian.

Falſhood is ſuppoſed to be a very common fault in the dealings of men one with another: where truth ought to be ſtrictly regarded, as the great bond of ſociety, and of confidence in each other.

Abuſive ſpeeches, proceeding from anger or contempt, are too common among men. Our bleſſed Lord has condemned all ſuch expreſſions, when he ſhews the guilt of thoſe who ſay to their brother *Racha*, or, *thou fool*, Matt. v. 22. How apt are ſome, upon occaſion of ſlight provocations, to break forth into very abuſive and contemptuous language againſt thoſe who have, or are ſuppoſed to have, diſobliged them!

Calumny is another great fault of the tongue, which too many are guilty of, for carrying on ſelfiſh deſigns, and to weaken and diſparage their enemies or rivals. And many arts of detraction there are, divulging leſſer faults that might be concealed or paſſed by, without detriment to any: aggravating the known offences of men, leſſening the merit of good and commendable actions, or converting actions that are innocent, or at the moſt ſuſpicious only, into heinous tranſgreſſions.

Flattery is another fault of the tongue, and an abuſe of the noble faculty of ſpeech: when, to carry on deſigns of private intereſt, we deceive men, by aſcribing to them excellencies

excellencies they are deſtitute of; and thus fill them with an empty conceit of imaginary worth, and encourage ſloth and indolence, or otherwiſe miſlead them to their great detriment.

Ridicule, ill applied, is another fault of the tongue. Some make a mock at ſin, and would ſcoff away the weighty and awful truths of religion. Some endeavour to bring the ſacred ſcriptures into contempt. Others expoſe their neighbours by ridiculing the natural defects and infirmities of the body or the mind, which are no real faults, but their own unhappineſs.

There is a fault, which we may ſtile the uncharitableneſs of the tongue: when men ſtrive to leſſen all thoſe who differ from them in opinion, repreſenting them as prejudiced, or deſtitute of a love of truth, and out of the favour of God and the way of ſalvation. And accordingly they pronounce hard and unmerciful ſentences of condemnation upon them. St. James ſeems particularly to have an eye to this conduct: and he ſhews, that it cannot proceed from a principle of true religion. It may indeed conſiſt with a profeſſion of religion: but it is inconſiſtent with virtue and true piety. Sincere praiſes of God, and ſevere and unrighteous ſentences againſt our neighbour, can no more proceed from the ſame mind, than bitter and ſweet water from one and the ſame fountain. Conſequently, if men ſo condemn their brother, their love of God is not ſincere and genuine. So in his argument, ver. 9, 10, *Therewith bleſs we God, and therewith curſe we men, made after the ſimilitude of God. Out of the ſame mouth proceedeth bleſſing and curſing. My brethren, theſe things ought not ſo to be. Doth a fountain ſend forth at the ſame place ſweet water and bitter?*

Another fault of the tongue, which we are ſometimes guilty of, is too great ſeverity of reproof and cenſure of real offences and miſcarriages. This is one thing which St. James has an eye to in this context, when he cautions againſt being many maſters: intending to ſoften the rigour of thoſe who are forward in taking upon them that character. St. Paul has particularly cautioned againſt the ſame thing. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs, conſidering thyſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted,* Gal. vi. 1.

Another fault of the tongue is talkativeneſs, or a multitude of words, in which, as ſolomon ſays, *there wanteth not*

*ſin,*

*ſin*, Prov. x. 19. This fault St. James has an eye to in ſeveral of his directions and obſervations in this epiſtle, particularly in the text above cited: *Let every man be ſwift to hear, ſlow to ſpeak.* Where he ſeems to condemn talkativeneſs, abſtracting from the conſideration of what is ſaid; when men ſpeak with little or no regard to, or thought of, doing good or harm. Which, though it may ſeem an indifferent matter, or of no great conſequence, yet an indulgence of ſuch a diſpoſition leads men into many offences; inaſmuch as when innocent or indifferent topics of diſcourſe are exhauſted, ſuch will not fail, in order to gratify that diſpoſition, to go into defamation and ſcandal: ſo it is in converſation: and the like temper will ſhew itſelf on other occaſions. Some may deſire to be *teachers of the law*, 1 Tim. i. 7. who are unacquainted with its deſign: and may affect prolixity of diſcourſe, and uſe a multitude of words, not becauſe their ſubject requires it, but to gratify the diſpoſition to diſcourſe, and an ambition of ſhining as very knowing men, and fluent ſpeakers.

Theſe and other faults there are of the tongue: and this is one thing that ſhews the difficulty of governing it.

3. And we ſhall be farther ſatisfied of this, if we conſider the cauſes and ſprings of theſe faults: and there are many of them. This was obſerved by St. James. Does he ſay of the tongue at ver. 6. *That it ſetteth on fire the whole courſe of nature?* He adds: *And it is ſet on fire of hell.* There are within bad principles, that give the tongue this wrong direction, and ſet it on work for miſchief. Blaſphemy, or evil-ſpeaking, is one of thoſe defilements which our Lord ſays *come from the heart*, that is, from ſome bad diſpoſition there. And St. James, ver. 14, 15, *If ye have bitter envying and ſtrife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not againſt the truth. This wiſdom is not from above, but is earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh.*

The cauſes of the offences of the tongue are ſuch as theſe. Unbelief and diſcontent. Theſe were the cauſes of the murmurings and complaints of the people of Iſrael againſt God and Moſes, in the wilderneſs: and the many murmurings and complaints of men in all ages, are owing to the like cauſes. Other ſprings and principles of faulty diſcourſe are inordinate ſelf-love, pride, arrogance, envy and ill-will, contempt of other men, and a diſregard to their intereſts, covetouſneſs, emulation and ambition. Theſe lead men into falſhood and defamation, for promoting their

own gain, and leſſening thoſe whom they envy, or whoſe influence ſtands in their way. St. Paul ſpeaks of ſome, who *taught things which they ought not for filthy lucre's ſake*, Tit. i. 11. Some depart from the truth, and forward erroneous conceits, becauſe they are pleaſing. Detraction is one way of leſſening thoſe who are eminent, and of carrying a point againſt them. St. John had experience of this, and therefore ſays in his third epiſtle: *I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he does, prating againſt us with malicious words.*

Theſe, and other cauſes there are of the offences of the tongue. And when it is conſidered how difficult it is to root all theſe bad principles out of the heart of man; it muſt be apparent, that governing the tongue is no eaſy thing: for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh*, Matt. xii. 34. The ſtreams will partake of the qualities of the fountain: and according to the root, ſo will the fruit be.

II. In the ſecond place ſome arguments ſhould be mentioned, to induce us to uſe our beſt endeavours to bridle the tongue.

And St. James does preſently furniſh us with three conſiderations to this purpoſe: firſt, the importance of the thing to the good of the world. Secondly, its importance to us: foraſmuch as without it our religion would be vain. And thirdly, it is a great perfection.

1. The importance of this matter. St. James has illuſtrated this by ſeveral inſtances and compariſons, the *bit in the horſe's mouth*, *the helm of ſhips*, and *fire*, a ſpark of which kindles into a devouring flame. That is, the uſe or abuſe of the tongue is of much importance, and great things, for good or evil, are effected thereby, in the ſtate, in leſſer ſocieties, and among particular perſons. By the right uſe of the tongue truth is recommended, virtue promoted, the peace and happineſs of mankind advanced. By a perverſe employment of ſpeech the peace of ſociety, of families, and particular perſons is interrupted and diſturbed: the intereſts of error are promoted, inſtead of thoſe of truth: good deſigns are obſtructed, or quite defeated: the reputation of innocent, and even excellent men, is blaſted: ſeeds of animoſity and diſſenſion are ſown among brethren, friend-

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ſhips broken and diſſolved, and many bad effects produced, more than can be eaſily numbered.

How much did Joſeph ſuffer by the calumny of his miſtreſs! how long, before his reputation could be vindicated, or his innocence cleared up! And ſometimes the reputation of the innocent and virtuous is for ever ruined by malicious and artful detraction. We have a remarkable inſtance of the bad effect of a ſtudied miſrepreſentation of things in the hiſtory of David. When he fled from Jeruſalem, on occaſion of Abſalom's rebellion, Ziba, ſervant of Mephiboſheth, ſon of Jonathan, came to David, bringing him preſents. *And David ſaid to him: where is thy maſter? And Ziba ſaid unto the king: behold, he abideth at Jeruſalem: for he ſaid: to day ſhall the houſe of Iſrael reſtore me to the kingdom of my father. Then ſaid the king to Ziba: behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephiboſheth*, 2 Sam. xvi. 3, 4. But when David returned victorious, and in ſafety, to Jeruſalem, it appeared, that during the time of his abſence, Mephiboſheth had lived with all the outward tokens of mourning and affliction, without putting on his uſual ornaments, or taking the refreſhments, cuſtomary in times of peace and proſperity. *And when he met the king, David ſaid unto him: wherefore wenteſt thou not with me, Mephiboſheth? And he anſwered: my Lord, O king, my ſervant deceived me. For thy ſervant ſaid: I will ſaddle me an aſs, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king, becauſe thy ſervant is lame. And he has ſlandered thy ſervant unto my Lord the king. But my Lord the king is as an angel of God. Do therefore what is good in thy eyes.* What now is the anſwer, which David makes to Mephiboſheth, after ſo ſubmiſſive a ſpeech, and ſo full a defence of himſelf? It is this. *The king ſaid unto him: why ſpeakeſt thou any more of thy matters? I have ſaid: thou and Ziba divide the land.* An anſwer, if we may preſume to judge, unworthy of David. It ſeems to ſhew, that Ziba's ſtory ſtill made impreſſions upon him, and that he was not fully reconciled to Mephiboſheth: or elſe, that he was unwilling to own how much he had been deceived and impoſed upon by the artifice of Ziba, Mephiboſheth's ſervant. Such effect had flattery and ſlander, improbable ſlander, upon the mind of king David.

David ſeems not now to have recollected the reſolutions which he had formed, the plan of government which he had laid down to himſelf before his ſettlement on the throne

of Iſrael. When he ſaid: *Whoſo privily ſlandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off. He that worketh deceit ſhall not dwell in my houſe. He that telleth lies ſhall not abide in my ſight,* Pſ. ci. 5, 7. And indeed, it may exceed the abilities of the beſt and wiſeſt of men, to guard, at all times, againſt all the arts of detraction.

2. Another thing that ſhould induce us to this care, is, that otherwiſe we cannot approve ourſelves to be truly religious. It is an obſervation of St. James, already taken notice of. If any *man among you ſeemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain.* And the truth of that obſervation is confirmed by what has been ſaid under the foregoing particular, of the importance of this matter. That man is not truly religious, whatever profeſſion he may make, who talks without conſideration, ſpreads ſtories to the diſadvantage of others, founded only on ſurmiſe, or upon teſtimony that ought to be ſuſpected: or affects to recommend the principles of religion, or of any ſcience, who has neglected inquiry; or, who gives his judgment in affairs, about which he is not well informed, and has taken no care to be ſo.

3. It ought to induce us to aim at the government of the tongue, that it is a great excellence. It is the doctrine of the text. *If any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man, and able alſo to bridle the whole body.* It is a proof of much virtue, great diſcretion, a full command of the paſſions, and a prevailing regard to the good of others. Does a man bridle his tongue? Does nothing proceed out of his mouth to the detriment or offence of others? nothing but what tends to edification? Does he know when to ſpeak, and when to be ſilent? *Is his ſpeech always with grace, ſeaſoned with ſalt?* Col. iv. 6. Are his words weighty though few? Are his diſcourſes ſolid for the matter, and modeſt, and agreeable for the manner? Does he argue without poſitiveneſs, adviſe without aſſuming authority, and reprove without ſeverity and harſhneſs? Such an one is an excellent or perfect man. And it is a character which we may deſire to attain to.

III. Which brings me to the third and laſt thing that was propoſed, to lay down ſome rules and directions, which may aſſiſt us in governing the tongue, and curing the faults of it.

1. Let us cheriſh the principle of the fear of God in our hearts. For that will deter from every kind of evil, and diſpoſe

diſpoſe to good words, as well as to good actions. *Come, ye children,* ſays the Pſalmiſt, *hearken unto me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking guile,* Pſ. xxxiv. 11—13.

2. Let us alſo cheriſh and cultivate the love of our neighbour. *For love,* as the apoſtle ſays, *is the fulfilling of the law,* Rom. xiii. 10. If we love our neighbour as ourſelves, we ſhall be concerned for his credit, as well as for our own: and not willingly injure him by words, any more than by actions.

3. Let us call to mind former offences and tranſgreſſions of this kind, which we have been convinced of, and have been ſorry for. This may be of great uſe for time to come. It will ſecure our guard, and render it more effectual.

4. If we are acquainted with any excellent maſters in this art, who are great examples of this virtue, we ſhould diligently obſerve them for our imitation. If we know of any, who do not readily receive evil reports, who rarely ſpeak to the diſadvantage of any, who never aggravate the real faults of men, who are willing to applaud commendable actions, and to excuſe imprudencies, and leſſer faults: whoſe diſcourſes are uſeful and entertaining: in whoſe mouth is the law of kindneſs, and whoſe *wiſdom* is accompanied with *meekneſs,* Ja. iii. 13. they are worthy of our attentive view and obſervation.

5. Let us endeavour to mortify pride, envy, and inordinate ſelf-love; and cultivate that wiſdom, which is *pure, peaceable,* ver. 17, 18. unbiaſſed, diſintereſted, and public ſpirited. Then we are likely to attain to this perfection, and not offend in word.

6. Let us alſo endeavour to improve in the knowledge of the works of nature, and the word of God. If a man's mind be filled with a variety of valuable knowledge, he will be under little temptation to divert into the topics of detraction and ſcandal, for the ſake of ſhining in company.

7. Let us often recollect ſome of the directions, which the ſcripture affords upon this point: *Speak evil of no man,* Tit. iii. 2. *Let every one be ſwift to hear, ſlow to ſpeak,* Ja. i. 19. *Speak not evil one of another, brethren,* ch. iv. 11.

But it is time to conclude, out of reverence to the rules that have been juſt laid down, ſome of them eſpecially.

I add therefore but one word more, which is, that we ſhould now make application, not to others, but to ourſelves. And

if we have this day seen any of our faults, and the causes of them; let us not be like a *man, who having beheld his face in a glass, goes away, and soon forgetteth what manner of man he was: but having looked into the perfect law of* virtue, *let us continue therein: not being forgetful hearers, but doers of the word: for such shall be blessed in their deed,* Ja. i. 23, 24.

# SERMON XVIII.

## THE BENEFIT OF FEARING ALWAYS.

PROV. xxviii. 14.

*Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart, shall fall into mischief.*

All know, that a large part of the book of Proverbs consists of sentences unconnected, or observations and maxims independent on each other. Where that is the case, little light is afforded by the coherence. Nevertheless I shall read the verse immediately preceding. And if any connection was intended, possibly we may perceive it, at least hereafter, when we have considered the meaning of the words of this text.

Ver. 13. and 14. *He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy. Happy is the man, that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart, shall fall into mischief.*

In discoursing on this text

I. I shall describe the fear here recommended.

II. I would shew the happiness of him, who feareth always.

III. I shall endeavour to shew, how this fear conduces to a man's happiness.

IV. After which I intend to mention some remarks and observations upon this subject, and conclude.

I. In the first place I should describe the fear, here recommended: or shew, what is meant by fearing always.

There is a good counsel of Solomon in the twenty third chapter of this book: *Let not thy heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long,* Prov. xxiii. 17.

This

This is our duty and intereſt. Whatever advantages ſome may gain by unrighteouſneſs, we ſhould never be thereby induced to imitate their ways: but ſhould ſtill perſevere in the ſervice of God, and the way of virtue, which in time will be rewarded.

But it does not appear very likely, that this is what is here particularly intended by the wiſe man. The fear, here ſpoken of, ſeems to be apprehenſiveneſs, diffidence, with the fruits thereof, care, caution, and circumſpection: as oppoſite to ſecurity, inconſideration, confidence and preſumption. In this text is meant a temper of mind, which is often recommended by the wiſe man in other words. *The ſimple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his goings*, chap. xiv. 15. And, *keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the iſſues of life. . . . Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look ſtraight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy paths be eſtabliſhed*, chap. iv. 23, 25, 26.

This property of fearing always, may be expedient and uſeful in a variety of occaſions: in the things of this preſent life, and in the great concerns of our ſalvation.

It would undoubtedly be of bad conſequence, with regard to the affairs and buſineſs of this world, for men to be void of thought and conſideration: to preſume upon ſucceſs, and depend upon good treatment, and honeſt dealings from all men; and rely upon the kind and faithful aſſiſtances of friends and ſervants, and others with whom we may be concerned, without any previous trial or examination.

And it muſt be expedient and uſeful for men, to be ſo far apprehenſive of dangers and accidents, ſo ſenſible of the changes and viciſſitudes that attend all earthly things, and ſo far aware of the unſkilfulneſs, unfaithfulneſs, art and ſubtilty of other men, as ſhall induce them to take care of their own affairs themſelves, and uſe a prudent caution and circumſpection.

A like temper may be very uſeful in the things of religion. And to this the words of Solomon may be applied, if they are not to be directly interpreted in this ſenſe.

Indeed there is a fearfulneſs, and timorouſneſs of mind, which religion condemns: which is mean and unreaſonable, groundleſs and indiſcreet: when we are too apprehenſive of the evils and afflictions of this life, or fear men more than God. Then we are to be blamed; then we act indiſcreetly: when for fear of the diſpleaſure of men, and the

ſmall evils they can inflict upon us, we do that which will offend God, and expoſe us to the long and grievous pains and miſeries of another ſtate, with the loſs of all that happineſs, which we might have ſecured by reſolution and courage in the way of religion and virtue.

But there is a fear and apprehenſion, which may be very uſeful. It is a fear of offending God, and a diffidence of ourſelves and our own ſtrength. It is founded in a perſuaſion of the great importance of right behaviour in this world, and a ſure knowledge of the conſequences thereof, either happineſs or miſery in a future ſtate. It is alſo owing to a conſideration of the power of things ſenſible, good and evil, agreeable or diſagreeable, to biaſs and influence the mind: and that, oftentimes on a ſudden, and to a degree beyond moſt men's expectations: whereby many are diverted from right conduct, and act contrary to former convictions, and their beſt purpoſes and reſolutions.

He who fears always is one, who is never unmindful of what is the great deſign of life, and what will be the conſequences of it, He is deſirous of obtaining eternal ſalvation, even a better happineſs, than this preſent world affords any proſpect of. And he dreads the being finally rejected of God, and excluded from his preſence. And as the reaſon of things, and the expreſs declarations of the word of God, aſſure us, that final happineſs, or miſery, depends upon men's behaviour here; he is deſirous, that his behaviour may be ſuch, as ſhall be approved in the end by the impartial and equitable ſovereign and judge of the world.

But he is aware, that there is no ſmall difficulty in executing this deſign. He therefore fears always. In every ſtate and condition, whether proſperity or adverſity, he knows there are ſnares and temptations. For which reaſon he is at no time ſecure: but has continually a kind of diſtruſt of himſelf, and is apprehenſive, leſt the eaſe and pleaſure of the one ſhould make him forget God and another world: and leſt ſome things in the other condition, of which the afflictions are various, and very moving, ſhould induce him to caſt off the fear of God, and ſay, religion is vain.

He has his fears and apprehenſions, ariſing from ſolitude, and from company: when alone, and when in converſation. He is aware, that there are ſome ſnares peculiar to retirement, others to buſineſs. Nor is there any age, or time of life, but has its temptations.

He

He is not without his fears, when he engages in the worſhip of God, leſt his ſervices ſhould be defective and unacceptable: and leſt through neglect, inattention, or prejudices, the opportunity afforded him ſhould be unprofitable. And indeed, Solomon has a direction and caution to this purpoſe: *Keep thy foot, when thou goeſt to the houſe of God: and be more ready to hear, than to give the ſacrifice of fools*, Eccl. v. 1.

In undertakings for the honour of God, and the intereſts of religion among men, he is ſometimes in doubt and ſuſpenſe, whether his zeal, though well-meant, be right and juſt. And he admits a re-examination of his deſign, that he may act according to knowledge, and upon the grounds of a well informed judgment: leſt what he does ſhould in the iſſue be rather prejudicial, than advantageous to the good cauſe he would promote.

After worſhipping God with ſincerity and fervour, and partaking in thoſe ordinances and privileges, which God has ordained for our improvement, he does not truſt to the ſtrength he has thereby gained: but ſtill allows of apprehenſions, leſt he ſhould act contrary to what he has ſeen to be fit and right: or ſome way fail to execute the purpoſes and reſolutions, which he has made and renewed in the preſence of God.

And as he was before-hand afraid, that he ſhould not approve himſelf as he ought; ſo likewiſe, when through care and attention, he has, as he hopes, performed agreeably to his aims and wiſhes; he is upon his guard, leſt ſome improper opinion and ſelf-ſufficiency ſhould ariſe in his mind, inconſiſtent with that humility, which he would ever maintain.

Nor does the man who fears always preſume after the greateſt ſucceſſes. And though he has proceeded for ſome time in a courſe of obedience to God's commandments, and temptations have not hitherto greatly prevailed againſt him, he ſtudiouſly declines conceit and aſſurance. He is ſtill ever apprehenſive of ſome new and unlooked for danger: and doubts, whether ſome time leſſer temptations may not prevail, after greater have been vanquiſhed.

Like ſome general, who, the more victories he has gained, is the more cautious of engaging an enemy: leſt the honour of former ſucceſſes ſhould be loſt and forfeited by ſome unhappy diſaſter.

This

This is the man, who, in a religious ſenſe, ‡ feareth always.

And now we may juſt obſerve the connection, which ſome think there is between this and the preceding obſervation, though it is not very clear and certain. *He that covereth his ſins, ſhall not proſper: but whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh them ſhall find mercy. Happy is the man that feareth always*: that is, if he would ſecure the mercy he has found, the advantage he has gained; it will be of uſe, to preſerve a fear of offending, and to be cautious and circumſpect in all his actions.

II. Which leads us to the ſecond point, the happineſs of this temper and diſpoſition of mind. *Happy is the man, that feareth always.*

The happineſs of ſuch an one is this: he will not fall into miſchief. He will exceed his own fears and apprehenſions. He will behave better, and wiſer, than he imagined. It is very probable, that this fear of offending will prevent a great deal of grief and vexation. And he will never know by experience, what that remorſe and anguiſh of mind is, which is the fruit of great, and repeated tranſgreſſions. His apprehenſions of falling, and dread of guilt, with the conſequences of it, will ſecure him from thoſe great and dreadful evils.

Probably, the life of ſuch an one will be even and uniform. It will conſiſt of a regular courſe of religious devotion, public and private; and of a great number, and large variety of beneficial actions, and kind offices to others.

He will ſcarce be able to refrain himſelf from giving ſome hints and inſtructions, that ſhall be uſeful to others.

‡ ‘3. Walk circumſpectly at all ‘times, and in all relations and ‘circumſtances of life.... Let not ‘ſucceſs betray you into ſecurity. ‘Perhaps you have not for ſome ‘time been importuned by temp‘tations, or you have overcome ‘them, and made ſome good pro‘greſs in religion. But do not ‘therefore lay aſide your vigilance, ‘ſince there may happen ſuch an ‘alteration in your circumſtances, ‘or in your temper, that you may ‘have as much occaſion for it, as ‘ever you had in your lives, if not ‘more. *Bleſſed is the man, that fear‘eth always*, Pr. xxviii. 14. who has ‘ever upon his mind ſuch an ap‘prehenſion of the great evil of ſin, ‘and his liableneſs to it, while he ‘is in the body, as to be continu‘ally watchful againſt it. By thus ‘fearing always he will be able to ‘rejoice always, both in the con‘ſciouſneſs of his own integrity, ‘and the hope of the heavenly re‘ward.’ Mr. H. Grove’s ſecond volume of Additional Sermons. Serm. xvii. p. 450.

Eſpecially,

Eſpecially, if he ſee any ſecure and preſuming, he will warn them affectionately and earneſtly. But being ſenſible of his own weakneſs, and ever apprehenſive of acting, ſome time, amiſs himſelf; his admonitions, and warnings, and reproofs, if they ſhould be needful, will be tempered with mildneſs and gentleneſs.

It ſeems not unlikely, that this property, of fearing always, ſhould produce an amiable character, which ſhall gain a man ſome good degree of eſteem, and qualify him for more uſefulneſs, than very eminent attainments could do without it. The modeſty and meekneſs of his behaviour will not only caſt ſome luſtre upon himſelf, but likewiſe adorn religion, and give it an agreeable and lovely appearance.

And though he never, whilſt in the body, and in this ſtate of trial, dares paſs a definitive ſentence in favour of himſelf, but refers that to the all-knowing judge: yet it is likely, that continued innocence, and perſevering integrity, will lay a foundation for growing joy, and ſolid ſatisfaction of mind, which will be preferable to all the advantages of this world.

Such is the happineſs of this perſon, and of this temper of mind.

III. In the third place we are to obſerve, how this temper, of fearing always, contributes to a man's happineſs.

And it is very eaſy for any one to perceive this. For ſuch an one will be circumſpect and watchful: which, certainly, muſt be a good mean of ſecurity. He that looks well to his going, who is thoughtful and conſiderate, will, in all probability, act more wiſely and diſcreetly, than the raſh and unthinking.

Moreover he will be ſerious and diligent in the uſe of all proper means of ſecurity and ſteadfaſtneſs. He will frequent the aſſemblies of divine worſhip, and will pray and hear, not only out of form and careleſsly, but with attention, and with a view of gaining confirmation and eſtabliſhment. He conſiders acts of worſhip as means of improvement, and preparatory for the duties of life. And hereby he gains ſtrength for reſiſting of temptations, and grows ready to every good word and work.

Nor does he neglect private meditation; but often thinks of God and another world. He contemplates the works of God, and ſtudies his word. He conſiders the perfection and

and extent of the divine law. He obſerves the reaſonableneſs of every part of it, and fixes in his mind an abhorrence of all ſin upon a reaſonable foundation.

He frequently contemplates the glory ſet before the upright and perſevering in the goſpel of Chriſt: and thereby he is animated to duty, and ſet more and more at variance with every thing that might deprive him of ſo great a recompenſe.

He dreads the thought of being hardened in ſin, and therefore cheriſhes tenderneſs of ſpirit.

He often reflects on his ways, and calls himſelf to an account for what he has done in public and private; and fails not to renew his repentance. If any thing unbecoming has eſcaped him, he does not palliate and juſtify it, or ſeek for excuſes and apologies; but he condemns himſelf for it, and laments it. His humility is thereby increaſed, and his future circumſpection is rendered more exact and vigilant.

Nor would he ſhun the advices and reproofs of others; but would gladly accept the reprehenſions and admonitions of a knowing and faithful friend.

This courſe of thinking and acting cannot but be of advantage, and conduce to the happineſs deſcribed under the foregoing particular.

IV. I am now to add ſome remarks and obſervations. They will be ſuch as theſe.

1. The temper of mind, ſpoken of in this maxim of Solomon, and ſtiled *fearing always*, is frequently recommended to Chriſtians in the New Teſtament.

Our Lord cheriſhed it in his own diſciples by exhortations and arguments. They were not ſo perfect after he had been long with them, but he ſet before them the duty of watching. It is one of thoſe things which he inculcated upon them a little before he took his leave of them. *And what I ſay unto you, I ſay unto all: watch*, Mark xiii. 37. And, *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The ſpirit indeed is willing, but the fleſh is weak*, Matt. xxvi. 41. They had been too poſitive and preſuming. He aſſures them that they had better be, with regard to themſelves, more diffident and diſtruſtful; that they might be more upon their guard, and more conſtant and earneſt in prayer to God for his protection and help.

This fear of offending, this diſtruſt of ourſelves, this apprehenſiveneſs of the power of temptations, is implied in that

that petition of the prayer which Chriſt taught his diſciples: *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

*Brethren,* ſays St. Paul to the Galatians, *if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs, conſidering thyſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted,* Gal. vi. 1. that is, mindful of thy own weakneſs, and that it is not impoſſible, but thou alſo mayeſt at ſome time, and ſome way or other, be tempted with effect, ſo as to fall.

Among divers conſiderations, which the apoſtle Paul mentions to diſſuade the Corinthians from too great intimacy with the idolatrous heathens, he inſerts this alſo: *Wherefore let him that thinks he ſtands, take heed, leſt he fall,* 1 Cor. x. 12.

And with great affection and earneſtneſs he ſays to the Philippians: *Wherefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my preſence only, but now much more in my abſence, work out your ſalvation with fear and trembling,* Philip. ii. 12.

St. Peter exhorts thoſe, to whom he writes, *to paſs the time of their ſojourning here in fear.* Again, *Be ſober, be vigilant: becauſe your adverſary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour,* 1 Pet. i. 17. ch. v. 8.

And the apoſtle to the Hebrews: *Take heed, my brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin,* Heb. iii. 12, 13.

2. We may obſerve in the Old and New Teſtament divers inſtances of this temper of fearing always, in the ſenſe of a religious fear, as we have explained it: a fear of offending, through the power of external temptations, and the weakneſs and inconſtancy of our minds.

Poſſibly ſomewhat of this temper is implied in that expreſſion of Job. *All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change be,* Job xiv. 14.

For this reaſon it is, that good men in the Old Teſtament ſometimes ſpeak of their guarding the ſenſes, the inlets of external temptations, or occaſions of ſin. Job ſays, *he had made a covenant with his eyes,* xxxi. 1. And the Pſalmiſt: *I am purpoſed, that my mouth ſhall not tranſgreſs,* Pſ. xvii. 3.

Joſeph, as is well known, feared to truſt too much to his own reſolution; and therefore ſhunned the company of the ſeducer.

This

This fear is the ground and principle of divers prayers of pious men: as *Keep back thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins. Let them not have dominion over me. So ſhall I be free from every great tranſgreſſion*, Pſ. xix. 13. Again, *Incline my heart unto thy teſtimonies, and not unto covetouſneſs. Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity. And quicken me in thy way*, Pſ. cxix. 36, 37. And, *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips. Incline not my heart unto any evil thing*, Pſ. cxli. 3, 4. that is, let not my heart incline to any evil thing: let me not be prevailed upon by any temptations, to do that which is evil.

To this purpoſe is that requeſt of Agur. *Two things have I deſired of thee. Deny me them not, before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lies. Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with food convenient for me. Leſt I be full, and deny thee, and ſay: who is the Lord? and leſt I be poor, and ſteal, and take the name of the Lord my God in vain*, Prov. xxx. 7—9.

This good man feared always. He was apprehenſive, that he had not ſufficient reſolution and virtue, to behave well either in great proſperity, or in extreme want and poverty.

And the condition he chooſes, as moſt deſirable, is that, in which he thinks his virtue would be expoſed to the ſmalleſt, or the feweſt hazards.

St. Paul, who recommended to others fear and caution, is an example of it himſelf. He even ſays: *I keep under my body, and bring it into ſubjection, leſt that by any means, when I have preached the goſpel to others, I myſelf ſhould be a caſt-away*, 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Nor can it be doubted, but St. Peter likewiſe obſerved the rules he gave. It evidently appears in the temper of his epiſtles.

Yea our Lord himſelf is, in ſome meaſure, an example here. For he was tried as we are. Indeed he reſiſted, and overcame always. But though he was completely innocent, he ſaw the force of worldly temptations, and provided for them.

Before he entered upon his important and difficult miniſtry, he was led of the ſpirit into the wilderneſs, and was tempted divers ways. And by meditations, in that ſolitude, upon the vanity and emptineſs of this world, and all its glory, and by conſidering the greater glory ſet before him, he was prepared for the trials of a more public life. And as his laſt and great

great temptation drew near, we diſcern him to be mindful of it. Says he to the diſciples: *The prince of this world cometh: but hath nothing in me*, John xiv. 30. And he retired into a private place. And likewiſe charged three of his diſciples to watch, whilſt he went and prayed at a ſmall diſtance from them.

3. Upon the whole therefore we need not be ſhy of admitting, and cheriſhing this temper, of fearing always, or a perpetual diſtruſt of ourſelves, during this ſtate of trial.

This fear or diffidence, has in it ſome uneaſineſs: but it will lay a foundation for great advantages.

It is better to fear offending, than to ſorrow for having offended.

The care of caution is not ſo troubleſome, as the bitterneſs of late repentance.

Though he who fears always ſhould at firſt be eſteemed neither the greateſt, nor the happieſt of men, in the end he may be both. For *pride goeth before deſtruction, and a haughty ſpirit before a fall*, Prov. xvi. 18. Again, *Before deſtruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility*, chap. xvii. 12.

It is good counſel, more eſpecially fit to be given to ſome: *Let not him that putteth on the harneſs boaſt himſelf, as he that putteth it off*, 1 Kings xx. 11.

In this reſpect, as well as ſome others, the day of a man's death is better than the day of his birth, Ecc. vii. 1. It is a happy thing, to paſs with ſafety through the temptations of this world. At ſetting out the trial is doubtful and hazardous. But if a man be faithful, and keep the way of the Lord to the end; the reward is ſure, and no temptations ſhall any more annoy or terrify.

To a good man therefore it muſt be deſirable, after difficult ſervices, and a life of caution and circumſpection, to be able to ſay, when the will of the Lord is: *It is finiſhed.* There is now an end to the labours, the afflictions, the ſorrows, the temptations of this life. But there remains a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to all thoſe who have fought a good fight, and kept the faith: who in all the difficult ſervices, and hazardous ſeaſons of this life, have been encouraged by the hope of his appearing to reward the well-doer.

And ſince God knows all our frame, it muſt be our wiſdom to refer ourſelves to him, as to all things concerning us in this world:

world: desirous, that all things may work together for our good: and that nothing may be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus: and hoping, that neither the good nor the evil things of this life, shall destroy the principle of virtue begun in us; but rather refine, improve, and strengthen it, until it be perfected in glory.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

# SERMONS

## UPON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

### VOL. II.

[FIRST PUBLISHED IN MDCCLX.]

## SERMON I. OUR SAVIOUR'S THIRST UPON THE CROSS CONSIDERED AND IMPROVED.

JOHN xix. 28, 29.

*After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith: I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar. And they filled a spunge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.*

St. Paul in the epistle to the Ephesians, ch. iii. 18. speaks of the unmeasurable extent of the love of Christ. Which yet it is very desirable, and will be very profitable for us, to understand. And though we are not able to comprehend it, it will be of advantage to think rightly and justly of it, and not to conceive of his sufferings, that great proof of his love, as designed to supply the want of righteousness in us, but to be a powerful argument and incentive to real, eminent, and persevering righteousness and holiness.

All the ends and uses of Christ's sufferings shew his love in submitting to the pain and shame of the cross. And the greatness and variety of those sufferings are an affecting thought and consideration.

The

The words of the text are near the concluſion of the hiſtory of our Lord's laſt ſufferings. And in explaining and improving them, I am led to ſpeak to theſe ſeveral particulars.

I. I would ſhew the nature, and the cauſes of our Lord's thirſt upon the croſs, which he declared aloud.

II. The treatment, which he thereupon met with: *They filled a ſponge with vinegar, and put it to his mouth.*

III. The meaning of that expreſſion in this place: *That the ſcripture might be fulfilled.*

IV. After which I ſhall mention ſome ſuitable remarks.

I. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the nature, and the cauſes of our Lord's thirſt upon the croſs, which he declared aloud.

Doubtleſs it was real and vehement, and owing to what he had endured both in body and mind. The Lord Jeſus had not, that we any where read, any ſickneſs. And it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that he never had any. For death, and conſequently ſickneſs, and diſeaſes, the forerunners and ordinary occaſions of death, are the fruit of ſin: from which Jeſus was quite free. St. Paul ſpeaks of God's *ſending his own ſon in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh*, Rom. viii. 3. He had true and real fleſh. For he was born of a woman. But it was not *ſinful fleſh*. It was only *the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh*. For he was not conceived in the ordinary way, but by the Holy Ghoſt, or the immediate interpoſition of God. And he in all things did the will of the Father, and ever pleaſed him that ſent him.

But though Jeſus was liable to no diſeaſe, or ſickneſs, he had the innocent infirmities of the human nature. He was *wearied* with journeying, and had hunger and thirſt, John iv. 6. He needed the refreſhments of meat, and drink, and ſleep: as we plainly perceive from his hiſtory in the goſpels. He was alſo grieved, and offended, and angry, though without ſin or exceſs, at the miſeries, the faults, and the follies of men, eſpecially ſuch as were very great and aggravated. And undoubtedly he felt the pain of thoſe ſtripes, which without reſiſtance he ſuffered to be inflicted upon him.

In the fourth chapter of St. John's Goſpel is the relation of our Lord's paſſing from Jeruſalem to Galilee, where he chiefly was. *And he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And he muſt needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a*

*city of Samaria, which is called Sychar..... Now Jacob's well was there. Jeſus therefore being wearied with his journey, ſat thus on the well. And it was the ſixth hour.* If our Lord, in travelling on foot, was wearied with the length of the journey, and the heat of the day: how much more muſt he have been diſcompoſed by all that had paſſed to this time from the evening of the preceding day!

For, as we all know from the evangelical hiſtory, when he had eaten the paſchal ſupper, and inſtituted a memorial of his own tranſactions among men on this earth, and eſpecially of his then approaching death, he had a long, but moſt heavenly and affecting converſation with the diſciples. After that, coming to the garden, whither he ſometimes went for the ſake of privacy, he ſeparated himſelf from the reſt of the diſciples, and retired with three of them into a more private place, and withdrew a ſmall diſtance from them alſo: where in a near view of his approaching ſufferings, and a cloſe meditation upon the affecting circumſtances of them, and the greatneſs of the temptation, which he was entering into, and how ſevere a trial it would be to the conſtancy of his virtue, and conſidering alſo the difficulty and the importance of a ſteady and exemplary conduct, and the tremendous conſequences of any the leaſt failure on his part, and alſo diſcerning the heinous guilt of his accuſers and enemies, whether Jews or others, and divers other amazing particulars of the expected ſcene of ſufferings; he earneſtly prayed, *that the cup might paſs from him. And there appeared an angel from heaven, ſtrengthening him. And being in an agony, his ſweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground,* Luke xxii. 42—44.

Soon after which, he was apprehended, and carried to the houſe of Annas, then of Caiaphas the high prieſt. And having been examined, and ill-treated, he was confined until early in the morning, and was then had before Pilate, where the accuſations were renewed againſt him. By Pilate's order he was once at leaſt, if not twice, ſcourged. And the ſoldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it upon his head. Neither of which could be without ſome effuſion of blood. The ſame would be in a great degree the effect of faſtening him to the croſs, by the hands, and the feet. In the ſuffering of which, and during the whole time of his hanging on the croſs, he muſt have had in his perfect body, of the fineſt contexture, the moſt exquiſite ſenſe of pain.

pain. In conſequence of theſe fatigues, and theſe ſufferings, and this loſs of blood, he would be parched as it were with a violent drought.

Another thing, contributing to the vehemence of his thirſt, muſt have been the exerciſe of his mind. Unqueſtionably, during the whole ſpace of this concluding ſcene of our Lord's life, which we have juſt now briefly ſurveyed, there was in his mind all the care and attention and circumſpection which can be conceived. And it required the full exertion of all the powers of his ſpotleſs and perfect mind, to perſevere in meekneſs and patience under the inſulting ſpeeches, and other abuſive treatment, which he met with; and in complete reſignation to the will of God: and in benevolence toward thoſe who ſo unrighteouſly perſecuted him.

Such a concluſion of ſo holy, ſo uſeful, ſo glorious a life and miniſtry, as was that of the Lord Jeſus, muſt have been the moſt affecting trial that ever befel any man. During the period of this trial, the whole frame, both of body and mind, was ſtretched to the utmoſt: and the thirſt, which our Lord now openly expreſſed, muſt have been a natural conſequence of it. We may well ſuppoſe, it was indeed great and vehement: an uneaſineſs, which at this time almoſt ſwallowed up the pains of his pierced and wounded hands and feet.

When Pilate had pronounced ſentence upon Jeſus, and they were carrying him to the place of crucifixion, or when he was come thither, and before they nailed him to the croſs, there was offered to him *wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not*, Mark xv. 23. He refuſed to drink of it. That was an intoxicating potion, wine mingled with ſome rich ingredients, tending to ſtupify. And probably, was a kind proviſion, made by ſome inhabitants of the city of Jeruſalem, of a generous and compaſſionate temper for all, or moſt of ſuch as were there ſentenced to die by crucifixion. But it was wiſely and greatly refuſed by the Lord Jeſus: that he might be a complete example of ſuffering virtue. Somewhat elſe was now reached up to him upon the croſs, after he had ſaid, *I thirſt*. Which is next to be conſidered by us.

II. The treatment, which he thereupon met with.

*Now there was ſet a veſſel full of vinegar. And they filled a ſponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyſſop, and put it to his mouth.*

This particular is alſo related by two other evangeliſts. But we do not in them readily diſcern the occaſion of it. This having been obſerved by St. John, when he wrote his goſpel, he was induced to ſupply their omiſſion, and therefore inſerted what we have juſt now conſidered, our Lord's ſaying: *I thirſt.*

Let us compare the other Evangeliſts with him. Says St. Matthew: *And about the ninth hour*, or three in the afternoon, *Jeſus cried with a loud voice, ſaying: Eli, Eli, Lama ſabachthani, that is to ſay: my God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me? Some of them that ſtood there, when they heard that, ſaid: this man calleth for Elias. And ſtraightway one of them ran, and took a ſponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink*, Matt. xxvii. 46—48. And to the like purpoſe in Mark xv. 34—36. But here, in St. John, it is thus, *After this, Jeſus knowing that all things were now accompliſhed, that the ſcripture might be fulfilled, ſaith: I thirſt. Now there was ſet a veſſel full of vinegar. And they filled a ſponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyſſop, and put it to his mouth.* St. Matthew and St. Mark, as it ſeems, mention together two things, which were partly independent on each other: I mean our Lord's prayer: *my God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me:* and then the giving him the ſponge with vinegar. But St. John thought proper to inſert more particularly the occaſion of their giving him that vinegar, which was his ſaying: *I thirſt.*

*Now there was ſet a veſſel full of vinegar. And they filled a ſponge with the vinegar, and put it upon hyſſop*, that is, a reed, or ſlender ſtalk of hyſſop, which is ſaid to grow much higher in thoſe climates, than with us: *and put it to his mouth.* It is likely, that this was a veſſel of ſuch liquor, as the Roman ſoldiers, and meaner people, generally drank.

What was the deſign of the perſon, or perſons, who reached up the ſponge filled with that liquor, may not be certain: whether it was in the way of inſult, or only an indifferent action, performed without any bad or good view, or whether with a kind deſign of affording at leaſt ſome ſmall relief under a very uneaſy thirſt. But it muſt be reckoned a very great trial, on ſo preſſing an occaſion, to have no other refreſhment offered, beſide that of ſo ordinary a liquor, out of ſuch a veſſel, which having ſtood all the while open,

muſt

muſt now, at the end of a public execution, have been very filthy, and offenſive.

Though we had had only the accounts of the other evangeliſts, where the reaching up the ſpunge with vinegar is mentioned; we could have been able to diſcern, that it was either a deſigned affront and indignity, or at the leaſt, an affecting proof of the deplorable and diſconſolate condition of the Lord Jeſus at this time, with regard to all outward circumſtances. But St. John's addition of the occaſion in thoſe words, *I thirſt*, does more diſtinctly repreſent to us a very great uneaſineſs endured by our Lord.

They who are well acquainted with the nature of the death of the croſs, in uſe among the Romans, and attentively obſerve the hiſtory of our Lord's being brought to it, might poſſibly have inferred, that a very uneaſy and violent thirſt muſt have been one of the painful and afflictive circumſtances of it. Nevertheleſs St. John's particular mention of it is worthy of conſideration, and is ſuited to engage our attention.

III. We ſhould now conſider the meaning of thoſe expreſſions of the evangeliſt, *that the ſcripture might be fulfilled.*

*After this, Jeſus knowing that all things were now accompliſhed, that the ſcripture might be fulfilled, ſaith, I thirſt:* that is, Jeſus knowing and conſidering in his own mind, that many things appointed by the Father to be done and ſuffered by him on this earth, for the good of men, and which had been before-hand propheſied of him, had now come to paſs, ſaid, *I thirſt:* believing that would give occaſion for the fulfilment of a particular prophecy concerning him.

By which we may perceive that the firſt words of the evangeliſt, *knowing that all things were now accompliſhed*, ought not to be ſtrained. He does not intend to ſay that all things, without exception, were already accompliſhed: for many things remained to be accompliſhed concerning Jeſus Chriſt, after his reſurrection. The meaning therefore muſt be reſtrained to things relating to the Meſſiah, during his abode on this earth. Nor are they to be abſolutely underſtood ſo far: for it ſtill remained that he ſhould die, according to the ſcriptures. And there was ſtill one thing to be accompliſhed before his death, as the evangeliſt himſelf ſays: *Jeſus knowing that all things were accompliſhed, that the ſcripture might be fulfilled, ſaith, I thirſt.*

The meaning therefore is, that Jeſus knowing, and obſerving in his own mind, that many prophecies had been accompliſhed in the courſe of his miniſtry, and that now he had endured a very great variety, and almoſt all kinds of inſults and indignities, pains and ſorrows, agreeably to what the ſcriptures had ſaid concerning the ſuffering character of the Meſſiah: he was about to reſign and give up his ſoul into the hand of God. But knowing alſo that there was one thing ſpoken of the Meſſiah in the ſcriptures, which was not yet fulfilled, he ſaid, *I thirſt.*

There are two places in the Pſalms which are thought to ſpeak of this: *My ſtrength is dried up like a potſherd: and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou haſt brought me into the duſt of death,* Pſ. xxii. 15. And, *They gave me alſo gall for my meat, and in my thirſt they gave me vinegar to drink,* Pſ. lxix. 21. Theſe ſcriptures were now fulfilled.

IV. I would now mention ſome remarks and obſervations ſuitable to this ſubject.

1. When we meditate upon the ſufferings of the Lord Jeſus, we ought ever to admire the wiſe deſign and great love of the Father, in appointing that the Chriſt, his beloved Son, moſt dear to him, ſo holy, ſo excellent, ſo diſtinguiſhed by miraculous powers and gifts, ſhould for the general good of mankind live in this world in mean circumſtances, and ſubmit to the rage and enmity of wicked and prejudiced men, in teſtimony to the great truths and principles of religion, which contain inſtructions for our preſent conduct, and the beſt encouragements of our hopes and expectations of future glory and happineſs.

2. Thoſe meditations may alſo juſtly ſerve to endear to us the Lord Jeſus, who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us to himſelf for *a peculiar people, zealous of good works,* Tit. ii. 14. Such was the ranſom he laid down for us, even his own life, in a way moſt painful and diſhonourable to himſelf in all its outward circumſtances.

Without this, his preaching, and all the miracles of his miniſtry, would not have been ſufficient to awaken, convince, and gain more than a ſmall number of Jews and Gentiles, in that, and a few following ages, in ſome parts of the world only: whereas now, we alſo, once very far off from the kingdom of God, in a very late age of the world, are brought into the number of God's people, and made heirs of eternal life. We

muſt therefore acknowledge that the croſs of Chriſt is the *power of God, and the wiſdom of God*, 1 Cor. i. 24.

He might with leſs pains and expence to himſelf have ſet up a very extenſive empire of a worldly nature, and fixed it upon foundations that ſhould be durable. But that was not the deſign of his coming; which was, that he might ſet up a kingdom in the minds of men, and ſubdue them to willing obedience to the laws of right reaſon, and the will of God, that they might be partakers of future, endleſs happineſs, and that they might be ſtregthened againſt all the temptations of their preſent condition.

When therefore we conſider at any time, how juſt ſentiments we have of God, and of the way of ſerving him, how high ideas we have of a life to come, and what expectations we have of ſuch a happineſs: provided we can alſo diſcern in ourſelves any diſpoſitions of true holineſs, and ſome preparedneſs for a better life: let us give a tribute of praiſe and honour to the Lord Jeſus for ſuch advantages, and love him who has loved us, and given himſelf for us. And let us be careful not to do any thing unbecoming the character which we ſuſtain, of being his diſciples. That would be a very ungrateful and diſagreeable return for his pure and diſintereſted love, who expects nothing more of us than that we ſhould honour him by a right temper and conduct.

3. The particular of the text may induce us ſometimes to ſurvey with care and attention the circumſtances of our Lord's laſt ſufferings. We ſhould then, very likely, obſerve divers things deſerving admiration, and very proper for our eſtabliſhment and comfort.

4. We cannot omit to obſerve at this time the compoſure of our Lord's mind, and the greatneſs of his behaviour in the moſt trying circumſtances.

*Jeſus knowing, that all things were now accompliſhed, that the ſcripture might be fulfilled, ſaith: I thirſt.* So writes St. John, who was at the foot of the croſs, and was perſuaded, that in what the Lord then ſaid, he had a regard to the ancient prophecies concerning the Meſſiah. Which ſhews great compoſure of mind under the moſt painful ſufferings.

We alſo perceive the greatneſs of his behaviour. When the ſponge dipped in vinegar was put to his mouth, he does not make any complaints, nor exclaim againſt ſo diſagreeable treatment, nor bemoan his ſad condition. Nor does the evangeliſt enlarge upon it, having for wiſe reaſons

preſcribed to himſelf great conciſeneſs. Nevertheleſs theſe things may be well obſerved by us. The doing ſo, will help us to form a more juſt idea of the great example of reſignation and patience, which our Lord has given.

5. Finally, we ſhould, in imitation of Jeſus, be willing to endure all things for the truth's ſake, and for the good of our fellow-creatures, and fellow-chriſtians.

I am ſenſible, that the actions and ſufferings of Jeſus Chriſt are ſometimes miſunderſtood and miſapplied. Some in the church of Rome eſpecially, have weakly imitated this part of our Lord's ſufferings. And becauſe he ſaid, *I thirſt*, that they might reſemble him therein, they have practiſed abſtinence, until they have been incapable of admitting any liquid. To ſuch it might be juſtly ſaid: *Who has required this at your hand?* Iſ. i. 12. This is not a ſervice acceptable to God, who does not delight in the pain and diſtreſs of any of his creatures. Nor did Jeſus ſeek theſe ſufferings: though he meekly acquieſced in them.

Chriſt indeed has required his followers to *love one another, as he has loved them*. Which is a very comprehenſive command. And implies, that they ſhould be willing to hazard, or even lay down their lives for one another, and for the general good, if there ſhould be occaſion. But not otherwiſe. For he recommended to his diſciples diſcretion, (which he often practiſed himſelf) as well as innocence. And directed them to decline dangers, as far as they honourably could, and when perſecuted in one city, to flee into another.

But though ſome have practiſed a vain imitation of Chriſt, his conduct is really exemplary and encouraging. We ſhould reſemble him in zeal for God, a love of truth, and of one another. Reſolution and ſteadineſs in ſuch intereſts are very honourable and commendable. And if at any time, in the courſe of Divine Providence, we are made like unto Jeſus in afflictions and ſufferings, and are meek and compoſed, and courageous under them as he was, we ſhall alſo be like him in glory and happineſs hereafter.

SERMON

# SERMON II.

## THE GREATNESS OF JESUS IN HIS LAST SUFFERINGS.

JOHN xix. 30.

*When Jeſus therefore had received the vinegar, he ſaid: it is finiſhed. And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghoſt.*

ST. PAUL, in his firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, ſpeaks of the offence which ſome took at the ſufferings of Chriſt. *The Jews required a ſign, and the Greeks ſought after wiſdom:* inſomuch that the preaching of Chriſt crucified was *to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs.* Nevertheleſs to many, *both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt was the power of God, and the wiſdom of God,* 1 Cor. i. 18—24. For which reaſon, and becauſe he had himſelf in particular experienced the benefit of that doctrine, he determined, when at Corinth, one of the politeſt cities of Greece, then eſteemed the moſt polite and learned part of the world, *not to know,* or make manifeſt, *any thing, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified.*

The diſciples of Jeſus, who had ſo much reaſon, from the excellence of his words, and the wonders and condeſcenſions of his life, to love and reſpect him, were offended in him, forſook him, and fled, when he entered into the thick cloud of affliction. But their eyes were afterwards enlightened, their underſtandings opened, and their hearts enlarged. And they were able and willing to recommend to all, a faith in Chriſt crucified and riſen as perfectly reaſonable, and highly beneficial and advantageous.

But it is not now my intention to inſiſt on all the ends and uſes of the death of Chriſt, nor on all the reaſons for permitting it. It is chiefly in one particular light, that I would at preſent conſider the ſufferings of the Lord Jeſus: to ſhew, in ſome meaſure, his greatneſs under them: how he maintained his dignity, throughout this hour of affliction, and ſtrange ſcene of abaſement: and the fitneſs and propriety of all his words and actions, from his yielding up himſelf into the hands of his enemies to his expiring on the croſs:

croſs: how he joined majeſty with meekneſs, and under the moſt injurious and provoking treatment, manifeſted great preſence of thought, and perfect compoſure of mind.

For this end, I ſhall take notice of the main parts of the whole hiſtory of the laſt ſufferings of Jeſus, as recorded by the evangeliſts. The diſcourſe ſhall be divided into two ſections. The firſt containing the particulars of our Lord's apprehenſion and proſecution, to the time of his condemnation by Pilate: the ſecond, containing the ſeveral things following, till he expired on the croſs.

§ I. 1. And in the firſt place, there is a circumſtance fit to be obſerved by us, which greatly exalts the fortitude of Jeſus: that he knew before-hand the death he was to endure, and all the painful concomitants of it, and yet he reſigns himſelf to it, and prepares himſelf for it with cheerfulneſs.

This compoſure of mind at his entering into the amazing ſcene of his ſorrows, and his foreknowledge of them, appear in thoſe words ſpoken to the diſciples, in his retirement, after the concluſion of the prayers, which he had there offered up. *Then cometh he to the diſciples, and ſaith unto them: ſleep on now, and take your reſt. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the ſon of man is betrayed into the hands of ſinners. Ariſe, let us be going. Behold, he is at hand that does betray me,* Matt. xxvi. 45, 46.

We may be perſuaded, from the intimations which our Lord had given to many, and upon divers occaſions, in the courſe of his miniſtry, that he before-hand knew the painful and ignominious death which he was to undergo. Here, in theſe words, juſt read from St. Matthew, the like to which are in St. Mark's goſpel, we perceive his diſtinct foreſight of the beginning of his laſt ſorrows, and at the ſame time how compoſed he was, Mark xiv. 41, 42.

The evangeliſts uſually content themſelves with barely relating things as they happened, without any hint of ſpecial obſervation to engage the attention of readers: Nevertheleſs St. John has thought fit juſt to take notice of this foreknowledge of Chriſt. *Jeſus therefore knowing all things that ſhould come unto him, went forth, and ſaid unto them: whom ſeek ye?* John xviii. 4.

Our bleſſed Lord's diſtinct foreſight of all the affecting ſufferings which he was to endure, greatly illuſtrates the reſolution

lution and fortitude of his mind, and his affectionate concern for ſinful men, in reſigning himſelf to them with ſuch readineſs as he did; which appears in the words juſt read, and in other particulars to be farther taken notice of.

2. Our Lord's great mind appears in the manner in which he received Judas who came to betray him, and the officers who were ſent to apprehend him.

*Judas, one of the twelve,* as the evangeliſt relates, *came, and with him a great multitude, with ſwords and ſtaves, from the chief prieſts and elders,* Matt. xxvi. 47. *And forthwith he came to Jeſus, and ſaid, hail, Maſter: and kiſſed him,* ver. 49. He comes, with the uſual tokens of reſpect, after ſome time of abſence. Thus he addreſſeth himſelf to Chriſt, when this very ſalutation had been agreed upon, as a mark, denoting him whom the officers were to ſeize and lay hold of. Whereupon Jeſus ſaid unto him: *Friend, wherefore art thou come?* ver. 50. So in Matthew. But in another goſpel: *Judas, betrayeſt thou the Son of man with a kiſs!* Luke xxii. 48.

This was the beginning of theſe ſorrows: and it was a very affecting caſe. To be betrayed by a diſciple, in the eye of the world, would appear a prejudice to our Saviour's reputation, and an argument of ſome miſconduct, or of ſome bad deſigns; that one of his diſciples and intimate friends delivered him to his enemies. This was an affecting thing. It muſt be ſo to any man, who is virtuous and innocent, and has a ſenſe of honour. In ordinary minds, even where there is true goodneſs, it would have had one or other of theſe effects: to ſink the ſpirits in a great degree; or elſe provoke to ungovernable reſentment and indignation, breaking out into paſſionate expreſſions; but the greatneſs of Jeſus is conſpicuous. He ſaw the falſhood of Judas, under the fair appearance of reſpect and affection. Yet he returns him a familiar ſalutation, and calls him friend. But at the ſame time he intimates his diſcernment of his treacherous purpoſe, and gives a piercing reproof of his baſeneſs: *Judas, betrayeſt thou the Son of man with a kiſs!*

Then turning himſelf to the officers who came with Judas, he ſays, *Whom ſeek ye? They anſwered him: Jeſus of Nazareth. Jeſus ſaith unto them: I am he.... As ſoon then as he had ſaid unto them, I am he, they went backward,* or drew back, *and fell to the ground. Then aſked he them again: whom ſeek ye? And they ſaid: Jeſus of Nazareth. Jeſus anſwered: I have told you, that I am he,* John xviii. 4—8.

Here,

Here, as every where, all along, we ſee proofs of great preſence of mind and compoſure of thought. Jeſus had retired into a private place; but it was not with a view of hiding himſelf from his enemies. He was innocent, and knew himſelf to be ſo, and ſhews his conſcious integrity, by declaring himſelf to be the perſon whom they ſought: which acknowledgment was delivered with ſuch majeſty, or accompanied with ſuch power, that they fell to the ground as if ſtruck with lightning. Then a ſecond time he aſks, *whom they ſought*, and told them again, he was the perſon: by all this ſhewing that he could not be apprehended, but with his own conſent, and that he did now willingly yield himſelf up into their hands.

This ought to fill us with reſpect for the Lord Jeſus, at once admiring his dignity, and his condeſcenſion.

And this ſhews, that if afterwards he does not deliver himſelf, or eſcape from his enemies, but ſubmits to all the evils which they are diſpoſed to inflict upon him; it is not becauſe he is not able to ſave himſelf; but becauſe he reſigns himſelf to thoſe ſufferings, it being the will of God, for the good of men, that he ſhould ſo acquieſce, and thereby afford an example of conſummate patience, confirm his important doctrine, and draw men to him, and bring them to high degrees of virtue here, and of glory and happineſs hereafter.

3. The next thing to be obſerved by us is the demand, which he makes for the liberty of his diſciples. As it follows in St. John's goſpel. *Jeſus anſwered: I have told you, that I am he. If therefore ye ſeek me, let theſe go their way. That the ſaying might be fulfilled, which he ſpake: 'of them which thou gaveſt me I have loſt none,'* John xviii. 8, 9.

This is another proof, that the mind of the bleſſed Jeſus was not diſcompoſed by the indignities already offered to him, or the ſufferings which he expected to befal him. He yields up himſelf, but ſecures his diſciples, who were not yet qualified for great trials, and whoſe life was neceſſary for ſpreading his doctrine in the world, after he ſhould riſe again.

We here alſo evidently diſcern, not only the tender compaſſion and faithful care of the Lord Jeſus for thoſe whom he had called to follow him, and be with him, but alſo the over-ruling conduct of Divine Providence in this event, the death of the Meſſiah. It is indeed a ſurpriſing thing.

But

But it is not without a divine permiſſion. It was the intereſt of the enemies of Jeſus, and his doctrine, to take off his diſciples, his conſtant followers, together with him. And if he was judged to be criminal, they muſt be reckoned ſo likewiſe. But the high prieſts and rulers had not power ſo much as to apprehend and impriſon one of them.

Chriſt having authoritatively and effectually demanded ſafety and liberty for his diſciples, they ſoon after this withdrew, moſt of them, whilſt one or two of them followed afar off to ſee the end.

4. The next thing, which immediately follows in St. John's goſpel, is the reſiſtance made by Peter. Which is in part related alſo by the other evangeliſts, except that they have not mentioned that diſciple by name.

Says St. John: *Then Simon Peter having a ſword, drew it, and ſmote the high prieſt's ſervant, and cut off his right ear. Then ſaid Jeſus unto Peter: put up thy ſword into the ſheath. The cup, which my Father has given me, ſhall I not drink it?* John xviii. 10, 11. We muſt take a part of this hiſtory as related by others. In Matthew: *Then ſaid Jeſus unto him: put up again thy ſword into its place. For all they that take the ſword, ſhall periſh with the ſword. Thinkeſt thou, that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he ſhall give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then ſhall the ſcriptures be fulfilled, that thus it muſt be?* Matt. xxvi. 52—54. In St. Luke: *And one of them,* that is, of the diſciples, *ſmote the ſervant of the high prieſt, and cut off his right ear. And Jeſus anſwered, and ſaid: ſuffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him,* Luke xxii. 51, 52. St. Mark: *And they laid their hands on him, and took him. And one of them that ſtood by, drew a ſword, and ſmote a ſervant of the high prieſt, and cut off his ear,* Mark xiv. 46, 47.

Certainly Jeſus appears great in this place. He had already done what might be ſufficient to ſatisfy every one, that he was willing to ſubmit to the trial that was coming upon him, how great ſoever it might prove, and whatever ſhould be the iſſue of this attempt of his enemies upon his liberty. Nevertheleſs his faithful and affectionate diſciples are ſtill uneaſy and perplexed to a great degree. And one of them makes reſiſtance, takes the ſword and wounds one of the officers, who came to ſeize his Lord and Maſter. This was a teſtimony of ſincere affection and zeal: and our

Lord

Lord muſt have been ſenſibly touched with it. This was one of the bitter ingredients of his cup: the ſorrow and anguiſh of mind which his diſgraces and other ſufferings cauſed in his diſciples. But obſerve the alacrity with which he takes it, and the ſuperior regard which he has for the will of God above all private intereſts of his diſciples, whom he tenderly loved, as well as above his own. *The cup, which my Father has given me, ſhall I not drink it? Thinkeſt thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he would give me more than twelve legions of angels?* Theſe things more eſpecially concerning the diſciples. However, the officers likewiſe, and all preſent, were hereby inſtructed.

Let us then take notice of this, as another proof of the fortitude and the meekneſs of Jeſus, and his complete reſignation to the whole will, and all the appointments of the Father.

Chriſt did not ſuffer, as he did, becauſe he could not ſave himſelf: but for great and valuable ends, the glory of God, the intereſts of truth, and the welfare of men, he ſubmitted and acquieſced.

5. What follows is the actual apprehending of Jeſus.

In St. John: *Then the band, and the captain, and the officers of the Jews, took Jeſus, and bound him*, John xviii. 12. In St. Matthew: *In that ſame hour ſaid Jeſus unto the multitudes: are ye come out as againſt a thief, with ſwords and ſtaves, to take me? I ſat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the ſcriptures might be fulfilled. Then all the diſciples forſook him and fled*, Matt. xxvi. 55, 56. Compare Mark xiv. 48—50. In St. Luke thus: *Then Jeſus ſaid unto the chief prieſts, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him: be ye come out as againſt a thief, with ſwords and ſtaves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye ſtretched forth no hands againſt me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkneſs*, Luke xxii. 52, 53.

In this occurrence, I apprehend, we diſcern the ſenſibility of our Lord's frame, and that he was affected with this great indignity: that he was ſought for, and taken up in the night as a thief, or ordinary offender againſt the peace of ſociety. But though he is affected, he does not faint, or ſink under the vile abuſe. He teaches the men preſent the iniquity of their proceeding, and of the deſigns

of

of thoſe from whom they came. He alſo ſatisfies and compoſes himſelf, and likewiſe obviates their triumph on account of their ſeeming ſucceſs in getting him into their hands, ſaying: *But this is your hour, and the power of darkneſs,* 'You could not ſeize me before: nor until I had fully 'taught the will of God, and finiſhed the work, which 'the Father had gave me to do. But now is come the 'time when Divine Providence, for wiſe reaſons and 'great ends and purpoſes, permits your wicked counſels 'to take place. And though the circumſtances in which I 'now am, are indeed as to outward appearance, diſhonour-'able and diſgraceful, I acquieſce and yield myſelf to you, 'and even ſubmit to be bound: though you have no reaſon 'to think that I ſhould attempt to make an eſcape. It 'is not your power to which I am ſubject, and by which I 'am overcome. But it is the will of God, to which I 'ſubmit, and reſign myſelf.'

It is not eaſy to proceed, without obſerving the ſad inſtances, which appear here of the hardneſs of men's hearts, and of an obſtinate diſpoſition of mind.

One inſtance is that of Judas, whom Jeſus had kindly and ſolemnly warned more than once, intimating before-hand, that *one of the twelve would betray him,* and ſaying: *Woe be to that man, by whom the Son of man is betrayed.* Yet this wicked diſciple proceeded to execute the baſe purpoſe which he had conceived in his mind.

Another is that of the Jewiſh ſervants and officers. Who, notwithſtanding the knowledge, which they muſt before have had of the character of Jeſus, and notwithſtanding what they now heard from him, and ſaw in him, performed the orders which they had received, and laid hands on Jeſus, and bound him, to carry him to the prieſts and elders. Some ſuch officers, having formerly received a like order, returned without obeying it: and when aſked: *why they had not brought him,* anſwered: *Never man ſpake like this man,* John vii. 46. So might theſe have alledged this reaſon for not bringing him: *Never was there any man ſo great and excellent as he.*

May we be always preſerved from ſuch hardneſs of heart. Let us not neglect the remonſtrances of conſcience. Let us ſubmit to admonition. If we enter into wrong deſigns, let us not perſiſt in them. Let us quit and forſake them, when

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we find that they are diſapproved of God, and contrary to reaſon.* *

They who had apprehended our Lord, firſt had him to Annas, who ſent him to Caiaphas, at that time high prieſt. Which is a particular related by St. John only, *Then the band and captain and officers took Jeſus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas firſt. For he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was the high prieſt that year. . . . Now Annas had ſent him bound unto Caiaphas the high prieſt,* John xviii. 12, 13, 24.

6. What we are therefore next to take notice of in the ſixth place, is, what firſt happened at the houſe of Caiaphas the high prieſt. *The high prieſt then aſked Jeſus of his diſciples, and of his doctrine. Jeſus anſwered him: I ſpake openly to the world, I ever taught in the ſynagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always reſort. And in ſecret have I ſaid nothing,* John xviii. 19, 20. 'That is, 'I have taken all 'proper opportunities of ſpeaking in the moſt public places. 'And if at any time I have taught my diſciples privately, 'there is no reaſon to think, that any thing was then ſaid 'by me different from the tenour of the doctrine taught 'by me in places of the moſt general reſort.' *Why aſkeſt thou me? Aſk them which heard me, what I have ſaid unto them. Behold, they know what I have ſaid,* ver. 21.

Every one muſt be ſenſible of the propriety of this anſwer. It was not a time for our Lord to rehearſe the doctrine which he had taught, or to apologize for it, and demonſtrate the innocence of it, or that it had no bad tendency. The high prieſt's queſtion was improper and unſeaſonable. And our Lord juſtly expoſed it by his anſwer.

Nevertheleſs, as it follows in St. John: *When he had thus ſpoken, one of the officers, who ſtood by, ſtruck Jeſus with the palm of his hand, ſaying: anſwereſt thou the high prieſt ſo? Jeſus anſwered him: if I have ſpoken evil, bear witneſs of the evil: but if well, why ſmiteſt thou me?* ver. 22, 23. Which, certainly, ſhews full compoſure of mind, and great meekneſs. He does not exert his power for puniſhing ſo heinous an indignity: but calmly ſhews the iniquity of the treatment juſt given him: his anſwer to the high prieſt having been very juſt, implying the conſciouſneſs of his innocence, and

*** If any ſhould find the firſt part of this ſermon too long to be read at once, here may be a proper pauſe.

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the impropriety of the queſtion, put by the high prieſt to a perſon brought before him as upon trial.

7. In the next place, ſeventhly, we are to obſerve the farther proceedings before the high prieſt, which are rather more regular, though altogether unrighteous, they by whom they endeavoured to convict Jeſus being falſe witneſſes. *Now the chief prieſts and elders and all the council ſought falſe witneſs againſt Jeſus to put him to death; but found none. Yea though many falſe witneſſes came, yet found they none. At the laſt came two falſe witneſſes, and ſaid: this man ſaid, I am able to deſtroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high prieſt aroſe, and ſaid unto him: anſwereſt thou nothing? What is it that theſe witneſs againſt thee? But Jeſus held his peace,* Matt. xxvi. 59—62. St. Mark alſo relating this tranſaction, ſays, *But he held his peace, and anſwered nothing,* ch. xiv. 60.

The ſilence of our Lord upon this occaſion deſerves notice, as highly becoming a perſon of a diſtinguiſhed character, and known innocence: eſpecially, when men, ſitting in judgment as magiſtrates, ſhew themſelves deſtitute of a regard to juſtice and equity, and betray a malicious deſign to put a man to death, though they have no evidence againſt him, and the witneſſes that appear, at their procurement, are inconſiſtent, and do not agree together. We ſhall have occaſion, as we proceed, to obſerve more than once this proof of our Lord's greatneſs: I mean his ſilence.

However it follows in St. Matthew. *And the high prieſt anſwered and ſaid unto him: I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Chriſt, the Son of God? Jeſus ſaith unto him: thou haſt ſaid*: Matt. xxvi. 63—66. that is, it is as thou haſt ſaid. You have rightly expreſſed the character which I claim. *Nevertheleſs I ſay unto you*; notwithſtanding the meanneſs of my preſent appearance: and though at this preſent time I ſay and do nothing beſide what has been manifeſted in my paſt life for juſtifying this claim and character, I do aſſure you: *Hereafter ye will ſee the Son of man ſitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high prieſt rent his clothes, and ſaid: he has ſpoken blaſphemy. What farther need have we of witneſſes? Behold, now ye have heard his blaſphemy. What think ye? They anſwered, and ſaid: he is guilty of death*; or deſerves to be put to death.

Here again we ſee our Lord's excellent behaviour. Though he had been ſilent hitherto, yet being adjured in

the name of God, he anſwers readily, and diſtinctly: even though he could not but very well know the perverſe uſe which the council would make of it, and that they would charge him with blaſphemy, as if the claim was without ground.

Here therefore we perceive the truth, and the courage of our Lord. In the time of his public preaching he proved himſelf to be the Chriſt, or the Meſſiah, by his diſcourſes and his works. But he ſeldom ſaid expreſsly, that he was the Meſſiah, for avoiding oſtentation, and for preventing the abuſe, which ſome might have made of ſuch a declaration, and the bad conſequences that might have enſued, conſidering how many ſuppoſed a temporal power and kingdom to be annexed to that character. But now, when the declaration could be attended with no bad conſequences to others, he freely makes it: though it would ſoon expoſe him to a charge of blaſphemy, which would be deemed worthy of death.

In this profeſſion, now made, there is much majeſty, unſpeakable goodneſs, and admirable wiſdom and diſcretion. The majeſty is evident. There is alſo goodneſs, in foretelling the glory and power, to which he ſhould be advanced, and in which he ſhould come to puniſh the determined and implacable enemies of truth and virtue. It was, I ſay, great goodneſs to warn and admoniſh thoſe who had given ſuch proofs of hardneſs of heart, of the guilt they would contract, and the miſeries they would be in danger of, if they ſhould proceed to condemn him. And the diſcretion is admirable, in delivering that kind and compaſſionate inſtruction and warning, without any diminution of his greatneſs.

8. Eighthly, the next thing, which offers itſelf to us is the behaviour of Peter, whoſe repeated denial happened at this ſeaſon, whilſt our Saviour was in the houſe of Caiaphas.

There is no need, that I ſhould inſert here any of the accounts of this matter, in any of the evangeliſts; it being well known to every one, that this diſciple, partly out of curioſity, partly out of eſteem and affection for Jeſus, had followed him into the high prieſt's hall. At this time, when Jeſus was before the high prieſt and elders and the council of the Jews, Peter at ſome ſmall diſtance, in the lower part of the hall, as a ſtranger, and among perſons chiefly

chiefly of lower rank, being challenged as a diſciple of Jeſus, thrice denied it, or that he had any knowledge of him, and endeavoured to corroborate what he ſaid with oaths and imprecations, the more effectually to ſecure his own ſafety.

This muſt have been very affecting to our Lord: that a diſciple of his, and one of the chief, and moſt favoured, ſhould act ſo unſuitably to his obligations and ſolemn profeſſions. But behold the complete compoſure of our Lord's mind. He is not ſo offended at the bad conduct of his diſciple, nor ſo concerned about the malicious and artful proceedings of the council, before whom he ſtood, but he takes care of Peter: *He turned and looked upon Peter*, Luke xxii. 61. with earneſtneſs and tenderneſs. And by that piercing and gracious look, he recovered this fallen diſciple, who then, not being longer able to bear company, and wanting a place of retirement to bemoan his own falſhood and inconſtancy, *went out and wept bitterly*, ver. 62. and Matt. xxvi. 75.

9. In the ninth place we will obſerve the hiſtory of our Lord's firſt appearance before Pilate. *When the morning was come, all the chief prieſts and elders of the people took counſel againſt Jeſus, to put him to death. And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor*, Matt. xxvii. 1, 2. *And Jeſus ſtood before the governor. And the governor aſked him, ſaying: art thou the king of the Jews? And Jeſus ſaid unto him: thou ſayeſt*, ver. 11. that is, it is as thou ſayeſt. You have rightly expreſſed my character. I acknowledge myſelf to be the king of the Jews. Thus our Lord here profeſſes again plainly the ſame thing, which he had ſaid before the Jewiſh council: whatever bad uſe might be made of it, to his detriment.

St. Matthew's account is juſt, but it is very conciſe and ſummary. Therefore, though we ought to ſtudy brevity, I think we ſhould take in alſo a part of St. John's account, which is more full. *Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jeſus, and ſaid unto him: art thou the king of the Jews? Jeſus anſwered him: Sayeſt thou this thing of thyſelf, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate anſwered: am I a Jew? Thy own nation and the chief prieſts have delivered thee unto me. What haſt thou done? Jeſus anſwered: my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my ſervants fight, that I ſhould not be delivered up to the Jews. But*

*now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore ſaid unto him: art thou a king then? Jeſus anſwered: thou ſayeſt, that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this end came I into this world, that I ſhould bear witneſs to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice.*

By which we perceive, that our Lord was not unwilling to ſpeak when there was occaſion: and that, being fully compoſed in his mind, when he ſpeaks his words are wiſe and proper. He not only undauntedly acknowledges his character of the Meſſiah, but Pilate being a ſtranger, he condeſcends alſo to give him ſome information concerning the nature of his kingdom, and of the title which he aſſumed, of *the king of the Jews*: letting him know, that it was not a worldly kingdom, ſupported by ſanctions of worldly rewards and puniſhments, human force and authority, but is a kingdom of truth: and that his deſign was to bear teſtimony to truth, eſpecially religious truth; the intereſt of which is ſupported and carried on by reaſon and argument only, and by appeals to the underſtanding, judgment and conſcience of men. Such a King I am: and every one who is a lover of truth, will receive me for his Lord and Maſter, and become my diſciple and follower. Thus, as St. Paul ſays, *Jeſus Chriſt before Pontius Pilate witneſſed a good confeſſion*, 1 Tim. vi. 13.

It is added in St. Matthew, in the place before quoted: *And when he was accuſed of the chief prieſts and elders, he anſwered nothing. Then ſaith Pilate unto him: heareſt thou not how many things they witneſs againſt thee? And he anſwered him never a word: inſomuch that the governor marvelled greatly,* Matt. xxvii. 12—14. Our Lord having ſaid what was ſufficient to give Pilate ſatisfaction concerning the nature of his claim, and the innocence of his behaviour, if Pilate was impartial and equitable, as related in St. John, he refuſed to plead any longer. That would have looked like diſputing and arguing; which was below his dignity, and unſuitable to his preſent circumſtances.

10. There is another thing in the tenth place, mentioned by St. Luke, which we cannot overlook, the appearance of Jeſus before Herod the Tetrarch. *Then ſaid Pilate unto the chief prieſts and to the people: I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, ſaying, he ſtirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee unto this place. As ſoon as he knew that he belonged to Herod's juriſdiction, he ſent him to Herod, who was alſo at Jeruſalem at that time. And when*

Herod

*Herod ſaw Jeſus, he was exceeding glad; for he was deſirous to ſee him of a long ſeaſon, becauſe he had heard many things of him, and he hoped to have ſeen a miracle done by him. Then he queſtioned him in many words: but he anſwered him nothing. And the chief prieſts and ſcribes ſtood and vehemently accuſed him: and Herod, with his men of war ſet him at naught, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and ſent him again to Pilate,* Luke xxiii. 4—11.

Here we ſee our Lord's continued meekneſs and patience, in ſubmitting to be thus ſent from one to another, and enduring all manner of ſcoffs and inſults without complaint. We likewiſe ſee his true greatneſs. He works not any miracle before Herod, either of ſalvation or deſtruction; though this laſt might have been juſtly done. He ſays not a word by way of apology for himſelf, his innocence being conſpicuous, and all the accuſations brought againſt him falſe and groundleſs. Our Lord's behaviour is admirable. If he had not been a perſon of conſummate wiſdom, and had not now had the full command of himſelf, he might have been induced to exert his power in performing ſome work of an extraordinary kind, or to ſay ſomething ſtrongly in his own behalf: but his ſilence and inaction are more becoming. He behaves as one ought to do, who had wrought ſuch miracles as he had done, many of them in the territories of Herod, who might have informed himſelf concerning them if he had pleaſed: and as became him in the preſence of that man, who had unrighteouſly put John the Baptiſt to death, and ſtill lived in the ſins for which he had been reproved by him, and now added the prodigious ſin and folly of inſulting, and contemptuouſly ridiculing and mocking a man, concerning whom many great things had been reported to him, and in whom no fault had been found, after a very public life, into which the ſtricteſt inquiries had been made.

11. Now we are led to take notice of the demand made by the people, at the inſtigation of the rulers, that Barabbas might be delivered to them.

For Pilate was convinced, that in this cauſe the chief men of the Jews had been actuated by envy: therefore he put the people in mind of a cuſtom they had for him to releaſe to them a priſoner at that feaſt. And the more to incline them in favour of Jeſus, he propoſed him to them, together with another, who was infamous, or, as St. Matthew ſtiles him, a *notable priſoner*, Matt. xxvii. 16. or notorious tranſgreſſor,

whoſe crimes are more particularly put down in the other evangelifts. Mark xv. 7. Luke xxiii. 25. John xviii. 40. *The governor anſwered, and ſaid unto them, whether of the two will ye that I releaſe unto you? They ſaid, Barabbas. Pilate ſaid unto them, what then ſhall I do with Jeſus, who is called Chriſt? They all ſaid unto him: let him be crucified,* ver. 21, 22.

How provoking is this! Yet not one word proceeds from Jeſus. He might indeed juſtly have ſpoken out, and addreſſed himſelf to the people, and all preſent, ſaying, 'O ſhameful indignity! O unexampled preference! Do you not know the demerits of the priſoner, whom you deſire to have releaſed unto you? And do you demand that I ſhould be put to death? Have you never been preſent at my diſcourſes in the temple or the ſynagogues? Have you never ſeen or heard of any of the mighty works done by me, equalling, or exceeding thoſe done by any of your prophets, Moſes himſelf not excepted? Have you forgot your own loud and cheerful acclamations, and the ſolemn and willing pomp with which you lately conducted me into this city, ſaying, *Hoſannah to the Son of David: bleſſed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!*' Theſe and other things might have been juſtly and properly ſaid. But our Lord's ſilence is greater than all words; more ſignificant and moving than the moſt pathetic ſpeech that could be made.

12. The laſt thing to be mentioned here is the ſentence pronounced by Pilate.

Says St. John: *When Pilate therefore heard that ſaying, he brought Jeſus forth, and ſat down in the judgment ſeat.... Then delivered he him therefore to them to be crucified,* John xix. 13, 16. To the like purpoſe in St. Matthew, chap. xxii. 26. and St. Mark, chap. xv. 15. Or, as in St. Luke, chap. xxiii. 24, 25. *And Pilate gave ſentence, that it ſhould be as they required—and he delivered Jeſus to their will.*

That is the ſentence. But it may be perceived, that for the ſake of brevity I paſs over divers things, which happened at this time: the ſcourging ordered by Pilate, the deriſions and inſults of the ſoldiers, *who platted a crown of thorns, and put it upon his head, and put on him a purple robe, and ſaid: Hail, king of the Jews. And they ſmote him on the head with a reed, and ſpat upon him, and bowing their knees, worſhipped*

*worſhipped him:* that is, derided him with many tokens of mock-honour and reſpect.

It was amazing meekneſs in our Lord, to bear all this treatment without puniſhing it: true greatneſs, to make no remonſtrances againſt ſuch crying abuſe. This was not a time for him to uſe earneſt expoſtulations or loud complaints. His †‡ former life teſtified his innocence, and condemned all accuſations brought againſt him, and covered with ſhame the indignities offered to him, and thoſe by whom they were offered. He therefore was ſilent, and referred himſelf to the judgment of God: as St. Peter ſays admirably: *Who when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he ſuffered, he threatened not: but committed himſelf to him who judgeth righteouſly,* 1 Pet. ii. 23.

§ II. Having already obſerved the account of our Lord's being apprehended, with the circumſtances of it, and many marks of meekneſs and greatneſs therein, and the hiſtory of our Lord's being carried to Annas and Caiaphas, and then to Pontius Pilate the Roman governor in Judea, with the indignities there caſt upon him, and his admirable behaviour upon every occaſion, till Pilate unwillingly pronounced ſentence that he might be crucified.

I now proceed to the remaining part of this affecting hiſtory, written indeed, as every other part of the goſpels is, without ornaments and embelliſhments, and without any deſigned artifice to raiſe the paſſions, being throughout only plain relations of matters of fact, with their ſeveral circumſtances. Which, however, being for that very reaſon the more apparently credible, are moving in a great degree, and afford ground for many juſt reflections and obſervations, and ſecure the trueſt reſpect and eſteem for him, whoſe hiſtory is here related.

1. Our Lord is now carried away to the common place of execution, without the city of Jeruſalem, bearing his own croſs according to the cuſtom of the Romans, till he having been much fatigued by the ſufferings already

†‡ Ὁ μεν σωτηρ και κυριος ημων ιησους χριστος, ψευδομαρτυρουμενος μεν, εσιωπα· κατηγορουμενος δε, ουδεν απεκριναιτο· πειθομενος, παντα τον βιον εαυτου, και τας εν ιουδαιοις πραξεις, προειπουσης γεγονεναι φωνης ελεγχουσης την ψευδομαρτυριαν, και λεξεων απολογουμενων προς τας κατηγοριας. Orig. Contr. Celſ. l. i. in.

endured, they compelled another to carry it, or help in bearing it, holding up the hinder part of it.

Here offers itſelf to our conſideration the anſwer, which our Lord made to thoſe who lamented and bewailed him. Says St. Luke: *And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon a Cyrenian coming out of the country. And on him they laid the croſs, that he might bear it after Jeſus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which alſo bewailed him, and lamented him. But Jeſus turning unto them, ſaid: daughters of Jeruſalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourſelves and for your children. For behold the days are coming, in which they ſhall ſay: bleſſed are the barren, and* [or *even*] *the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave ſuck. Then ſhall they begin to ſay to the mountains: fall on us: and to the hills: cover us, For if they do ſuch things in a green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?* Luke xxiii. 26. That is, bewail not me, but rather think of the dreadful calamities, which are coming upon this city and people, for rejecting my miſſion, and putting me to death, and for the other ſins, which they will be guilty of: even as I myſelf, beholding this city ſome while ago, wept over it in the proſpect of the heavy judgments impending over it.

This is a demonſtration of a moſt excellent temper. At the very time that our Lord is ill-treated in the moſt unrighteous manner, and has a near proſpect of the pain and ſhame of the croſs, he breaks out into compaſſionate expreſſions for his enemies, and appears to be touched with a concern for thoſe calamities, which were coming upon the moſt hardened ſinners. His concern for them ſeems to make him forget and overlook his own afflictions. That is the firſt thing.

2. We are led in the next place to obſerve our Lord's refuſing a ſtupifying potion of liquor offered to him, mentioned Mark xv. 22, 23. *And they bring him to the place called Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a ſkull. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh. But he received it not.* It is probable, that this was a draught of generous wine, improved likewiſe with ſpices, and made intoxicating and ſtupifying in a great degree. It was either a potion ordinarily allowed to malefactors, condemned to the croſs: or elſe was prepared by ſome who had an affection for our Lord, to abate the pain of the piercing and lingering ſufferings,

ſufferings, which he was going to endure. *But he did not receive it:* being *(c)* determined to give a complete example of patience, by enduring all the pain of the death aſſigned him without any abatement.

There is no need to add remarks on this particular. Every one ſees the compoſure of our Lord's mind, and the propriety of his action. To have received it might have been no diſparagement to a perſon of an ordinary character. But it was very becoming Jeſus to reject it. And yet, whilſt he does what is a very great inſtance of reſolution and fortitude, the principle, from which it proceeded, is not particularly mentioned. *He received it not.* That is all which is here ſaid. Nothing is added to enhance ſuch generous ſelf-denial.

3. We now obſerve our Lord's prayer for his enemies. Which follows next after the words before cited from St. Luke, ch. xxiii. 32—34. *And there were alſo two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then ſaid Jeſus: Father forgive them: for they know not what they do.*

It is plain, that it was now the beginning of the crucifixion. I think it likely, that this compaſſionate prayer was offered up by our Lord at the very time, that they were nailing his hands and feet to the wood of the croſs, or elſe, immediately afterwards as ſoon as the croſs was ſet up: at which time the pain felt by him muſt have been the moſt acute that can be conceived.

In this prayer are divers things remarkable, proofs of an heroic mind.

Here appear, at this time, under the heavieſt load of ignominy, and the moſt painful ſufferings, a calm and compoſed frame, acquieſcence in the diſpoſal of providence, and a full perſuaſion of the favour and good will of God.

Toward men here appear meekneſs and benevolence. The mind is not filled, as it juſtly might, with bitter reſentment and indignation, manifeſting itſelf in loud com-

*(c)* Noluit autem imbibere Chriſtus, quia, ut diximus, menti exſternendæ adhibebatur. In cruce autem pendens poſtea, quia ſitiebat, ελαβετο οξος, *accepit acetum*, id eſt, imbibit. John xix. 30. Grot. ad Matt. xxvii. 34.

plaints

plaints of injuſtice, appeals to heaven for the innocence of the ſufferer, and earneſt expoſtulations of immediate and exemplary vengeance upon unrighteous enemies.

Inſtead thereof, our Lord, ſenſible indeed of their guilt, and conſcious of his own innocence, and perſuaded that this treatment of him was offenſive to the ſupreme Judge, intercedes in behalf of thoſe, who were the inſtruments of ſuch pain: deſiring, that they might be forgiven, and alledging the only thing that could alleviate their guilt or puniſhment: *they know not what they do.* This may relate more eſpecially to the heathen ſoldiers, the immediate inſtruments. But it will comprehend, and undoubtedly was deſigned in favour of the Jews alſo, or many of them, whoſe prejudices prevailed againſt evidence. So St. Paul ſpeaks of the Jews at Jeruſalem, Acts xiii. 27. . . . *becauſe they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets . . . they have fulfilled them in condemning him.* And 1 Cor. ii. 8. *Had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* The like is ſaid by St. Peter, Acts iii. 17. *And now brethren I know, that through ignorance ye did it, as did alſo your rulers.*

That is the third thing, our Lord's compaſſionate prayer for his enemies. And we ſhould remember the time when it was offered: not before his paſſion nor after it, when the pain and anguiſh of his ſufferings were over, and he was raiſed from the dead: but at the time, when pain and ſhame, and every evil thing that can be thought of, concurred to excite diſpleaſure and reſentment.

4. Another thing, which cannot be unobſerved by us, is our Lord's amazing patience, and wonderful ſilence, under all the reproaches caſt upon him at this time. So it follows in St. Luke, ſoon after the fore-mentioned prayer, ch. xxiii. 35, 36. *And the people ſtood beholding, and the rulers alſo with them derided him, ſaying: he ſaved others. Let him ſave himſelf, if he be the Chriſt the choſen of God. And the ſoldiers alſo mocked him, ſaying: if thou be the king of the Jews ſave thyſelf.* Or as in St. Matthew ch. xxvii. 39, 42, 43. *And they that paſſed by reviled him, wagging their heads. . . . Likewiſe alſo the chief prieſts mocking him, with the ſcribes and elders, ſaid: he ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave. If he be the king of Iſrael, let him now come down from the croſs, and we will believe him. He truſted in God. Let him deliver him if he will have him.*

Theſe

Theſe ſcoffs muſt have been very trying. Nevertheleſs our Lord bears them meekly and patiently. He does not come down from the croſs as he might: nor ſtrike theſe blaſphemers dead as he could. He does not make any reply as he might have done, to thoſe eſpecially who ſtood near the croſs: reminding them of the innocence of his life, the greatneſs of his works, or any other demonſtrative proofs of the ſpecial regard and approbation of the Father. Nor does he remind them of his expected reſurrection, which he had foretold. But he ſilently bears all the reproaches, which the preſent circumſtance ſeemed to juſtify. This ſilence is greater than all words. It was, as he ſaid at the beginning of this ſtrange ſcene, *their hour, and the power of darkneſs.* And he had *committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.* He now therefore meekly endures all, which the malice of evil and prejudiced men prompted them to do to him, and patiently waited for the full vindication, which in due time would be given of his innocence and great character.††

5. Another mark of greatneſs is the regard ſhewn by our Lord to the penitent thief. For, as St. Luke proceeds to relate in the forecited twenty-third chapter of his goſpel: *And one of the malefactors railed at him, ſaying, if thou be the Chriſt, ſave thyſelf and us.* But he was rebuked for it by the other, who alſo ſaid unto Jeſus: *Lord, remember me when thou comeſt into thy kingdom. And Jeſus ſaith unto him, verily, I ſay unto thee, this day ſhalt thou be with me in paradiſe.*

He bears all the reproaches of his enemies without ſaying a word. But he hears and anſwers the petition of a humbled, penitent ſufferer. This requeſt of the malefactor is a proof that he had ſeen ſomething very great and extraordinary in the perſon and behaviour of Jeſus under his ſufferings. If before he was ſet upon the croſs, he had ſome knowledge of Jeſus, and a faith in him, as the Chriſt (which may be reckoned probable) yet, undoubtedly, his faith was increaſed and confirmed by the excellent behaviour of Jeſus, during this afflictive and melancholy ſeaſon. And our Lord's anſwer ſets before us another and manifeſt inſtance of the excellent frame of his mind. *Verily, I ſay unto thee, this day ſhalt thou be with*

†† Our Saviour's meekneſs under ſufferings is prophetically repreſented in a beautiful ſimilitude: *and as a ſheep before its ſhearers is dumb, ſo he openeth not his mouth,* Iſ. liii. 7.

*me*

*me in paradiſe.* Which ſhews that his ſpirit was not broken, ſunk down, and dejected by the continued ſcene of various afflictions of the moſt trying nature. He is ſtill compoſed. He is perſuaded of the happy iſſue of all. He knows his own innocence, and eyes the reward ſet before him. He receives the profeſſion made of a belief in his character and kingdom. He ſhews his approbation of it, and his ſatisfaction therein: and with full authority he promiſes a place that very day in paradiſe. How great is Jeſus here! He triumphs every where: and how glorious is this triumph! On the croſs, during the very time of his moſt ignominious ſufferings, he carries on, and accompliſhes his great deſign of converting and ſaving ſinners. Truly the phariſees had ſtill cauſe of envy and indignation. They were before offended, becauſe ſinners reſorted to him to hear him, and he taught them: or becauſe he received them, and comforted them with aſſurance of pardon, when they gave tokens of compunction and repentance. They make him ſuffer with ſinners, yea with malefactors. And one of them openly profeſſes faith in him, and humbly ſeeks to him. And Jeſus receives him, and promiſes him immediate admiſſion, together with himſelf, into paradiſe.

In a word, Jeſus is the ſame every where. And on the croſs he receives penitent ſinners with like readineſs and ſatisfaction, as when ſitting at table in the houſe of a phariſee. Such uniformity is there in his life and in his death!

6. Another thing very obſervable is the regard that Jeſus ſhewed to his mother Mary. *Now there ſtood by the croſs of Jeſus, his mother and his mother's ſiſter, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen. When therefore Jeſus ſaw his mother and the diſciple ſtanding by, whom he loved, he ſaith unto his mother: woman, behold thy ſon. Then ſaith he to the diſciple: behold thy mother. And from that hour that diſciple took her to his own home,* John xix. 25—27.

Certainly never was there a greater inſtance of full compoſure under ſufferings than this. On the croſs our Lord diſpoſes his only worldly concern, and recommends his mother to the perſon fitteſt to take care of her, to comfort her, and ſecure her from contempt and injury, ſo long as ſhe ſhould ſurvive himſelf on this earth.

It is much to the honour of Mary, that we find her preſent at this mournful ſcene; as it is to the honour of our Lord that he took ſuch notice of her.

7. I add

7. I add but one thing more, the concluſion of theſe ſufferings, or the greatneſs and majeſty of our Lord in his death; though it will contain more particulars than one.

Matt. xxvii. 46—50. *And about the ninth hour Jeſus cried with a loud voice, ſaying, Eli, Eli, lama ſabachthani! that is to ſay, my God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* St. John, omitting that particular, ſays, *After this, Jeſus knowing that all things were now accompliſhed:* that is, knowing that all things were now near a full and entire accompliſhment, *ſaith, I thirſt. Now there was ſet a veſſel full of vinegar: and they filled a ſponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyſſop, and put it to his mouth. When therefore Jeſus had received the vinegar, he ſaid, it is finiſhed. And he bowed his head and gave up the ghoſt,* ch. xix. 28—30.

I once intended, after going through the ſeveral tokens of greatneſs and majeſty appearing in our Lord's laſt ſufferings, to conſider thoſe words as an objection, which were juſt now recited from St. Matthew, where our Lord ſays, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* But I now rather think it beſt to clear them as we go along. The ſame expreſſions are alſo in St. Mark: *And at the ninth hour Jeſus cried with a loud voice, ſaying, Eloi, Eloi, lama ſabachthani, my God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* ch. xv. 34.

Some may apprehend that theſe words import uneaſineſs and impatience of mind. But when duly attended to, I think there will be no foundation for that ſuppoſition. The addreſs, *my God, my God,* ſhews a claim of intereſt, and a perſuaſion of acceptance. And the whole, if rightly underſtood, will be perceived to be a requeſt to be now releaſed from theſe troubles, and preſented with a full belief that he ſhould now be releaſed, all things concerning the ſufferings of the Meſſiah being quite, or well nigh, accompliſhed.

The words are at the beginning of the twenty-ſecond pſalm, entitled, *a pſalm of David.* And in them our Lord choſe to offer up his petition at this time: *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* It follows: *Why art thou ſo far from helping me?*

Our Lord's expiring is thus related by St. John in the text. *When Jeſus therefore had received the vinegar, he ſaid, it is finiſhed. And he bowed his head and gave up the ghoſt.* In St. Luke xxiii. 46. *And when Jeſus had cried with a loud voice, he ſaid, Father, into thy hands I commend my ſpirit. And having ſaid thus, he gave up the ghoſt.* Joining together thoſe two evangeliſts,

evangeliſts, the hiſtory, I think, is thus: having received the vinegar, he ſaid, *It is finiſhed.* And ſoon after that he ſaid: *Father, into thy hands I commend my ſpirit. And then declining his head, he gave up the ghoſt,*

Thus died Jeſus, after having endured all manner of indignities, as well as the moſt exquiſite pain, with perfect compoſure of mind, and full confidence in God. Having offered up an earneſt requeſt to be releaſed and diſmiſſed, he ſays, *I thirſt.* And having then received one indignity more of a very affecting nature, he cried out again: *It is finiſhed.* 'Every humbling circumſtance concerning the life of the 'Meſſiah, that had been foretold, is accompliſhed. And I 'have now done and ſuffered all that my office required.' And knowing, that the prayer before offered was acceptable to the Father, he bowed his head, and willingly reſigned his ſpirit, in hope of a reſurrection to life, and the glorious exaltation that had been ſet before him.

Herein muſt be allowed to be every thing great and excellent: meekneſs toward men, peace of mind within, reſignation to the will of God, confidence of his approbation, hope of after-glory and honour.

That there was ſomewhat very great and admirable in the concluding circumſtances of this amazing ſcene, is evident from the confeſſion of the centurion, who preſided at the crucifixion. *And when the centurion, which ſtood over againſt him, ſaw that he ſo cried out, and gave up the ghoſt, he ſaid: truly, this man was the Son of God,* Mark xv. 39. St. Luke's words are, *Now when the centurion ſaw what was done, he glorified God, ſaying: certainly, this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that ſight, beholding the things that were done, ſmote their breaſts, and returned,* ch. xxiii. 46, 47.

Let me add a few thoughts by way of reflection.

1. From the view, which we have now taken of our Lord's ſufferings, we may perceive, it was with good reaſon he prayed, that *this cup might paſs from him,* if it were pleaſing to the Father: and that, when he attentively conſidered thoſe ſufferings which were near at hand, he was amazed, and ſorrowful unto death, or was under great concern, accompanied with an uncommon ſweat, Luke xxii. 39—41.

For it was a cup, filled with bitter ingredients, the pain, and the ſhame of the croſs: reproaches and ſcoffs, injurious to his high character, and the belief of his miſſion. Beſide all

all the ſufferings to be inflicted upon himſelf, he felt, undoubtedly, in that preparatory meditation, the grief, the doubts, the fears, and even the guilt, and miſeries, which his ignominious ſufferings would occaſion in others. If the Father did not ſee fit to interpoſe for preventing the ſufferings of his Son, he** ſhould be betrayed by one of his own diſciples, who thereby would incur a moſt heavy doom: ſo that it would be better for him, that he had not been born. He would likewiſe be diſowned, and denied by another diſciple: and all the reſt would be offended in him. The minds of all his friends and followers, in general, would be pierced with inexpreſſible grief: and their juſt and reaſonable belief in him, as the Meſſiah, built upon his mighty works, and the teſtimonies that had been given him from heaven, would be greatly ſhaken, if not quite overthrown. The Jewiſh people, with their rulers, would contract much guilt, and bring upon themſelves heavy judgments and calamities. And how our Lord's mind was affected with the foreſight of the deſolations of Jeruſalem, we well know from the tears, which it drew from his eyes, and from the mournful lamentation, which he made over that city, Matt. xxiii. 37—39. Luke xiii. 34, 35. ch. xix. 41—44.

From theſe, and other thoughts and conſiderations, preſent to the comprehenſive mind of the bleſſed Jeſus, juſtly did he renew that prayer: *Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me.*

I am aware that ſome would affix another meaning to that prayer, and argue that our Lord did not deprecate his paſſion. But I think, with little ſucceſs, and with leſs reaſon.

They ſay, how could our Lord pray againſt his paſſion, when he had reproved Peter for attempting to divert him

** Contriſtabatur autem non timore patiendi, qui ad hoc venerat, ut pateretur, et Petrum timiditatis arguerat; ſed propter infeliciſſimum Judam, et ſcandalum omnium Apoſtolorum, et rejectionem populi Judæorum, et everſionem miſeræ Jeruſalem. Hieron. in Matt. xxvi. 37. p. 129. Vid. et in ver. 39. p. 129, 130.

Et in paſſione. Pater, ſi fieri, inquit, poteſt, tranſeat calix iſte a me. Qui locus hunc ſenſum habet: Si poteſt fieri, ut ſine interitu Judæorum, credat Gentium multitudo, paſſionem recuſo. Sin autem illi excæcandi ſunt, ut omnes gentes videant, fiat, Pater, voluntas tua. Id. in Iſ. cap. viii. p. 84. Conſer. Euſeb. in Pſ. 87. al. 88. p. 548, 551, 552.

from

from the thought of it? But our Lord's prayer was not founded upon Peter's views. Nor did it proceed from Peter's worldly temper. And after all, he added: *Not my will, but thine be done.* He was reſigned, and willing, and ready to take the cup, if infinite wiſdom ſaw fit that he ſhould take it, for advancing the intereſt of religion, and the good of men.

Some reluctance of nature upon this occaſion, was not inconſiſtent with conſummate virtue, and a full determination to acquieſce in what divine wiſdom appointed. There is another plain inſtance of the like reluctance in regard to the ſame thing. *Now is my ſoul troubled. And what ſhall I ſay? Father, ſave me from this hour. But for this cauſe came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name,* John xii. 27, 28. ††

Theſe perſons ſay, that by the cup which our Lord prayed might paſs from him, he meant his agony in the garden, being afraid he ſhould expire there. But is not that imputing to our Lord what is manifeſtly derogatory to his honour upon many accounts? For it implies diſtruſt and want of faith, not eaſy to be accounted for, or reconciled with his high character, and his large experience of the divine preſence with him. And it would be as difficult to reconcile this ſenſe with the predictions concerning his dying the death of the croſs, as any other interpretation whatever.

Once more, then it is objected. How could our Lord pray, that the cup of his paſſion might paſs from him, when he had foretold that he ſhould ſuffer and die, and be raiſed again the third day?

But this objection likewiſe is of ſmall moment, though of ſpecious appearance. For, notwithſtanding predictions, intervening events as they occur, both the good and the evil things of this life, and the actions of moral agents will operate and influence the mind.

†† Which place is exactly parallel with that which we are now conſidering. For it is, as if he had ſaid: 'I have prayed, ſaying, '*Father, ſave me from this hour.* 'Yet I am willing to do and ſuffer 'what ſhall be moſt for the advance-'ment of thy glory, and the intereſt 'of religion in the world. My 'firſt and chief deſire is, that *thy name may be glorified.* Thou there-'fore, by thy all-wiſe Providence, 'order what may be moſt conducive 'to that end: and I acquieſce, 'whatever it is.'

And

And whatever things are foreſeen and foretold, we are to perform our duty to God and men, ſuitably to the circumſtances which we are brought into in the intermediate ſpace.

Our Lord foretold the treachery of Judas. And yet he often warned that diſciple, and ſaid enough to diſcourage and diſſuade him from that evil conduct. And ſaid in his hearing: *Woe to that man, by whom the Son of man is betrayed. Good were it for that man if he had not been born,* Matt. xxvi. 24. Mark xiv. 21.

He alſo foretold the fall of Peter: and yet did a great deal to prevent it, giving ſuch warnings and directions to him and the reſt, as were moſt likely to ſecure their ſteadineſs.

He foretold the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the overthrow of the Jewiſh nation. Nevertheleſs, after his aſcenſion, his apoſtles, by his ſpecial direction, did all that was in their power, by preaching and working miracles among that people for a long ſeaſon, to bring them to repentance, and to prevent their final ruin.

In like manner our Lord had foretold his own ignominious ſufferings and death, and his reſurrection afterwards. Nevertheleſs he was greatly concerned in the near view and approach of thoſe ſufferings. If he had not, he had not been man. Nor does he diſſemble it. For * going out with his diſciples after ſupper to the mount of Olives, when he came to the place called Gethſemane, he ſaid to the reſt, *Sit ye here whilſt I go and pray yonder. And he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be ſore amazed, and to be very heavy,* or to be in great concern of mind. *Then ſaith he unto them: my ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death. Tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, ſaying, O my Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me. Nevertheleſs not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Which prayer he alſo repeated.

Meditating in this retirement on the ſufferings he had in view, he earneſtly recommended his caſe to infinite wiſdom, expreſſing acquieſcence in the divine will whatever it ſhould be. After which he was ſtrengthened and comforted by the preſence of an angel ſent to him from heaven, and by conſidering *the joy that was ſet before him,*

* Matt. xxvi. 36—46. Mark xiv. 32—42. Luke xxii. 39—46.

Heb. xii. 2. and the benefits that would accrue to mankind by his death and reſurrection.

Whereupon he aroſe, went out to meet him that betrayed him, and thoſe who came to apprehend him, and went through the amazing ſcene of ſufferings that followed, with full compoſure, and all the indications of a moſt excellent temper, which have been delineated, though too faintly, in the preceding part of this diſcourſe.

Our Lord ſaid to his diſciples, *Watch, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The ſpirit indeed is willing; but the fleſh is weak.* He was himſelf an example of thoſe duties, ſuited to all, the beſt, and the ſtrongeſt, in a ſtate of trial. And he was an inſtance of the benefit of them.

There can be no doubt, that the apoſtle refers to theſe devotions of our Saviour, in thoſe words, *Who in the days of his fleſh, when he had offered up prayers and ſupplications with ſtrong crying and tears, to him that was able to ſave him from death. And was heard in that he feared*, Heb. v. 7. Or, was * delivered from his fear.

Our Lord's devotions in the garden, if duly conſidered, are liable to no exceptions. They are edifying, and exemplary. Acquieſcence in the divine will is always reckoned by wiſe men** a proof of perfection of virtue, or of great progreſs therein. If there be no ſenſibility to pain and ſhame, nor any apprehenſiveneſs of mind in the proſpect of ſufferings, there can be no virtue in reſignation to the diſpoſals of providence. The greater the ſenſibility of any human frame to the evils of this life, the greater muſt be the virtue of reſignation under them: and the more engaging is the example of ſuch †† patience. ‡‡

2. The

* See Whitby upon the place.

** ινα δυνηται λεγειν εν τη φυλακη, ω φιλε κριτων, ει ταυτη τοις θεοις φιλα, ταυτη γενεσθω. Arrian. Epict. l. 1. c. 4.

†† Vid. Cleric. H. E. ann. 29. n. xliii.

‡‡ Says that good man, and great preacher, Abp. Tillotſon: 'All 'this our Lord bore, not with a 'ſtoical and ſtupid inſenſibility, but 'with a true patience. For no man 'had greater apprehenſions of ſuf-'fering, and a more quick and 'tender ſenſe of it than he had. 'He had not only the more manly 'virtues of wiſdom, and reſolution, 'and conſtancy; but was clothed 'alſo with the ſofter paſſions of 'human nature, meekneſs and com-'paſſion, and grief, and a tender 'ſenſe of pain and ſuffering. *He 'took our infirmities*, ſays the pro-'phet, *and bore our griefs*. And 'this he expreſſed both in his agony 'in the garden, and in his be-'haviour upon the croſs. He did 'not

2. The view which we have now taken of our Lord in his laſt ſufferings, may be of uſe to confirm our faith in him, and increaſe our eſteem for him; and enable us to vindicate him againſt ſuch as would detract from him. Indeed he is, in all reſpects, the greateſt character that has appeared on this earth. *Never man ſpake like him*, John vii. 46. Nor has there ever been any other man who lived and died as he did.

3. The view which we have now taken of our Lord in his laſt ſufferings may be of uſe to leſſen our regard for worldly honour and grandeur, and to abate our dread of the evils of this life.

If we ſhould have a proſpect of any great trial, we are to recommend ourſelves to the diſpoſal of providence, and ſhould ſubmit our will to the will of God. If troubles befal us, we ſhould aim to bear them with a greatneſs of mind reſembling that of our great Maſter: that is, without murmurings and complaints, or dejection of ſpirits, with meekneſs and patience, and a comfortable hope and expectation of being vindicated, and rewarded in due time.

Such are the words of St. Peter, with which I conclude: *For hereunto were ye called: becauſe Chriſt alſo ſuffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye ſhould follow his ſteps: who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he ſuffered, he threatened not; but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.* 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22.

'not deſpiſe pain, but dreaded it, 'and yet ſubmitted to it. He did 'not out-brave his ſufferings, but 'bore them decently. He had a 'human ſenſe of them, but bore 'them with a divine patience, re-'ſigning himſelf abſolutely to the 'will of God, when he ſaw them 'coming: and when they were up-'on him, expreſſing a great ſenſe 'of pain without the leaſt ſign of 'impatience. And hereby he was 'a pattern accommodated to the 'weakeſt and tenderеſt of mankind. 'He did not give us an extravagant 'example of bravery, and a ſturdy 'reſolution; but, which was much 'fitter for us, of a patient ſub-'miſſion to the will of God, under 'a great ſenſe of ſuffering.' Serm. 166. the ſecond upon 1 Pet. ii. 21. near the end. See likewiſe the beginning.

# SERMON III.

## DIVINE TESTIMONIALS GIVEN TO JESUS DURING HIS LAST SUFFERINGS.

MATT. xxvii. 52, 53.

*And the graves were opened, and many bodies of ſaints, which ſlept, aroſe: and came out of the graves after his reſurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared to many.*

I HAVE lately conſidered our bleſſed Lord's ſufferings, chiefly in one particular light, for ſhewing the excellency of his behaviour under them, his greatneſs and majeſty during a ſcene of the utmoſt ſcorn and ignominy, his meekneſs under the moſt heinous provocations, and his full truſt and confidence in God during that hour of darkneſs which concluded his wonderful life.

I would now obſerve, in one ſingle diſcourſe, the extraordinary teſtimonials given from heaven, in that ſeaſon, to his innocence, and the dignity of his perſon and character.

The miracles of our Saviour's miniſtry, the ſpotleſs innocence, and the unparalleled excellency of his life and death, his reſurrection on the third day, together with the mighty works done after his aſcenſion by his apoſtles in his name, would have been a ſufficient vindication of his character, and a full atteſtation to the truth of his doctrine, and the divine original of his miſſion: notwithſtanding the reproaches, and other indignities caſt upon him by envious and deſigning men.

Nevertheleſs the divine wiſdom ſaw fit not to leave him without witneſs at that very ſeaſon. And though our Lord was ſo far left and forſaken of God the Father, as to be given up into the hands of ſinful men: and they were allowed to carry into execution their malicious purpoſes, ſo far as to put him to a painful and ignominious death: there appeared, even then, ſome tokens of God's eſpecial favour and approbation of him who ſuffered, and of his diſpleaſure againſt thoſe, who preſumed to touch that excellent perſon.

1. In

I. In the firſt place, I obſerve what is ſaid by the evangeliſt Matthew at the nineteenth verſe of this chapter, ſpeaking of Pontius Pilate the Roman governor in Judea. *When he was ſet down on the judgment ſeat, his wife ſent unto him, ſaying, have thou nothing to do with that juſt man: for I have ſuffered many things this day in a dream, becauſe of him.*

There can be no reaſon to doubt that the terrifying thoughts of this dream were owing to a divine impulſe. There are in the ſcriptures many inſtances of extraordinary intimations given to heathen people as well as others, in dreams, which muſt have been of divine operation: as Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Joſeph's fellow-priſoners, and others; and to bad as well as to good men.

Pilate's wife, when he was ſet down on the judgment ſeat, ſent him a meſſage, earneſtly intreating him not to pronounce a ſentence, or do any thing whatſoever to the prejudice of the perſon now brought before him, and accuſed by the Jewiſh rulers. For ſhe had that morning a dream, in which her thoughts had been mightily diſturbed with the apprehenſion of calamities likely to befal Pilate and his family, if he ſhould pronounce ſentence againſt that perſon, who was juſt and innocent.

It was a teſtimony to our Lord's innocence, at the time that he was accuſed by the Jews. It was delivered publicly. Nor would the meſſage have been brought at all, if it had not been judged important: but though it deſerved the notice of all, it was more eſpecially a warning to Pilate. It was a warning of an extraordinary kind, ſent to him by his neareſt relative, to deter, and diſſuade him from an action that could not but be criminal, and might be of fatal conſequence.

Solomon ſays, *A dream cometh through the multitude of buſineſs*, Eccl. v. 3. which may be a good way of accounting for ordinary dreams. In the night ſeaſon, when the body is at reſt, thoſe things about which the mind was much engaged in the day time, may diſturb the thoughts and produce dreams. But it does not appear that Pilate's wife could at this time have any knowledge of the Jewiſh proſecution of our Lord in an ordinary way. Jeſus was not a priſoner that had been long in cuſtody. He was apprehended late in the night, and was hurried away to the houſe of Annas, and then of Caiaphas. Having been there examined, and detained ſome while by the Jewiſh council, he was carried by them*

* See Matt. xxvii. 1, 2. Mark xv. 1. John xviii. 27, 28.

early in the morning to Pilate: about which time his wife, ſtill at reſt, had a dream of an uncommon nature, in which ſhe was admoniſhed, and by which ſhe was greatly affected. As ſoon as ſhe awoke, ſhe by the firſt opportunity ſent this warning to Pilate, then upon his tribunal: *Have thou nothing to do with that juſt man; for I have ſuffered many things this day in a dream, becauſe of him.*

Elihu ſays excellently well: *God ſpeaketh once, yea twice: yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a viſion of the night, when deep ſleep falleth upon men, in ſlumberings upon the bed. Then he openeth the ears of men, and ſealeth their inſtruction. That he may withdraw man from his purpoſe, and hide pride from man,* Job xxxiii. 14—17. Thoſe obſervations may have been founded upon facts. There is an inſtance of a warning given to Abimelech, king of Gerar, in the time of Abraham, for preventing ſin, and with effect, Gen. xxx. The warning, of which we are now ſpeaking, was for the very ſame purpoſe. Nor was it altogether without effect. For this warning, now ſent to Pilate, may be well ſuppoſed to have been one reaſon, together with his own clear diſcernment of the innocence of Jeſus, upon examination, why he ſo long withſtood the importunate and clamorous demands of the Jewiſh rulers, and the multitude to paſs ſentence upon him.

II. In the next place we obſerve the darkneſs at this time, mentioned by three evangeliſts. Matt. xxvii. 45. *Now from the ſixth hour there was darkneſs over all the land unto the ninth hour.* Mark xv. 33. *And when the ſixth hour was come, there was darkneſs over the whole land until the ninth hour.* Luke xxiii. 44, 45. *And it was about the ſixth hour, and there was darkneſs over all the land until the ninth hour. And the ſun was darkened.*

That is, there was darkneſs for the ſpace of three hours, from the ſixth to the ninth hour, according to the computation of the hours of the day in thoſe times, reckoning the day from ſun-riſing to ſun-ſetting: according to our method of computation, from about twelve at noon till three afternoon.

How great this darkneſs was, is not diſtinctly ſaid. It might reſemble that of a total eclipſe of the ſun, though there were glimmerings of light, whereby buſineſs might be tranſacted.

It was not in Jeruſalem only, but in all the land of Judea.

That

That this general darkneſs was not natural, is apparent; for our Saviour ſuffered at the time of the Jewiſh paſſover, when the moon was at full. But natural eclipſes of the ſun, as all know, happen at the time of new moon.

This remarkable darkneſs muſt have been very awful and affecting, reaching all over the land of Iſrael where Chriſt had preached, and wrought many miracles. It continued three hours, and manifeſtly denoted the divine diſpleaſure againſt the Jewiſh people for an action, in which they and their rulers were guilty. Indeed, the main body of the nation was now aſſembled at Jeruſalem, where Jeſus ſuffered: and they could not but know for whoſe ſake this darkneſs happened. However, that it might be the more obſervable, it was univerſal, over all the land of Judea, and for three hours; which was a remarkable teſtimony to the innocence and the dignity of the Lord Jeſus.

III. The next extraordinary thing is the rending the veil of the temple.

At the fifty-firſt verſe of this chapter: *And behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom.* So likewiſe Mark xv. 38. *And the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom.* And Luke xxiii. 45. *And the ſun was darkened. And the veil of the temple was rent in the midſt.*

There were two veils at the temple, one at the entrance into the holy place: the other between the holy place, or the ſanctuary, and the moſt holy, or the holy of holies, called the inner veil, and the ſecond veil, in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, ch. ix. 3. It is particularly deſcribed Exod. xxvi. 31—33. that is the veil here intended. It was of the ſtrongeſt contexture, as well as of the richeſt materials, and the fineſt workmanſhip.

It has been thought by ſome, that the high prieſt might now, at this very time, be preſent in the temple, performing the ſolemn act of burning incenſe before the veil. There can be no doubt that many of the Jewiſh prieſts ſaw the veil after it was rent, and they muſt have been as fully convinced of the reality of this extraordinary event, as if they had been preſent when it happened.

It has been ſuppoſed by ſome, that this rending of the veil denoted and foreſignified the ſudden deſtruction of the temple, and the ſpeedy abolition of the rites of the Moſaic law. But without relying too much upon any conjectural ſpeculations, it may be reckoned certain, that it muſt have greatly ſur-

priżed the Jewiſh prieſts, who entered into the holy place: and it gave ground to believe that the Divine Being was diſpleaſed with the Jewiſh nation. And upon a little reflection and conſideration they might know the reaſon of the divine diſpleaſure.

IV. At the ſame time there was an earthquake at Jeruſalem, but eſpecially at mount Calvary, where our Lord was crucified.

So this is expreſſed by St. Matthew very briefly, yet fully, ver. 51. *and the earth did quake and the rocks were rent.* How this extraordinary event was then underſtood, and how it ought to be ſtill underſtood by us appears from what is added at ver. 54. *Now when the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jeſus, ſaw the earthquake, and thoſe things that were done, they feared greatly, ſaying, truly, this was the Son of God.*

V. The fifth and laſt particular, is that in the text which may be reckoned a difficult portion of ſcripture, and the more ſo for being ſingular, without any parallel place. The words in connection are theſe, ver. 50—53. *Jeſus, when he had cried with a loud voice, yielded up the ghoſt. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom: and the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent; and the graves,* or tombs, *were opened; and many bodies of ſaints, which ſlept, aroſe, and came out of the graves after his reſurrection, and went into the holy city* (meaning Jeruſalem, ſo called Matt. iv. 5. comp. Luke iv. 9.) *and appeared unto many.*

Here it will be proper to conſider ſeveral queries. 1. The place where this reſurrection happened. 2. Who were raiſed. 3. The time when they were raiſed. 4. To whom they appeared. 5. Whether they ſoon after aſcended up to heaven, or died again. 6. The truth of this hiſtory. 7. The uſe of this extraordinary event.

Firſt, The place of this reſurrection. Some have thought it might be done in ſeveral parts of Judea. But, upon due conſideration, I believe it will be reckoned more probable, that the tombs here ſpoken of were near to Jeruſalem, the holy city, into which theſe ſaints went ſoon after their reſurrection. There was an earthquake at mount Calvary, where our Lord was crucified. There the rocks were rent. And by that concuſſion the doors of many tombs upon that mount and near it were thrown open.

It

It is well known to have been the cuſtom of the ancients to bury without the walls of their cities. Here, upon mount Calvary, and near it, were many tombs: It being a rock it was a ſuitable place. We perceive as much from the evangeliſts: Matt. xxvii. 58—60. *Joſeph, a rich man of Arimathea, begged of Pilate the body of Jeſus . . . and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock.* John xix. 41. *Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new ſepulchre, wherein was never man laid. There laid they Jeſus.* Compare Mark xv. 43—46. and Luke xxiii. 50—53. So eminent a perſon as Joſeph of Arimathea had a ſepulchre in this place. It may be inferred, that there were other tombs there, and ſome of perſons of diſtinction. Out of thoſe tombs, now opened, came the bodies of the ſaints here mentioned.

Secondly, Who were now raiſed? Some have imagined that the perſons here intended were the moſt eminent patriarchs and prophets of the Old Teſtament; but that opinion is without foundation. The tombs now opened, and out of which theſe ſaints came, as has been already argued, were near Jeruſalem. But the patriarchs and ancient prophets could not be all interred in this place, or near it: nor could they at this time have any known tombs remaining. And there is an argument inſiſted on by St. Peter, after our Lord's aſcenſion, which may be reckoned to overthrow this ſuppoſition. Having largely cited the ſixteenth pſalm, he ſays to the company then preſent at Jeruſalem: *Men and brethren, let me freely ſpeak unto you concerning the patriarch David: that he is both dead and buried, and his ſepulchre is with us unto this day,* Acts iii. 25—31. But if any of the ancient patriarchs had been now raiſed, in order to be aſſumed up to heaven, it might be reaſonable to think that David would have been one of them.

Without offering any more arguments againſt that opinion, we may reckon it to be more probable, that the ſaints now raiſed up were good men, who had died lately, a few years, or rather perhaps not may weeks or days before, who upon going into Jeruſalem would be well known to their friends ſtill living. The miracle is more evident in the reſurrection of ſuch than of any others who had been dead and buried long ago, ſo as to be known by face to none then living on this earth.

The

The evangeliſt calls them ſaints: which word in the New Teſtament often denotes diſciples of Jeſus, who believed in him as the Chriſt. Acts ix. 13. *Then Ananias anſwered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to thy ſaints at Jeruſalem.* Compare xxvi. 10. and ch. ix. 32. *And it came to paſs, as Peter paſſed through all quarters, he came down alſo to the ſaints which dwelt at Lidda.* And ſee there ver. 41. and Rom. xv. 25, 26. and 2 Cor. i. 1. and other places. It is very likely therefore that the perſons here intended by St. Matthew are diſciples, or believers in Jeſus, who had died not long ago.

Thirdly, We are to conſider the time when theſe ſaints were raiſed. Were they raiſed when our Saviour expired? or, were they not reſtored to life until after his reſurrection?

The words of the evangeliſt are: *And the graves were opened, and many bodies of ſaints which ſlept aroſe and came out of the graves after his reſurrection.* They did not come out of their graves till after Chriſt's reſurrection: conſequently I think they were not reſtored to life before he had riſen. When our Lord expired, the rocks were rent by the earthquake, and the doors of the tombs were ſhaken and looſed and flew open. Nevertheleſs the bodies of theſe perſons ſtill reſted there. We are therefore led to think, that when Chriſt aroſe from the dead, or ſoon after, theſe ſaints were reſtored to life: and then they came out of their tombs and went to Jeruſalem early in the morning of the firſt day of the week.

Fourthly, To whom did they appear?

The text ſays, to many. We have already argued, that the ſaints, now raiſed, were perſons, who had not been long dead. It is likely, that they firſt went to their friends and acquaintance. To them they appeared: to them they were manifeſted to be the ſame perſons, whom they knew to have lately died. They were known to them by their ſhape, their features, their diſcourſe, their action. Thus they were known to their friends and relatives at their return to them. They therefore, who had been before acquainted with them, and knew, that they had been dead and buried, were now fully perſuaded, that they had been raiſed from the dead. When theſe had been ſatisfied about their reſurrection, they might be ſeen alſo by others, who, upon ſerious inquiries, were likewiſe perſuaded of the wonderful work, which God had wrought upon them.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, What became of the perſons, who were now raiſed? Were they ſoon after this aſſumed up to heaven? or did they die after their reſurrection?

I anſwer, that there is no account of their aſcending, or being aſſumed up to heaven. Which is ſo important a thing, that I think, it could not have been omitted, if it had been done. It is more probable therefore, that they died afterwards, as Lazarus did: whom our Lord, in a very ſignal manner, called forth out of his grave, after he had been dead four days. They behaved here among their friends and acquaintance with great modeſty and humility: ſhewing little reliſh of the delights and entertainments of this life. Having been for a while examples of undiſſembled piety in this world, God gave them a comfortable and placid exit out of it.

In the ſixth place, let us obſerve the truth of this hiſtory.

There can be no reaſon to doubt of it. Its being related by one evangeliſt only, is no objection. Each one of the evangeliſts has ſome things peculiar to himſelf, not mentioned by any of the reſt. Nor is that at all ſtrange, conſidering the copiouſneſs of the ſubject. St. John, who had ſeen and read the firſt three evangeliſts, before he wrote, has confirmed their hiſtories, and has alſo added divers things omitted by them. And yet he aſſures us, that there were ſtill *many other ſigns* done by Jeſus, John xx. 30, and that they were too numerous to be all written, and that thoſe recorded are ſufficient.

However, ſome judicious commentators have been of opinion, that this very reſurrection is intended, and foretold by our Lord, in thoſe words, recorded in John v. 25. *Verily I ſay unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear ſhall live.* And indeed our Lord does afterwards ſpeak of the general reſurrection, as a diſtinct thing from what is there mentioned. For he ſays, at ver. 28, 29. *Marvel not at this. For the hour is coming, when all that are in their graves ſhall hear his voice, and come forth.*

Seventhly, and laſtly, we are to obſerve the uſes of this miracle.

Doubtleſs, it was of advantage to ſome: though the reſurrection of theſe perſons, like that of Lazarus, might be without effect to others. But to their pious relatives, and divers

divers others, who were ſerious and attentive, their return to life was matter of great joy, and an additional confirmation of their faith now, and all their days. They were hereby confirmed in the perſuaſion, that Jeſus was the Chriſt, and in the belief of all the truths of his religion. And they were ſtrengthened and animated for the trials and difficulties, which they might meet with in the profeſſion of his name. Of ſuch uſe was the reſurrection of theſe perſons, to thoſe who attended to it, as well as other miracles of Jeſus, and the extraordinary appearances in his favour.

We will now make ſome reflections, ſuited to this argument.

1. We may perceive a great agreement between the life and the death of Jeſus.

How great and excellent he was in his death, was lately ſhewn. He does alſo in all appear to be the beloved of the Father. There were teſtimonials to his dignity at his birth, and afterwards at his baptiſm, and in the courſe of his miniſtry, and when he was glorioufly transformed on the mount. Nor were there wanting extraordinary teſtimonials of the divine favour and approbation, during the dark and gloomy ſcene of his laſt ſufferings. Even then *he was not alone.* But *the Father was with him,* John xvi 32. Soon after which he was raiſed from the dead, and aſcended to heaven. And many wonderful works were done in his name by his apoſtles. Such was the regard ſhewn to him, who was the Meſſiah, the well-beloved Son of God, and the deſire of all nations.

2. It cannot but be pleaſing to obſerve the mildneſs of all the wonderful works performed by Chriſt, and done in his favour.

His own miracles were healing and beneficent. His power was ſhewn in reſtoring health, or limbs, or ſenſes, or life. Scarce any miracle detrimental, except that one emblematical miracle of withering a barren fig tree.

It is the ſame at his death. This moſt excellent perſon, to whom ſo many then living were indebted for the moſt valuable benefits, is betrayed, apprehended, condemned, inſulted, derided, crucified. How aggravated, how complicated was the iniquity of thoſe proceedings! How grievous muſt thoſe indignities have been to the innocent ſufferer! and how offenſive in the ſight of the ſupreme Lord of all! And the divine diſpleaſure was manifeſted. There

was

was univerſal darkneſs over the land of Iſrael for three hours: the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom: the earth too was ſhaken, and rocks were rent. Awful and affecting events! And yet no dwellings were overturned, nor men ſwallowed up. The earthquake was preternatural, and reached ſo far as God appointed, and no farther, without doing any damage. And moreover, when Jeſus dies, or when he riſeth again, the tombs are not only opened by the ſhaking of the earth, but many ſaints alſo are awakened and reſtored to life.

The divine wiſdom, power and goodneſs are here very conſpicuous. And every ſincere Chriſtian has reaſon to triumph, and glory in the evidences of the truth of his religion. The doctrine is reaſonable, the promiſes are moſt gracious and comprehenſive, and the evidences of its truth are affecting, forcible and convincing, yet mild and beneficent.

3. The teſtimonials given from heaven to the authority and dignity of the Lord Jeſus, during his painful and ignominious ſufferings, ſhould induce us to ſhew him all honour and reverence.

Let us be cautious of deſpiſing or ſlighting him, or any of his ſayings. Let us not dare to ſpeak a word, or admit a hard thought againſt the Son of man, who was alſo the Son of God: who ſuffered ſo meekly and ſo greatly: and who whilſt he was deſpiſed and abuſed by miſtaken and prejudiced men, had honourable teſtimonials from him, who is Lord of heaven and earth.

Nor let any of us, who bear the character of his diſciples and followers by an unworthy behaviour, or by leaving and forſaking him, expoſe him again to ſhame and reproach.

Finally, Let theſe meditations on the greatneſs as well as meekneſs of Jeſus under ſufferings, and the teſtimonials of divine favour and approbation then given him, inſpire us with courage and reſolution in the profeſſion of his name, and the performance of the duties he has enjoined upon us, whatever reproaches or other diſadvantages our fidelity to him may bring upon us: not doubting of a happy iſſue, and that if we ſuffer with him, or for him, we ſhall reign with him hereafter: and that, if we now honour him, (though not altogether as he deſerves, and we ſometimes could wiſh, when our hearts are affected with the greatneſs

of

of his love) he will honour and glorify us with himſelf in the kingdom of his Father.

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## SERMON IV.

### THE ROMAN SOLDIERS AND THE JEWISH RULERS.

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MATT. xxviii. 12, 13.

*And when they were aſſembled with the elders, and had taken counſel, they gave large money to the ſoldiers. Saying: ſay ye, his diſciples came by night, and ſtole him away whilſt we ſlept.*

At the end of the preceding chapter, we are informed by the evangeliſt, that at the requeſt of Joſeph of Arimathea, Pilate granted him the body of Jeſus after he had been crucified. *And when Joſeph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth. And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock. And he rolled a great ſtone to the door of the ſepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary ſitting over againſt the ſepulchre. Now the next day that followed the day of the preparation* (by which muſt be underſtood the ſabbath, the ſeventh day of the week) *the chief prieſts and phariſees*, or ſome of them, a deputation from the council, *came together to Pilate, ſaying: Sir, we remember, that that deceiver ſaid, while he was yet alive, after three days I will riſe again. Command therefore, that the ſepulchre be made ſure until the third day, leſt his diſciples come by night, and ſteal him away, and ſay unto the people, he is riſen from the dead. So the laſt error ſhall be worſe than the firſt. Pilate ſaid unto them: ye have a watch. Go your way, make it as ſure as you can. So they went, and made the ſepulchre ſure, ſealing the ſtone, and ſetting a watch.* The guard would prevent violence. And the ſeal would be a ſecurity againſt any fraud of the ſoldiers, in confederacy with the diſciples, if that could have been ſuſpected.

Then at the beginning of the twenty-eighth chapter. *In the end of the ſabbath, as it began to dawn, toward the firſt day of the week, came Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary, to ſee the ſepulchre. And behold,* a ſhort time before their arrival, *there was*, or had

had been, *a great earthquake. For the angel of the Lord deſcended from heaven, and came, and rolled back the ſtone from the door, and ſat upon it. His countenance was like lightening, and his raiment white as ſnow. And for fear of him the keepers,* the guards, *did ſhake, and became as dead men. And the angel anſwered, and ſaid unto the women: fear not ye. For I know, that ye ſeek Jeſus, who was crucified. He is not here. For he is riſen, as he ſaid. Come, ſee the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his diſciples, that he is riſen from the dead.... And as they went to tell his diſciples, behold Jeſus met them, ſaying: all hail. And they came, and held him by the feet, and worſhipped him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto them: be not afraid. Go tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee. And there ſhall they ſee me. Now when they were going, behold ſome of the watch came into the city, and ſhewed unto the chief prieſts all things that were done.*

By this account it appears, that our Saviour's reſurrection, and the preparations for it, were gradual. *There was a great earthquake: an angel deſcended from heaven, and rolled back the ſtone from the door, and ſat upon it. His countenance was like lightening, and his raiment white as ſnow. For fear of him the keepers did ſhake, and became as dead men.* Now, at this inſtant, or ſoon after, the bleſſed Jeſus aroſe, and came out of the tomb. Whether the guards ſaw the Lord come out of the ſepulchre, and paſs by them, is not altogether certain. The evangeliſt's expreſſions are ſtrong. *For fear of him the keepers did ſhake, and became as dead men.* It ſeems that they fainted, or fell into a ſwoon. If our Lord came out at that inſtant, they did not ſee him. But if they were recovered, before he came out, and they ſaw him, they might be ſtill under ſuch an awe, as to let him paſs leiſurely and unmoleſted. For the firſt ſight of a man returned to life, who had been dead and crucified, would be exceeding ſurpriſing. And the late earthquake, and the majeſtic appearance of the angel, ſtill in view, who alſo, as may be ſuppoſed, ſhewed our Lord marks of ſubjection and reverence, as he paſſed, might make ſuch impreſſions, as would reſtrain rudeneſs and violence.

If they did not ſee our Lord come out of the tomb, and paſs by them; when they had recovered themſelves from their fright, and looked round them, they ſaw that the ſtone had been rolled away, and that the body was gone, and they could

could make no doubt that the perſon whom they were ſet to guard was come to life.

From the order of the evangeliſt's narration we alſo perceive that our Lord had been raiſed to life ſome while before the ſoldiers came to the Jewiſh high prieſts. When the body was gone undoubtedly they had no farther buſineſs at the ſepulchre. But it might require ſome time to recover themſelves from the conſternation they had been in: and before they went off they would look well about them. After which, as it ſeems, they retired to ſome houſe and reſted themſelves, and endeavoured to ſettle the account which they ſhould carry to thoſe who had employed them. Nor could they know how to find the chief prieſts ſo early in the morning. When they had acceſs unto them, *they ſhewed unto them all the things that had been done:* that is, 'they told them that †‡ whilſt 'they were watching at the ſepulchre at ſuch an hour, there 'was a great earthquake, that they ſaw a certain being re-'ſembling human ſhape, clothed in a garment uncommonly 'white, his countenance exceeding bright and ſhining, who 'with amazing ſwiftneſs deſcended from heaven, and that at 'the ſight of him they were ſeized with great conſternation. 'He rolled away the ſtone, and opened the ſepulchre. The 'body was gone, and the man was certainly alive again.'

For vindicating themſelves they added. 'They did not 'believe any others would have behaved better. Who, but 'muſt have been in pain for their lives, when the earth 'trembled under them and around them? and when there 'appeared ſome god, or celeſtial being, from whoſe coun-'tenance iſſued flaſhes of lightening? If the body was

†‡ If it ſhould be aſked, how could the evangeliſt be aſſured of all this, and be able to relate theſe things ſo diſtinctly: I ſhould anſwer, that the ſolution is very obvious. Some of the apoſtles, or other diſciples of Jeſus, had this account from the ſoldiers themſelves, or others to whom they had related it. There was an interval of ſeveral hours between the opening the ſepulchre and our Lord's reſurrection, and their coming to the Jewiſh rulers. In that ſpace they had much diſcourſe among themſelves about the things which had happened, and which had cauſed them ſo great ſurpriſe. And they had related them to ſeveral. It is alſo very obſervable, that the whole band did not attend upon the chief prieſts, but a part only. Matt. xxviii. 11. *Some of the watch came into the city, and ſhewed unto the chief prieſts all the things that were done.* Nor is it needful to ſuppoſe that the ſoldiers, who had been bribed by the Jewiſh council, were ſtrictly obedient to their orders, and never ſaid any thing but what they had been taught, when they knew otherwiſe.

'gone,

'gone, they could not help it. They were ſet to guard 'againſt the deceit and violence of men. But they were 'not able to contend with beings of a ſuperior order.'

This was a diſagreeable ſtory to the high prieſts: and very unfortunately for their cauſe, the ſoldiers had not come directly to them: they had ſtayed by the way: and the high prieſts were juſtly apprehenſive, that the account now brought to them, had been already divulged to others.

In ſo perplexing an emergency theſe chief prieſts thought it beſt to convene the whole ſanhedrim. So it follows: *And when they were aſſembled with the elders, and had taken counſel,* or deliberated and conſulted what to do, *they gave large money to the ſoldiers, ſaying, ſay ye, his diſciples came and ſtole him away whilſt we ſlept. And, if this come to the governor's ears, we will perſuade him, and ſecure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught. And this ſaying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*

The ſummary remarks of a judicious writer † upon this hiſtory are to this purpoſe. 'The prieſts and phariſees muſt 'be thought a ſtrange ſtupid ſort of creatures, if they did 'not examine where the apoſtles were all night; beſide 'many other particulars, which might have been a thread 'to lead them into ſtrict inquiries, unleſs it was becauſe 'they believed the report that the watch had brought them 'of Chriſt's riſing again. When they had this certain reaſon 'to believe it, and yet reſolved to oppoſe it; the only thing 'they could do, was to ſeem to neglect the matter, and only 'to decry it in general as an impoſture, without going into 'particulars. Which certainly they would not have done, 'if they themſelves had not been too ſure of the truth of it.'

*His diſciples came by night, and ſtole him away while we ſlept.*

I propoſe to ſhow the falſhood and improbability of this report.

And then I ſhall add ſome obſervations upon this hiſtory of the evangeliſt.

Concerning the firſt, it may be thought, that I am about to take needleſs pains, the ſaying being ſo very abſurd. And indeed, it is well that it deſerves little regard, and that it appears ſo to us, after having carefully attended to the evidence of our Saviour's reſurrection. But as *this*

† Burnet upon the Articles, p. 64.

*ſaying was commonly reported among the Jews*, it may be worth the while to ſhow in ſome particulars, how unlikely it is, and that it could not be then much regarded by any, but ſuch as were very weak, or very much prejudiced.

1. It is very unlikely, that †‡ a guard of Roman ſoldiers ſhould ſleep upon duty.

For the Roman diſcipline was extremely ſtrict. Such a thing would be improbable among any people, eſpecially among the Romans. And for certain, they who ſet them here gave them a ſtrict charge to be vigilant. Nor was there any long or tedious ſervice required of them. The whole ſeaſon of their attendance could not, at the utmoſt, much exceed four and twenty hours. The ſabbath was begun when they were placed at the ſepulchre. And ſoon after the ſabbath was over, the body, which they were to take care of was gone, and they came down into the city to let the high prieſts and Jewiſh rulers know what had happened.

2. The abſurdity of this report is manifeſt from itſelf.

For men cannot ſay what is done, when they are aſleep. If the diſciples had attempted to take the body away, and they knew it; they muſt have been awake, and could, and would have prevented it. If they were aſleep, they deſerved to be puniſhed. But they could not make any credible report of what was done whilſt they were in that condition. If the body was carried off whilſt they were aſleep; they could not ſay, by whom it was done. Whatever happened at that time muſt have been altogether unknown to them.

3. If the guard of ſoldiers had fallen aſleep as they were watching at the ſepulchre, they muſt have awaked if any attempt had been made to ſteal away the body.

For the body had been laid in a new tomb hewn out in a rock. And a large ſtone was laid at the door of it. And after that the Jewiſh high prieſts had ſeen it ſecurely faſtened. It was impoſſible, in an ordinary way, that the ſepulchre ſhould be opened, and the body in it taken thence, without a good deal of noiſe, which muſt have awakened ſuch as were near.

†‡ Et quis credet, tot milites, vigiliis perpetuis aſſuetos, circumfuſos ſepulchro, in re tanti momenti, ſummæque expectationis . . . jacuiſſe omnes quaſi lethargo ſepultos? Pol. Syn.

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4. The remaining of the burial clothes affords proof, that the body was not removed by friends or other men.

The women, who had been at the ſepulchre, come to the diſciples, and told them what they had ſeen. Luke xxiv. 12. *Then aroſe Peter, and ran unto the ſepulchre: and ſtooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themſelves, and departed, wondering in himſelf. He beheld the linen clothes laid by themſelves.* The meaning of the original word, I think, is this: *He ſaw nothing but the linen clothes lying.* Or, *he ſaw the linen clothes only lying on the ground.*

This is more particularly related by St. John xx. 1—8. who gives an account of his own and Peter's going together to the ſepulchre. *Peter therefore went forth, and that other diſciple, and came to the ſepulchre. So they ran both together. And the other diſciple did outrun Peter, and came firſt to the ſepulchre. And he ſtooping down, and looking in, ſaw the linen clothes lying. Yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the ſepulchre, and ſeeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itſelf. Then went in alſo that other diſciple, which came firſt to the ſepulchre. And he ſaw, and believed.*

This circumſtance is a proof, that the body was not ſtolen away by the diſciples, or other friends, nor by common robbers, nor by any other perſons. Whoever came upon ſuch a deſign, would have been in a hurry, and would have executed their deſign with all poſſible expedition: whereas here are marks of leiſure and compoſure.

5. It is not conceiveable, that the ſtealing away, or the clandeſtine removal of the body of Jeſus, could anſwer any purpoſe whatever; therefore it was not thought of nor attempted by any.

I preſume it was not intended or attempted by enemies: for it muſt have beſt anſwered their purpoſe that the body ſhould remain where it had been laid: and, if produced on the fourth day after the death of Jeſus, it would have overthrown all reports of his reſurrection.

Nor is it conceiveable that it ſhould anſwer any deſign of the diſciples: for what could they have done thereupon? By ſtealing away the body they would have been guilty of a great offence, and would have been liable to a heavy puniſhment. What expectation could they have had of ſupport and defence either from God or men, in aſſerting and teach-

ing the reſurrection of Jeſus, which they knew to be a lie and falſhood?

6. There does not appear any where in this hiſtory, any intimation of the diſciples expecting the reſurrection of Jeſus: therefore they did not contrive any account of his being riſen; nor had they before-hand any thought of it, till they had more than ſufficient evidence of that event.

If the diſciples had in their minds contrived a deſign of the reſurrection of Jeſus, ſome hints would have appeared in the goſpels of their having an expectation of it. There is a long and particular account in the goſpels, written by four ſeveral perſons, in which the tempers, and deſigns, and actions of various ſorts of perſons are exhibited during our Lord's proſecution, crucifixion and burial: but not any the leaſt notice, or opening of ſuch an expectation in the minds of any of the diſciples. When our Lord is apprehended, the diſciples flee and abſcond. Peter, who goes into the hall of the high prieſt, is ſo affrighted when challenged, that he diſowns all acquaintance with Jeſus. When *the women*, who had been firſt at the ſepulchre, *returned*, as St. Luke ſays, ch. xxiv. 9—11. *and told all theſe things unto the eleven, and to all the reſt, their words ſeemed unto them as idle tales, and they believed them not.* And afterwards, in the evening of that day, as two of the company of the diſciples were going to Emmaus, when Jeſus came to them, as a ſtranger, and aſked them, *What manner of communications are theſe, that ye have one to another, and are ſad?* they tell him *concerning Jeſus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in word and deed, whom the chief prieſts and rulers had delivered to be condemned, and had crucified. But we truſted,* ſay they, *that it had been he who ſhould have redeemed Iſrael. And beſide all this, to-day is the third day ſince theſe things were done: yea, and certain women alſo of our company made us aſtoniſhed, which were early at the ſepulchre.*—And thus they go on till our Lord interrupts them, *and ſays to them: O fools, and ſlow of heart to believe all that the prophets have ſpoken! Ought not the Chriſt to have ſuffered theſe things, and to enter into his glory?*

Nor does the expectation of our Lord's reſurrection appear in any others. But all were thrown into a ſtate of dejection and deſpondency upon the death of Jeſus. Joſeph of Arimathea and Nicodemus bury the body, as if it were to lie there till the general reſurrection. And the third day after his crucifixion, the women that had ſhown him

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ſo much reſpect before, come to ſhow it again, by more completely embalming his body.

Since therefore there is not any where betrayed an expectation before hand of his riſing from the dead; the ſtory of his reſurrection is not a contrivance of the diſciples. Nor did they remove the body, that they might with the better aſſurance give out, that he was riſen.

7. This ſaying of the guard muſt have been falſe, foraſmuch as no puniſhment was inflicted upon any for taking away the body.

This was their ſaying. This is what the Jewiſh council directed. *They gave large money to the ſoldiers, ſaying, Say ye, his diſciples came by night, and ſtole him away, whilſt we ſlept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will perſuade him, and ſecure you.*

If this ſaying be true, here were two great and heinous offences, deſerving a ſevere puniſhment. *The guard of ſoldiers ſlept, when they were upon duty.* That is the firſt offence. *The diſciples came by night, and ſtole him away:* another very great offence, no leſs than robbing a ſepulchre, and alſo deſerving ſevere puniſhment. And yet no one is puniſhed. Nor is there any deſign formed, or attempt made, to bring guilty perſons to juſtice. A certain ſign, that the Jewiſh rulers knew the falſhood of what they bid the ſoldiers to ſay, and report to the world: and that they themſelves were perſuaded, that Jeſus was riſen from the dead.

It has been very juſtly obſerved upon this hiſtory. 'The† 'prieſts going along with the party of ſoldiers placed them 'in their poſt, and ſealed the ſtone that was rolled to the 'door of the ſepulchre, to hinder the guards from com- 'bining with the diſciples in carrying on any fraud.... Thus 'whilſt the prieſts cautiouſly propoſed to prevent our 'Lord's reſurrection from being palmed upon the world, 'reſolving, no doubt, to ſhew his body publicly after the 'third day, as an impoſtor, they put the truth of Chriſt's 'reſurrection beyond all queſtion, by furniſhing a number 'of unexceptionable witneſſes to it, whoſe teſtimony they 'themſelves could not refuſe.'

So that this ſaying is not only falſe, and exceeding improbable, but it alſo ſerves to confirm the belief of our Lord's miraculous reſurrection from the dead.

† Macknight's Harmony. Sect. 147. p. 200.

8. It remains therefore, that the teſtimony of the diſciples of Jeſus concerning his reſurrection is true and credible.

There is nothing incredible, nor improbable in the thing itſelf, that Jeſus ſhould riſe from the dead. If we do but conſider, what miracles he wrought during his life on earth, and how excellent a doctrine he taught, that he was a prophet mighty in word and deed, ſo as none before him had been, and what ſignal teſtimonies were given to him from heaven in the time of his miniſtry, and during the time of his crucifixion, and at his death: and that he openly declared more than once, that after having been put to death, he ſhould riſe again in three days. If we conſider all theſe things, his reſurrection cannot be thought improbable.

Moreover what the diſciples ſay, they aver upon good grounds. They ſaw him, and converſed with him frequently, and had full ſatisfaction of his being alive. Therefore he was riſen again. For all men knew, that he had been put to death, and had expired on the croſs, and was laid in a ſepulchre. They themſelves were with difficulty convinced of his being alive again after his paſſion. But ſeeing evidently, that it was he, with whom they had converſed formerly, and ſeeing him often, they could no longer withhold their aſſent. And being convinced, they openly publiſhed the Lord's reſurrection to all the world.

And, in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, riſen from the dead, they wrought many miracles, which were teſtimonies given from heaven by God himſelf to the reſurrection and aſcenſion of Jeſus Chriſt.

This teſtimony to the reſurrection of Jeſus was received. Many at Jeruſalem hereupon believed in Jeſus, as the Chriſt. Which could not have been, if he had not riſen from the dead. For, if he had remained in the grave, no one could have any expectations from him. His word, in that caſe, had failed: and there could not have been any ground to rely upon him, and truſt in him. But becauſe his word had not failed, but the promiſe made by him had been fulfilled, of coming again to his diſciples, and endowing them with power from above, therefore many believed on him.

Finally, the report, or teſtimony of the diſciples, is conſiſtent, and harmonious throughout. They teach, that Jeſus is riſen from the dead, and their behaviour is ſuitable to ſuch a faith and doctrine.

Once

Once they were timorous, dejected, inconſiderable. But now, when they ſay, Jeſus is riſen from the dead, they are knowing, diſcreet, intrepid in dangers, and glory in ſufferings, and they inſpire the like ſentiments in others. They all unanimouſly bear witneſs to the reſurrection, and exaltation of Jeſus. Nor can any of them, or of thoſe who receive their teſtimony, be brought to diſown or conceal this thing. They therefore knew, and were perſuaded of the truth of it.

And now they preach the doctrine of the goſpel to all, a doctrine of the greateſt importance, *words*, on which the *life* and happineſs of men depend, Acts v. 20. They addreſs the whole nation at Jeruſalem, ſaying, *Ye men of Iſrael, hear theſe words*, ch. ii. 22. . . . *Let all the houſe of Iſrael know, that God hath made that ſame Jeſus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Chriſt*, ver. 36. . . . *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins*, ver. 38. . . *Repent, and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out. . . Unto you firſt, God having raiſed up his Son Jeſus, ſent him to bleſs you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities*, ch. iii. 19—26. In a word, the illiterate diſciples of Jeſus, who was lately crucified, are now ſuperior to all men. And they *ſit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael*, Matt. xix. 28. Luke xxii. 30, as he had foretold, and promiſed. A demonſtrative proof, that their maſter was not ſtill in the grave, but was riſen from the dead, and that he was aſcended up into heaven, and had ſent down upon them the promiſed gift of the ſpirit.**

II. I would now mention ſome remarks, partly inſtructive, partly practical, upon this hiſtory of the evangeliſt Matthew.

1. Sad is the condition of a people when their rulers and teachers practiſe themſelves, and recommend to others falſhood and prevarication, and other wickedneſs.

Such conduct we ſee in the Jewiſh rulers. They had before given money to Judas, to induce him to betray into their hands an innocent and excellent perſon, and alſo ſought for falſe witneſs to put him to death. Here is another like inſtance of their diſregard to all religious obligations. Now they have to do with heathens, Roman ſoldiers, and they put

** If this ſermon is too long to be read at once, here is a proper pauſe.

into their mouths a downright falſhood, and tempt them with money, and give them a large ſum, to ſay as they directed them. We may charitably hope, that it was not the act of all the Jewiſh council, or of every one in it. But it is a deliberate thing, and there was a general concurrence in this great and aggravated wickedneſs. Some of the guards came into the city, to the prieſts, who had placed them at the ſepulchre. They convene the council, and when they had conſulted together, *they gave large money unto the ſoldiers, ſaying: Say ye, that his diſciples came by night, and ſtole him away, whilſt we ſlept.*

It is a ſtudied falſhood, contrived by the chief prieſts and rulers, when aſſembled together. Juſtly did our Lord reprove the hypocriſy of theſe men. How muſt irreligion and baſeneſs, and every evil thing prevail and ſpread among a people, that are under ſuch rulers and inſtructors!

2. Here is another inſtance of the ſad degeneracy of men, and the hardneſs of ſome men's hearts.

The guard of ſoldiers were actually preſent at our Lord's reſurrection. An angel deſcended, and appeared in a glorious form: the door of the ſepulchre was opened, and the earth ſhook, and the *keepers trembled.* Theſe things the ſoldiers themſelves had told the chief prieſts, and particularly how they had been affrighted: but all this terror ſoon wears off. The Jewiſh elders put a contrived falſhood into their mouth, and offer them money, which they take, and ſay as they had been directed.

3. We likewiſe here ſee the dangerous conſequence of an inordinate love of worldly gain, and indeed of the prevalence of any bad principle in the heart.

The fear of God ſhould always poſſeſs and govern us. If an inordinate love of worldly gain, or an exceſſive fear of any worldly evil be admitted, there is great danger that the next temptation we meet with may make a breach in our integrity.

4. This hiſtory may put us upon our guard againſt every temptation to a known falſhood, and make us very apprehenſive of a lie.

We know not what may be the conſequence: the miſchief is oftentimes wide and durable. We may ſay, that the miſchief of ſome lies is infinite and without end. The bad effect of this lie of the ſoldiers is dreadful to think of. It was the occaſion of the unbelief of many of the Jewiſh peo-

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Every man knows when he utters a lie; for it is ſomething contrary to his own inward perſuaſion; but he may not be always able to foreſee the conſequences. The ſoldiers knew the falſhood of what they ſaid; but they did not duly conſider the iſſue of this calumny upon the diſciples. We now can better perceive it than they did, when they were firſt drawn into this prevarication. This therefore may increaſe our dread of a lie. We know it is not innocent. We feel it to be contrary to our own conviction: but it may be worſe than we are aware of; and may have conſequences which we do not think of.

5. This hiſtory may help us in forming a juſt and great idea of the diligence and zeal of the apoſtles of Jeſus in aſſerting his reſurrection, and ſpreading the doctrine of the goſpel in the world.

They met with, as we hence perceive, many oppoſers, and a powerful oppoſition. Force and fraud, and every method was taken to ſuppreſs and invalidate their teſtimony, and to defeat their endeavours. They therefore muſt have been laborious and active, zealous and diligent: or they had not prevailed as they did. And we ſhould learn to imitate them if there be occaſion. And occaſion there is, and will be. There always will be adverſaries of the truth. Nor ſhould we grudge any labour for promoting the principles of true religion. But ſhould do our utmoſt to convince gainſayers, to ſtrengthen thoſe who believe, and aſſiſt ſuch as are diſpoſed to admit the evidence that is fairly ſet before them.

6. From this text we may argue, that St. Matthew's goſpel was not written quite ſo ſoon, as ſome have been willing to ſuppoſe.

Some have been apt to think, that the goſpel according to St. Matthew was written about eight years after our Lord's aſcenſion. But the account of the moſt ancient Chriſtian writers which we have, is, that it was not publiſhed till about thirty years after our Lord's aſcenſion.

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Which date much better ſuits the expreſſion of the text than eight years. *And this ſaying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.* Which words imply, that ſome conſiderable ſpace of time had paſſed ſince the event here ſpoken of.

Indeed, a written goſpel was not immediately wanted. And a period of between twenty and thirty years after our Lord's reſurrection was early enough. There would be ſtill living a good number of the eye and ear-witneſſes of our Lord's perſon, teaching, and miracles. As believers were by that time become numerous, ſome would deſire to have written memoirs and hiſtories of the Lord Jeſus. And the doctrine of Chriſt having made conſiderable progreſs in the world, many copies of the goſpels would be taken ſoon after they were written. Which affords the beſt ſecurity for their being preſerved, and tranſmitted ſincere and uncorrupted to future times. We ſeem to have good reaſon to believe, that the firſt three goſpels were all written about the ſame time. Theſe, ſoon after they had been written were brought to St. John, who thereupon wrote, and publiſhed his goſpel as a ſupplement: thereby both confirming their hiſtories, and making ſome valuable additions to them. And probably, all the four goſpels were written before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem.

7. Every one muſt obſerve in this context a remarkable inſtance of the fidelity, impartiality, fairneſs and ſimplicity, with which the hiſtory of the Lord Jeſus has been written by the apoſtles and evangeliſts.

They have recorded many injurious reflections caſt upon our Lord himſelf in perſon. Here is mentioned a calumny upon his diſciples. And it is a thing, that ſeems to weaken their teſtimony in a point of the greateſt importance: and, if true, would overthrow all the evidence of the reſurrection of Chriſt. And though not true, it obtained credit with many Jews. And yet the evangeliſt has been ſo fair as to put it down. This honeſty and ſimplicity of narration muſt, in the eſteem of all good judges, recommend the evangeliſt's performance: and induce men to receive every thing elſe related by him.

And this is what Chriſtians ſhould ſtill imitate. They ſhould not be afraid of difficulties and objections: but ſhould be willing to ſtate them clearly and fully: or let them be ſo ſtated by others. There is a ſuperior evidence for

for truth. Otherwiſe, we ſhould not be able to ſay, that it ought to be received. And when things are carefully examined, and impartially conſidered, that ſuperiority of evidence will be diſcerned and allowed of.

*The diſciples came, and ſtole him away whilſt we ſlept,* So ſaid thoſe perſons, who were ſet to guard the ſepulchre of Jeſus. Who therefore ſhould know what was done there? But when we obſerve, that this is ſaid to have been done *when they ſlept:* and when we do alſo take notice of the other things before-mentioned, it appears to be a ſtory of very little ſignificance. Yea it tends to confirm the perſuaſion of our Lord's reſurrection as already ſhown.

To which may be added, that this ſtory, or ſaying of the ſoldiers, aſſures us, and all men, that there was a guard ſet at the ſepulchre, and that all poſſible precautions were taken to prevent fraud, and to hinder the diſciples and others, if any had been ſo minded, from making, or feigning a ſtory of a reſurrection, when there was none.

The diſciples had it not in their power to remove the body. Our Lord therefore was raiſed to life. The Divine Being interpoſed for his reſurrection. And then ſupported the diſciples in their teſtimony to the reſurrection of Jeſus, by wonders and ſigns, accompanying the word ſpoken by them. Therefore we need not be ſhy to repreſent things as they really are.

8. Finally in the eighth place. We hence perceive the nature of the evidence, by which our Lord's reſurrection, and the truth of the Chriſtian religion are ſupported.

It is not an overbearing, but a ſufficient evidence. It is not an evidence that leaves no room for cavils and exceptions. It is not ſuch, but that ſome may reject it, if they are biaſſed and prejudiced: and may make a ſhift to ſatisfy themſelves in ſo doing. But yet it is an evidence ſufficient to perſuade reaſonable men. It will bear the ſtricteſt ſcrutiny and examination: and to ſerious, attentive, and rational men, it will appear convincing and concluſive: ſufficient to induce their aſſent, and to encourage, and ſupport their diligence and perſeverance in the profeſſion of religious truth, and the practice of virtue.

Let us, then, ſhow ourſelves to be children of wiſdom, by diligently examining the evidences of the principles of religion, and by embracing and maintaining thoſe, which appear to be reaſonable, and ſupported by good and ſufficient evidence.

SERMON

# SERMON V.

## THE APOSTLE THOMAS.

JOHN xx. 29.

*Jeſus ſaith unto him: Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believed. Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.*

THESE words are part of a remarkable converſation between an affectionate diſciple, and a more affectionate Lord and Saviour. Thomas, in the time of his Maſter's miniſtry, upon an occaſion of great danger to his perſon, had been willing *to go, and die with him*, John xi. 16. Jeſus out of love for his diſciples, and for mankind in general, had now laid down his life, with as many aggravations of pain and diſgrace, as the loſs of an innocent life can well be attended with. But he was delivered from the grave, and raiſed up again to life, now to die no more.

And that the diſciples themſelves, and the world in general, might obtain the benefits propoſed by his death and ſufferings, and all his tranſactions on this earth, he was willing to give his diſciples, and others who had known him, the moſt ſatisfactory evidence of his reſurrection. The ſame love, that had carried him through the pains of death, ſtill reigned in the riſen Saviour, and Lord of life. And he condeſcends, after his reſurrection, to renew his acquaintance with his diſciples, and to give them in a free and familiar manner the proofs of his being alive again.

He had already before this ſhewn himſelf to ſeveral, and to all the other diſciples on the day on which he aroſe. ver. 19, 20. *Then the ſame day at evening, being the firſt day of the week, when the doors were ſhut, where the diſciples were aſſembled for fear of the Jews, came Jeſus, and ſtood in the midſt, and ſaith unto them: peace be unto you. And when he had ſo ſaid, he ſhowed them his hands, and his ſide. Then were the diſciples glad, when they ſaw the Lord...* ver. 24—29. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jeſus came. The other diſciples therefore ſaid unto him: we have ſeen the Lord. But he ſaid unto them: except I ſhall*

*I ſhall ſee in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thruſt my hand into his ſide, I will not believe. And after eight days, again his diſciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jeſus, the doors being ſhut, and ſtood in the midſt, and ſaid: peace be unto you. Then ſaith he to Thomas: reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands. And reach hither thy hand, and thruſt it into my ſide. And be not faithleſs, but believing. And Thomas anſwered, and ſaid unto him: my Lord, and my God. Jeſus ſaith unto him: Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believed. Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.*

The conſideration of which words will lead me to three heads of diſcourſe.

I. The conduct of Divine Providence in not giving to all the higheſt evidence of the objects of faith, even the evidence of ſight, or of extraordinary works done before them, and the reaſonableneſs of that conduct.

II. That an evidence below that of ſenſe may be a ſufficient ground of belief.

III. The bleſſedneſs of ſuch as believe, though they have not the higheſt evidence, that of their ſenſes.

I. The conduct of Divine Providence, in not affording to all the higheſt evidence of the objects of faith, that of ſight, or of extraordinary works done before them: and the reaſonableneſs of that conduct.

Here it may be worth the while to obſerve, that the great and ultimate objects of faith are always, or at leaſt, uſually inviſible to men in this world: and that none, or very few, have the demonſtration of ſenſe for their truth and exiſtence. We believe the being of God: but he himſelf is inviſible. They are his works only, the proofs and evidences of his being and perfection, that are viſible. That the world was made, is the object of our faith, the ſubject matter of our perſuaſion. But we did not ſee it made. Nor could its formation be ſeen by any man. But we believe, that it was made, from the conſiderations of reaſon, and from the teſtimony of the word of God conveyed to us. So it is alſo, when promiſes of temporal bleſſings are made to any for the encouragement of their obedience. God promiſed to Abraham, that he would give his poſterity the poſſeſſion of the land of Canaan. And Abraham believed that God would perform his word and promiſe. That was the object of his faith. But he did not ſee the thing believed. He might for

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his ſatisfaction have afforded to him the ſight of ſome extraordinary effects, ſuch as conſuming his ſacrifice by fire, and other miraculous appearances, to aſſure him, that the promiſe was made by God himſelf, and might be relied upon as certain. Still the object of his faith, that *his ſeed ſhould poſſeſs the land of Canaan*, was a thing future, diſtant, and inviſible.

In like manner Chriſt's miracles were viſible to thoſe who lived at that time, and were preſent when they were performed. But his divine commiſſion and authority, the thing to be proved by them, was not viſible. Nor was the heavenly life, which he promiſed, viſible to the men of that time, but only the evidences of it, his mighty works.

Of ſuch things the diſciples themſelves had not a ſight. It was only the evidence of them, that was viſible. After all that they had ſeen in Chriſt, the diſciples, as well as others, were to exerciſe a faith of inviſible things.

Thomas, and the other diſciples, had the evidence of their ſenſes, that Jeſus, their maſter, was alive again, after his crucifixion. But the heavenly ſtate, the future happineſs of good men, the general judgment, the things to be proved by his reſurrection, were ſtill diſtant and inviſible: not objects of ſenſe, but aſſented to by faith only.

The difference therefore between the diſciples of Chriſt, and others, who ſee not his miracles, is this. The diſciples, and many others at that time, had viſible and ſenſible proofs or evidences of inviſible things. But ſtill the heavenly ſtate, and future retributions were inviſible to them, and objects of faith. Others, who live, not at the time of the revelation of the divine will, but after it, and after the ceaſing of extraordinary works, and miraculous operations, neither ſee the heavenly ſtate, nor the external evidences of it. But they receive upon teſtimony the evidences, that had been ſet before others. Upon that teſtimony they believe the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, and the miracles wrought by himſelf, and by others in his name. And they admit them to be ſufficient evidences of a life to come, and the recompenſes of it.

For ſhewing the reaſonableneſs of this conduct of Divine Providence, in not giving to all the higheſt kind of evidence, it may be obſerved, that there ſeem to be but three ſeveral ways ſuppoſable for a revelation to be made by God to mankind, concerning the obligation of duty, and the recompenſes of it.

For,

For, if over and above the light, which may be attained in the exerciſe of our natural powers and faculties, God is graciouſly pleaſed to vouchſafe a revelation to men; in order to make it general, it muſt be one of theſe three ways: firſt, by a particular revelation of himſelf to every man in every age. Or, ſecondly, by affording a revelation in every age, and in every country, to ſome few, or a certain number of perſons, endowed by him with a power of performing extraordinary works before other men, ſufficient to ſatisfy them, that the doctrine, taught by thoſe perſons, is from heaven and the will of God. Which all ought to receive, and conform to, as the rule of life, and to rely upon, as the ground and meaſure of their hopes and expectations concerning future recompenſes. Or, thirdly, God may ſend ſome meſſenger of high character and authority, who ſhall communicate his will to the men of ſome one age and country; and by many miracles give full proof, that what he delivers is with authority from heaven. And then they, who have received this revelation from the divine meſſenger, ſhall communicate it to others: who having received it upon good evidence, ſhall be bound, not only to conform to it themſelves, but alſo to deliver, and tranſmit it to others: both the revelation itſelf, and the evidences of its divine original: that it may be handed down from age to age, as the rule of action, and the ground of comfort and hope to all.

This is very much the method, which we ſuppoſe God to have taken in the revelation by Moſes, and by Jeſus Chriſt, his well-beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour.

And it is not difficult to perceive, that the other two methods, before mentioned, would be attended with many inconveniences, and very much break in upon the eſtabliſhed order of things in this preſent world. Nor would they, in all probability, be more effectual, than the method which God appears to have taken.

II. The next thing to be ſhown is, that an evidence below that of ſight may be a ſufficient ground of belief and action.

And it is plain, that it is ſo, becauſe in many caſes men act upon it. And the evidence, which we ſtill have of the revelation made by Jeſus Chriſt, is a ſufficient reaſon for receiving it, as a true revelation. For the account of it contained in the New Teſtament is delivered with all poſ-

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ſible marks of ſimplicity and integrity. That revelation was received by a great number of perſons from the beginning. It has been confirmed by great and remarkable effects, and the vaſt alteration which has been thereby made in the falſe notions and ſentiments, and evil practices and cuſtoms of mankind. And from that time to this there have been many in the world, in every age, who have made an open profeſſion of this doctrine: great numbers of whom have born their teſtimony to it by patiently enduring all kinds of ſufferings on account of it. And the reſurrection of Jeſus has been celebrated on the firſt day of the week in all the ages of Chriſtianity. And his death, and all the wonders of his miniſtry, have been frequently remembered and rehearſed in the aſſemblies of his followers.

Though therefore we have not the evidence of ſight, we have a ſufficient evidence of the reſurrection of Chriſt: and conſequently, of all the religious truths which were to be confirmed by it: and by this evidence we may, and ought to be guided and influenced.

III. The third thing is the bleſſedneſs of thoſe who believe, though they have not the evidence of ſenſe, or the higheſt evidence of all.

The meaning of our Lord ſeems to be, that they are more bleſſed than they who believe only upon the evidence of ſight. *Jeſus ſaith unto him: becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believed. Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.*

The reaſon is this. Such do in this reſpect ſhew a greater love of truth, than they who yield only to the evidence of ſight. They who have only the evidence of teſtimony, and that teſtimony conveyed through ſeveral ſucceſſions of witneſſes, have need to uſe more attention and care than they who have before them the evidence of ſight.

They who out of love for truth, and a deſire of the knowledge of religious principles, carefully examine this leſſer kind of evidence, and the ſeveral branches of it, till they arrive at a full conviction of the truths atteſted, ſhow a very good and laudable diſpoſition.

They likewiſe manifeſt a humble and teachable temper in ſubmitting to the will of God, and acknowledging the wiſdom of this diſpoſal: who has appointed viſible and ſupernatural evidences of inviſible things in that way, which is beſt adapted to the eſtabliſhed order of nature, and

and ſo as may leaſt break in upon the ſettled courſe of things.

Moreover they may be ſaid to have a nobler faith, who upon an evidence, ſure and ſatisfactory indeed, but below that of ſight, are induced to be faithful to God, and practiſe ſelf-denial in thoſe many occaſions in which it is neceſſary in the preſent ſtate of things.

I may add farther, that they *who have not ſeen, and yet have believed,* will have a faith in more truths than they who yield only to the evidence of ſight: for we may know of many more things by hearing and reading than have been done before us. Certainly there may be good evidence of many remarkable works of God, and of many eminent acts of goodneſs, patience, meekneſs, integrity of our fellow-creatures, beſide thoſe which we have ſeen with our own eyes, done in diſtant parts, and in paſt ages. And, if upon due examination, we are perſuaded of them, we may be thereby much confirmed in the belief of the truth of the inviſible things of the heavenly ſtate. And we may be eſtabliſhed in the practice of virtue; and may be animated and ſtrengthened in the Chriſtian courſe, much more than we ſhould be if we diſbelieved every thing which we have not ſeen with our eyes.

Application. IV. I now proceed to mention ſome obſervations ſuitable to the ſubject.

1. We are led to obſerve in this hiſtory, one of the many inſtances of plainneſs, ſimplicity and integrity, which do ſo much recommend the goſpels to our belief and reception.

The apoſtle and evangeliſt John, who wrote this goſpel, we may be aſſured had a reſpect to truth in his hiſtory: or he had not inſerted this account of Thomas's unbelief; for though it is far from being honourable to that diſciple, St. John has related it plainly. But it is a particular that may tend to ſatisfy us of the truth of our Lord's reſurrection, in that there was ſuch full proof given of it again and again to the diſciples; ſo as to convince them all of it, though they had for a while been under great doubts and prejudices: therefore St. John has inſerted this account that we might believe. As he ſays, ver. 30, 31, *And many other things truly did Jeſus in the preſence of his diſciples which are not written in this book. But theſe are written, that ye might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

2. From this text may be inferred the great neceſſity, and many advantages of ſerious and impartial inquiry and examination into the grounds and evidences of the principles of religion.

For it has not been at all my intention in this diſcourſe, concerning the reaſonableneſs of believing without the higheſt degree of evidence, to perſuade any to believe without ground, or without ſufficient evidence: nor does the text lead to any ſuch thing but quite the contrary. Thomas is not reproved for not believing, whilſt he had no ground to believe; but becauſe he had reſiſted very cogent evidence.

And the conduct of Providence in not affording to all the evidence of ſight ſhould put men upon examining and conſidering, with care and diligence, that evidence which is propoſed to them. It was the duty of thoſe who lived in our Saviour's time, before whom his miracles were wrought. There was, even then, a neceſſity of this. There were ſeveral branches of the evidence of his authority, and the truth of his doctrine. All which were to be carefully attended to, and impartially weighed. He himſelf referred them to theſe evidences. He directed them to conſider the reaſonableneſs of his doctrine, and its agreement with the writings of Moſes and the prophets: to conſider the teſtimony of John, and the greatneſs of his own works. John viii. 45, 46.

It is as needful, or more needful for us now to inquire and examine. We ſhould be at the pains of obſerving the many proofs there are in the New Teſtament of the certainty of a Providence, a future judgment, and a life to come. We ſhould, as we have opportunity, conſider what evidence there is, that the books of the New Teſtament are the writings of the apoſtlesand evangeliſts of Chriſt, to whom the mind of God was revealed. We may do well to obſerve the marks of ſimplicity, veracity and integrity, which there are in the hiſtorical parts of the New Teſtament: and alſo how reaſonable, how perfect, how heavenly the whole doctrine of the evangelical ſcriptures, and conſequently, how worthy of God.

This examination is a duty incumbent upon all, that they may gain ſuch a knowledge, and rational conviction of the truths of religion, as ſhall be ſufficient for their own ſatisfaction.

And for ſome others, who have more opportunities, and better abilities, it may be incumbent upon them, ſo far to inquire

inquire into the grounds and evidences of the principles of religion, as to be able to propound them to other men, and assist them in their searches after truth.

3. Which brings me to another observation upon this text and context in the third place, that it may be our duty, of some at least, to propose and recommend the evidences of the principles of religion frequently, and with great plainness.

Though some are greatly prejudiced, and hard to be convinced of some things that appear to us very reasonable and well founded. Yet if they have but sincerity of mind, they should not be abandoned as obstinate, and incapable of conviction.

We have seen a strange instance of the force of prejudice in Thomas a disciple of Jesus, and unquestionably a sincerely good and upright man. He had heard all that Christ had before said of his dying, and rising again from the dead. He had also been assured by the other disciples, that they had seen the Lord since his crucifixion. They whom he well knew, whose honesty he had no ground to suspect, whose prejudices too had prevailed greatly, say to him: *We have seen the Lord.* Here are ten witnesses concerning a point, about which they could not be easily deceived. And, very probably, some others, who had seen Christ separately, told him the same thing. Nevertheless, he did not believe them. Nor would he believe, he said, unless he should himself see and touch the marks of his crucifixion. Thus acted this person, because of some prejudices, too much favoured and indulged. Nevertheless Jesus did not give him up to his unbelief. But he comes again among his disciples, and at a time when Thomas was with them. He shows himself to him, speaks to him, and discovers the strange and positive demand that he had made for his satisfaction.

In like manner, may some others, good and sincere men, reject a sufficient evidence of some truths, on account of prejudices, which have been long and deeply rooted in their minds.

When this is the case, though they should withhold their assent to the first representation of the evidences of some truth; it may not be always reasonable to give them up. It may be fit to take some other opportunity to repeat the evidence, or to set it before them in a different light, or

to add new and farther proofs if they can be had. It is a kind and generous work, to carry men on from truth to truth, and bring them to a perſuaſion of every truth, conducive to the enlargement of their minds, and the increaſe and perfection of their virtue.

Thomas was a Jew and a good man, and believed the general articles of religion. But our Lord does not leave him there. For his own benefit, and the benefit of others, he affords him evidences of his reſurrection, till he is convinced: that thereby he might have farther evidences of a future ſtate, and be acquainted with all the inducements to virtue, and ſteadineſs therein, which would flow from a belief of his reſurrection: and might be alſo able to recommend them to others.

You know how St. Paul ſolemnly exhorts Timothy. *Preach the word,* ſays he, *be inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-ſuffering and doctrine,* 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

4. We may infer from the declaration of our Lord in the text, that the Divine Being in his acceptance of men, and in the recompenſes he beſtows upon them, has a reſpect to their ſeveral circumſtances, and their ſuitable improvements.

It is a general maxim, mentioned by our Lord. Luke xii. 48. *Unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much required. And to whom men have committed much, of him they will aſk the more.*

The doctrine of the text is to the like purpoſe. Our Lord pronounceth a ſpecial bleſſing upon ſuch as have not ſeen, and yet have believed. He that did not ſee, has not all the ſame inducements to believe that Thomas had, who ſaw Chriſt after his reſurrection. In this reſpect he excels Thomas, who believed upon the evidence of ſight, and not before.

If then any one, with leſs and fewer advantages, attain to an equal degree of faith and virtue with him who has more and greater advantages; he is more commendable, and will be more bleſſed than the other.

It was very fit that all the apoſtles of Jeſus ſhould have the higheſt evidence; that they might give the beſt ſatisfaction to others concerning his reſurrection, and that they might all be eminent examples of zeal, patience and fortitude.

And

And yet he who with leſs advantages equals them in zeal, patience and fortitude, may be reckoned to exceed and excel them.

We hereby ſee how difficult it muſt be to anſwer that queſtion: *Who ſhall be greateſt in the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xviii. 1. a queſtion which the diſciples put to our Saviour, when their notions of that kingdom were too worldly and ſenſual. The queſtion is ſtill very difficult, though our ideas are enlarged: nor can we ſay, *who ſhall be greateſt in the kingdom of heaven*; or, whence that perſon ſhall come: Whether from among thoſe who lived in the time of our Saviour, who heard the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, and ſaw the wonderful works that he did; and thereby were filled with a lively faith in God, and in the Son of God, and were excited to labour, and endure hard things for his name's ſake. Whether, I ſay, he ſhall be one of thoſe who *have ſeen, and therefore believed*; or whether he will be one of thoſe *who have not ſeen, and yet have believed*. Whether he may be one who lives in latter times, and by ſerious and humble inquiry and conſideration arrives at a faith of equal ſtrength and activity, with thoſe of the more early ages of the goſpel, and labours, and ſuffers, and dies as they did.

Or, whether he ſhall come from among thoſe, who under the obſcurer revelations of the divine will, before the coming of Chriſt, arrived at eminence in all virtue and holineſs.

Or, finally, whether he ſhall come from ſome of the dark places of the earth, where ſcarcely one ray of divine revelation has reached: and be a perſon, who under the greateſt diſadvantages for religious knowledge, arrived at ſome conſiderable juſtneſs of ſentiments concerning God, and the way of ſerving him, and has been there an example of virtue to the men among whom he lived; who had ſought, and found, and acknowledged the one God, Creator of the univerſe, and under great diſcouragements recommended the worſhip of God, and the practice of virtue.**

But

** 'Whoever places the true moral worth and excellence where it ought to be placed, I mean, not in the ſoundneſs of the head, but in the ſoundneſs of the heart, will eaſily diſcern, how poſſible it is for one profeſſor, that is furniſhed with the ſcantieſt ſtock of knowledge, to be a far better, worthier and more amiable character in life, than

But though we cannot ſay who will be the greateſt, we know, that *whoever hears Chriſt's ſayings, and doth them*, Matt. v. 19. whoever ſincerely *keeps the commandments of God, ſhall be great in the kingdom of heaven*, ch. vii. 24. And we know what are the virtues, and what the works which are in high eſteem with the Saviour and Judge of the world: *feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, viſiting the ſick, and ſuch as are in priſon* (eſpecially when it is for a good cauſe) and other like offices of benevolence to our fellow-creatures in this ſtate of trial.

Upon the whole, then, let us cheriſh and improve a faith of inviſible things, by ſerious and impartial conſideration: and attending to the evidence which God has given us; which, though not the higheſt, is very cogent and ſufficient. And let us be concerned to ſhow our faith by works, ſuited to the doctrine of Chriſt, which we have received, and all the advantages which we enjoy.

# SERMON VI.

## JESUS THE SON OF MAN.

### LUKE xvii. 22.

*And he ſaid unto the diſciples: the days will come, when ye ſhall deſire to ſee one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye ſhall not ſee it.*

The words of the text are owing to an inquiry concerning the time of the manifeſtation of the kingdom of the Meſſiah; accompanied, it is likely, with indications of their prevailing prejudice concerning its worldly nature. Ver. 20. *And when he was demanded of the phariſees, when the kingdom*

than another who is poſſeſſed of the greateſt. And if God, in the great day of retribution, will render to every one according to his work; for the ſame reaſon it is not impoſſible, after all our boaſted advantages in point of knowledge, but that a man, caſt upon the moſt barbarous and illiterate part of the globe, may come off with more applauſe at that impartial tribunal, than our Clarkes, Newtons, or any other the moſt diſtinguiſhed characters, whether of the philoſophic, religious, or civil kind.' Dr. J. N. Scott. Serm. xx. vol. II. p. 416, 417.

*of*

*of God ſhould come; he anſwered them, and ſaid, the kingdom of God cometh not with obſervation:* or with the outward pomp and ſplendour, viſible in earthly kingdoms, exciting wonder and ſurpriſe, attracting the eyes, and pleaſing the paſſions of carnal and worldly people.

Ver. 21. *Neither ſhall they ſay, lo here, or lo there: for the kingdom of God is within you.* Neither will it come after the manner of worldly kingdoms, ſet up by a great leader, to whoſe ſtandard all ſhould be invited to reſort, to put themſelves under his protection, in order to join in advancing it, and ſhare in its emoluments and advantages. *For behold the kingdom of God*, though you are not pleaſed to regard it, and the ſigns of it are ſuch as you diſdain to obſerve, is *within you*, or among you. It is already begun to be ſet up, the kingdom of the Meſſiah is come, the doctrine of it is preached, the rules, and the rewards and privileges of it are publiſhed. And it is received by ſome, who even preſs into it, and are the willing ſubjects of it: and rejoice in, and ſhall partake of all its bleſſings and privileges.

So the kingdom of God was then among them: but not literally within the perſons, to whom Chriſt was ſpeaking, as ſome have thought. For if our Lord be ſuppoſed to ſpeak directly to the phariſees, or of them, this kingdom was ‡ not within them. It had not gained power in their minds, nor been received and acknowledged by them.

Ver. 22—25. *And he ſaid unto the diſciples, the days will come, when ye ſhall deſire to ſee one of the days of the ſon of man, and ye ſhall not ſee it. And when they ſhall ſay unto you, ſee here, or ſee there* [looking for the appearance of the Meſſiah] *go not after them, nor follow them: for as the lightning that lightens out of the one part under heaven, ſhineth unto the other part under heaven, ſo ſhall alſo the ſon of man be in his day:* his kingdom will prevail on a ſudden, and his doctrine will make a ſwift and amazing progreſs in a very ſhort time, beyond expectation, and without the ordinary methods made uſe of in advancing worldly deſigns and intereſts. *But firſt he muſt ſuffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.* So is the context.

In conſidering the words of this text there offer to us three ſeveral ſubjects of inquiry. 1. How are we to under-

‡ Illud εντος υμων recte vertitur in medio veſtri. Conf. Matt. xxi. 43. Grot. in loc.

ſtand that character, the Son of man? 2. Who are the perſons here ſpoken to, and ſaid to be the diſciples? 3. What our Lord ſays to them, or the deſign of this warning and prediction: *Ye ſhall deſire to ſee one of the days of the ſon of man, and ye ſhall not ſee it.*

I. The firſt ſubject of inquiry is, how we ought to underſtand that character, the ſon of man?

And as it is frequently uſed by our Lord in ſpeaking of himſelf, we may be deſirous to determine the meaning of it. But here, as in many other caſes, where certainty would be deſirable, it is not a little difficult to find what ſhall be deciſive.

Son of man is often in ſcripture equivalent to man. Job. xxxv. 8. *Thy wickedneſs may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteouſneſs may profit the ſon of man.* Pſ. viii. 4. *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the ſon of man, that thou viſiteſt him?* And Prov. viii. 4. ſays wiſdom: *Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the ſons of men:* or to all men in general, and of every rank, to whom my inſtructions will be uſeful, Iſa. li. 12. *I, even I am he, which comforteth thee. Who art thou, that thou ſhouldeſt be afraid of a man, that ſhall die, and of the ſon of man, which ſhall be made as graſs.* And in like manner in many other places. See particularly Jer. xlix. 18, 33. ch. l. 40. ch. li. 43. This then is one common, obvious meaning of ſon of man. It is the ſame as man.

Some think that the ſon of man, when uſed by our Saviour, denotes his high dignity, or a man of diſtinction and eminence, and is equivalent to Meſſiah, or the Chriſt: and that he hereby intends to ſignify, that he is the great perſon ſpoken of by the prophets, who was to come for the benefit of mankind. And indeed in Dan. vii. 13, 14. is this remarkable prophecy. *I ſaw in the night viſions. And behold, one like unto the ſon of man,* or like to a ſon of man, *came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people and nations and languages ſhould ſerve him. His dominion is an everlaſting dominion, which ſhall not paſs away, and his kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed.* And our Lord is ſuppoſed to allude to this prophecy upon a very memorable occaſion: when being before the high prieſt, he adjured him, ſaying: *Tell us, whether thou be the Chriſt, the Son of God. Jeſus ſaith unto him: thou haſt ſaid.*

*ſaid. Nevertheleſs I ſay unto you: hereafter ſhall ye ſee the ſon of man ſitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* Matt. xxvi. 63, 64. See alſo Mark xiv. 61, 62.

The ſon of man, then, when uſed by our Saviour in ſpeaking of himſelf, may denote his great character, the promiſed Meſſiah. This ſenſe I do not abſolutely reject, and it may be embraced by thoſe, to whom it approves itſelf.

Nevertheleſs there are ſome exceptions to be made againſt its being equivalent to Meſſiah, and againſt its being what our Lord intends thereby.

It ſeems to me, that the forecited text from Daniel is not a ſufficient foundation for this opinion. The phraſe is no where uſed in Daniel, but in the place juſt taken notice of, and in one more. ch. viii. 17. Where an angel ſays to Daniel himſelf: *Underſtand, O ſon of man. For at the time of the end ſhall be the viſion.*

Though therefore in the other place of Daniel thoſe words, *there came one like the ſon of man*, intend Jeſus, the Meſſiah; it does not follow, that it is equivalent to Meſſiah, and is uſed by our Lord in that ſenſe.

Another difficulty there is, which muſt be reckoned of ſome moment. Our Lord very often ſpeaks of himſelf in the character of the ſon of man. But yet he declined to own himſelf publicly, and ordinarily, to be the Meſſiah. There is a text in Matt. xvi. 13—16. which is obſervable. *When Jeſus came into the coaſts of Ceſarea Philippi, he aſked his diſciples ſaying: whom do men ſay, that I the ſon of man am?* After they had mentioned the opinions of others concerning him, he aſks their own. Whereupon *Peter anſwered: thou art the Chriſt, the Son of the living God.* It ſeems therefore, that the ſon of man, and the Chriſt, are not equivalent, and that the phraſe is not ſo uſed by our Lord.

Moreover, if it had, it is likely, that the diſciples and others would have often ſpoken of our Lord in that character, and would ſometimes have made their profeſſion of him in ſuch words, ſaying, that they believed him to be the ſon of man: whereas there is not one ſuch inſtance in the goſpels, and but one in the Acts of the apoſtles. ch. vii. 56. where St. Stephen ſays: *I ſee the heavens opened, and the ſon of man ſtanding on the right hand of God.* This phraſe is alſo found in Rev. i. 13. and ch. xiv. 14.

It ſhould be here obſerved by us, that man, and ſon of man, with the Hebrews, often denote a man of low condition.

*Hear*

*Hear this, all ye people,... both low and high, rich and poor together*, Pſ. xlix. 1, 2. The original Hebrew word rendered by us low is ſons of Adam: evidently meaning men of obſcure birth, and low rank, or mean condition. *Lord, what is man, that thou takeſt knowledge of him? or the ſon of man, that thou takeſt account of him?* Pſ. cxliv. 3. Where the Pſalmiſt intends to repreſent the human meanneſs and wretchedneſs.

Farther, it is obſerved by learned commentators, that this denomination is given to ſome prophets, with this view, and in this ſenſe, particularly to Daniel and Ezekiel. However, I think, it is but once applied to Daniel, and in the place before mentioned. But to Ezekiel very frequently. *And he ſaid unto me, ſon of man, I ſend thee to the children of Iſrael, to a rebellious houſe*, Ezek. ii. 3. And in like manner, very often in that book, almoſt in every chapter of it, and in ſome chapters ſeveral times. And it is ſaid by thoſe commentators, that this expreſſion is there uſed with a deſign to admoniſh thoſe prophets of their meanneſs and frailty, as men. Our Lord therefore by this phraſe or character repreſents that humbling of himſelf, which is ſpoken of by the apoſtle in the ſecond chapter to the Philippians, and is the ſame with what is ſaid in Iſ. liii. 3, *he is deſpiſed*, and *rejected of men*, or is one of the loweſt and meaneſt of men.

Our Lord adopts this character in ſpeaking of himſelf, in order to undeceive the Jews, and correct their falſe opinion concerning the kingdom of the Meſſiah, and to intimate, that he was not to arrive at glory, and the full poſſeſſion of his kingdom, but through ſufferings and humiliations.

Thus argue thoſe interpreters, and, as ſeems to me very cogently. And therefore, if ſon of man be equivalent to Meſſiah, it is not uſed to denote his dignity, as the firſt and greateſt of men, but rather to ſignify his humble form and low condition, in which he then lived: and is expreſſive of the ſcorn and contempt which was caſt upon him, and in which he acquieſced.

Moreover, poſſibly, our Lord frequently makes uſe of this expreſſion, to denote his real humanity, and alſo that he was not made and created as Adam, but was a man born even of a woman.

Once more, it ſeems to me, that our Lord takes this character as a modeſt way of ſpeaking. Eminent and diſtinguiſhed perſons, who have many occaſions to ſpeak of themſelves, eſpecially if it be to their advantage, decline the

too

too frequent uſe of the phraſes *I* and *me*, and chooſe to ſpeak in the third perſon, as of another, diſtinct from themſelves.

Having mentioned all theſe ſeveral obſervations concerning this title and character, let us now take notice of ſome of the places of the evangeliſts where it is uſed.

Matt. xx. 17, 18. *And Jeſus going up to Jeruſalem, took the twelve diſciples apart in the way, and ſaid to them: behold, we go up to Jeruſalem, and the ſon of man ſhall be betrayed unto the chief prieſts and ſcribes, and they ſhall deliver him unto the gentiles.* Here, and in other places, our Lord may be ſuppoſed to make uſe of this expreſſion, as a modeſt way of ſpeaking. So alſo in John i. 51. *Thou ſhalt ſee greater things than theſe. . . . Hereafter ſhall ye ſee heaven open, and the angels of God aſcending and deſcending upon the ſon of man.* Which muſt be reckoned more agreeable to decorum, than to ſay *upon me.* John xii. 23. And *Jeſus anſwered them, ſaying: the hour is come that the ſon of man ſhall be glorified.* Which likewiſe muſt be allowed by all to be more agreeable than to ſay: *When I am to be glorified.*

And in the text. *The days are coming, when ye ſhall deſire to ſee one of the days of the ſon of man.* Our Lord might have ſaid, *one of my days.* We actually have that expreſſion in John viii. 5, 6. *Your father Abraham rejoiced to ſee my day: And he ſaw it, and was glad.* But he might chooſe, generally, to ſpeak in the other way, eſpecially as the title, ſon of man, carried in it no ambitious aſpiring meaning, but rather denoted a mean condition as was before ſhewn.

Therefore let us obſerve a few more paſſages of the evangeliſts, where this character occurs. It ſeems to be uſed in the ſame manner in the text above cited. *Whom do men ſay, that I the ſon of man,* who appear in ſo mean a form, *am?* So likewiſe John v. 27. *And hath given him authority to execute judgment alſo, becauſe he is the ſon of man:* that is, as ſeems to me, becauſe of his preſent willing humiliation and abaſement. So St. Paul, Philip. ii. 8, 9. having ſpoken of our Lord's *humbling himſelf unto death, adds: wherefore God alſo has exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.*

Matt. xxvi. 63, 64. *The high prieſt anſwered, and ſaid unto him: I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Chriſt, the Son of God. Jeſus ſaith unto him: thou haſt ſaid. Nevertheleſs I ſay unto you: hereafter ſhall ye ſee the ſon of man,* that is, him, who now is in ſo low a condition,

dition, so humbled and abased, *sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

And when St. Stephen says, Acts vii. 56. *Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the son of man standing on the right hand of God:* it is likely, that he refers to our Lord's mean condition in this world, and the base treatment which he had received from the Jewish people. But though once he had been so low, he was now exalted.

And some judicious expositors think, that the title is to be understood as used with this view in that noted place of Daniel. *I beheld, and one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven.* He had a humble appearance, but he was greatly honoured and exalted. *He came on the clouds of heaven,* and an extensive and everlasting dominion was given to him.

This title, then, being expressive of humility and abasement is very fitly adopted by our Lord, in representing the glory conferred on him by the Father, of which he was obliged to speak, and to inform his disciples about it. Matt. xiii. 41. *The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend.* Matt. xvi. 28. *Verily I say unto you: there are some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the son of man coming in his kingdom.* Matt. xxv. 31. *When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.*

These are the observations which have been mentioned for illustrating this title and character, so often made use of by our Lord, when speaking of himself.

It sometimes denotes in scripture man in general, or any man. It is also used for a man of low condition. And for that reason, probably, is frequently used by our Lord in speaking of himself, as expressive of the low estate, in which he, the Messiah then was, and in which he willingly acquiesced. It was a modest way of speaking, and was suited to admonish the Jewish people, and correct their mistaken apprehensions concerning the worldly nature of his kingdom: and to intimate, that, as Messiah, he must suffer before he was advanced to glory. Moreover, such being his condition in this world, his followers also should expect the like, and be willing to submit to afflictions and trials here, that they may be thereby farther prepared and qualified for heavenly glory and happiness.

II. The second thing to be considered by us is, who are the persons to whom our Lord here speaks.

*And*

*And he ſaid unto the diſciples.* Poſſibly, we need not thereby underſtand the twelve apoſtles. The word is ſometimes uſed concerning the followers of Jeſus in general, and of ſome who were not ſincere, or well inſtructed, who attended on him for a while only, and with worldly views. So John vi. 66. *From that time many of his diſciples went back, and walked no more with him.*

If our Lord ſpeaks to his diſciples, others alſo are inſtructed in what he ſays, and deſigned to be ſo. I find this text paraphraſed by a judicious expoſitor after this manner. '*And* † '*he ſaid unto his diſciples*, or followers: *the days will come*, '*when ye*, of this nation, *ſhall deſire to ſee one of the days* '*of the ſon of man, and ye ſhall not ſee it.*'

III. Which brings us to the laſt inquiry: how we are to underſtand this warning and prediction. *The days will come, when ye ſhall deſire to ſee one of the days of the ſon of man, and ye ſhall not ſee it.*

If this relate chiefly to the Jewiſh nation and people, or a large part of them, who now were, and ſtill continued unbelieving: our Lord may be ſuppoſed, affectionately, and earneſtly, to warn them of the ſad circumſtances which they were falling into. As if he had ſaid: 'The time would be, 'when all the gracious means, afforded them by the Divine 'Being, having proved to be in vain, their ruin would be 'near, and their condition very calamitous. They would 'eagerly look for deliverance, and pretended leaders would 'offer themſelves to their aſſiſtance in order to draw followers 'after them. But they would not be able to perform any 'thing to their advantage. The bleſſings offered by me 'in this mean form are deſpiſed. I ſet before you heavenly 'bleſſings, things of the greateſt value. And I am able 'to perform what I promiſe. But they are not reliſhed. 'The time will come, when with the utmoſt impatience 'you will wiſh for the appearance of the Meſſiah, to work out 'the temporal ſalvation which you deſire. But the days 'will then be more calamitous and afflictive than thoſe of the 'preſent ſeaſon, under which you are now ſo uneaſy. And 'they who will then offer themſelves to you in that character 'as they will not bring with them a doctrine like mine, ſo will 'they abſolutely fail in every attempt for your advancement,

† Whitby upon the place. See alſo Doddridge's Family Expoſitor, vol. II. p. 188.

'and

'and your earneſt expectations of deliverance will be utterly 'diſappointed.'

And I cannot ſee, but that this may be reckoned the more direct deſign of our Lord, that is, to ſet before his diſciples, in the hearing of others, the ſad and deplorable circumſtances of the Jewiſh people: if they did not improve the means afforded them by himſelf, and his apoſtles after him.

But if it be ſuppoſed, that our Lord here ſpeaks to his own diſciples chiefly, and to ſuch others as ſincerely believed in him: I apprehend, he muſt have had a reſpect to ſome prejudices, which ſtill had too great an influence upon them. And what he ſays is to this purpoſe. 'That whereas they 'looked for great things in this world, and, with too many 'others, waited for a temporal ſalvation for the Jewiſh people, 'together with ſpiritual privileges, they would be diſap-'pointed. The time would come, when they would eſteem 'theſe happy days. Such would ſoon be the calamitous 'ſtate of things in the land of Judea, that they would be 'glad to ſee a time of ſo much eaſe and quiet as the preſent. 'You will wiſh to ſee again one of theſe days of mine. But 'you will not. No! Your profeſſion of my name, if 'you are faithful to me, will coſt you dear. At that time you 'will mourn. The circumſtances of things will call you to 'weeping and faſting, and every inſtance of ſelf-denial. Im-'prove then the preſent time: content yourſelves with it: be 'thankful for it, and rejoice therein. For a better ſtate of 'things is not to be expected in this land, and among thoſe 'who dwell in it.'

IV. Having now in ſome meaſure explained this text, I would add a thought or two by way of reflection.

1. We perceive that every method was taken for ſaving the Jewiſh people, that could be uſed in the way of moral perſuaſion.

For our Lord, and his fore-runner, and his apoſtles after him, preached among them the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven. They confined their preaching to them entirely, or chiefly, for a good while: and many miraculous works were done among them. They were called to repentance, and the joys and glories of a future life were ſet before them. Beſide this, they were again and again informed of the judgments hanging over their heads: and with earneſt concern and affectionate tenderneſs they were warned to take heed to themſelves. They were aſſured, for their good, that this was the day

day of their viſitation: if this opportunity ſhould be let ſlip: if they did not now attend to the things of their peace, it would be afterwards too late. And moreover all expectations of another Meſſiah, and of temporal ſalvation by him, would prove vain and deluſive, and the diſappointment would be moſt grievous and vexatious. The only way of ſaving themſelves was to hearken to thoſe who now, in the name of God, and with evident tokens of divine authority, invited them to repentance, with the great and ſure promiſes of forgiveneſs and eternal life.

2. We alſo may hence learn our own duty, and conſider this warning as delivered to us.

If what is here ſaid did more eſpecially relate to others, yet the diſciples were not altogether unconcerned therein, and our Lord thought beſt to ſay it to them. *And he ſaid to the diſciples, the days will come, when ye ſhall deſire to ſee one of the days of the ſon of man, and ſhall not ſee it.* If we are not in any immediate danger of loſing our temporal, or our ſpiritual privileges; yet, certainly, the beſt way to ſecure them is to value and improve them: to be thankful for them, and rejoice in them; and not to be uneaſy and diſcontented for want of ſome greater things. The time may come when we ſhall wiſh, in vain wiſh, for ſuch days as theſe: for a liberty of thought and inquiry, profeſſion and practice: for freedom to unite together in the worſhip of God, though a few only, and thoſe of low condition and mean appearance: to hear the Old and New Teſtament read and explained, and the truths of religion recommended and enforced by rational arguments, though without the ornaments of eloquence, in a plain manner: and to be exhorted to virtue by the conſideration of its real excellence, the divine command, and the conſequences of it in a future ſtate, though no worldly honours and preferments are now annexed to it.

Is there nothing agreeable, nothing ſatisfying in ſuch entertainments as theſe? If ſuch an advantage be deſpiſed and neglected, for want of worldly ſplendour and greatneſs, may there not be danger of an alteration for the worſe? And if it ſhould happen, a recovery of loſt privileges may be very difficult. When once our portion is come to be unintelligible myſtery, with numerous and ſhowy, but empty rites and ceremonies, impoſed by mighty and awful authority: we may deſire to ſee one of theſe deſpiſed, unimproved days of reaſon and liberty, ſcriptural worſhip, and pure ordinances, but not be able to ſee it.

SERMON

# SERMON VII.

## JESUS THE SON OF GOD.

JOHN xx. 17.

*Go to my brethren, and ſay unto them: I aſcend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God.*

In diſcourſing on theſe words I ſhall firſt endeavour to ſhow, in what reſpects God is peculiarly the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. And ſecondly, the deſign of this meſſage of Chriſt to his diſciples, and in what ſenſe God is alſo their and our God and Father.

I. That God is in an eſpecial and peculiar manner *the God and Father* of our Lord and Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*, may be inferred from the frequent uſe of that title and character * in the epiſtles of the apoſtles. In this text our Lord's ſtile is remarkable. He does not ſay: *Go to my brethren, and ſay: I aſcend to our Father and God:* but *I aſcend to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God.* In the goſpels our Lord is often ſtiled *the only begotten Son of God*, and *the well beloved Son of God.* And the apoſtle to the Hebrews begins that epiſtle thus: *God, who at ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpake unto the fathers by the prophets, has in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son.* Though therefore others alſo are called *ſons of God*, the Lord Jeſus is *the Son of God* in a ſenſe peculiar to himſelf, tranſcendent and ſuperior to all others.

Father and ſon are relative. If I ſhow in what reſpects, and on what accounts Jeſus is the Son of God, it is at the ſame time ſhown, in what ſenſe God is his Father. And I ſhall now mention theſe ſeveral reſpects, which, I think, are plainly expreſſed in ſcripture.

1. Jeſus is the Son of God upon account of his miraculous conception and birth.

Luke i. 31—35. An angel appeared to Mary, and ſaid to her: *Fear not. For, behold, thou ſhalt conceive in thy womb,*

* Rom. xv. 6. 2 Cor. i. 3. xi. 31. Eph. i. 3. 17. iii. 14. Col. i. 3. 1 Pet. i. 3.

*and*

*and shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the highest. And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.* When Mary asked, *how that could be; the angel answered, and said unto her: the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore that holy thing, that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.* Here our Lord is expressly said to be the Son of God on account of his miraculous conception and birth. A like history of our Saviour's nativity may be seen in the first chapter of St. Matthew's gospel.

St. Luke, who carries up our Lord's genealogy to the first man, concludes it, saying: *Who was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the Son of God.* Adam, as seems to me, is here said to be the Son of God, as he was immediately formed by God out of the earth. So Jesus was formed of the substance of the virgin Mary by the power of God, or the special operation of the Holy Ghost.

2. Jesus is the Son of God, or the well-beloved Son of God, upon account of the most plentiful measure of the gift of the Holy Ghost conferred and bestowed upon him.

St. John having spoken of the *word*, as *with God*, and *God*, and that *all things were made by him*, says, ver. 14. *And the word was made flesh, and dwelled among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.* It was not the word, which John and others beheld, but Jesus, in whom the word dwelled. Him they beheld, and his greatness, or glory was conspicuous: so that he appeared, and they knew him to be, *the only begotten of the Father*, or the Messiah.

In other places of St. John's gospel this is expressed in other words. ch. iii. 34. John the Baptist bears this testimony to Jesus: *He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God. For God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him.*

John x. 36. Our Lord himself argues with the cavilling Jews: *Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?* That is, as a learned † expositor paraphrases that verse:

'*Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified* (by the Holy
'Ghost essentially dwelling in, or without measure imparted
'to him. John iii. 34.) *and sent into the world, thou blasphemest,*

† Whitby.

'*becauſe I* (after this unction, and commiſſion to make known 'his will to you) *ſaid, I am the Son of God?*' Or, as another **** Expoſitor: '*Say ye of him, whom the Father hath ſanctified,* 'that is, conſecrated, deſigned, ſeparated from the reſt of men 'by a ſupernatural birth, and by a communication of the 'ſpirit without meaſure, and by a ſpecial commiſſion and 'authority to declare his will, *that he blaſphemeth*, becauſe he 'has thus ſpoken?'

John xiv. 10. *The words that I ſpeak unto you, I ſpeak not of myſelf. But the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works.* Which in other goſpels is expreſſed by doing miracles by the *finger*, or *ſpirit*, or power of God. Luke xi. 20. *If I by the finger of God caſt out dæmons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come unto you.* Matt. xii. 28. *But if I caſt out dæmons by the ſpirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.* Which ſhould be compared with John x. 38. *If ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.*

Matt. i. 22, 23. in the hiſtory of our Lord's nativity. *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was ſpoken of the Lord by the prophet, ſaying: behold a virgin ſhall conceive, and ſhall bring forth a ſon, and they ſhall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.*

Col. ii. 9. St. Paul: *In him dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily:* that is, really. In the temple of Jeruſalem there was a glory, which was a ſymbol of the divine preſence. But in Jeſus Chriſt God dwelled really. Or, as St. John's expreſſion is: *The word was made fleſh, and dwelled amongſt us.*

By virtue of this indwelling of the Father, or this moſt plentiful and extraordinary communication of the ſpirit, without meaſure, Jeſus knew the whole will of God concerning the ſalvation of men, and ſpake the words of God with full authority, and wrought miracles of all kinds, at all times, whenever he pleaſed, and had the knowledge of all things; even the thoughts and characters of men, and things at a diſtance, and things to come.

With regard to this it is, that St. Paul ſays of our Lord, that he *was in the form of God*, Philip. ii. 6. Which alſo an-

** *Sanctifié.*] C'eſt à dire, conſacré, deſtiné, ſeparé du commun des hommes par une naiſſance ſurnaturelle, par une communication d'eſprit ſans meſure, et par un pouvoir tout divin pour exercer la charge de Mediateur. Voyez le mot de *ſanctifier* pris dans ce ſens. Jer. i. 5. Lenfant.

ſwers

swers to those expressions. *The brightness of the divine glory*, or majesty, *and the express image of his person*, Heb. i. 3.

This consecration, this sanctification of Jesus, this plentiful communication of the gifts of the spirit to him, is sometimes expressed by anointing, and answers to the character of Messiah. So Acts iv. 27. *For of a truth against thy holy child*, or servant, *Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, ... were gathered together.* And Acts x. 37, 38. *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. For God was with him.*

Thus Jesus is the Son of God, on account of his having the spirit without measure. And hence we see the reason, why the Christ, or the Messiah, and the Son of God, are equivalent expressions. That they are so, is evident from divers texts. John i. 34. John the Baptist says: *And I saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God.* And, as it follows in the same context, two of John's disciples heard the testimony, which he bore to Jesus. *One of those two was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him: we have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ:* or the anointed, and is plainly equivalent to what John Baptist said: *this is the Son of God.* Afterwards *Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him: we have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* When Nathanael is convinced of the same thing, how does he express himself? It is in this manner. *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel:* two expressions, equivalent to that of Messiah.

The great article of faith in Jesus is sometimes expressed by believing him to be the Christ, at other times believing him to be the Son of God. John iv. 25, 26. *The woman saith unto him: I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ. When he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her: I that speak unto thee, am he:* or the Christ. Our Lord meeting the man, whom he had cured of blindness, says to him: John ix. 35, 36. *Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said: who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him: thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.* Once more, 1 John v. 1. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* Then at ver. 5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

To all which texts let me add here one or two more. Matt. xii. 17, 18. *That it might be fulfilled, which was ſpoken by Eſaias the prophet, ſaying: behold my ſervant, whom I have choſen, my beloved, in whom my ſoul is well pleaſed. I will put my ſpirit upon him, and he ſhall ſhew judgment to the Gentiles.* And what follows, taken from Iſa. xlii. 1—4. And Heb. i. 8, 9. *But unto the Son he ſaith: . . . Thou haſt loved righteouſneſs, and hated iniquity. Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladneſs above thy fellows.*

3. Jeſus is the Son of God, on account of his reſurrection from the dead, on the third day, ſo as to die no more.

So the apoſtle ſays. Rom. i. 3, 4. *Concerning his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, who was made of the ſeed of David according to the fleſh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the ſpirit of holineſs, by the reſurrection from the dead.* Col. i. 18. *Who is the beginning, the firſt-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.* Heb. i. 6. *And again, when he bringeth in the firſt-begotten into the world, he ſaith: and let all the angels of God worſhip him.* Which indeed ſome have underſtood of our Lord's coming into the world at his nativity. But more generally interpreters have underſtood it of our Lord's entering into his glory, and taking poſſeſſion of his kingdom, after his reſurrection from the dead. Which brings us to one thing more.

4. Jeſus is the Son of God, on account of his exaltation to God's right hand, and being inveſted with authority and dominion over all fleſh, and conſtituted the judge of the world, by whom God will paſs ſentence upon all mankind.

John iii. 35. *The Father loveth the Son, and hath put all things into his hands.* Ch. v. 21, 22. *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men ſhould honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.*

Philip. ii. 9, 10. *Wherefore God alſo has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow.* Eph. i. 19, 20. *According to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Chriſt when he raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but alſo in that which is to come.* Heb. i. 2. *God hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son, whom he has made heir,* or lord, *of all things.* Ch. iii. 5, 6. *Moſes verily was faithful in all his houſe, as a ſervant. . . . But Chriſt as a ſon over his own houſe.*

Some

Some now by the Son of God underſtand an intelligent being, or emanation, begotten by the Father in an ineffable manner from all eternity, and of the ſame eſſence or ſubſtance with the Father. Others, a mighty ſpirit or angel, begotten or formed by the will of the Father, in time, before the creation of the world, and of a different ſubſtance from the Father. Which Son of God, eternally begotten, or in time, became incarnate; that is, united himſelf to the human nature, conſiſting of ſoul and body, or to human fleſh, ſo as to ſupply the place of a human ſoul.

But it does not appear to be any where uſed in that ſenſe in the goſpels, where it frequently occurs. We find it in the profeſſions ſome made of their faith in him, or their acknowledgments of the great character which he ſuſtained, and which they ſuppoſed he had fully proved by the great works wrought by him, and the demonſtrations of wonderful knowledge.

Simon Peter's confeſſion, before taken notice of, for which he was ſo much applauded, as recorded in Matt. xvi. 16. is: *Thou art the Chriſt, the ſon of the living God.* That this confeſſion implies an acknowledgment of his Maſter's being the Meſſiah, the great perſon who was to come, according to the predictions of the prophets, is manifeſt from the ſequel. For hereupon, our Lord not judging it prudent that the diſciples ſhould as yet, with all their prejudices about them, declare that character every where: *charged them that they ſhould tell no man that he was Jeſus the Chriſt*, ver. 20. with which agrees the account in Mark viii. 29, 30. *But whom ſay ye that I am? and Peter anſwered, and ſaith unto him, thou art the Chriſt. And he charged them that they ſhould tell no man of him:* that is, that they ſhould not publiſh that their perſuaſion concerning him to others. To the like purpoſe in Luke ix. 20. 21. *He ſaid unto them, but whom ſay ye that I am? Peter anſwering, ſaid, the Chriſt of God. And he ſtraitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing.*

Perſons poſſeſſed by dæmons likewiſe bore their teſtimony to Jeſus, that he was the Son of God, plainly intending thereby, that he was the Chriſt. Luke iv. 41. *And dæmons came out of many, crying out, and ſaying, thou art Chriſt, the Son of God. And he rebuking them, ſuffered them not to ſpeak: for they knew that he was the Chriſt.* The ſame muſt be the meaning of all others who make the ſame confeſſion.

All theſe perſons, then, when they confeſſed Jeſus to be the Son of God, meant no more than that he was the Chriſt. And if this be the meaning of the phraſe in the goſpels, it is likely to be the meaning of it in the epiſtles.

But by the Chriſt, or Meſſiah, the Jewiſh people meant a man who had the ſpirit without meaſure, or in a greater meaſure than any of the prophets: a man, endowed from above with power, wiſdom and underſtanding ſuperior to all others, knowing the whole will of God, and appointed by the Father to reveal it, and capable of accompliſhing all the great deſigns for which he ſhould be ſent.

II. I am now to ſhow in the ſecond place the deſign of this meſſage of Chriſt to his diſciples, and in what ſenſe God is alſo their and our God and Father. *Go to my diſciples, and ſay unto them, I aſcend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God.*

1. The meaning of theſe words is this: 'I am now about 'to leave this earth, and am going to heaven, the place of 'the more eſpecial preſence and reſidence of God, and where 'are the brighteſt manifeſtations of his glory.' This, I ſay, appears to be the obvious and direct ſenſe of the words, that Jeſus was now ſhortly to aſcend to the bleſſed abode, the regions of the heavenly world.

2. Our Lord intends by this meſſage to his diſciples, to carry their thoughts to the things of another world, even to things ſpiritual and heavenly.

Upon our Lord's revival, and coming again among them, their fond expectations of a kingdom in this world might again take place. But our Lord, before he ſhows himſelf to them (as he neceſſarily muſt do to give them evidences of his reſurrection) deſires to prevent ſuch low conceptions, and falſe imaginations.

Whither he went, or was to go, was a queſtion that had been often ſtarted in the courſe of his miniſtry: and it was a tender and affecting point. If he had left Judea, provided he would have ſet up a kingdom and government full of ſplendour, eaſe and riches, men would have followed him, though to the greateſt diſtance. To have left the land of Iſrael, to go and teach Gentiles, and Jews diſperſed among Gentiles, in the ſame way that he had taught men in Judea, would have been offenſive and diſagreeable to many. But for him, who took upon himſelf the character of the Meſſiah, to ſpeak of leaving this earth, and be no longer viſible here,

was

was exceeding diſcouraging; for it overthrew all hopes of a life in worldly eaſe and proſperity under him; which had been the expectation of carnal minds.

Let us obſerve the paſſages of St. John's goſpel, where this inquiry appears; and we ſhall find, that our Lord himſelf gave occaſion to it, and endeavoured by what he ſaid of his going away, to deſtroy that expectation which was ſo prejudicial to juſt ſentiments concerning himſelf and the things of religion.

John vii. 32—36. *The phariſees heard that the people murmured ſuch things concerning him: and the phariſees and chief prieſts ſent officers to take him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto them: yet a little while I am with you: and then I go unto him that ſent me. Ye ſhall ſeek me, and ſhall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come. Then ſaid the Jews among themſelves, whither will he go, that we ſhall not find him? Will he go unto the diſperſed among the gentiles, and teach the gentiles? What manner of ſaying is this that he ſaid: ye ſhall ſeek me, and ſhall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?*

And ch. viii. 20—23. *Theſe things ſpake Jeſus in the treaſury, as he taught in the temple.... Then ſaid Jeſus again unto them: I go my way, and ye ſhall ſeek me, and ſhall die in your ſins. Whither I go ye cannot come.... And he ſaid unto them, ye are from beneath. I am from above. Ye are of this world. I am not of this world.*

Ch. xiii. 33. *Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye ſhall ſeek me. And as I ſaid unto the Jews, whither I go, ye cannot come: ſo now ſay I unto you....* Ver. 36. *Simon Peter ſaid unto him, Lord, whither goeſt thou? Jeſus anſwered him, whither I go, thou canſt not follow me now; but thou ſhalt follow me afterwards.*

Ch. xiv. 1—6. *Let not your hearts be troubled.... In my Father's houſe are many manſions.... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myſelf, that where I am, there ye may be alſo: and whither I go, ye know: and the way you know. Thomas ſaith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goeſt: and how can we know the way?* Such was their remaining ignorance, occaſioned by the prejudices which they laboured under. *Jeſus ſaith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life:* and what there follows.

Once more, ch. xvi. 5, 6. *But now I go my way unto him that ſent me: and none of you aſketh me, whither goeſt thou? But becauſe I have ſaid theſe things unto you, ſorrow has filled*

*your heart.* They had ſometimes before put that queſtion to him. But they did not yet fully comprehend his anſwers. And it would have been agreeable to him, if they had now given him occaſion to ſpeak again of the place whither he was going; eſpecially if they had by their inquiries manifeſted an increaſe of knowledge, and a growing eſteem and affection for heavenly things.

This meſſage therefore our Lord now ſends to his diſciples immediately after his reſurrection, before he ſhewed himſelf perſonally to any of them. 'I am indeed riſen 'from the dead. I who was dead, am alive again. But 'let not therefore any fond thoughts ariſe in the minds 'of any of you. I am ſoon to leave this world, and go 'to him that ſent me, as I often told you formerly. *I 'aſcend to my Father, and your Father: to my God, and your 'God.*'

This meſſage was altogether worthy of our Lord. And it was exceedingly ſuited to produce a ſerious and attentive frame in the minds of his diſciples, and to carry their thoughts from the things of this world, however engaging to thoſe of another.

3. Our bleſſed Lord intended by this meſſage to comfort and ſtrengthen his diſciples by aſſurances of a like glory and happineſs with what was allotted to himſelf.

*I go to my Father*, ſays he, *and to your Father, to my God, and your God.* 'I am raiſed up to life. So likewiſe ſhall all 'they be in due time who believe in me, and follow, 'and obey me. To all ſuch the Father will by me give 'eternal life.'

Our Lord proved a reſurrection to the phariſees from God's having called himſelf *the God of Abraham, and Iſaac and Jacob.*

Our Lord had been now declared to be the Son of God by his reſurrection. Herein God had ſhewn himſelf a Father to him. He here ſays to his diſciples, that God is not only his God and Father, but theirs alſo. Thereby he aſſures them of a reſurrection to life, to die no more, and of their partaking of glory and happineſs like his. Then their ſonſhip, and God's fatherly love and care for them, will be manifeſt. So ſays our Lord. *Neither can they die any more. For they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the reſurrection,* Luke xx. 36.

Whilſt

Whilſt our Lord was yet with the diſciples, and before he took his leave of them, he ſaid: *I go to prepare a place for you, If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myſelf: that where I am, there ye may be alſo,* John xiv. 2, 3. and afterwards, ver. 19. *Becauſe I live, ye ſhall live alſo.*

Thus we ſee at once, how God is not only the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but alſo how he is the God and Father of his diſciples and people. He is the Son of God, and God is his Father, in a ſenſe peculiar to himſelf. He is their elder brother, and the firſt-born from the dead, and has in all things the pre-eminence. They likewiſe are dear to God, as children: they have been born of God, they are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt. And they have an inheritance. It is in the heavenly manſions of their Father's houſe with Chriſt, who is their head and Lord.

4. In this meſſage to the diſciples our Lord might intend to encourage their expectation of the fulfilment of the promiſe of the gift of the ſpirit, to enlighten them, and qualify them for the difficult work, to which he had called and appointed them: a thing which he had often ſpoken of, eſpecially when he diſcourſed of his leaving them. *Nevertheleſs, I tell you the truth. It is expedient that I go away: for if I go not away the comforter will not come. But if I depart I will ſend him unto you,* John xvi. 7, 8.

Application. I ſhall add a thought or two by way of reflection.

Admirable are the condeſcenſion and the goodneſs of the Lord Jeſus. *Go to my brethren, and ſay unto them: I aſcend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God.*

Jeſus is riſen from the dead to die no more. He nevertheleſs calls his diſciples, as yet in a ſtate of affliction and trial, brethren. They had accompanied him in his temptation. And he ſtill calls them brethren. We therefore need not ſcruple to eſteem and call them our brethren, who in ſome reſpects are inferior to us.

The goodneſs of Jeſus is alſo very admirable. The diſciples had lately failed in their regard to him, and left him alone in his hour of diſgrace. Nevertheleſs, when riſen from the dead, and death has no longer any power over him, nor are any of the afflictions of this life able to reach him,

him, he sends them this message full of affection and tenderness. It is not a threatening, it is not an upbraiding message, but encouraging and cheering.

We should not abuse his goodness. But if we are sincere, let us hope, that Jesus, who knows all things, will not reject us for unallowed failings and neglects.

And let us also be willing to own others for our brethren, who are not perfect, but are defective, and fail, though sincere, in an hour of temptation: and let us do what we can to strengthen and comfort them.

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# SERMON VIII.

## CHRIST'S POVERTY OUR RICHES.

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2 COR. viii. 9.

*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

THESE words lie among divers arguments, which the apostle offers to the Corinthians, to induce them to a liberal contribution for the relief of the poor saints in Judea. And these words may be considered as containing an argument to generosity therein. Or, whilst they contain indeed a very powerful motive to liberality, and to every good work; they may be considered as exhibiting to these christians a reason, why the apostle need not press their liberality to the utmost, by the use of many arguments, they being already acquainted with a very forcible inducement. *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

However, it is not my design at this time to consider the words, particularly with regard to their connection, or to excite your liberality to any contribution. I now treat of them, as a remarkable and distinguished part of the portion of scripture, read this morning in our ordinary course, and as likely to furnish meditations suitable to the solemnity of the Lord's supper to be this day administred among us.

In

In the words are ſeveral things obſervable.

I. The riches of Chriſt.

II. His poverty.

III. The moving cauſe and conſideration of his *becoming poor*, which was our benefit: or *that by his poverty we might be rich.*

IV. How Chriſt's poverty conduces to our riches.

V. *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in becoming poor, that we might be rich.*

I. In the firſt place we are to obſerve the riches of Chriſt. Hereby is meant the great dignity of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the mighty power, which he was poſſeſſed of, and his command over all things. In a text very parallel with this the apoſtle ſpeaks of Chriſt being *in the form of God*, Philip. ii. 6. In another place he ſays, *in him dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily*, Col. ii. 9. that is, really: not as in the temple of old at Jeruſalem, in a bright flame, or reſplendent glory, a viſible outward ſymbol of the divine preſence. But in him *dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Deity* really. He has divine knowledge, wiſdom and power. In Matt. i. 23. is applied to Jeſus the prophecy of Iſaiah concerning the birth of a child, of whom it was foretold: *they ſhall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.* And St. John at the beginning of his goſpel ſays: *The word was made fleſh*, or took human nature, *and dwelled among us. And we ſaw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

This is great riches. Let us alſo obſerve ſome of the proofs hereof. They are very evident in the life of Jeſus. In him appeared the knowledge of all things, of the thoughts and deſigns of men, things done formerly, in private, and things future. He had likewiſe all power for healing diſeaſes, raiſing the dead, and for reſtraining his enemies when he ſaw fit. He commanded the winds and the waves, and they obeyed him. He multiplied ſmall proviſions for the ſupply of great multitudes: and he ſpake as man never ſpake, with perſpicuity and true ſublimity, to the admiration of the people, to the conviction of ſome of his enemies, and the ſurpriſe of others of them.

II. The next particular is our Lord's poverty. *He became poor.* In this expreſſion two things are implied: firſt that he was poor, and then, that he was ſo willingly, and with his own conſent.

Firſt,

Firſt, Jeſus Chriſt was poor. Hereby is meant by the apoſtle not only the being deſtitute of a large patrimony, or plentiful income, and many accommodations, but all the mean circumſtances of our Lord's outward condition.

However, he was poor in the literal ſenſe of the word. He deſcended from the family of David, when it was in a low eſtate; and when he appeared in his public character, he had no ſettled habitation of his own. When one of the Jewiſh ſcribes cames to him, making an offer to follow him whitherſoever he went; our Lord recommended to him to conſider the conſequence of ſuch a reſolution: for, ſays he, *the ſon of man hath not where to lay his head*, Matt. viii. 20. There are many evidences of our Lord's poverty: for he ſubſiſted chiefly by the contributions of a few zealous friends and followers. When they came to him for the tribute-money, or the annual offering for the uſe of the temple at Jeruſalem, he ſeems not to have had of his own wherewith to pay it; and therefore rather than give offence by not paying it, he wrought a miracle for a ſupply.

But by the poverty mentioned in the text, we are farther to underſtand all the many ſufferings and inconveniences to which our Lord was expoſed in this world, as a perſon in mean circumſtances: the ingratitude of ſome, whom he had obliged by very valuable benefits, the neglect of many, who pay regard not to merit, but to wealth and outward ſhow and appearance: the ſcorn of the great and powerful, the frequent contradictions and continual oppoſitions which he met with from the ſcribes and phariſees, and the chief prieſts, and the rulers, and all the pain and ignominy of his death.

That all this may be juſtly underſtood to be comprized in this expreſſion of the text, may be concluded from the parallel place before referred to. *Who being in the form of God, made himſelf of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a ſervant: . . . and being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs*, Philip. ii. 6—8.

Secondly, All this poverty was free and voluntary. Though he was rich, *for your ſakes he became poor*: or, in the words juſt cited, *he made himſelf of no reputation.*

That our Lord's poverty, and all the inconveniences attending it, and all the ſufferings he underwent, as a man, mean, and deſpiſed of the people, were freely ſubmitted to,

to, is apparent. When he wrought a miracle for the ſake of the tribute-money, he carried it no farther than an immediate ſupply for that one particular exigence; though he therein ſhowed a command over all nature. The two miracles of the loaves, when he multiplied ſmall proviſions, are another clear demonſtration that he could have abounded in all good things if he had pleaſed. How he declined all worldly power and ſplendour, is evident from his ſhunning, and diſappointing thoſe who would have had him aſſume regal ſtate and authority. *When Jeſus therefore perceived,* ſays the evangeliſt, *that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himſelf alone,* John vi. 18. And when, for the good of his diſciples, he ſpake to them before-hand of his laſt ſufferings, and Peter ſaid, *Be it far from thee, Lord, this ſhall not be unto thee,* Matt. xvi. 22. he repreſſed that apoſtle, as a ſeducer and tempter, with marks of great diſpleaſure and reſentment. *He turned, and ſaid unto Peter, get thee behind me, ſatan, thou art an offence unto me: for thou ſavoureſt not the things that be of God, but thoſe that be of men,* ver. 23. And when thoſe ſufferings were near at hand, and Peter began to make reſiſtance, that he might not be apprehended by the Jewiſh officers, he ſaid to him: *The cup, which my Father has given me to drink, ſhall I not drink it?* John xviii. 11. And, *Thinkeſt thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he ſhould preſently give me more than twelve legions of angels?* Matt. xxvi. 53.

That is the ſecond thing, Chriſt's poverty, and the cheerfulneſs with which he ſubmitted to it, and to all the inconveniences attending it.

III. The next thing obſervable in the words of the text is the moving cauſe of it, or the end aimed at and propoſed in this poverty, which is our benefit, that we might be rich.

I need not ſay, that hereby is not particularly intended earthly riches: that the perſons, to whom St. Paul is writing, or others, followers of Jeſus, might have a great deal of wealth, or large eſtates, and worldly pomp and honour. There is no reaſon to doubt, that uſually, or however very frequently, good Chriſtians may have an equal ſhare of worldly good things with other men, by the practice of the virtues of ſobriety, diligence, prudence and moderation, which his doctrine recommends: nevertheleſs that is not what is here particularly intended, but ſomewhat higher.

Any

Any thing that is valuable may be repreſented by riches, for which men ordinarily have a great eſteem. This language is common in profane authors of the beſt note, as well as in the ſacred writings. They who are wiſe, whatever is their outward condition, are reckoned rich in ſome ſenſe by the judicious. In the figurative ſtile of Solomon, in the book of Proverbs, Wiſdom there ſays: *Riches and honour are with me, yea durable riches and righteouſneſs. My fruit is better than gold, yea than fine gold, and my revenue than choice ſilver. I lead in the way of righteouſneſs, in the midſt of the paths of judgment: that I may cauſe thoſe that love me to inherit ſubſtance: and I will fill their treaſures*, Prov. viii. 18, 19.

It is in this ſublime and exalted ſenſe, that the apoſtle ought to be here underſtood, when he ſays, *for your ſakes Chriſt became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.* For this is agreeable to his ſtile in other places. So he ſays to the Corinthians, *I thank my God always in your behalf, that in every thing ye are enriched by him in all utterance, and in all knowledge*, 1 Cor. i. 4, 5. In like manner in the ſeventh verſe of this chapter, wherein is the text: *Therefore as ye abound in every thing, in faith, in utterance, and in knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, ſee that ye abound in this grace alſo.*

There are ſeveral branches of this kind of riches, with which Chriſtians are enriched by Jeſus Chriſt, and which he propoſed to enrich them with. There are riches of knowledge and underſtanding in divine things, riches of virtue and holineſs, riches of good works, riches of inheritance, riches of comfort, and riches of future glory and happineſs.

Firſt, There are the riches of knowledge and underſtanding in divine things. This is a fundamental bleſſing, on which many others depend. *In Chriſt are hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge*, Col. ii. 3. From his fulneſs Chriſtians have received. They gain by him a clearer knowledge of God, and the way of ſerving him, and approving themſelves to him, than others have, or than they had, before they had heard of him and had learned of him. Says the apoſtle to the Galatians: *But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements?* Gal. iv. 9. They have juſter notions of the future ſtate of recompenſes, than others. Through Chriſt, theſe Corinthians, and other gentiles, had gained

gained a clearer and more delightful knowledge, and fuller aſſurances concerning the wiſdom, goodneſs and mercy of God, and many other religious truths, than they had before.

Secondly, There are alſo the riches of graces or virtues, the trueſt riches in the world, and the moſt valuable of all attainments. Such as the love of God and our neighbour, moderation for earthly things, meekneſs, patience, gentleneſs, long-ſuffering, the government of ourſelves and all our paſſions. To have theſe virtuous diſpoſitions, eſpecially to excel in them, is great riches. St. James ſpeaks of ſome, who were *rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promiſed to them that love him*, Jam. ii. 5. Chriſt has become poor, and has given himſelf for us, that we might have theſe riches of virtue and holineſs, and that we might abound therein, excelling in love, meekneſs, patience, zeal, and fortitude of mind in the profeſſion of truth, and the practice of virtue.

Farther, thirdly, There are the riches of good works, when the virtuous diſpoſitions, juſt mentioned, are exerciſed, and ſhow themſelves in their proper fruits. St. Paul requires Timothy, to *charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate*, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. He himſelf is here exhorting the Corinthians to be rich in that way. And at the beginning of this chapter he commends the churches of Macedonia for the riches of their liberality.

4. There are alſo the riches of inheritance, or expectation. And Chriſt became poor for this end, that we might be entitled to a glorious and heavenly inheritance. Though gentiles, once afar off, we through Chriſt have been brought nigh unto God, and admitted into his family, and made children. *And if children, then heirs*, ſays St. Paul, *and joint heirs with Chriſt*, Rom. viii. 17. And St. James: *Has not God choſen the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom: which he has promiſed to them that love him*, Jam. ii. 5. So Chriſtians are rich in hope and expectation.

5. Conſequently, they are likely to be rich in comforts. Since their expectations are vaſt, and alſo well founded, they have ſources of conſolation, which cannot eaſily fail. In every condition, whether they want, or abound, as to earthly goods, they will enjoy contentment, and in all their tribulations have peace and comfort. As St. Paul ſays:

*Therefore*

*Therefore being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. By whom alſo we have acceſs into this grace . . and rejoice in hope of the glory of* God. *And not only ſo, but we glory in tribulations alſo,* Rom. v. *beg.* eſpecially when they happen on account of ſervices for the intereſt of true religion: *knowing, that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. And hope maketh not aſhamed, becauſe the love of God is ſhed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghoſt, which is given to us.*

6. The riches, which the apoſtle here ſpeaks of, muſt include alſo the riches of future glory and happineſs. And that is true riches, a treaſure laid up in heaven, liable to no violence, nor accidents, nor decays. They, who according to the directions of Chriſt, and his apoſtles, ſeek the kingdom of heaven and its righteouſneſs in the firſt place, who rightly improve their preſent advantages, *doing good, and being rich in good works, lay up for themſelves in ſtore a good foundation,* or a good treaſure, *againſt the time to come, and will obtain eternal life,* 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19.

Thus Chriſt *became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich,* in religious knowledge, in virtue, in good works, in the hope and expectation of a heavenly inheritance, in contentment, peace and comfort of mind now, and at length in glory, the perfection of holineſs and happineſs.

IV. It may be now fitly inquired by us: how does Chriſt's poverty conduce to our riches? It does ſo many ways.

For by Chriſt's living in this world in a mean condition we have better aſſurance of the reality of his miraculous works, and conſequently of the truth of his doctrine, than otherwiſe we ſhould have had. The evidence of them is now much more clear and credible, than it would have been if he had lived in ſplendour, and had enjoyed external power and authority. For in that caſe it might have been ſuſpected, that ſome were diſpoſed to aſcribe great works to him without ſufficient ground and reaſon. But now there is no pretence for ſuch a ſuſpicion.

As a teacher of the principles of true religion, a low and mean condition was on many accounts preferable, and more likely to ſubſerve the great ends which he had in view. And therefore he ſubmitted to it, and even choſe it.

Hereby he has been a pattern of all virtues, eſpecially the moſt difficult. In a word, he has given an example of

of virtue, ſuited to the afflicted, tempted ſtate and condition which we are in.

They of low rank are a large part of mankind. He has ſet a pattern of the virtues ſuited to their condition, meekneſs, patience, reſignation to the will of God, truſt in Divine Providence. Hereby alſo men of higher rank are inſtructed to be thankful, and uſeful in their ſtations. Moreover moderation for all earthly things is a diſpoſition neceſſary even for the richeſt and the greateſt. And they ought to be prepared for poverty, and every kind of abaſement: foraſmuch as no condition in this world is ſet above a liableneſs to the moſt ſurpriſing changes and viciſſitudes.

V. One thing more, which we are led to obſerve, is *the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt:* his goodneſs, his benevolence, his munificence in *becoming poor*, that others *might be rich.*

Ye know this, ſays the apoſtle. The Corinthians, and other Chriſtians of that time, had been acquainted with it by thoſe who had preached the goſpel to them. We know it likewiſe from the hiſtory of our Lord's life, recorded in the goſpels, and from the enlargements upon the ſubject of the love of Chriſt, which we find in the epiſtles of his apoſtles.

We may know it alſo by the conviction we have of the great difference between wealth and poverty, the advantages of the one, and the diſadvantages and inconveniences of the other; the reſpect and homage paid to the one, the contempt and neglect which are often the portion of the other. We know it by obſerving, how ſeldom reſpect and eſteem can be ſecured by the moſt exalted virtue, and the moſt uſeful ſervices of men of low condition. And we ſee, what oppoſition our Lord met with, what contradictions he endured in the courſe of his miniſtry; which might have been prevented, if he had been in power and authority: if he had not choſen to be in this world, and among his diſciples, as one that ſerveth, and to maintain this character to the end, and lay down his life for his ſheep, even thoſe of the people of Iſrael, and for thoſe who were not of that fold, but were afar off among the gentiles.

VI. Application. Let me now add a word or two by way of application.

1. We are all here furniſhed with a powerful motive to condeſcenſion, meekneſs, forbearance, and every virtue, con-

ducive to the welfare of our fellow creatures. *We know the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* We need not therefore to have frequent and earneſt admonitions to works of kindneſs. We have always at hand a conſideration, that may make us ready of ourſelves to every good work, as occaſions offer.

2. Let then every rational, every unprejudiced, and well diſpoſed mind, give honour and praiſe to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. What, and who is he, to whom Jeſus does not appear amiable in his words, in his works, and in the whole of his conduct? Is generoſity amiable in others? Why not in Jeſus, who has given the moſt extraordinary and unexceptionable proofs of that great virtue?

By his grace in becoming poor, we have been made rich. For to what elſe; or to whom, ſo much as to him, do we owe our juſt ſentiments in religion; or any meaſure of virtue which we have attained? To whom are we ſo much indebted as to him, for the comfort of our minds, for ſupport under afflictions, and for a well grounded hope of eternal life?

We may owe ſomething to reaſon. We alſo owe a great deal to revelation, eſpecially to the revelation of the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, which he taught in a mean condition, and confirmed by his willing and patient death. We are indebted to the faith of Abraham, the ſelf-denial of Moſes, and to all the noble exploits of others, who have been animated by the principles of true religion. We are indebted to the devout and elegant compoſitions of king David, and the wiſe obſervations of his ſon Solomon, who alſo was king in Jeruſalem, and long reigned in great ſplendour. But we owe a great deal more to Jeſus Chriſt, who was crucified, and afterwards roſe from the dead.

When all the maxims of mere philoſophy never proceeded ſo far, as to make one province or city of philoſophers: when the law of Moſes, with a magnificent temple, and a well endowed prieſthood, could ſcarcely keep one ſingle nation ſteady in the worſhip of the true God, or from falling into all the abominations of the groſſeſt idolatry; in a ſhort time after the preaching of the croſs of Chriſt, multitudes of people turned from idols to ſerve the living and true God: and many ſocieties of men, profeſſing the principles of true religion, were formed and planted in diſtant parts of the world: till many of the kingdoms of the earth became the kingdoms of our God, and his Chriſt.

Some

Some have been apt to raiſe diſputes concerning the powers and intereſts of reaſon and revelation, which might have been reconciled. Applicable here ſeems to be the wiſe anſwer, which our Lord gave to an enſnaring queſtion. *Render*, ſays he, *to Cæſar, the things that are Cæſar's; and to God the things that are God's.* In like manner, render to reaſon the things that are reaſon's, and to revelation the things that belong to it.

That it is very much owing to revelation, that true religion has been kept up in the world, appears from the deplorable ignorance of thoſe who have not had that advantage. How much we owe to the Chriſtian revelation, may be concluded from the ſwift progreſs of the principles of true religion, upon the preaching of Chriſt's apoſtles. *Where is the wiſe? where is the ſcribe? where is the diſputer of this world? Has not God made fooliſh the wiſdom of this world?* that is, does not all that wiſdom now appear very contemptible, as to its influence, when compared with the effect of the preaching of the goſpel of Chriſt? Indeed, it is he to whom we are indebted for all this riches. By the preaching of his goſpel we have been brought to the knowledge of the law and the prophets, and have learned the right exerciſe of our reaſon.

## SERMON IX.

### CHRIST'S FAREWELL WISH OF PEACE TO HIS DISCIPLES.

JOHN xiv. 27.

*Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives, give I unto you.*

THE text contains our Lord's valedictory bleſſing, which he leaves with his diſciples. And I now conſider it, as preparatory to a diſcourſe on the apoſtolical benediction, at the end of the ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians; hoping, that an explication of this text may lead us to the right meaning of the other.

I. I ſhall firſt ſhow, how we are to underſtand theſe words: *Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you.*

II. And then, wherein Chriſt's peace exceeds and ſurpaſſes *the peace which the world gives.*

I. I would endeavour to ſhow, how we are to underſtand theſe words: *Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you.*

The word *peace* is uſed in various ſenſes. A very common meaning of the word in our language, and often found likewiſe in ſcripture, is that of general quiet and tranquillity, in oppoſition to public war; or for private friendſhip and agreement, in oppoſition to ſtrife and contention among particular perſons. *There is*, ſays Solomon, *a time of peace, and a time of war*, Ecc. iii. 8. *He maketh peace in thy borders*, Pſ. cxlvii. 14. Where it denotes public and general quiet and tranquillity. In many other places it ſignifies private friendſhip and agreement, in oppoſition to ſtrife and contention. Our Lord directs his diſciples: *Have peace one with another*, Mark ix. 50. And St. Paul ſays, 2 Cor. xii. 11. *Be of one mind, live in peace.* And Rom. xii. 18. *If it be poſſible, as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all men.*

Peace is ſometimes equivalent to comfort and ſatisfaction of mind. Iſa. xxvi. 3. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whoſe mind is ſtayed upon thee.* Luke ii. 29. *Now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace.* So the word ſeems to be taken, Pſ. cxix. 65. *Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing ſhall offend them.* Prov. iii. 17. It is ſaid of wiſdom, or religion: *Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.* John xvi. 33. *Theſe things have I ſpoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye will have tribulation.* Rom. xv. 13. *Now the God of peace fill you with all joy and peace*, or all comfort and ſatisfaction of mind, *in believing.*

In the eaſtern languages peace is oftentimes the ſame as happineſs or proſperity. Pſ. cxxii. 6, 7. *Pray for the peace of Jeruſalem. They ſhall proſper, that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and proſperity within thy palaces.* And when the Jews were going captives into Babylon, they were required to pray for the peace of the city where they dwelt. By which undoubtedly is to be underſtood proſperity in general: not only tranquillity, or freedom from foreign wars, and inteſtine ſeditions and commotions, but likewiſe plenty of all good things, and freedom from calamitous circumſtances

ſtances of every kind. Iſa. xlviii. 18. *O that thou hadſt hearkened to my commandments. Then had thy peace been as a river*; that is, then thy wealth and proſperity would have been very great and remarkable.

This being a common ſenſe of the word among the eaſtern people, wiſhing peace was a very uſual form of ſalutation with them. In this manner David ſent his ſalutations or compliments to Nabal, by his ſervants: *Thus ſhall ye ſay to him, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thy houſe, and peace be unto all that thou haſt*, 1 Sam. xxv. 6. It is ſaid of Joſeph's brethren, that *they hated him, and could not ſpeak peaceably unto him*, Gen. xxxvii. 4. In the original it is: *they could not ſay, peace to him:* that is, when they met him, they could not perſuade themſelves to ſalute him, or ſay, *peace be unto thee.* Such grudging and envy were in their minds. This form of ſalutation was uſed by ſuperiors to inferiors, and likewiſe by inferiors to the greateſt. Ezra iv. 17. *Then ſent the king an anſwer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimſhi the ſcribe, ... and to the reſt of their companions beyond the river ... Peace: and at ſuch a time.* And Ezra v. 7. *The copy of the letter of Tatnai the governor, on this ſide the river.... They ſent a letter to Darius the king, wherein it was written: unto Darius the king: all peace.*

God himſelf is repreſented as adopting this manner of expreſſion. Jer. xvi. 5. *For I have taken away my peace from this people, ſaith the Lord, even loving-kindneſs and mercies.* As if he had ſaid: 'I now withdraw from you my bleſſing, 'and no longer concern myſelf for your welfare and proſ-'perity.'

I may add here a few other inſtances. Our Lord directs his diſciples. *And into whatſoever houſe ye enter, firſt ſay, peace be to this houſe*, Luke x. 5. Our Lord himſelf, when he came again among his diſciples, after his reſurrection, ſaluted them in the like manner. *The ſame day at evening came Jeſus, and ſtood in the midſt, and ſaith unto them, peace be unto you*, John xx. 19.

Such then was the common form of ſalutation. The farewell wiſh at parting was much the ſame. *Then Eli ſaid unto Hannah, go in peace, and the God of Iſrael grant thee thy petition that thou haſt aſked of him*, 1 Sam. i. 17. So the prophet Eliſha ſays to Naaman, *go in peace*, 2 Kings v. 19.

It may be here obſerved, that ſometimes the ſame expreſſion is uſed by way of farewell, as in the ſalutation. St.

Peter concludes his first epistle: *Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus.* So it is in our translation: but in the original it is exactly thus: *Peace to you all that are in Christ Jesus.* Ειρηνη υμιν πασι κ. λ. And St. Paul near the conclusion of his epistle to the Ephesians, ch. vi. 23. *Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

However, by comparing the salutations at the beginning, and the valedictions at the end of the epistles, in the New Testament, we seem to learn that it was common to begin with praying that grace and mercy might be to persons: and to conclude with a wish, that the same blessings might be with them; meaning thereby, as I apprehend, that they might remain and abide with them. So Philip. i. 2. the salutation is, *Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* The concluding wish or farewell, c. iv. 23. is: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.* And Col. i. 2. *Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* The valediction, at the end of the epistle, is, *Grace be with you.*

Complying with the common forms, our Lord here gives his blessing to the disciples in a like manner, and says, *Peace I leave with you.* 'I wish you all happiness. I leave and 'bequeath it to you: and remember, it is my valedictory 'blessing.' *My peace I give unto you.* 'Nor do I only wish, 'but I actually give and impart happiness to you, provided 'you are desirous of it, and careful to obtain it.' Or, he† repeats the same wish, as we sometimes do at parting, saying, *Farewell, farewell:* or, *again and again I wish you all happiness.*

II. Which brings us to the other point to be considered by us: wherein Christ's peace exceeds and surpasses the peace which the world gives.

It may imply these several things. Christ's wish of peace is more sincere, more fervent, more valuable, and more effectual than that of the world.

1. Christ's wish of peace is more sincere.

Men's wishes of happiness are sometimes, formal only, an empty sound, mere words, and nothing else: a compliment

† Bis autem eundem sensum repetit, sicut dicere solemus: Vale, Vale. Grot. in loc.

performed

performed out of regard to cuſtom and faſhion, without any real love, or true deſire of the welfare of thoſe who are favoured with it. In this reſpect, Chriſt's peace exceeded that of the world. His farewell wiſh was not without thought and meaning. He was not unconcerned about the welfare of his diſciples. Their happineſs was not a thing indifferent to him. He truly loved them, and wiſhed them well. As St. John obſerves at the beginning of the thirteenth chapter of his goſpel: *Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them to the end.* He was continually giving them marks of affection for their welfare: and at this time he was as ſincere as ever.

2. Chriſt's wiſh of peace exceeds that of the world in the fervour and earneſtneſs, as well as in the truth and ſincerity of it.

It was not a cold, and faint deſire of their happineſs, but moſt fervent and earneſt. Otherwiſe he had not now concerned himſelf about his diſciples, when he was ſo near a time of bitter ſufferings.

Indeed Chriſt's love was very general and extenſive. *For God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth on him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life,* John iii. 16. He gave himſelf for *the life of the world,* John vi. 51. In his difficult and important undertaking, and every part of it, he had an eye to the recovery and ſalvation of all, even of all ſuch as were in darkneſs and ignorance, ſin and miſery. And certainly that love is very great and extraordinary, which produceth ſuch effects, and carries through the ſorrows of a painful and ignominious death.

In this general and fervent love the diſciples had their ſhare. He gave himſelf for them, as well as for others. But we may ſuppoſe, that in the days of his fleſh, during his abode on this earth, he had an eſpecial affection and tenderneſs for thoſe, whom he had called to be with him, and who had hearkened to that call. Before he gave them that call, they believed in him, and were diſciples in general, and had a reſpect for him as the expected Meſſiah. Such an idea they formed of him, founded upon the preaching of John the Baptiſt, and ſome diſcourſes with himſelf, compared with the prophecies of the ancient ſcriptures.

And now they had been with him a year or two, during the time of his public miniſtry. They perſevered in their faith and profeſſion, and attendance on him, notwith-

ſtanding the reflections caſt upon him, and upon them for his ſake. They were not free from defects and failings, which his all-diſcerning eye obſerved, and which he kindly took notice of to them. But they had ſhown a ſincere affection and reſpect for him, and an ardour for his honour and ſervice, which were very acceptable.

They were become more eſpecially his charge, and were as his family. As ſuch he is now retired with them, and has friendly and intimate converſation with them. And he takes his leave of them, as a parent does of his children, a little before his expected departure out of this world: or as ſome perſon of eminent ſtation and character, may do of his friends and dependents, or others, whom he has treated with ſpecial regard.

3. There is ſtill another very remarkable difference to be obſerved by us. Chriſt's peace ſurpaſſeth that of the world in real excellence and value.

His wiſh of peace is not only ſincere and fervent, but alſo wiſe and judicious, not weak, and fond, or partial.

What was the peace, which our Lord now gave, and left with his diſciples, we may clearly diſcern from the tenour of all his exhortations and teachings, public and private. He does not wiſh them the great things of this world, abundance of riches, honour and ſplendour: theſe are not the things which he wiſhes for them chiefly, and in the firſt place. He continually cautioned men againſt ſetting their affections upon ſuch things, and ſeeking them as their main happineſs. Undoubtedly, he wiſhes, that his friends and followers may fare well, and meet with a kind and friendly reception among men, and obtain other advantages and comforts, ſo far as they can be ſecured in the way of integrity and ſtrict virtue, and without abating the ardour of their zeal for the honour of God, and the intereſt of true religion, in all its branches. But he firſt of all deſires, that they may do well, and in the next place only, that they may fare well.

In this reſpect the peace of Chriſt differs very much from the peace of the world, and the men of it. The peace, which they uſually wiſh for thoſe, whom they love beſt, is made up of all the ingredients of a worldly felicity. They ſet a great value upon ſuch things themſelves. And therefore, when their love of others is ſincere and warm, they are very apt, earneſtly to deſire abundance of worldly goods for them.

But

But that is not true wiſdom. Solomon ſaid of old: *Fear God, and keep his commandments. For this is the whole* duty and intereſt *of man*, Eccl. xii. 13. Our Lord proceeds upon the ſame plan, only farther improved. As he ſays in this context, ver. 21. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me, ſhall be loved of my Father. And I will love him, and will manifeſt myſelf to him.* His precepts are very ſublime and ſpiritual, requiring purity of heart and life. His bleſſings and promiſes are ſuitable, even heavenly and eternal. And the deſires and purſuits of his diſciples and followers ſhould be anſwerable. *My ſheep hear my voice. And I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they ſhall never periſh. Neither ſhall any man pluck them out of my hands*, John x. 27, 28.

This bleſſing our Lord now gives to his diſciples. This peace he leaves with them, and wiſhes, and recommends it to them, to take care, that they fail not of it, and fall not ſhort of the everlaſting reſt, which remains for God's people. And if they act thus, all other things needful and convenient will be added.

Then they will have peace with God. God will not be an enemy to them, but will love and approve of them. And they will have a comfortable perſuaſion of his favour and acceptance. If they ſeek the kingdom of heaven, and its righteouſneſs in the firſt place; they will never contract ſuch friendſhip with this world, as would produce enmity with God.

Then they will have peace in their own minds. They will not eaſily do any thing, for which their own hearts ſhould afterwards reproach them: but will ſo act, as to enjoy a happy ſerenity and compoſure of mind.

They will be alſo free from tormenting, ambitious purſuits of the great things of this world, and will have ſatisfaction and contentment in every condition.

Says our Lord: *And ye now therefore have ſorrow. But I will ſee you again, and your heart ſhall rejoice. And your joy no man taketh from you*, John xvi. 22. This is a great advantage of the peace of religion, the peace, which our Lord gives, that it is durable. It is not to be broken in upon, and carried away, by every flood of affliction. It is not fleeting and inconſtant, like worldly peace and joy, depending upon advantages, paſſing and fading. But it reſembles

reſembles the rock, upon which it is built, the hope of everlaſting life, which God has promiſed to them that love him, and keep his commandments. The earneſt deſire and ſteady purſuit of that, above all things elſe, muſt produce great and conſtant peace. For whatever we loſe, this great bleſſing is ſure, if we do not forfeit it by wilful diſobedience and tranſgreſſion.

This is a bleſſed peace. St. Paul ſpeaks of the peace of God, as *paſſing all underſtanding*, Philip. iv. 7. It includes advantages, not eaſy to be apprehended by ſuch as have had no experience of it.

There is a paſſage of a gentile philoſopher, who lived in the Roman empire, ſoon after the riſe of the Chriſtian religion: whoſe ſtudy, as is ſuppoſed, was not ſo much the contemplation of the works of nature, as the rules of virtue, and who aimed to cultivate the manners of men. 'You †‡ perceive, ſays he, that the emperor gives you 'great peace, inaſmuch as there are no longer wars, and 'fightings, robberies and piracies, and you may travel ſafely 'from the eaſt to the weſt. But can he give you peace 'from fevers, from ſhipwreck, from fire, from earthquakes, 'from thunder? Can he give you peace from ambition? 'No, he cannot. From grief? No, he cannot. From 'envy? No, not from any ſuch things. But the doctrine 'of the philoſophers promiſes you peace from theſe alſo. 'And what ſays it? O ye men, if ye will hearken to 'me, then wherever you are, and whatever you are doing, 'you ſhall not be ſad, you ſhall not be angry, you ſhall 'be free from tumultuous paſſions. He who has this peace, 'not proclaimed by Cæſar, (for how ſhould he proclaim 'ſuch peace?) but proclaimed by God, according to 'reaſon: he, I ſay, who has this peace, is he not happy? 'Has he not, wherewith he may be ſatisfied?"

So that Greek philoſopher. And indeed this is great peace: to ſuffer afflictions, and not to be depreſſed by them: to meet with provocations and injuries, and not to be angry: to behold others preferred and advanced before us, and above us, and to be free from envy: to obſerve the practices of the crafty and deſigning, and not to admit within our breaſts vexatious and tormenting jealouſy: to live in a world, where ſome things are deſirable,

†‡ Arrian. Epict. l. 3. cap. 13.

others

others grievous: and to be free from uneaſy and tumultuous affections: not too much deſiring the one, nor too much fearing and dreading the other.

This is great peace. Nor is there any ſo likely to give it, as Chriſt.

4. Which brings us to the fourth particular: Chriſt's peace, or wiſh of peace and happineſs, excels the peace of the world, as being more effectual.

He was to be ſoon parted from his diſciples by death. But he would ſee them again. And if he lived, they ſhould live alſo. John xiv. 19.

His doctrine, his life, his death, his reſurrection and exaltation, tended mightily to confirm the faith and hope of eternal life; which would engage their affections for things heavenly, and take them off from things ſenſible and temporal: and thereby lay a foundation for peace and comfort, amidſt all the viciſſitudes of the preſent condition. And all they who believe in Jeſus, and attend to his doctrine and example, have like advantages with thoſe who converſed perſonally with him.

III. Application. I now conclude with a few reflections by way of application.

1. We may here obſerve, that our bleſſed Lord is great and admirable every where, and upon all occaſions. We diſcern his moſt excellent temper and conduct in private and in public, with his diſciples, and when retired from the world, as well as at other ſeaſons.

2. Our Lord's conduct here, as well as upon other occaſions, deſerves our attention, and imitation.

Being about to be removed from his diſciples by death, he takes leave of them in an affectionate manner. He gives them a valedictory bleſſing: or leaves with them a legacy and preſent of peace. Conceive it either way, it makes no great difference. Nor let us be concerned about imitating him in form only. Let our peace, as his did, exceed that of the world. Let our peace, our wiſhes of happineſs to others, be more ſincere, more fervent, more valuable, and more effectual, than that of moſt men. Eſpecially let us attend to the third property, more valuable and important. Let us be above all things deſirous, that they, whom we love in the fleſh, may ſeek heavenly things in the firſt place. And if we ſet them an example of moderation for earthly things, as our Lord did, and at the ſame time

time are concerned for their temporal welfare, as for our own, and practise frugality, diligence and application: this will be the way to render our wishes for those who are dear to us, advantageous and effectual. Hereby we shall leave, and give to them that peace, which we wish and desire may be their portion: provided they do their part, and are not wanting to themselves.

3. Lastly, Let us each one reflect upon ourselves. Have we that peace, which Christ gave to his disciples? If not, let us inquire what is the reason of it: for, as our Lord said to his disciples; when they wished peace or prosperity to any house into which they entered, *if the son of peace be there, their peace should rest upon it*, Luke x. 5, 6. In like manner, if we are true disciples of Jesus, if we love him, and keep his commandments, *his peace will rest upon us.* But if we are not humble: if we are not meek and self-denying, as he has required us to be: if we are proud and aspiring: if our prevailing aims and desires are selfish and worldly, without any fruits of generous love: we are not sons of peace, or Christ's disciples; nor does his peace belong unto us.

However, having once found where our fault or defect lies, let us be willing and careful to amend it. So wrath shall not abide upon us, but we may become sons of peace. We shall then enjoy comfort and peace of mind now, and hereafter enter into that undisturbed and everlasting rest and peace, which remain for all the people of God, of all places, and of all times. Amen.

# SERMON X.

## THE APOSTOLICAL BENEDICTION.

2 COR. xiii. 14.

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.*

I AM not insensible of the difficulty of the subject, and that, possibly, what shall be proposed may not be satisfactory

tory to all. I have been deſirous, nevertheleſs, to explain this apoſtolical benediction; which is very often, though not always, and conſtantly, made uſe of in our aſſemblies, at the concluſion of our ſolemn and public worſhip.

As every word in it may require diſtinct obſervation, ſo there may be reckoned to be ſome ſpecial difficulty in ſettling the preciſe meaning of the laſt phraſe, *the communion of the Holy Ghoſt:* which is not found at the concluſion of any other of the epiſtles in the New Teſtament. And it is queſtioned by ſome, whether it does not intend thoſe miraculous gifts which were then common, but were peculiar to the early ages of Chriſtianity, and have for a long time ceaſed in the church. If that be the direct, and the ſole and only meaning of the expreſſion; then it will be argued, that this benediction, in all its fulneſs, cannot be fitly uſed in our aſſemblies in theſe times. For it is not reaſonable to aſk for ourſelves, nor to wiſh and pray for others, ſuch things, as we have no ground to hope for, and which the circumſtances of things in the world declare and manifeſt, that it is not the good will and pleaſure of God to beſtow. As this is a main difficulty in the words, we ſhould have a particular eye to it.

In order the better to conceive diſtinctly of this matter, I ſhall mention theſe ſeveral following propoſitions.

I. It will be of uſe to compare this with the farewell, or valedictory wiſhes and benedictions at the end of the other epiſtles of the apoſtles.

I begin with thoſe in the two epiſtles to the Theſſalonians, which ſeem to be the firſt written epiſtles of St. Paul, and the moſt early ſcriptures of the New Teſtament.

1 Theſſ. v. 28. *The Grace of our Lord Jeſus be with you all.* 2 Theſſ. iii. 17, 18. *The ſalutation of Paul with my own hand, which is the token in all my epiſtles. So I write. The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you all. Amen.*

And exactly the ſame in Rom. xvi. 24. *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you all.* And before in ch. xv. 13. he had ſaid: *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.* And ver. 33. *Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.* And ch. xvi. 20. *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you. Amen.*

1 Cor. xvi. 23, 24. *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you. My love be with you all in Chriſt Jeſus. Amen.*

Gal.

Gal. vi. 18. *Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with your ſpirit.*

Eph. vi. 23, 24. *Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Grace be with all that love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity. Amen.*

Philip. iv. 23. *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you all. Amen.*

Col. iv. 18. *The ſalutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.*

1 Tim. vi. 21. *Grace be with thee. Amen.*

2 Tim. iv. 22. *The Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with thy ſpirit. Grace be with you. Amen.*

Tit. iii. 15. *All that are with me ſalute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.*

Philem. ver. 25. *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with your ſpirit. Amen.*

Heb. xiii. 25. *Grace be with you all. Amen.*

In the epiſtle of St. James there is nothing very ſolemn, either at the beginning, or the end. What he ſays at the beginning is this: *To the twelve tribes, which are ſcattered abroad, greeting.*

1 Pet. v. 13, 14. *The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, ſaluteth you, and ſo doth Marcus my ſon. Greet ye one another with a kiſs of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Chriſt Jeſus. Amen.*

There is no ſalutation at the end of the ſecond epiſtle of St. Peter.

St. John's third epiſtle concludes thus: *Peace be to thee. The brethren ſalute thee. Greet the friends by name.*

Rev. xxii. 21. *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you all. Amen.*

Theſe are the concluſions, or the valedictory bleſſings, of the ſeveral epiſtles of the New Teſtament. Whereby we perceive, that none is more frequent, than that of *the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you.* Sometimes it is ſhorter: *Grace be with you all.* Or *the God of peace be with you:* or *peace be with you all that are in Chriſt Jeſus.*

II. It may be of uſe to compare the valedictions at the end with the ſalutations, which are at the beginning of the apoſtolical epiſtles.

For a valediction, or farewell, is nothing elſe, but a ſalutation at parting. The chief difference ſeems to be in the form, without much difference in the meaning. At meeting

ing it uſually is: *peace be to you.* At parting: *peace be with you*, or abide with you. Another ſmall difference may be obſerved. The wiſh at the end is more ſummary. Or, perhaps, there is none at all: the ſalutation at the beginning of a writing, or at firſt meeting, being reckoned ſufficient. Beſides that, poſſibly, in the midſt of your diſcourſe, or in the body of your epiſtle, or other writing, you have inſerted divers good wiſhes.

I ſhall now recite ſome of the ſalutations at the beginning of the epiſtles, and in the preſent order of the books of the New Teſtament. You will, in your own minds, compare them with the valedictions, or farewell wiſhes, at the end, which have been already recited.

Rom. i. 7. *To all that be at Rome.... Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

1 Cor. i. 3. *Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

2 Cor. i. 2. *Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

Gal. i. 3. *Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

So alſo Eph. i. 2. and Philip. i. 2. and Col. i. 2. and 1 Theſſ. i. 1. and 2 Theſſ. i. 2.

1 Tim. i. 2. *Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father, and Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* So alſo 2 Tim. i. 2.

Tit. i. 4. *Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour.*

Philem. ver. 3. *Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

In the epiſtle to the Hebrews there is no ſalutation at the beginning.

James i. 1.... *to the twelve tribes that are ſcattered abroad greeting.*

1 Pet. i. 2. *To the ſtrangers ſcattered throughout Pontus, Galatia,... grace unto you and peace be multiplied.*

2 Pet. i. 2. *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

In St. John's firſt epiſtle there is no ſolemn wiſh or prayer, either at the beginning, or the end. However at ver. 3. and 4. of ch. i. he ſays: *That which we have ſeen and heard declare we unto you, that ye alſo may have fellowſhip with us.... And theſe things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

2 John

2 John ver. 3. *Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*

3 John 2. *Beloved, I wiſh above all things, that thou mayeſt proſper, and be in health, even as thy ſoul proſpereth.*

Jude ver. 2. *Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.*

Rev. i. 4. *John to the ſeven churches in Aſia, grace be unto you, and peace, from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the ſeven ſpirits which are before the throne, and from Jeſus Chriſt the faithful witneſs.*

Theſe are the ſolemn wiſhes or ſalutations at the beginning of the apoſtolical epiſtles, as under the preceding head we ſaw their ſolemn wiſhes and benedictions at the end.

Before I leave this ſecond propoſition I would obſerve, that there is nothing ſolemn, but only, as it ſeems, common in the wiſhes or ſalutations in the epiſtle, written by the apoſtles and elders at the council of Jeruſalem. Acts xv. 23. *The apoſtles, and elders, and brethren, ſend greeting unto the brethren, which are of the gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia.* And the concluſion at ver. 29. is only this: *If ye keep yourſelves from theſe things, ye ſhall do well. Farewell.*

III. The wiſhes, prayers, or benedictions of the apoſtles at the end of their epiſtles, are deſigned for Chriſtians only.

Whether that be expreſſed or not, it is to be ſuppoſed, and underſtood. If St. Paul ſometimes ſays no more than *grace be with you all*, it may be reckoned equivalent to what is a more common form, the *grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you all.* Which can pertain to ſuch only, as make a profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, and are deſirous of his favour. And ſometimes this is expreſſed, as in St. Peter's firſt epiſtle. *Peace be with you all that are in Chriſt Jeſus.* And St. Paul at the end of his epiſtle to the Epheſians. *Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity*, that is, *in ſimplicity*: meaning, probably, ſuch as embraced and adhered to the true doctrine of Chriſt, without the additional obſervances of the law of Moſes, as neceſſary to ſalvation.

But if there be no limitation in the words of the benediction at the end of the epiſtles, (which, as before hinted, may be ſometimes conciſe and ſummary) the introductions to the epiſtles teach us, to whom all the reſt is directed, and to whom the bleſſings, or good wiſhes, at the end, do belong.

belong. For the epiſtles are all, or however all with very few exceptions, expreſsly addreſſed to believers. So: *To all that be at Rome, called to be ſaints. Unto the church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus, called to be ſaints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, both theirs and ours.... Unto the church of God, which is at Corinth, with all the ſaints that are in Achaia.* And in a like manner in other epiſtles. Beſide that the whole train of the arguments and exhortations ſhow them to be written to Chriſtians.

IV. The benedictions, or farewell wiſhes at the end of the epiſtles, which we are conſidering, are of a ſolemn kind, different from common ſalutations.

That they are not common greetings, is apparent at firſt ſight. This may be argued alſo from the concluſions of ſeveral of the epiſtles, where there is a common friendly ſalutation, beſide the ſolemn benediction. The firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians concludes in this manner. *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you. My love be with you all in Chriſt Jeſus.* The concluſion of the epiſtle to the Philippians is thus: *Salute every ſaint in Chriſt Jeſus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the ſaints ſalute you, chiefly they of Cæſar's houſehold. The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you all. Amen.* The laſt words of the epiſtle to Titus are: *All that are with me ſalute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.* Heb. xiii. 24, 25. *Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the ſaints. They of Italy ſalute you. Grace be with you all. Amen.* We might alſo argue from St. Paul's many ſalutations of particular perſons in the ſixteenth chapter of the epiſtle to the Romans. After which he ſhuts up all, ſaying: *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you all.*†‡†

V. The meaning of the valedictory prayer or benediction at the end of this ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians ſeems to be to this purpoſe: 'May the favour of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, 'and the love and good will of God be with you, and 'abide with you. And may you partake of all the bleſ-'ſings of the goſpel, with all good things needful for 'you.'

Let us obſerve each expreſſion.

†‡† If any find this Sermon too long to be read at once, here may be a good pauſe.

*The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* It is ſo well known, that the word, which we render grace, ſignifies favour, that there can be no need to prove it. Hereby then is to be underſtood all that is included in having the favour of Jeſus Chriſt.

*And the love of God.* 'And may you enjoy, and continue 'to have, the love, approbation, and good will of God: 'whoſe good will is the ſpring of all happineſs, natural and 'ſpiritual, temporal and eternal.'

*And the communion of the Holy Ghoſt be with you all.*

*Communion*, or fellowſhip. The word is uſed ſeveral times in the New Teſtament, and ſeems to ſignify one or other of theſe two things. Firſt, it ſometimes denotes *communication* or diſtribution. At other times it ſignifies partaking or *participation* of ſomewhat together with others.

Firſt, I ſay, it ſometimes denotes communication or contribution of ſomewhat to others. Rom. xv. 26. *It has pleaſed them of Macedonia, and Achaia, to make a certain contribution*, communion, communication, *for the poor ſaints at Jeruſalem.* It is the ſame word in the original, which is here rendered *communion.* 2 Cor. ix. 13. *Whilſt by the experiment of this miniſtration they glorify God....for your liberal diſtribution to them*, communion or communication, *and to all men.* Heb. xiii. 16. *But to do good, and to communicate forget not.* The Greek is literally thus: *But forget not well-doing, and communion*, or communication. For here too is the ſame word, which we have in the text. And the words are well rendered: *But to do good, and to communicate, forget not.* Theſe inſtances, not to mention others, ſhow that the word does ſometimes ſignify communication, or diſtribution of ſome good to others.

It ſeems alſo to denote ſometimes participation with others in ſome good. 1 Cor. i. 9. *God is faithful, by whom ye were called to the fellowſhip* or communion *of his Son Jeſus Chriſt:* that is, to a participation of the bleſſings vouchſafed in and through Jeſus Chriſt. And 2 Cor. viii. 14. *What fellowſhip has light with darkneſs?* Gal. ii. 9. *They gave unto us the right hands of fellowſhip:* or admitted us to partake with them in the ſame office and work, in which they were engaged.

Thus it alſo ſignifies a participation of good things with others. And both theſe ſenſes may be included in the word, as uſed by St. John, and perhaps in ſome other places.

1 John i. 2. *That which we have ſeen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowſhip with us:* that is, that ye may have like privileges with us. *And truly our fellowſhip is with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt.* 'And indeed we 'are ſervants of God, and followers of Jeſus Chriſt, and 'have received moſt delightful and moſt valuable com-'munications from above.'

By the *Holy Ghoſt*, undoubtedly, is often meant in the New Teſtament, and throughout the ſcriptures, miraculous powers and gifts, or immediate inſpiration, and divine revelation, in an eſpecial manner. Acts vii. 5. St. Stephen, before the Jewiſh Council, ſays: *Ye do always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt.* Or, ye have been always wont to oppoſe and diſobey the divine revelations, and the meſſengers ſent to you with them. As ye have now reſiſted Chriſt, ſo did your fathers the prophets in former times.

It is ſaid in St. John's goſpel, ch. vii. 39. that the *Holy Ghoſt was not yet given, becauſe Jeſus was not yet glorified:* meaning, that the miraculous powers and gifts, deſigned to be beſtowed upon the apoſtles, and others, who believed in Jeſus, were not yet vouchſafed to them: the plentiful effuſion of ſuch gifts having been deferred, till after Chriſt's aſcenſion, as an evident proof of it to all. Acts ii. 4. *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other tongues, as the ſpirit gave them utterance.* And it is well known, that miraculous gifts, in ſome degree and proportion, were beſtowed upon moſt believers at that time. Acts v. 32. Peter, and the other apoſtles before the Jewiſh council: *And we are his witneſſes of theſe things. And ſo is alſo the Holy Ghoſt, whom God hath given to them that obey him.*

This is what the apoſtle may be thought to mean here: 'to wiſh, that theſe Chriſtians might continue to partake 'in miraculous gifts and powers.' And if that be the meaning, it is argued that this benediction, or farewell prayer, is confined to thoſe times, and cannot be reaſonably uſed now.

For farther clearing up this point therefore, and enabling all to judge of it, ſo far as I am able, I would obſerve, that words are not always uſed in their fulleſt ſenſe and meaning. If all believers in general at that time are ſpoken of as having the ſpirit, yet, as to moſt of them, it was in a much inferior degree and meaſure, than that of the apoſtles.

St. Paul ſays Col. i. 19. *It pleaſed the Father, that in him all fulneſs ſhould dwell.* In Eph. iii. 19. he prays for thoſe Chriſtians, that *they might be filled with all the fulneſs of God.* Nevertheleſs none can ſuppoſe, that he intends all the power and wiſdom that was in Chriſt. The context does not lead us to think, that the apoſtle intended any miraculous gifts at all. But he means, probably, what the evangeliſt John does, when he ſays ch. i. 16, 17. *And of his fulneſs have all we received, even grace for grace. For the law was given by Moſes, but grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt*: that is, the true grace of the goſpel, with which all Chriſtians ought to be well acquainted. And the apoſtle there prays particularly for the Epheſians, that they may be ſo.

In like manner, Eph. i. 17, 18. he prays for the ſame Epheſian Chriſtians, *that the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of glory, may give unto you the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: that the eyes of your underſtanding being enlightened, ye may know what is the hope of his calling.* And the reſt, which there follows. Not intending, I preſume, any new revelation, or immediate inſpiration, or the infuſing into them any wiſdom miraculouſly: but that in the right uſe of their reaſonable powers and faculties, and recollecting what they had heard from him, and other preachers of the goſpel, and attending to this his epiſtle, and other ſcriptures, or rightly improving any other means of religious knowledge, they might attain to and be ſettled in a right conception and underſtanding of the doctrine of the goſpel, as it had been revealed by Chriſt and his apoſtles. Upon this place Mr. Locke might be fitly conſulted.

Moreover, the phraſe, the Holy Ghoſt, is, I think, plainly uſed for ſpiritual good things in general. Luke xi. 9—13. *And I ſay unto you: aſk, and ye ſhall receive.... For every one that aſketh receiveth. If a ſon ſhall aſk bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a ſtone? Or if he aſk a fiſh, will he for a fiſh give him a ſerpent? Or, if he ſhall aſk an egg, will he offer him a ſcorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that aſk him?* Which in St. Matthew is expreſſed by good things. And I ſhall likewiſe recite that context largely, that all may the better judge, whether it is not exactly parallel. Mat. vii. 7—11. *Aſk, and it ſhall be given you.... For every one*

*that*

*that aſketh, receiveth. . . . Or what man is there of you, whom if his ſon ſhall aſk bread, will he give him a ſtone? Or, if he aſk a fiſh, will he give him a ſerpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more ſhall your Father which is in heaven, give good gifts to them that aſk him.*

Prov. i. 23. *Behold, I will pour out my ſpirit upon you. I will make known my words unto you.* It is not reaſonable to think, that thereby is meant inſpiration, in the higheſt meaning of the word. But only: 'If you will hearken unto me, and 'follow my counſels, you will attain to wiſdom, and good 'underſtanding.'

St. Paul ſays Eph. i. 3. *Bleſſed be God, which has bleſſed us with all ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus.* Which thankſgiving, I think, may be uſed by Chriſtians ſtill, though they have not exactly the ſame privileges with the Chriſtians of the apoſtolic age.

Nor is it uncommon for the apoſtle, near the concluſion of his epiſtles, to offer up prayers or wiſhes, in behalf of thoſe to whom he writes, for the ſpiritual bleſſings of the goſpel, or confirmation, and increaſe of virtue and holineſs, and likewiſe for all that happineſs, which was then generally included in the word peace, comprehending both temporal and ſpiritual bleſſings. Of this ſome inſtances may be taken notice of. Eph. vi. 23. *Peace be unto the brethren, and love, with faith from God the Father, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* 2 Theſſ. iii. 16. *Now the Lord of peace himſelf give you peace always, by all means. The Lord be with you all.* And in this very epiſtle, the ſecond to the Corinthians, the words near the concluſion may be obſerved. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. *Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace ſhall be with you.*

All theſe things may lead us to think, that this benediction needs not to be underſtood of miraculous gifts, and therefore may be ſtill uſed.

Let me propoſe ſome other obſervations. The firſt two particulars, *the grace of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the love of God,* may ſtill be deſired for all Chriſtians. Why then ſhould the third particular be eſteemed peculiar to ſome?

Farther, though the benediction at the end of this epiſtle is more particular, I apprehend, that it is no more than equivalent to thoſe in the other epiſtles. For when it is

ſaid *grace be with you*, or *the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you*, therein is included a wiſh of all needful bleſſings, ſuited to the circumſtances of Chriſtians at that time. And this has no more.

A frequent ſalutation at the beginning of St. Paul's epiſtles, as we have ſeen, is *Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*. But at the beginning of the epiſtles to Timothy and Titus he writes: *Grace, mercy, and peace be to thee.* Which nevertheleſs can import no more than a wiſh of all happineſs. And as much is included in the other forms. So likewiſe St. Jude's epiſtle begins after this manner. *Mercy unto you, and peace and love be multiplied.* But it may be ſuppoſed, that no more is comprehended therein, than in St. Paul's wiſh of *grace and peace.*

*The communion of the Holy Ghoſt* therefore means a participation in all the bleſſings of the goſpel, with all other needful good things.

*Be with you all*, that is, abide with you. 'May theſe bleſſings be always your portion and happineſs.'

VI. From what has been ſaid by way of explication we ſeem to have reaſon to think, that this valedictory wiſh and prayer may be ſtill uſed. However, the preceding argument is referred to the conſideration of the ſerious and inquiſitive.

VII. Though this form may be ſtill uſed, it needs not, it ought not to be always uſed.

As there are other forms of bleſſing in the New Teſtament, it is very fit, that they alſo ſhould be uſed. Otherwiſe ſome might have a ſuperſtitious regard for one portion of ſcripture above another: or indulge a weak and groundleſs apprehenſion, that ſomething more extraordinary is propoſed to them, than is intended.

VIII. Theſe benedictions, when uſed by us, are not to be pronounced in the way of authority, but only as a prayer, or wiſh of all good and happineſs to others.

Indeed no man can bleſs authoritatively. No one man, more than another, can convey bleſſings to any. Nay, none can be bleſſed of God himſelf, or obtain true happineſs, unleſs they will deſire and ſeek it, and will be in the uſe of proper means to obtain it.

IX. What has been now ſaid, may ſatisfy us about the manner of pronouncing theſe benedictions.

Some,

Some, of good judgment, have ſcrupled to pronounce them in the form of a wiſh for others: thinking that to be peculiar to the apoſtles, and as if ſo doing had in it an appearance of authority. Therefore they chooſe to ſay: *And may the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with us all.* But to me this appears to be a mere ſcruple, without reaſon. For we may wiſh and pray for the ſame bleſſings for others, which we aſk for ourſelves. A writer at the end of an epiſtle, or a ſpeaker at the end of a diſcourſe, does properly expreſs a prayer or wiſh of good for thoſe, to whom he has been writing or ſpeaking. And if they will return the like prayer or wiſh, it will be very acceptable. You know very well, that the apoſtles of Chriſt did often entreat the prayers of their fellow-chriſtians, both for temporal and ſpiritual bleſſings, needful for them, and ſuited to their work, office, and particular circumſtances.

X. The ſolemn ſalutations at the beginning, and valedictions at the end of the apoſtolical epiſtles, are not to be made uſe of upon common occaſions. They are ſuited only to the ſolemnity of public worſhip, or ſome other occaſions of great moment.

Upon the whole it ſeems to me, that the ſalutations at the beginning of the apoſtolical epiſtles may help us to underſtand the benedictions at the end. And if *grace and peace from God, and from Chriſt,* at the beginning, imply a wiſh, or prayer of favour and bleſſing and all happineſs: in like manner the ſame is the import of all the valedictions, or farewell-wiſhes, at the concluſion. And I apprehend, that as to the ſenſe, meaning and deſign, when applied to Chriſtians, there is little difference, whether the form be *Grace be with you,* or *may the God of peace be with you,* or *the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you,* or the form in the text. For in each, and all, is intended to be deſired, and aſked the beſt of bleſſings, and all needful bleſſings: that men may have, and keep themſelves in the favour of Chriſt, and the comfortable perſuaſion of it: that they may always enjoy the love of God, and do all that lies in their power to ſecure it: that they may grow in the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, and his goſpel, and that the protection of Providence may be over them. In a word, that they may proſper in all things: that, if their ſoul proſpers, which is the principal thing, they may be in health alſo: and that through the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt,

and the power of his ſpiritual and heavenly doctrine, their whole ſoul and body may be preſerved blameleſs unto his coming.

APPLICATION. I ſhall now mention a thought or two by way of application.

The uſe of theſe benedictions at the concluſion of our public worſhip may be reckoned to hold forth two inſtructions, both to miniſters and people.

1. One is, that they ought to bear good will to each other, and ſincerely to deſire each other's welfare. So much certainly is implied in him, who offers theſe prayers. And; as before hinted, it may be conſidered, whether they ought not alſo to be ſincerely returned.

2. Theſe prayers and wiſhes teach us in a ſummary way, what we ought all to deſire and ſeek after, even the favour of Chriſt, the love of God, the knowledge of the goſpel, and the evidences of its truth, and all the ſpiritual bleſſings attending it.

If from time to time ſincere wiſhes and prayers are expreſſed, that theſe bleſſings may be your portion, ſhould you not deſire and endeavour to obtain them?

And if theſe bleſſings are commonly wiſhed and deſired at the end of our religious ſervices, does not this intimate that our public performances ought to be ſuited to promote the great ends of men's ſpiritual improvement, and their comfort and happineſs, here and hereafter? May theſe ends be always propoſed by us! And may they be obtained! that our profiting may be apparent to ourſelves, and to others.

# SERMON XI.

## OF PRAYING IN THE NAME OF CHRIST.

JOHN xvi. 24.

*Hitherto have ye aſked nothing in my name. Aſk, and ye ſhall receive, that your joy may be full.*

OUR Lord is ſpeaking to the diſciples of his being ſoon to be taken from them, and of his ſeeing them again, though

though not to abide any long time perſonally with them. ver. 22, 23. *And ye now therefore have ſorrow. But I will ſee you again, and your heart ſhall rejoice: and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye ſhall aſk me nothing. Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, whatſoever ye ſhall aſk the Father in my name, he will give it you.* 'At that time, after my removal, 'you will not be able to addreſs yourſelves directly to me, 'as you now do. But that needs not to give you much 'concern: for whatever petitions you preſent to the Father 'in my name, they will be heard and anſwered.'

Ver. 24—27. *Hitherto have ye aſked nothing in my name. Aſk, and ye ſhall receive, that your joy may be full. Theſe things have I ſpoken unto you in proverbs. The time cometh, when I ſhall no more ſpeak unto you in proverbs: but I ſhall ſhow you plainly of the Father. At that day ye ſhall aſk in my name. And I ſay not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himſelf loveth you, becauſe ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.*

Our Lord ſpeaks of praying in his name, in ſome other places, to which I now only refer. As John xiv. 13, 14. and xv. 16.

In order to illuſtrate this point, I would firſt ſhow in general, how that phraſe, doing any thing in the name of another, is uſed in the ſcriptures. Secondly, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow diſtinctly, what it is to pray in the name of Chriſt. After which I intend to mention ſome remarks, both inſtructive and practical.

I. Let us obſerve in general the meaning of the phraſe, acting in another's name.

To do any thing in the name of another is to act by his authority, and according to his directions, and as his diſciples.

John v. 43. Our Lord ſays to the Jews: *I am come in my Father's name*, that is, with authority from him: and I act, as by commiſſion under him. *But ye receive me not.*

John x. 25. *The works that I do in my Father's name bear witneſs of me.*

When our Lord made his public entrance at Jeruſalem, his character as the Meſſiah, the anointed and ſent of God, was acknowledged by the people in this manner: Matt. xxi. 9. *The multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, ſaying, Hoſannah to the Son of David. Bleſſed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* Or, as in St. Luke xix. 38. *Bleſſed is the*

*the King that cometh in the name of the Lord.* And John xii. 13. *Bleſſed is the King of Iſrael, that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt therefore acted in the name of God, by whom he was ſent. Chriſt's diſciples in like manner taught in his name, and wrought miracles in his name, that is, with his authority, and a commiſſion from him, by virtue of powers derived from him. Mark xvi. 17, 18. *And theſe ſigns ſhall follow them that believe. In my name ſhall they caſt out dæmons. They ſhall ſpeak with new tongues. They ſhall lay hands on the ſick, and they ſhall recover.* St. Peter ſays to the lame man at the temple, Acts iii. 6. *In the name of Jeſus Chriſt of Nazareth riſe up and walk.* Afterwards, Acts iv. 1—9. Peter and John were ſummoned before the Jewiſh council, who *aſked: by what power, or by what name, have ye done this?* that is, by whoſe power and authority? *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghoſt, ſaid unto them: ... Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Iſrael, that by the name of Jeſus Chriſt of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God has raiſed from the dead, even by him does this man ſtand before you whole.* That a miracle was wrought, they could not deny: but that the doctrine taught by the apoſtles might not ſpread, they judged it expedient to *charge them, that they ſpeak henceforth to no man in that name. And they called them, and commanded them not to ſpeak at all, nor to teach in the name of Jeſus*, ver. 16—18.

When St. Peter healed Eneas at Lydda, *who had kept his bed eight years, and was ſick of the palſy, he ſaid unto him: Eneas, Jeſus Chriſt maketh thee whole. Ariſe, and make thy bed. And he aroſe immediately*, Acts ix. 33, 34. When Paul intended to cure the young woman at Philippi, who had a ſpirit of divination, *he ſaid to the ſpirit: I command thee in the name of Jeſus Chriſt to come out of her*, Acts xvi. 18.

Our bleſſed Lord, the more effectually to convince men of the importance of real holineſs, expreſſeth himſelf in this manner. Matt. vii. 22, 23. *Many will ſay unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophеſied in thy name? and in thy name caſt out dæmons? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* Acting as under authority from thee we have done all theſe things: nevertheleſs, if they have been workers of iniquity, they will be rejected by him.

James v. 10. *Take, my brethren, the prophets who have ſpoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of ſuffering affliction, and of patience.* The ſame phraſe occurs frequently in the

the Old Teſtament, in ſpeaking of the prophets. Jer. xxvi. 9. *Why haſt thou propheſied in the name of the Lord, ſaying, this houſe ſhall be as Shiloh?* ver. 16. *Then ſaid the princes of Judah, this man is not worthy to die: for he has ſpoken to us in the name of the Lord.* See there alſo ver. 20. and ch. xliv. 16.

St. Paul directs Col. iii. 17. *And whatſoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jeſus:* that is, according to his command and appointment.

We will obſerve a few more inſtances of the uſe of this phraſe, where the meaning is ſomewhat different. Matt. x. 41. *He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, ſhall receive a prophet's reward. And he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, ſhall receive a righteous man's reward.* To receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, or a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, is to receive them as ſuch. Accordingly, to pray in the name of Chriſt will be to pray as his diſciples. It follows at ver. 42. *And whoſoever ſhall give to drink unto one of theſe little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a diſciple,* that is, as a diſciple of mine, *verily I ſay unto you, he ſhall in no wiſe loſe his reward.*

In like manner Mark ix. 39—41. *But Jeſus ſaid, forbid him not: for there is no man which ſhall do a miracle in my name,* that is, as by authority from me, or as a diſciple, though he does not follow me with you, *that can lightly ſpeak evil of me: for he that is not againſt us is on our part. For whoſoever ſhall give you a cup of water to drink, in my name,* as a diſciple of mine, *becauſe ye belong to Chriſt, verily I ſay unto you, he ſhall not loſe his reward.* And ſee Matt. xviii. 5. Luke ix. 48.

All theſe ſeveral inſtances of the uſe of this phraſe are ſufficient to ſhow, that to do any thing in the name of another, and particularly in the name of Chriſt, is the ſame as to do it by his authority, according to his directions, and as his diſciples, or as belonging to him.

There may be other uſes of this phraſe, or of a phraſe reſembling it. But thoſe already mentioned are very common, and ſeem moſt ſuited to the point which we are conſidering.

Sometimes the name of a perſon is the ſame as himſelf. Pſ. xliv. 20. *If we have forgotten the name of our God,* that is, if we have forgotten our God. Pſ. lxix. 30. *I will praiſe*

*the*

*the name of God with a ſong*, that is, I will praiſe God in a pſalm. John iii. 18. *He that believeth not is condemned already, becauſe he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God:* that is, becauſe he has not believed in the only begotten Son of God, or the Meſſiah. 1 John iii. 23. *And this is his commandment, that we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.* And ch. v. 13. *Theſe things have I written, unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God:* that is, who believe in Jeſus Chriſt, or the Son of God.

In other places the phraſe is ſomewhat different, not *in the name*, but *into the name*. Such is the moſt exact and literal verſion of Chriſt's general commiſſion to his apoſtles, after his reſurrection, in Matt. xxviii. 19. *Go ye therefore, and diſciple all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt:* or into the belief and profeſſion of, and obedience to, the doctrine taught by Jeſus Chriſt, with the authority of God the Father, and confirmed to be divine, by miraculous works, and gifts of the Holy Spirit. So alſo Rom. vi. 3. *Know ye not, that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his death?* that is, they who were baptized into the belief and profeſſion of Chriſt, and his doctrine, were alſo, and particularly baptized into the belief of his death, and a profeſſion of an obligation to be conformed to him in ſufferings, if need be: and to die to ſin, and live to righteouſneſs. And 1 Cor. x. 2. the apoſtle argues, that the Jewiſh people *were baptized into Moſes, in the cloud, and in the ſea:* that is, were initiated into an obligation to obey the laws and commandments delivered by him, and to be his diſciples.

II. Having now ſeen in general, what it is to do any thing in any one's name, I proceed to ſhow diſtinctly what it is to aſk, or pray for, any thing in the name of Chriſt. And I apprehend that it may be comprized in the three following particulars.

1. In praying in the name of Chriſt it is ſuppoſed, that the perſons who offer thoſe prayers believe in Jeſus Chriſt, and are his diſciples, and do ſincerely ſtrive and endeavour to act and behave as ſuch.

2. To pray in the name of Chriſt is to offer prayers to God according to his directions, and in a manner ſuited to his doctrine or inſtitution.

3. Herein

3. Herein may be alſo included, that oftentimes we ſhould preſent our addreſſes to God, through, or by him, as our great high prieſt, and interceſſor with God.

1. In praying in the name of Chriſt it is ſuppoſed, that they who offer prayers, believe in Jeſus Chriſt, and are his diſciples, and ſincerely endeavour to act as ſuch.

It ſeems, that this is neceſſarily implied, and preſuppoſed. For who ſhould think to pray in the name of Chriſt, who does not believe in him, and profeſs to do ſo? Who ſhould go to God in the name of Chriſt, who does not believe him to be a teacher come from God?

It ſeems to be implied alſo, as before hinted, that they do ſtrive and endeavour to behave as diſciples of Jeſus. For the doctrine of Chriſt being very practical, he who neglects the rules of life delivered by him, is not a Chriſtian. He is ſo in name, but not in deed. And as there are many ſtrict and comprehenſive rules of duty enjoined by Chriſt, ſo his principles, concerning the ſpiritual nature of God, the great love of God to us, and the promiſes of future happineſs, all tend to ſecure and promote holineſs of life.

We are led to this obſervation by the coherence, that is, by ſome things ſaid by our Lord, in all the places, where he ſpeaks of praying in his name, as well as by general conſiderations, taken from the divine perfection in wiſdom and holineſs.

So in what follows ſoon after the text. *At that time ye ſhall aſk in my name. And I ſay not, that I ſhall pray the Father for you.* 'This I need not ſay, though I ſhall certainly do it.' *For the Father himſelf loveth you, becauſe ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.* 'A ſincere 'faith in me, and an open profeſſion of my name, without 'worldly views, from a conviction of truth, are in them-'ſelves very acceptable to God. And he will approve 'of you, and bleſs you, though I were not particularly 'to intereſt myſelf in your favour.'

John xiv. 14, 15. *If ye ſhall aſk any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments.* Ch. xv. 16, 17. . . . *I have choſen you, and ordained you, that you ſhould go, and bring forth fruit . . . that whatſoever ye ſhall aſk the Father in my name, he may give it you. Theſe things I command you, that ye love one another.* All which, I think, clearly ſhows, that together with praying in his name our Lord enjoined,

*keeping*

*keeping his commandments,* particularly his commandment of mutual love, and the bearing fruit. And without this he does not aſſure that their prayers would be anſwered. And what is ſaid in theſe texts juſt cited, is agreeable to 1 John iii. 22, 23. *And whatſoever we aſk, we receive of him, becauſe we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleaſing in his ſight. And this is his commandment,* [herein the whole will of God is ſummed up] *that we believe on his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and love one another.*

And it is a certain maxim, that *God heareth not ſinners. But if any man be a worſhipper of God, and does his will, him he heareth,* John ix. 31.

This is not ſaid to diſcourage any. For when ſinful men repent, and forſake the evil of their ways, and their doings, they will find favour with God. But when men profeſs to repent, they ſhould *bring forth fruits meet for repentance,* and continue to walk in all God's ordinances, without returning to folly.

2. To pray in the name of Chriſt is to pray according to his directions, and agreeably to the nature of his inſtitution of religion.

Good men muſt aſk for good things, in a right manner. And they who are good and wiſe, are likely to aſk for good things. And they will uſually perform acts of worſhip in a right and acceptable manner.

Here I ſhall mention ſeveral particulars, taken from our Lord's obſervations and directions concerning prayer in divers places.

Only premiſing this: that as for the matter of prayer, we may certainly aſk for all good things, both temporal and ſpiritual, for ourſelves and others, for all good men, for the world in general, for thoſe who are in error and ignorance, that they may be enlightened with the knowledge of the truth, and may be ſaved, and for all who are in authority over us. We not only may, but we ought to pray to God for our own welfare, and for the welfare of others. We may pray for direction in our affairs, eſpecially in things of great moment. So our Lord, before he completed the number of his twelve apoſtles, *continued a whole night in prayer to God,* Luke vi. 12. We may pray to be preſerved from evil, and for wiſdom and ſtrength, equal to the difficulties, we are exerciſed with. We may pray for thoſe who have done good unto us, that they may be rewarded

rewarded by him, who is the only infallible judge of right and wrong. We may pray for thoſe who have injured us, that they may obtain repentance, and be ſaved. We may pray for our friends and relatives, that they may have all things neceſſary, and conducive to their welfare here, and hereafter.

I now proceed to mention diſtinctly our Lord's directions concerning prayer.

1.) Chriſtians ought to aſk for the good things of this life, and for deliverance from the evils of it, with moderation of affection and deſire, and with ſubmiſſion to the will of God.

This is peculiarly ſuited to the Chriſtian inſtitution, by which the things of another world have been ſet in a very clear light. It does not become a Chriſtian ardently to deſire the great things of this world, but rather to be contented with daily bread, food and raiment, ſuch things as are convenient in the condition and ſtation of life allotted to him. Matt. vi. 33. *But ſeek ye firſt the kingdom of heaven, and its righteouſneſs. And all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.* The good things of this life we are to deſire, ſo far as may be needful: not to ſpend upon our luſts, in riot and exceſs, but to be employed in a ſober uſe, for the ſupport of nature, and fitting us for the ſervice of God, and to give to others, as their need may require.

We are alſo to deſire deliverance from evil, with ſubmiſſion to the will of God, as our Lord did, ſaying: *If it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from us. Not our will, but thine be done.* So, as diſciples of Jeſus, we ought to pray in ſuch caſes, becauſe we know, that God is able to over-rule all theſe things for our good. And that if he do not ſee fit to prevent the evils we fear from befalling us, he can uphold us, and enable us to bear them with patience, and for his glory.

2.) Another direction of Chriſt concerning prayer is, that we pray, filled with love to one another, and to all men in general.

Mark xi. 25, 26. *And, when ye ſtand praying, forgive, if ye have ought againſt any: that your Father alſo which is in heaven may forgive you. For if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your treſpaſſes.* To the like purpoſe Matt. vi. 14, 15.

Matt.

Matt. v. 44. *But I ſay unto you: love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.* All this they are prepared for, and are able to perform, who, as before ſhown, believe in Jeſus, and endeavour to act, as his diſciples.

A Chriſtian, in his prayers, ought to be filled with good will to all men, and to deſire the ſame things for others, which he aſks for himſelf. And they who unite together in prayer, ought mutually to deſire each other's welfare and proſperity, ſpiritual and temporal. This may be what our Lord intends, when he ſays: *Again, I ſay unto you, that if two of you ſhall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midſt of them,* Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

3.) Another direction of Chriſt to his diſciples, is, that they ſhould pray with humility.

Luke xviii. 9—14. Our Lord *ſpake this parable unto certain, which truſted in themſelves, and deſpiſed others. Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a phariſee and the other a publican. The phariſee ſtood and prayed thus with himſelf: God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are.... And the publican, ſtanding afar off, would not lift up ſo much as his eyes unto heaven; but ſmote upon his breaſt, ſaying: God be merciful to me a ſinner. I tell you, this man went down to his houſe juſtified, rather than the other. For every one that exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed. And he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.*

In the application of another parable, our Lord ſays to his diſciples: *So likewiſe ye, when ye ſhall have done all theſe things which are commanded you, ſay: we are unprofitable ſervants. We have done that which was our duty to do,* Luke xviii. 10.

Chriſt taught his diſciples, daily to aſk forgiveneſs of ſins. A true diſciple of Jeſus will confeſs his ſins and failings, and own the defects of his ſervice and obedience: ſtill believing, that God is very good, and that his rewards will exceed the merit of our ſervices.

4.) Another direction of our Lord is, that we pray in faith, with a firm perſuaſion of God's goodneſs, and of his readineſs to hear and anſwer, and give the good things we aſk for, and ſtand in need of.

Matt. vii. 9—11. *Aſk, and it ſhall be given you. Seek, and ye ſhall find. Knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you. For every*

*every one that aſks, receives: and he that ſeeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh it ſhall be opened, Or, what man is there of you, whom if his ſon aſk bread, will he give him a ſtone? Or, if he aſk a fiſh, will he give him a ſerpent? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that aſk him?* And to the like purpoſe exactly in Luke xi. 9—13.

And it is the doctrine of the text. *And in that day ye ſhall aſk me nothing. Verily I ſay unto you: whatſoever ye ſhall aſk the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have aſked nothing in my name. Aſk, and ye ſhall receive, that your joy may be full.*

One reaſon of this is, that they who pray in Chriſt's name, or according to his directions, aſk for nothing but what is lawful and good, with a view to the glory of God, and with reſignation to his will, if they are temporal things. Therefore their prayers are heard, and their petitions are granted. They either receive the good things they aſk: or have what is better, ſtrength to practiſe ſelf-denial and patience, and thereby to glorify God.

However, certainly, it is the deſign of our Lord, to encourage his diſciples to go to God, with a lively perſuaſion of his goodneſs. He requires that they ſhould live in this world, without anxiety, and depend upon the divine bounty for needful ſupplies: and not ſeek them with an importunity which implies a ſuppoſition, that God would not grant without much entreaty. Therefore he ſays, Matt. vi. 7. *When ye pray, uſe not vain repetitions, as the heathen do. For they think to be heard for their much ſpeaking.* Again, ver. 31, 32. *Therefore take no thought,* be not anxious *for your life, ſaying, what ſhall we eat? or what ſhall we drink? or wherewithal ſhall we be clothed? ... For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of theſe things.*

This truſt in God, this aſſurance of being heard, is alſo recommended by Chriſt's apoſtles. James i. 5, 6, 7. *If any of you lack wiſdom, let him aſk of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not; and it ſhall be given him. But let him aſk in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth, is like a wave of the ſea, driven with the wind, and toſſed. For let not that man think that he ſhall receive any thing of the Lord.* They who waver in their profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and are doubtful in their fidelity to Chriſt, will receive nothing. But they who

are ſteadfaſt in their profeſſion, and in the general tenour and courſe of their life act as Chriſtians, and ſincerely ſtrive to behave in all things as ſuch, when they ſeek for wiſdom, will obtain it, and ought to be perſuaded that God giveth liberally and upbraideth not.

And Heb. iv. 14—16. *Seeing then, that we have a great High Prieſt, that is paſſed into the heavens, Jeſus, the Son of God, let us hold faſt our profeſſion: for we have not an High prieſt who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without ſin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.*

5.) Another direction of our Lord is, that we perſevere in prayer, and as occaſions require, renew our addreſſes to God, and pray with importunity, hoping he will at length hear us, and vouchſafe a gracious anſwer to our requeſts.

Luke xviii. 1—7. *And he ſpake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint, ſaying: there was in a city a judge, who feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city, and ſhe came unto him, ſaying: avenge me of my adverſary. And he would not for a while. But afterwards he ſaid within himſelf: though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet becauſe this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, leſt by her continual coming ſhe weary me. And the Lord ſaid: hear what the unjuſt judge ſaith. And ſhall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them ſpeedily.*

There is alſo ſomewhat to the like purpoſe in Luke xi. 5—9. after the evangeliſt's account of our Lord's teaching the diſciples to pray, or delivering to them what is called the Lord's prayer. *And he ſaid unto them: which of you ſhall have a friend, and ſhall go to him at midnight, and ſay unto him, friend, lend me three loaves. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to ſet before him. And he from within ſhall anſwer, and ſay: trouble me not. The door is now ſhut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot riſe, and give thee. I ſay unto you: though he will not riſe, and give him, becauſe he is his friend: yet becauſe of his importunity he will riſe, and give him as many as he needeth. And I ſay unto you: aſk, and it ſhall be given you: ſeek, and ye ſhall find: knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you.*

Agreeable

Agreeable to this doctrine of our Saviour, are various directions of the apoſtles in their epiſtles. Eph. vi. 18. *Praying always, with all prayer and ſupplication, in the ſpirit, and watching thereunto with all perſeverance, and ſupplication for all ſaints.* And 1 Theſſ. v. 17. *Pray without ceaſing.*

Of ſuch prayer, for himſelf, and others, we can perceive from his epiſtles, that St. Paul was an example. Yea our Lord himſelf in the time of his miniſtry has given us an example of frequent, renewed, believing, importunate, perſevering prayer to God.

That is the ſecond thing, which we have ſuppoſed to be included in praying in the name of Chriſt, even according to his directions, and agreeably to the nature of his inſtitution. Several of which directions have been now mentioned.†‡†

3. In praying in the name of Chriſt may be included, that always, or at leaſt oftentimes, we ſhould preſent our addreſſes to God through him, as by our high prieſt, and interceſſor with God.

This particular may be illuſtrated by ſeveral things in the Acts, and the Epiſtles.

Eph. iii. 14—16. *For this cauſe I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, . . . that he would grant you to be ſtrengthened with might by his ſpirit in the inner man.* That is, he worſhips God in the character of the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. So in the Old Teſtament the pious among the Jews often worſhipped God in the character of the God of Abraham, and the other patriarchs. 1 Kings xviii. 36. *And it came to paſs at the time of the offering of the evening ſacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and ſaid, Lord God of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, let it be known this day, that thou art God in Iſrael, and that I am thy ſervant.* See alſo 1 Chr. xxix. 10. and 18.

Moreover it is a reſpect due to Jeſus Chriſt, by whom we have been brought nigh unto God, and through whom God diſpenſeth bleſſings to us, not only that our prayers, but our praiſes alſo, and all our ſacrifices and ſervices ſhould be preſented to the Father, as by his means, and through his hands.

†‡† If any find this ſermon too long to be read at once, here may be a proper pauſe.

In Heb. iv. 14—16. before quoted, the apoſtle ſays, *Seeing then, we have a great High Prieſt, who is paſſed into the heavens, . . . let us hold faſt our profeſſion: for we have not an High Prieſt, which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* Having ſuch an High Prieſt, we have encouragement in all our preſſures and difficulties, eſpecially in the cauſe and ſervice of true religion, to offer up prayers, through him, with hopes of obtaining all needful aid and ſuccour.

In the ſame epiſtle the apoſtle gives a like direction concerning praiſe. And it may be applied to every part of worſhip, and to every kind of religious and ſpiritual ſervice. Heb. xiii. 15, 16. *By him let us offer the ſacrifice of praiſe to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good, and to communicate, forget not. For which ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleaſed.*

Agreeable hereto is what St. Peter ſays: *Ye alſo as lively ſtones are built up a ſpiritual houſe, a royal prieſthood, to offer up ſpiritual ſacrifices, acceptable to God through Jeſus Chriſt,* 1 Pet. ii. 5. Which words, I apprehend, might be more properly rendered thus: *Ye are . . . a royal prieſthood, to offer up through Jeſus Chriſt ſpiritual ſacrifices, acceptable to God.* Denoting, not that they are acceptable through Chriſt, but that thoſe ſpiritual, acceptable ſacrifices, ſhould be offered up to God through Chriſt. St. Peter exactly agrees with the apoſtle Paul, Rom. xii. 1. Spiritual ſacrifices, are ſuch as God requires, and are in themſelves acceptable to him. This interpretation is alſo confirmed by the text juſt quoted from the epiſtle to the Hebrews: *By him therefore let us offer the ſacrifice of praiſe to God continually.*

And it is frequent with the apoſtle Paul, to addreſs praiſe or thanks to God in or through Jeſus Chriſt. Rom. xvi. 27. *To God only wiſe be glory through Jeſus Chriſt for ever. Amen.* And near the beginning of that epiſtle. i. 8. *Firſt, I thank my God, through Jeſus Chriſt, for you all: that your faith is ſpoken of throughout the whole world.*

And it is fit, that our ſpiritual ſacrifices ſhould be offered to God through Chriſt, who has taught us to offer ſuch ſacrifices, and through whom God has beſtowed upon us invaluable bleſſings and privileges. As it is ſaid by the apoſtle, Rom. v. 1, 2. *Therefore being juſtified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. By whom also*

*alſo we have acceſs by faith into this grace.* Acts x. 43. St. Peter preaching to Cornelius, and the gentiles, aſſembled at his houſe, ſays: *To him give all the prophets witneſs, that through his name,* or through him, *whoſoever believeth in him ſhould receive remiſſion of ſins.* And Eph. i. 3—5. *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath bleſſed us with all ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly places, in Chriſt: according as he hath choſen us in him before the foundation of the world . . . having predeſtinated us unto the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt, according to the good pleaſure of his will.* See likewiſe Eph. ii. 4—7. and iv. 32. and Rom. vi. 23. and 1 Pet. v. 10. and 2 Pet. i. 3.

It may then be thought fit and reaſonable, that as all the diſtinguiſhing ſpiritual benefits and advantages, which we enjoy, have been conferred upon us through Chriſt; ſo our ſervices and ſacrifices, which we are enabled to perform and offer, ſhould be preſented to God the Father, in and through him.

Moreover Chriſt is ſpoken of as our interceſſor and advocate, now he is in heaven.

Rom. viii. 34. *Who is he that condemneth? Chriſt that died? yea rather that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us?*

Hebr. vii. 24, 25. *But this man, becauſe he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable prieſthood. Wherefore he is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt,* or for ever, *that come to God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them.*

And St. John 1 Ep. ii. 1. ſpeaks of Jeſus Chriſt, as our *advocate with the Father.* St. Paul. 1 Tim. ii. 5. ſays, he is *the one mediator between God and men.*

Some therefore have ſuppoſed, that this is the principal thing, or all that our Lord intends in thoſe places of St. John's goſpel, where he ſpeaks to his diſciples of *aſking in his name:* that all their addreſſes ſhould be preſented to God through him, as high prieſt, mediator, and interceſſor or advocate.

And indeed, I think, it appears, from the directions and examples juſt alledged, to be very proper, frequently to offer up our prayers to God through him, and in his name, expreſsly. And it is highly becoming us to worſhip God in the character of the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. Moreover, for certain, Jeſus Chriſt, now in heaven, intercedes for his people. Of which his

prayers for the diſciples, when with them, eſpecially thoſe recorded by St. John ch. xvii. may help us to form ſome idea.

Nevertheleſs I think, that is not all that our Lord means by *praying*, or *aſking the Father in his name:* nor the principal intention of it. But he teaches his diſciples to take care to pray, according to the directions, which at divers times, and often, he had given them: and in a manner ſuited to the ſpiritual and heavenly doctrine, which they had received from him.

That aſking through his interceſſion is not the only, or principal thing intended by aſking in his name, may be argued from this very context: ver. 25, 26. *At that day ye ſhall* or will *aſk in my name. And I ſay not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you. For the Father himſelf loveth you, becauſe ye have loved me, and have believed, that I came out from God.*

Therein he aſſures them, that ſoon, meaning after his reſurrection, or rather after his aſcenſion, when the ſpirit ſhould be poured down upon them, they would be able, and actually would pray to the Father in his name: and when they did ſo, there would be no abſolute neceſſity, that he ſhould pray the Father for them. For when they prayed in his name, as his diſciples, God would hear them, though he did not intercede.

This plainly ſhows, that praying in his name does not neceſſarily imply, deſiring to be heard and accepted through his interceſſion.

Moreover our Lord ſeems to attribute more virtue to praying in his name, than can be aſcribed to praying to be heard through his interceſſion. For he ſays to the diſciples: *Whatſoever ye ſhall aſk the Father in my name, he will give it you.* Barely calling Chriſt Lord, and making uſe of his name in our prayers, will not ſecure a favourable anſwer. But if we pray to God, as diſciples of Jeſus, and according to the directions which he has given; then, it may be very reaſonable to hope, that whatever we aſk, God will give it unto us.

Once more, it muſt be ſuppoſed, that after our Lord's aſcenſion the apoſtles did pray in his name, and as his diſciples. Nevertheleſs in their epiſtles are found prayers and praiſes, which are not offered up through Chriſt, or in his name expreſsly. Prayers without that expreſſion may be

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ſeen in Acts i. 24, 25. Col. i. 9—11. 1 Theſſ. v. 23. and elſewhere.

We quoted ſome while ago two places of the epiſtle to the Romans, where St. Paul thanks God, and gives glory to God through Jeſus Chriſt. So alſo Eph. iii. 20, 21. *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we aſk or think . . . unto him be glory in the church by Chriſt Jeſus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.* But in 1 Tim. i. 17. omitting by or through Chriſt, he ſays: *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, inviſible, the only wiſe God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.* And Philip. iv. 20. *Now unto God, even our Father, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.* And St. Jude concludes his epiſtle with theſe words. *To the only wiſe God, our Saviour, be glory, and majeſty, dominion and power, now and ever. Amen.*

I beg leave to obſerve farther, that the apoſtles never pray to God to grant them any thing for the ſake of Chriſt. Nor is God any where in the New Teſtament ſaid to vouchſafe bleſſings to men for Chriſt's ſake. We read in our verſion, Eph. iv. 32. *And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you.* But a more exact tranſlation would be, *as God in Chriſt*, or through Chriſt, *has forgiven you.* So the apoſtle ſays at the beginning of the ſame epiſtle to the Epheſians, ch. i. 3. *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who has bleſſed us with all ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly places in Chriſt.* Through Chriſt God diſpenſeth all bleſſings to men, and particularly forgiveneſs of ſins. Through him forgiveneſs is vouchſafed to all who repent. And men are called and invited to repent, with the gracious promiſe and aſſurance of forgiveneſs of ſins, without taking on them the burden of the law of Moſes. Luke xxiv. 47. *And that repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem.* Acts x. 43. *To him give all the prophets witneſs, that through his name whoſoever believeth in him ſhall receive remiſſion of ſins.* See likewiſe ch. ii. 19. and ch. xiii. 38. . . . *through his name is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins.* And ſee 2 Cor. v. 19. and Rom. vi. 23. *The gift of God is eternal life through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

Application. I now proceed to mention ſome remarks by way of application; which alſo may be of uſe for farther illuſtrating this point.

1. We hence perceive that prayers and praiſes ought generally, if not always, to be offered to God the Father.

Says our Lord: *Whatſoever ye ſhall aſk the Father in my name, he will give it you.* In St. Stephen, Acts vii. 59. is an inſtance of a prayer addreſſed to Chriſt, ſaying, *Lord Jeſus receive my ſpirit.* And St. Paul, 1 Theſſ. iii. 11. *Now God himſelf; even our Father, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, direct our way unto you.* But uſually in the Acts and in the Epiſtles, prayers are directed to God the Father, to whom our Lord himſelf prayed when on earth.

Doubtleſs our bleſſed Lord, in his ſtate of exaltation in heaven, knows all things done on this earth. And if he be interceſſor for us, as we are taught in the New Teſtament, it is requiſite, he ſhould know all the prayers that are offered by his people for whom he intercedes. Before he leftthe diſciples he aſſured them John xiv. 13. *Whatſoever ye ſhall aſk the Father in my name, that will I do,* I will take care it ſhall be done, *that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* Jeſus Chriſt, likewiſe, as conſtituted Lord and Judge of the world, muſt intimately know all things done therein. This knowledge of things he claims and manifeſts in his meſſages and warnings ſent to the churches in the revelation. Rev. ii. 18, 19. *And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira, write, theſe things ſaith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire. I know thy works, and charity, and ſervice, and patience....* ver. 23. *And all the churches ſhall know, that I am he which ſearcheth the reins and hearts. And I will give unto every one of you, according to his works.* Nevertheleſs, as we have ſeen, prayers and praiſes are uſually in the New Teſtament preſented to God the Father. And ſo St. Paul directs. Eph. v. 20. *Giving thanks always for all things unto God even the Father, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* And Heb. xiii. 15. *By him therefore let us offer the ſacrifice of praiſe to God continually.*

2. We are now able to ſolve that queſtion, concerning the prayer, which Chriſt taught his diſciples, and is recorded in Matt. vi. and Luke xi. whether it be proper to be uſed, ſince Chriſt's aſcenſion.

For ſome have argued in this manner. Jeſus Chriſt, ſay they, in St. John's goſpel, a little before he left his diſciples, directed them *to pray in his name.* But his name is not mentioned in the Lord's prayer. Therefore it was

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deſigned for the uſe of the diſciples only, till he was riſen from the dead, and aſcended to heaven.

But that argument is of no force, according to the interpretation now given of aſking the Father in Chriſt's name, that is, according to his directions, as his diſciples, in a way ſuited to the ſublimity of his inſtitution. Such certainly is this prayer. It is truly evangelical, according to the utmoſt perfection of the rules delivered by Chriſt concerning prayer. For here ſpiritual bleſſings are aſked in the firſt place, temporal good things with moderation, *daily bread*, a ſufficiency only. And when we offer up this prayer, we pray with a benevolent, forgiving temper of mind. Finally, the over-ruling Providence of God in all things is acknowledged, and we pray to be preſerved from evil, or to be ſupported and ſtrengthened under it, ſo as that we may not fall, and ſin againſt God. All the petitions of this prayer therefore are evangelical. And if offered with a ſuitable temper, the prayer will be accepted.

There is another objection againſt the uſe of this prayer, which alſo will appear to be of no moment. Here we pray, that the *kingdom of God may come:* whereas, ſay they, the kingdom of God is already come. The kingdom of God, or the goſpel-diſpenſation was ſet up, and made known upon Chriſt's aſcenſion. And his apoſtles ſoon preached the goſpel every where, and Jews and Gentiles were received into the church of God.

But in anſwer to this, it is obvious to ſay, that *God's name may* yet *be hallowed*, and *his kingdom may come* more univerſally. And we may therefore reaſonably pray, that it may be upheld and advanced.

This prayer then, in every part of it, is ſtill very proper to be uſed, and without inſerting Chriſt's name. For if the petitions be offered with a ſuitable temper, the petitioner prays *in the name of Chriſt, as a diſciple of his.*

This prayer therefore may be ſtill very fitly uſed. But I do not ſay, that it ought to be always uſed, or that we ought never to addreſs ourſelves to God, without ſaying this prayer.

3. We can now underſtand thoſe words of Chriſt to the diſciples: *Hitherto have ye aſked nothing in my name.*

The meaning is not, as ſome have ſuppoſed, hitherto you have not made uſe of my name in your prayers: but hitherto

hitherto you have not prayed, as my diſciples ought to do. Hitherto your prayers have wanted ſomewhat of that ſpirituality, and heavenly-mindedneſs, which becomes my doctrine.

It is well known to all, that for a good while Chriſt's diſciples had ambitious and worldly views, and deſires of pre-eminence: which produced jealouſies and emulations, inconſiſtent with the perfection of mutual love. But our Lord's death, and reſurrection, and aſcenſion to heaven, together with illuminations received from above, would enable them fully to underſtand the tenour of his doctrine, and raiſe their minds to things above. The glory of God, the intereſts of religion, and the real welfare of mankind, would then be their prevailing concerns, and they would be able to pray in Chriſt's name, as his diſciples, and according to the rules, which he had given concerning prayer.

We are led to this interpretation by the words, immediately following thoſe of the text. *Theſe things have I ſpoken unto you in proverbs*, or parables. *The time cometh, when I ſhall no more ſpeak to you in proverbs. But I ſhall ſhow you plainly of the Father.*

Our Lord had told the diſciples *all things*, John xv. 15. the whole ſcheme of the goſpel: as we may clearly diſcern from the accounts of his miniſtry, which have been left us by the evangeliſts. But their prejudices, ſtrengthened too by carnal affections, made them ſlow of underſtanding. Our Lord therefore now ſays to them: 'My diſcourſes 'oftentimes have appeared to you obſcure, and you have 'not fully perceived my intention. Nor could I ſpeak 'ſo plainly, as was to be deſired. Becauſe of the danger of 'offending you, ſome truths have been repreſented in 'ambiguous expreſſions. But now the time is coming, 'when all your prejudices will be removed, and you will 'clearly underſtand how God is to be worſhipped, and 'you will comprehend and obſerve the directions which I 'have given you, as my diſciples. Then you will be able 'to pray in a ſpiritual and acceptable manner. Ver. 26. '*In that day ye ſhall* or will *aſk in my name. And I ſay not* '*unto you, that I will pray the Father for you. For the Father* '*himſelf loveth you, becauſe ye have loved me, and have believed,* '*that I came out from God.* Your requeſts will then be ſo 'reaſonable, and acceptable, that I need not intercede for 'you, though I certainly ſhall do ſo. For your praying,

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'and acting in other reſpects, as my diſciples, the Father 'himſelf will love you, and manifeſt himſelf to you, and 'grant whatſoever you aſk.'

'In that day, and thenceforward, you will not aſk to ſit, 'one of you on my right hand, and another on the left, in 'my kingdom: whilſt the reſt are offended, and jealous of 'partial reſpects for ſuch petitioners: apprehenſive, leſt they 'ſhould obtain a pre-eminence, to which they are not 'intitled, and prejudicial to others, But you will all deſire 'the beſt things, in the firſt place. Such things you will 'deſire for yourſelves, and for each other, and for all men. 'Your moſt earneſt deſires will be, that you may be faithful 'to God, and that others may be ſo likewiſe, and ſo act in 'all things as to obtain eternal life.'

4. It is reaſonable to infer, that all Chriſtians ſhould be deſirous to pray in the name of Chriſt, or, as his diſciples, agreeably to the nature of his doctrine, and according to the rules, which he has given concerning prayer.

So we ought to endeavour to pray, both in private and in public, particularly, in public. There, eſpecially, we ought to be careful to pray, as diſciples of Jeſus. Some will bring into their prayers their own particular notions about the fall of Adam, and its conſequences, original ſin, the corruption of the human nature, the incomprehenſible order of divine decrees, election, grace, and other points. Others, and poſſibly the ſame perſons, at other times, will introduce their particular ſyſtem of the Trinity, or the perſon of Chriſt, and his tranſactions. But public prayer ſhould be ſuch, as all Chriſtians can join in. We are not in our prayers to ſtrive to impoſe our own notions upon others, or to exclude any Chriſtians, from joining in the addreſſes we preſent to God. A miniſter, in his public prayers, is to offer up common requeſts and praiſes, the unfeigned devotions of the aſſembly. Public prayers are not to be Lutheran, nor Calviniſtical, nor Arminian, but chriſtian, and ſcriptural. There ſhould be in them neither Arianiſm, nor Niceniſm. How contrary to the Chriſtian and apoſtolical rule, to offer petitions, or make declarations in prayer, to which a ſincere Chriſtian cannot aſſent, or about which he has doubts and ſcruples! For according to St. Paul's argument in Rom. xiv. *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink*, or doubtful, conteſted intricate ſyſtems and ſpeculations: *but righteouſneſs, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.*

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*And he that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God, and approved of* wiſe *men, Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

A preacher may in his diſcourſes propoſe to the people his own ſenſes and interpretations of ſcripture, and offer his reaſons for them. But in public addreſſes to God he ſhould offer common requeſts and thankſgivings, in which all ſincere Chriſtians can unite. In a word, public prayers ought to be agreeable to the *common faith of God's elect*, Tit. i. 4. and the doctrine of the *common ſalvation*, Jud. 3. preached by Chriſt and his apoſtles, to Jews and Gentiles, and all men under heaven.

5. We hence learn how to pray to God ſo as to be heard. So is the text. *Hitherto ye have aſked nothing in my name. aſk*, that is, in my name, *and ye ſhall receive, that your joy may be full.*

To the like purpoſe in other places, already cited. John xv. 7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you; ye ſhall aſk what ye will, and it ſhall be done unto you.* 1 John iii. 22. *And whatſoever we aſk, we receive of him, becauſe we keep his commandments, and do thoſe things that are pleaſing in his ſight.* And ch. v. 14, 15. *And this is the confidence that we have in him: that if we aſk any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know, that he hear us whatſoever we aſk, we know that we have the petitions that we deſired of him.*

It is therefore a great happineſs to have our deſires regulated by the reaſon of things, and the will of God. To deſire nothing but what is reaſonable: to deſire the beſt things, and to have them. This is great happineſs. To have no deſires, but what will be gratified. If we deſire periſhing riches, and do not obtain them, we are ruined. If we take care to lay up to ourſelves treaſures in heaven, and ſeek the kingdom of God and its righteouſneſs in the firſt place; we ſhall have what we moſt deſire, and a competency of other things therewith. The beſt things cannot be taken from us. If ſome other things are loſt, thoſe which are moſt valuable, and remain, will ſatisfy and ſupport us. Let us then do all things in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, ever acting as his diſciples. And let us aſk in his name, according to his directions, that we may receive the things which we aſk, and *our joy may be full*, or we may have abundant ſatisfaction and joy.

SERMON

# SERMON XII.

## THE WOMAN THAT ANOINTED JESUS WITH PRECIOUS OINTMENT.

MATT. xxvi. 13.

*Verily I ſay unto you: whereſoever this goſpel ſhall be preached in the whole world, there ſhall alſo this, that this woman has done, be told for a memorial of her.* ††

THIS action of the woman here ſpoken of, who anointed our Lord with precious ointment, may at firſt appear a thing of little moment. But ſince our Lord ſignified his approbation of it, and declared that it would in future times be celebrated; it is not unlikely that it may afford us ſome profitable meditations, if we carefully conſider it.

For which reaſon I ſhall review this hiſtory, and then make ſome remarks upon it: in which I ſhall endeavour to ſhow how we may improve it to our benefit.

I. In the firſt place I ſhall review and conſider this hiſtory.

Our bleſſed Lord was now come up to Jeruſalem, to keep the paſſover, at which he ſuffered. And, as you well know, he came up this time ſeveral days before the day of the paſſover. But he took up his lodging at Bethany, a village near Jeruſalem. In the morning he went up to Jeruſalem, and taught there in the temple. In the evening he returned to Bethany. This was his method, till the night, in which he ate the paſſover, according to the appointment of the law at Jeruſalem.

Says St. Matthew at ver. 6. and 7. of this chapter. *Now when Jeſus was in Bethany, in the houſe of Simon the leper*, that is, who once had the leproſy, but had been cured, and probably by our Lord, *there came unto him a woman, having an alabaſter box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he ſat at meat.*

In St. Mark xiv. 3. *And being in Bethany, in the houſe of Simon the leper, as he ſat at meat, there came a woman, having an*

†† For the whole of that hiſtory, in the ſeveral evangeliſts, ſee Matt. xxvi. 6—13. Mark xiv. 3—9. John xi. 2. and xii. 1—8.

*alabaſter*

*alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious, and she brake,* or opened *the box, and poured it on his head.*

That is the first part of the history, the action of this woman, or the respect shown by her to our Lord.

The second part consists of the notice, which some took of it, in a way of censure. In St. Matthew's gospel, ver. 8, 9. it is thus expressed. *But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, to what purpose is this waste? For it might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.*

Or, as in St. Mark, ver. 4, 5. *And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said: why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.* In the computation of the price of the ointment we must not think of our own, but of the Roman coin, then current in Judea, and other provinces of the Empire. The three hundred pence here mentioned might amount to about ten pounds of our money.

The third part of the history consists of our Lord's vindication of this action.

In St. Matthew, ver. 10—14. it is thus. *When Jesus understood it, he said unto them: why trouble ye the woman? For she has wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you. But me ye have not always. For in that she has poured this ointment upon my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman has done, be told for a memorial of her.*

In St. Mark this concluding part of the history stands in these words, ver 6—9. *And Jesus said: let her alone. Why trouble you her? She has wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor with you always: and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good. But me ye have not always. She has done what she could. She is come before-hand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you: wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she has done, shall be told for a memorial of her.*

The sum and substance of this apology of our Lord is to this purpose. 'You always have among you necessitous 'objects. And you may relieve them, whenever you please. 'There will be frequent opportunities for showing bene- 'volence to them, if you have ability. I am as a stranger, 'and my stay among you will be short. I have often

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'ſpoken to you of my departure. And you may be aſſured, 'the time is now at hand. And opportunities of teſtifying 'reſpect to me, in any ſuch way as this, will ſoon be over.

'You are apt, ſome of you, to think this expence ex-'ceſſive. But if this ointment were laid out upon a dead 'body, you would not think it too much. For that is an 'eſtabliſhed cuſtom among you, and you all think it 'laudable to embalm at a great expence the bodies of per-'ſons, who are of eminence and diſtinction. You may 'conſider this anointing as an embalming of me. And 'it may ſo happen, that neither ſhe, nor any others, ſhall 'actually have an opportunity to lay out all the rich ſpices 'and ointments upon me, when dead, which they may 'be diſpoſed to make uſe of.

'Upon the whole, the teſtimony of reſpect, which this 'woman has ſhown me, has in it nothing blameable: but it 'is worthy of commendation. And I readily teſtify my 'approbation of it. And I do now declare, that this action 'of her's will be publiſhed all over the world, and make 'a part of the hiſtory of things relating to myſelf, during 'my abode here among you. And the time is haſtening, 'when ſome here preſent will be fully convinced, that this 'token of reſpect, now ſhown me, was not extravagant 'and undeſerved, and will themſelves cheerfully ſpread 'it abroad, as an action of no ſmall merit, and entitled 'to applauſe and commendation.'

There is a relation in St. John, which is very like this, though different in ſome particulars. Which has occaſioned a difficulty, and raiſed doubts in the minds of attentive and inquiſitive readers of the goſpels, whether two ſeveral actions are ſpoken of, or one and the ſame only, with different circumſtances.

Says St. John, ch. xii. 1—8. *Then Jeſus, ſix days before the paſſover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raiſed from the dead. There they made him a ſupper, and Martha ſerved. But Lazarus was one of them that ſat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment, of ſpikenard very coſtly, and anointed the feet of Jeſus, and wiped his feet with her hair. And the houſe was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then ſaid one of his diſciples, Judas Iſcariot, Simon's ſon, which ſhould betray him. Why was not this ointment ſold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he ſaid, not that he cared for the poor, but becauſe he was a thief,*

*and*

*and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus: let her alone. Against my burying has she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you. But me ye have not always.*

To me it seems, that this is the same thing, which is related by the two former evangelists. If so, St. John has let us know, who this woman was. She was Mary sister of Lazarus. So he also says expressly at the beginning of the eleventh chapter: *Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.*

St. John having before given the history of the resurrection of Lazarus, it was very natural for him, when he came to relate this anointing of our Lord, to say, by whom it was done. But the two former evangelists having never mentioned Lazarus, or his sisters, in their gospels, when they came to relate this action, forbear to mention any name, and speak only of a certain woman.

St. Luke, ch. x. 38—42. has an account of our Lord's being entertained at the house of Martha: but he says nothing of this anointing. If he had related it, I make no question, that he, like St. John, would have said by whom it was done.

St. John indeed speaks of Judas only, who complained of the waste of the ointment, whereas the other evangelists express themselves as if other disciples also had disliked it. But it is well known to be very common with all writers to use the plural number, when one person only is intended. Nor is it impossible, that others might have some uneasiness about it, though they were far from being so disgusted at it as Judas was. And their concern for the poor was sincere. His was self-interested, and mere pretence.

One thing more should be observed for avoiding mistakes. It ought to be reckoned certain, that Mary sister of Lazarus, is different from Mary Magdalen; and also from the woman that was a *sinner*, of whom St. Luke speaks, ch vii. 37, 38. She also *anointed our Lord's feet, and wiped them with her hair.* But her name is no where mentioned. And it is very observable, that of the woman mentioned by him, St. Luke says, *she stood at the feet of Jesus, behind him, weeping, and did wash his feet with tears.* A particular quite omitted both by St. John, and by the two former evangelists,

liſts in their ſeveral accounts of the perſon, who anointed Jeſus at Bethany a ſhort time before his death.

II. I now proceed, without farther delay, to mention ſome remarks upon this hiſtory, and ſhow how we may improve it for our benefit.

1. From the words of this text we evidently perceive, that our Lord diſtinctly foreſaw the great progreſs which the goſpel would ſoon make in the world.

Some inveterate adverſaries of the Chriſtian religion, about three hundred years after our Lord's aſcenſion, ſurpriſed and grieved at the progreſs it had made, and deſirous, if poſſible, to retard and ſuppreſs it, and again raiſe up heatheniſm in its room, had the preſumption to ſay, that the ſucceſs of our Lord's doctrine had exceeded his own expectation: and that when he preached in Judea, he did not think his name and religion would prevail as they had done; but that is a falſe inſinuation. Our Lord often ſpoke of the wide extent of his doctrine. Though the Jewiſh people, many of them, withſtood the bright evidence which was ſet before them of his great character: and it was very likely that they would continue to harden their hearts to a great degree; he knew that would not obſtruct his reputation, or his doctrine. And did more than once declare, that *many would come from the eaſt and the weſt, and ſit down with Abraham and Iſaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, whilſt the children of the kingdom,* for continued obſtinacy and unbelief, *would be ſhut out.*

When ſome *Greeks, who had come up* to Jeruſalem *with thoſe who came thither to worſhip at the feaſt of the paſſover,* deſired to ſee him, he *anſwered, ſaying, the hour is come, that the ſon of man ſhould be glorified,* John xii. 20—23 And afterwards at ver. 31, 32. *Now is the judgment of this world. Now ſhall the prince of this world be caſt out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

Beſide other parables to the like purpoſe, he ſaid: *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of muſtard ſeed, which a man took and ſowed in his field; which indeed is the leaſt of all ſeeds; but when it is grown, is the greateſt among herbs, and becometh a tree, ſo that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it.*

This text is another clear proof of the ſame thing. And his prediction is delivered with ſome ſolemnity. *Verily, I ſay unto you, whereſoever this goſpel ſhall be preached in the whole*

*world, there shall this also that this woman has done, be told for a memorial of her.*

The thing however is remarkable and extraordinary: that Jesus should attain to such renown: that the doctrine taught by him should be preached every where: and that a testimony of respect to him should be thought to deserve frequent mention, and to be long spoken of to the honour of the person, that had done it. Princes and conquerors easily transmit with honour their own names, and the names and characters of those who attend upon them, and serve them. But Jesus lived a humble, lowly life in this world, and died, as he now foresaw he should, an ignominious death. And yet he has attained to lasting, and wide extended honour and renown: and it is esteemed by many, or even by all, in many parts of the world, an honour for any to be mentioned with him, and spoken of as having shown respect to him.

The only reason of all this can be, that he was a prophet mighty in word and deed, that he was a teacher sent from God, that his discourses were wise and reasonable, and his conduct excellent and admirable, and that after his sufferings and death, he was raised to life, and with great power declared to be the Son of God, or the Messiah, as he had said he was.

To this only can be owing the honour to which Jesus has attained: and hereby the aspersions that had been cast on him by enemies, have been wiped off. The judgments passed upon him by those who evil entreated him, have appeared to be prejudiced, false and malicious. Whatever honour they were possessed of, whatever splendour they lived in, how great soever their influence may have then been; their names are either forgotten, or are loaded with just and perpetual disgrace. On the other hand, they who believed in him, who received his words, who honoured him in their minds, and showed him respect in their actions, are spoken of as persons of distinguished wisdom and piety.

2. From this text we learn that reputation for good works is desirable, and valuable.

Otherwise, our Lord had not declared, in opposition to the censure now passed by some upon the action of this woman, that it would be celebrated by others, and that *wheresoever the gospel should be preached in the whole world what she had done, should be told for a memorial of her.*

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Wiſe men have always eſteemed the good opinion of fellow-creatures a great advantage. Solomon ſays, *A good name is rather to be choſen than riches, and lovingkindneſs rather than ſilver and gold*, Prov. xxii. 1. And again: *A good name is better than ointment*, Ecc. vii. 1.

But whilſt they ſpeak of this good name, as a ſpecial advantage, they take care to intimate what things are moſt excellent and meritorious, that the inconſiderate may not be miſled by falſe appearances: therefore it is ſaid by the ſame wiſe man: *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain. But a woman that feareth the Lord, ſhe ſhall be praiſed*, Prov. xxxi. 30. Not that the two former are contemptible, but that they are inconſiderable, when compared with religion and virtue, which are much more commendable, and are likely to ſecure durable love and eſteem.

It is an affectionate and comprehenſive exhortation, with which St. Paul ſhuts up his epiſtle to the Philippians. *Finally, brethren*, ſays he, *whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, if there be any praiſe, think of theſe things*, Philip. iv. 8.

We may, then, quicken ourſelves in the purſuit of virtue, and the practice of good works, with the hope of that acceptance and eſteem, which are juſtly due to things right and reaſonable in themſelves.

It is a thing not undeſirable, nor to be deſpiſed and ſlighted, to be praiſed by thoſe who are in honour, and are juſtly praiſed; or to be eſteemed by ſuch as are greatly and juſtly eſteemed. At the leaſt, we may ſet this againſt the cenſures of the inconſiderate, the miſtaken, and prejudiced: and may reckon the judgment of the knowing and ſerious to overbalance that of the vain and thoughtleſs.

To be converſant with wiſe and eminent men, and to be ſubſervient to their eaſe, their credit, their influence and uſefulneſs: or to approve and embrace the excellent leſſons and maxims which they deliver, and yield to them due honour and reſpect, is very commendable. This is a part of the virtue of the woman here ſpoken of: and our Lord declared ſhe ſhould not fail of being honoured for it.

3. Another thing, which we are taught by this text, is, that ſome ſeaſons and circumſtances may juſtify uncommon expence.

Such expence there was now, and some through prejudice or interest took upon them to blame it. And a specious argument there was against it. But our Lord, who always was impartial (as his worst enemies acknowledged) who was never under the biass of favour or interest, openly vindicates it. Some said, the ointment might have been sold, and the price given to the poor. *But he said, let her alone: why trouble ye her? ... The poor ye have with you always; but me ye have not always.*

Our Lord, then, without at all detracting from the obligation to relieve the poor and indigent, which he had often inculcated, justifies this uncommon expence. The reason, upon which his determination is founded, teaches, that some extraordinary respect may be fitly shown to strangers, especially illustrious strangers.

The argument will hold with regard to any other persons of great merit and high station, and all those, to whom we are under great obligations. We may pay them all the respect we are able, with the abundance of good things with which God has blessed us.

And what our Lord delivers here upon this occasion will serve to justify the true interpretation of divers other texts. As Luke xiv. 14, 15. *Then said he to him that had him, when thou makest a dinner, or a supper, call not thy friends, ner thy brethren, nor thy rich neighbours.... But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* Our Lord is not to be understood to forbid entertaining friends, and brethren, and rich neighbours; but to teach, that we ought also to take care not to neglect and overlook the poor and necessitous, but to make a kind provision for them, and to show tenderness to such as are in affliction. For men may live in the splendour of an exalted condition, provided they let the poor and indigent partake of their abundance. As our Lord says upon another occasion: *Give alms of such things as ye possess; and behold, all things are clean unto you*, Luke xi. 41.

We may reasonably take it for granted, that the woman, who now indulged herself in a costly profusion upon Jesus, was also ready to other good works, and often bountiful to the poor.

Upon the whole, the Christian doctrine does not require a mean and sordid spirit: but enlargeth the mind, and teacheth

teacheth that diſcreet moderation in all things, and thoſe tender regards for the poor and indigent, which may leave room for ſome enlargements upon ourſelves and others, on great and extraordinary occaſions.†‡†

4. What this woman now did in anointing the body of Jeſus was very commendable.

If any ſhould aſk, what could there be commendable in ſuch an action, I ſhould anſwer: I wiſh myſelf able to diſplay all its excellencies. Our Lord ſaid, that *wherever the goſpel ſhould be preached, this alſo which ſhe had done, ſhould be told for a memorial of her.* Which may ſatisfy us, that it deſerves to be celebrated. Indeed, I think, the virtues, which were then in exerciſe in her mind, and which formed this action, were more fragrant, than her ointment, though that too was very precious, and *the odour of it filled all the houſe.*

The ointment, made uſe of by her, was reckoned very valuable by thoſe who were preſent, and the expence extraordinary. I ſuppoſe it was ſo, and far exceeding what ſhe uſually expended on herſelf, or friends, at other times. But then the greater reſpect does ſhe appear to have had for Jeſus. If the woman ſpoken of by the firſt two evangeliſts, be the ſame with her, of whom St. John writes, (as is very likely) ſhe was Mary ſiſter of Lazarus. And we can form a tolerable notion of the circumſtances of his family. He is never called a phariſee, a title, ſeldom given to any but men of ſubſtance, and credit in the world. And when he died, and was buried, though extremely dear to his ſiſters, his funeral was very frugal. When our Lord came to his grave, which *was a cave, and a ſtone lay upon it, he ſaid: take ye away the ſtone. Martha, the ſiſter of him, who was dead, ſaith unto him: Lord, by this time he ſtinketh. For he has been dead four days,* John xi. 38, 39. His body therefore had not been embalmed, nor laid in ſweet ſpices. There can be no reaſon to think then that this family were people in opulent circumſtances, but rather of a middle rank only, and private condition.

Mary however had a veſſel of rich ointment. Whether it was a treaſure that had been long in the family, or whether ſhe had procured it lately for this purpoſe, we need not ſay,

†‡† If this ſermon be too long to be read at once, here may be a good pauſe.

and cannot determine. But being poſſeſſed of a box or vaſe of ointment, of the richeſt ſort, ſhe thought, ſhe could never beſtow it upon a more worthy object. Poſſibly, ſhe was under apprehenſions, from what ſhe had heard him ſay of his departure out of this world, that it was expedient to lay hold of the preſent opportunity, leſt another ſhould not offer for ſhowing reſpect to ſo great a perſon.

She had a pure, ſincere, ardent love and eſteem for the Lord Jeſus. Her mind was filled with gratitude for benefits conferred by him on herſelf, or her relations and friends, ſome temporal, ſome ſpiritual, and upon theſe ſhe ſet the greateſt value. She conſidered him as the Saviour of the world, and the greateſt benefactor to her, and thoſe beloved by her, that ever ſhe had hitherto known, or ſhould know in time to come.

All this will be readily apprehended to be true of ſo pious a woman as Mary, who by the gracious and wonderful interpoſition of the Lord Jeſus had received her dear brother alive after he had been dead four days.

Her eſteem for Jeſus was judicious, and determined, well grounded, and unalterable. She was perſuaded he was the Chriſt, the choſen of God. She knew it from the prophets, from his own moſt excellent words, and from his mighty works. And his conduct had been admirable, lovely and engaging, beyond expreſſion. She believed he had the words of eternal life: and ſhe would never ceaſe to eſteem him, and truſt in him, whatever change there ſhould be in his outward circumſtances; or however baſely and deſpitefully ſome others might think fit to treat him.

She had a higher idea of the dignity of Jeſus, than moſt others had, and thought no teſtimony of reſpect could be too great to be ſhown him. Some, who poſſibly were not deſtitute of all regard for him, made computations of the value of the perfumed ointment, and thought the uſe ſhe made of it no better than mere waſte. But ſhe having brought the veſſel, and opened it, poured it forth without reſerve upon Jeſus, and wiped his feet with her hair. All this was done by her in the preſence of many people, who were come to ſee Lazarus, who had been raiſed from the dead. Many others treated him as a mean and ordinary perſon. She conſiders him, as entitled to all the reſpect, that is due to the greateſt and the wiſeſt. And certainly, this her regard for Jeſus, ſince it was juſt and well grounded,

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is greatly to her commendation. Faith in Jeſus, as the Chriſt, was a virtue. She excelled in that virtue, and was eminent among the believers of that time, when the Meſſiah abode in perſon on this earth.

Nor was her faith raſh and inconſiderate. It was the fruit of diligent attention, juſt obſervations, and ſerious meditation. All this we can ſay aſſuredly of Mary ſiſter of Lazarus. We can collect it from a hiſtory of this family, (before taken notice of) related by St. Luke, though he has ſaid nothing of that action, which we are now conſidering; where he ſays, that when Jeſus, in his journeyings, came to the village where they dwelt, *Martha received him into her houſe.* Whilſt ſhe was buſy in preparing for the entertainment of Jeſus, and the company with him, *Mary ſat at Jeſus's feet, and heard his word. Martha being cumbered about much ſerving*, came to the Lord Jeſus, and requeſted that her ſiſter might *help her.* He anſwered *that Mary had choſen that good*, or better *part, which ſhould not be taken away from her*, Luke x. 38—42.

Finally, ſhe manifeſted courage and reſolution in this action, and with a readineſs of thought, that is exemplary, ſhe laid hold of the opportunity. Some reſolution was needful, to exceed the common meaſures of reſpect, that were uſually paid to Jeſus. She actually met with rebukes, that were diſcouraging: but our Lord interpoſed, and forbad the giving her any trouble, and declared, that this action ſhould be long and often mentioned to her honour.

Theſe virtues, as ſeems to me, were in the mind of this woman at that time. I preſume, I have not extolled this action beyond what it deſerves. I have had no ſuch deſign, though I have been willing to do juſtice to it, and to carry on the fulfilment of our Lord's prediction, *that whereſoever the goſpel ſhall be preached, there alſo this, which this woman had done, ſhould be told for a memorial of her.*

But ſomething ſtill remains. It is not enough, that we celebrate, or acknowledge the good diſpoſitions of this woman. We are to imitate the virtues, which we admire in others. She behaved commendably in her day. We are to do ſo in ours. She lived in the days of the Meſſiah, when he abode on this earth. She ſaw, and heard him. She was attentive, and open to conviction. She diſcovered his merit, and the evidences of his high character, and loved and honoured him as ſuch, when many others deſpiſed

and rejected him. And, as we have good reason to believe, was discreet and virtuous in the whole of her conduct, and so approved herself to be a true disciple of Jesus.

We also live in the days of the Messiah, which are times of greater light and knowledge, than any former times. He is not now on this earth. Nor have we seen him. But we have good reason to believe in him, and love him. The objects of faith are now increased. We believe his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension to heaven, and his exaltation to power: and have better assurance, that he will come again, and give to every man according to his work, than they had, who saw him here in person. We should behave accordingly, if we desire to be rewarded hereafter. We should be diligent in improving opportunities of serviceableness and usefulness. He who neglects to sow at the proper season, must not expect to rejoice in the time of harvest. And, as the apostle says, *he that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly. And he that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully*, 2 Cor. ix. 6.

5. From this, and other passages of our Lord's life, we can evidently perceive, that, with all his great and transcendent wisdom, he did not disdain what we call the weaker sex: but allowed them to be capable of true, and distinguished worth and excellence.

He found the woman of Samaria to be a person of an inquisitive temper, and of good understanding in the things of religion. And he condescended to discourse freely with her: and more clearly declared to her his character of the Messiah, than to most others. John iv.

He openly testified his accepting the repentance of the woman, spoken of in St. Luke, as *a sinner*, who had come into the house of a pharisee, when he sat at meat. He said to her: *Thy sins are forgiven.* And for her farther assurance and comfort, added: *Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace*, Luke iii. 36—50.

How acute was the woman of Canaan, and how ingenious in her importunity! And how agreeable was the answer, which in the end our Lord gave her! *O woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt*, Matt. xv. 21—28.

When he sat in the temple over against the treasury, and saw many rich men cast in their gifts, a poor widow woman, who cast in two mites, obtained from him the highest commendation. *Of a truth, this poor widow has cast in more than*

*than they all. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury has cast in all the living that she had*, Luke xxi, 1—4.

Yea it is said, that *Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus*, John xi. 5. Nor can there be any doubt, that they were worthy of the esteem, which he manifested for them. He had observed in them qualities of the mind, and a prudent and virtuous conduct, truly amiable and commendable. That was a happy family! They were happy in each other. They were likewise happy in the favour and friendship of Jesus himself.

And, not to mention any more instances of this kind, St. Luke has particularly informed us, that as our Lord *went throughout every city and village of Judea, preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits, and infirmities: Mary Magdalen, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered to him of their substance*, Luke viii, 1—3.

And it seems, that they made great proficiency by their attendance on Jesus. They must have heard many of his public discourses, and seen many of his miracles. But they were not present, at any time, when our Lord ate the paschal supper with the disciples. Nor did they hear his affecting discourses at those seasons. And they must have been absent upon many other occasions, when he discoursed and conferred with the disciples. In this respect it may be said, that they *partook of the crumbs only, that fell from the disciples table.* Their improvements therefore are surprising. For they appear not to have fallen short of the apostles themselves in understanding, faith, zeal, and affection for Jesus.

And St. Mark, relating the conclusion of our Lord's sufferings on the cross, says: *There were also women looking on afar off. Among whom was Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James the less, and of Joses, and Salome. Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him: and many other women, who came up with him unto Jerusalem*, Mark xv. 40, 41.

Those women therefore, who had before attended upon our Lord, persevered in their faith to the end. They attended his crucifixion, standing afar off, bewailing him. They afterwards observed, where they laid him. And early on the first day of the week came to the sepulchre, with

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rich ſpices to embalm him. And they had the honour to be the firſt, who ſaw the Lord after he was riſen from the dead.

Permit me to add a thought or two more. The perſons named by St. Luke and St. Mark, as following our Lord, and miniſtering to him, were, chiefly, women of diſtinction, and of advanced age. Such were thoſe, who, together with our Lord's mother, ſhowed him that reſpect. Among theſe I do not reckon the two ſiſters of Lazarus. They appear not to have attended upon our Lord any where, but at their own home, and, in the company of their brother, at the houſe of Simon the Leper, a neighbour in the village of Bethany, where they dwelt. The reaſon, we do not certainly know. But it may have been owing to their age. If they were ſtill in the days of youth, it might not be fit, that they ſhould expoſe themſelves abroad.

Hence we can infer, that the number of women, who believed in Jeſus as the Chriſt, and profeſſed faith in him, was not inconſiderable. Many of theſe there were, who had ſo good underſtanding, and ſo much virtue, as to over come the common and prevailing prejudice. Without any bias of paſſion, or worldly intereſts, and contrary to the judgments and menaces of men in power, they judged rightly in a controverted point, of as much importance as ever was debated on this earth.

I have touched upon all theſe particulars, by way of encouragement to others. Deſpair to excel, and attain to eminence, enervates the powers of action, and obſtructs thoſe advances in knowledge and piety which otherwiſe might be made. High ſtations and public employments are not needful. Eminent virtue may be in any ſtation. Wherever it is, it is diſcerned by the penetrating eye of Jeſus, and is beheld with approbation, and will be rewarded by him in due time.

6. This text gives no encouragement to thoſe honours, approaching to idolatry, or altogether idolatrous, which ſome have ſince given to departed ſaints, both men and women.

Our Lord, in this place, ſpeaks not of any ſuch thing. And it is inconſiſtent with the tenour of his, and his apoſtles doctrine. But I need not enlarge upon this, in an aſſembly of perſons, who think freely, and exerciſe their higheſt

higheſt powers of reaſon and underſtanding in things of religion, as well as about matters of leſs moment.

7. We have, in this hiſtory, an inſtance of the favour of our Lord for virtue.

A perſon having performed an action, which proceeded from laudable diſpoſitions, he expreſſeth his approbation of it, and declares, that it ſhould be celebrated. We may be aſſured therefore, that when our Lord ſhall come again, to judgment, this benevolent, this remunerative property of his all-knowing and perfect mind, will be gratified, and diſplayed to the full. He will then beſtow rewards, anſwerable to the riches, the honours, the delights and entertainments of this world: but greatly ſurpaſſing them, and the ideas, which we have formed from what now appears to us moſt ſplendid and magnificent.

8. And laſtly, This text teacheth us to think, and judge for ourſelves, and to act according to the light of our own judgment and underſtanding, after having taken due care to be well informed, without paying too great deference to the favourable, or the unfavourable ſentences of others.

This woman met with checks and rebukes in her teſtimony of reſpect to Jeſus. But he approved of it. Some acts of charity, ſome works of goodneſs, which appear reaſonable and expedient to ourſelves, may be preferred by us before ſome others, which are in more general eſteem. Thoſe we ſhould perform, without diſcouraging theſe others, or entirely omitting them, if our ability can reach them all. But every man is the beſt judge of his own abilities, and what is moſt proper to be done by him, in the circumſtances, in which he is placed, and the relation he bears to others. If we perform what appears to ourſelves beſt, and moſt expedient, with a ſincere regard to the glory of God: and upon all occaſions ſtrive to excel in what is laudable: we need not doubt the approbation of our Lord, whoſe judgment is the moſt impartial, and the moſt equitable, and will ſecure ſuch rewards, as are moſt valuable and deſirable.

SERMON

# SERMON XIII.

## THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN TAKEN BY FORCE.

MATT. xi. 12.

*And from the days of John the Baptiſt, until now, the kingdom of heaven ſuffers violence, and the violent take it by force.*

JOHN the Baptiſt ſent two of his diſciples to Jeſus with that queſtion: *Art thou he that ſhould come, or do we look for another?* Our Lord having wrought ſome miracles in the ſight of thoſe two perſons, as well as taught the people in their hearing, ſends them back again to John in priſon, ſaying, *Go, and ſhow John the things, which ye do hear and ſee.*

When they were departed, our Lord took that opportunity to ſpeak to the multitudes concerning John, the better to remove their prejudices againſt himſelf, and the goſpel-diſpenſation. He enlargeth upon John's character, whom they generally owned for a prophet. He tells them, that they therein judged very rightly. He was a prophet indeed, and ſuperior to moſt, or any of the prophets, that had been ſent to them, upon account of the doctrine taught by him: which was pure religion, recommended upon forcible motives and conſiderations.

*Nevertheleſs*, adds our Lord, *he that is leaſt in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.* He that ſhall receive my doctrine, and be a ſubject of the goſpel diſpenſation, fully revealed and eſtabliſhed, will excel him in the knowledge of religion in ſome reſpects. As much was intimated by John ††† himſelf.

It follows in the words of the text: *And from the days of John the Baptiſt until now, the kingdom of heaven ſuffers violence, and the violent take it by force.* As if he ſaid: 'However after all, it is not every one that will attain to 'this excellence and dignity. Such are the prejudices that 'obtain, and ſuch are the worldly and ſelf-intereſted views of 'many, that it is not without conſiderable difficulty, that

†† Matt. iii. 11. and other places.

'the

'the bleſſings of this diſpenſation will be ſecured. And 'they may be ſaid to be a ſort of violent men, that enter 'into the kingdom of God, now ſetting up in the world.'

*For all the prophets and the law propheſied until John.* Hitherto, you have had the teaching of the law and the prophets. But the genuine, and ſublime principles of true religion are now more clearly taught. And more ſelf-denial is requiſite to embrace them, than many are willing to practiſe and ſubmit to.

There is a parallel place in St. Luke, which is in theſe words. *The law and the prophets were until John. Since that the kingdom of God is preached. And every man,* who enters into that kingdom, *preſſeth into it,* Luke xvi. 16. that is, forceth his way into it, by breaking through many obſtacles.

It is added in the fore-cited place from St. Matthew, where our Lord is diſcourſing to the people concerning John: *And, if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was to come. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.* Which expreſſions we never find uſed by our Lord, but when he ſays ſomewhat of great importance, or which men were prejudiced againſt, and therefore it required more than ordinary attention and honeſty of mind, to admit and embrace. For though John was really very eminent, and at his firſt appearance raiſed the regard of the whole Jewiſh nation: they did not now ſo generally conſider him, in his proper character of the fore-runner of the Meſſiah as they had done.

The *kingdom of heaven ſuffers violence, and the violent take it by force.* Our Lord, by violent men, does not intend ſuch as are injurious to others in their rights and privileges. Nor does he deſign to intimate, that any violence is neceſſary to be uſed againſt the will and diſpoſals of God: as if hindrances were laid in the way of men's ſalvation by determinations of the Divine Being, ſecret or open. For God is ready, graciouſly to receive all who repent. And Jeſus Chriſt calls and invites all in general, ſaying: *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden: and I will give you reſt.* But the force here ſpoken of is that reſolution, which is exerted in denying ourſelves, and overcoming prejudices, or acting contrary to ſome obſtructions laid in our way by other men.

Not to enlarge any farther in a general way concerning the meaning of this obſervation of our Lord, I ſhall endeavour to explain it by repreſenting, in ſeveral particulars, the nature of

of that force, which is here ſpoken of, and mention divers inſtances of the violent people here intended. After which I may add ſome reflections, and conclude.

I. I ſhall mention ſome particulars, which may ſhow the nature of the force here ſpoken of.

1. One kind of force here intended is a reſolution of mind to receive the doctrine and precepts of ſtrict holineſs and virtue, though contrary to the ordinary bias of men's appetites and inclinations.

If religion conſiſted only in ſome ritual obſervances, or bodily mortifications, at ſome certain ſeaſons; it would not be ſo difficult a thing, nor very contrary to any bad habits and diſpoſitions. But true religion, ſuch as was taught by John the Baptiſt, and by our Saviour, is a doctrine hard to be received, and complied with, cordially, and fully. The general ſtrain and tenour of their preaching is, *repent:* forſake all ſin: return to God, and ſerve him in the practice of real holineſs. *When the people came to John, and aſked him, ſaying, what ſhall we do then? He anſwered and ſaid unto them: he that has two coats, let him impart to him that has none. And he that has meat, let him do likewiſe,* Luke iii. 11. Hard doctrine! And it requires a good deal of reſolution of mind, and much ſelf-denial, to determine to put it in practice, by parting with our all upon ſpecial occaſions, or our ſuperfluous abundance, from time to time, as the wants and exigences of men may demand.

The ſame may be ſaid of his other admonitions to publicans and ſoldiers, that they ſhould perform the duties, particularly ſuited to their employments, and forbear the exactions, or other offences, which their way of life more eſpecially inclined them to. Luke iii. 12—14.

Such was John's doctrine. And certainly our Lord's was of the ſame kind, and an improvement of it . . . declaring, that unleſs *men's righteouſneſs exceeded the righteouſneſs of the ſcribes and phariſees, they could in no caſe enter into the kingdom of heaven,* or obtain the everlaſting happineſs of the life to come.

Our Lord's precepts are very difficult, as they are contrary to generally prevailing affections and inclinations, enjoining purity of heart and life, meekneſs under provocations, and forgiveneſs of injuries.

Compliance with theſe rules and precepts he has himſelf compared to the parting with a valuable member of the body, ſaying:

ſaying: *If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and caſt it from thee. For it is profitable for thee, that one of thy members ſhould periſh, and not that thy whole body ſhould be caſt into hell,* Matt. v. 29, 30. And what there follows.

And in regard to the difficulty of this holy conduct, and this complete conqueſt, which we ought to make of irregular appetites and paſſions, his apoſtles have delivered ſome of their exhortations in ſuch terms as theſe: *Mortify your members, which are upon the earth; and crucify the fleſh, with the corrupt affections, and luſts thereof.*

2. Another kind of violence intended by our Lord is the quitting favourite notions and prejudices, upon ſufficient evidence, and with mature, ſerious and diligent conſideration.

It is, undoubtedly, ſomewhat difficult to part with opinions that have been long entertained, and thereby to own that we were once in the wrong. Prejudices are ſometimes ſtrengthened by fond affections, which increaſe the difficulty of parting with them. This was very much the caſe of the Jewiſh people in general. They expected in the Meſſiah a glorious prince, a ſucceſsful and victorious warrior, a king that ſhould reign over them with power and ſplendour, and enrich them with the ſpoils of the nations.

They thirſted for the pleaſure of being revenged upon the gentiles, the Greeks and the Romans, who had ſucceſſively brought them into ſubjection, and laid them under tribute. And many were in expectation of ſome of the moſt profitable and honourable poſts of this extenſive empire. They were intent upon the external ordinances of the law of Moſes; but thought little about any precepts or encouragements of internal religion and real virtue

It muſt therefore have been the effect of ſerious conſideration, that any embraced Jeſus as the Meſſiah, upon the evidence of his miracles, and the teſtimony of John, and ſuch like arguments: whilſt they ſaw nothing in him ſuited to the idea, which moſt had formed of a worldly prince. And yet there were ſome, yea many, who believed on him, *when they ſaw the miracles that he did,* John iii. 2. ch. vii. 31. ch. ix. 30—33. To theſe our Lord imputes a laudable violence and zeal, in diſtinguiſhing themſelves from the moſt.

All the diſciples of our Lord are to be remembered here, who overcame, in part at leaſt, at the very beginning, ſome prejudices:

prejudices: who made a profeſſion, that he was the Chriſt, the Son of God, and adhered to him, as having the words of eternal life: though they did ſtill maintain hopes of ſeeing him appear, ſome time, with worldly glory.

Nathanael is a plain inſtance of a man, who gave up his prejudices, and falſe notions, upon evidence. *Philip findeth Nathanael, and ſaith unto him: we have found him, of whom Moſes in the law, and the prophets did write, Jeſus of Nazareth, the ſon of Joſeph. And Nathanael ſaid: can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* John i. 45—51. Nevertheleſs, when Jeſus had manifeſted extraordinary knowledge, he anſwered, and ſaid unto him: *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Iſrael.*

This muſt have been true of all in general, among the Jewiſh people, who, at that time, believed in Jeſus. They did give up, in ſome meaſure, though not yet entirely, ſome notions that had for a while a deep rooting in their minds.

3. Another kind of violence, intended by our Lord, is quitting ſome preſent worldly advantages, for the ſake of the goſpel, and making a profeſſion of the truths of religion, againſt much oppoſition, and notwithſtanding difficulties and diſcouragements.

This kind of violence was practiſed by many, if not all Chriſt's diſciples, whom he choſe to be his apoſtles. They had at firſt, in believing in him, as before ſaid, yielded up ſome prejudices and wrong notions, in part at leaſt. And in obeying his call, to follow him, and attend upon him, they reſigned ſome earthly advantages. They left their employments, the ordinary means of their ſubſiſtence. And they would be, for the moſt part, removed from the ſociety of their friends and relatives. They never were great in the world. Yet they practiſed a ſelf-denying part for the preſent. And Peter once ſaid to our Lord: *we have left all, and followed thee. What ſhall we have therefore?*

All who then believed in Jeſus, and made a profeſſion of his being the Chriſt, muſt have withſtood ſome oppoſition, and met with difficulties and diſcouragements. They went againſt the ſtream of the nation. They fell under ſome reproaches, by believing in one as the Meſſiah, who made ſo mean an appearance in this world. Some who did not openly, and upon all occaſions, acknowledge him, did at ſome ſeaſons ſhow conſiderable reſolution. Nicodemus, who

who at the firſt came to Jeſus by night, ſpoke in his favour, in the Jewiſh council; for which he was checked and inſulted, as very ignorant. *They anſwered, and ſaid unto him, art thou alſo of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariſeth no prophet,* John vii. 51, 52. And he joined with Joſeph of Arimathea, in giving our Lord an honourable burial after he had been crucified. ch. xix. 39, 40.

I need not now obſerve particularly, in how remarkable a manner the apoſtles of Jeſus, and the firſt believers at Jeruſalem, practiſed the violence here ſpoken of, after his aſcenſion, when they profeſſed, or taught in the name of Jeſus, under the greateſt difficulties. Nor need I ſtay to ſhow, how the kingdom of heaven was taken by violence afterwards, and how the violent took it by force, for a long while, under heathen emperors: when profeſſing the Chriſtian religion was prohibited by edicts: and it could not be embraced, but with manifeſt hazard of life itſelf, and all that is dear in the world.

4. Another thing very probably intended here, is the willing forwardneſs, and reſolute zeal of many in embracing the principles of true religion, and entering into the kingdom of heaven, who, to outward appearance were the moſt unlikely of any, to have a ſhare in the bleſſings and privileges of the goſpel.

Here I ſhall mention three ſorts of perſons: men of mean rank, and low education: men of unreputable character, and of a ſinful, vicious courſe of life: and the gentiles.

1.) I obſerve here the forward and reſolute zeal of men of mean rank.

Our Lord did not require aſſent, without ſufficient evidence, that his doctrine was from heaven. Indeed, he gave abundant proof of it. But it was reaſonable to expect, that men of a liberal education, and of experience in the world, and in eaſy circumſtances, ſhould firſt diſcern the evidences of truth, and yield to them. It might therefore have been expected, that the ſcribes and phariſees ſhould firſt of all have owned our Lord's character, and have perceived, that the works done by him were works of divine power. In Jeſus alſo were fulfilled many ancient prophecies. And it might have been thought, that the ſcribes and phariſees, verſed in the law, ſhould have firſt diſcerned this fulfilment. But yet, inſtead of this, they were, generally, the meaner people, who believed in him, and publicly profeſſed him.

Of this number were moſt, or all our Lord's diſciples, men of mean employments, and low education, though not poor, or deſtitute. Such were moſt of the reſt, who believed in him. Theſe were the men, who moſt admired the wiſdom of his words, and the greatneſs of his miracles. As St. Matthew obſerves at the concluſion of the ſermon on the mount. *When Jeſus had ended all theſe ſayings, the people were aſtoniſhed at his doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the ſcribes*, Matt. vii. 28, 29.

This is the more remarkable, and the more properly ſtiled by our Lord, *taking the kingdom of heaven by force*, becauſe the ſcribes and phariſees, the more knowing, and the more powerful men of the nation, did all they could to diſcourage the people, by many inſinuations to the prejudice of Jeſus. And hereby, and by other means, as our Lord told them, *they ſhut up the kingdom of heaven againſt men. They neither went in themſelves, neither ſuffered they them that were entering, to go in*, Matt. xxiii. 13.

In this reſpect alſo the man born blind is to be reckoned among them that took the kingdom of heaven by force. Notwithſtanding the diſadvantages which he had lain under, by his total and early blindneſs, and notwithſtanding the meanneſs of his condition, he withſtood the arguments, as well as threatenings of the Jewiſh council: and inſiſted upon it, that he who had cured him, *was a prophet*, John ix 17. They were ſo offended, as to excommunicate him. He nevertheleſs continued firm in his perſuaſion, and proceeded yet farther, owning Jeſus to be the Chriſt. Ver. 35—38.

Of this number alſo may be reckoned the officers of the high prieſt, who had been ſent out to apprehend our Lord, who, when they returned, and were rebuked for not bringing him, anſwered: *Never man ſpake like this man*, John vii. 46.

2. Among the people of a forward and reſolute zeal we muſt place ſome men of unreputable characters, and a bad courſe of life. Theſe might be thought leſs likely than others. And yet ſome of theſe embraced the doctrine of true religion, and entered into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore it is ſaid: *And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, juſtified God, being baptized with the baptiſm of John. But the phariſees and lawyers rejected the counſel of God againſt themſelves, not being baptized of him*, Luke vii. 29, 30. That is, there were more of the publicans, and mean people,

people, who came to John's baptiſm, and who alſo heard Chriſt gladly, than of the ſcribes and phariſees. The publicans were reckoned men of a ſordid and unreputable profeſſion. And though they were moſt of them Jews by birth and religion, the phariſees, and many others diſliked them for collecting the Roman tribute, and would not willingly converſe with them, or ſit at table with them.

Among theſe was one of our Lord's diſciples, who upon the call of Jeſus, *left all, and followed him*, Luke v. 28.

Another remarkable inſtance is *Zaccheus, who was the chief among the publicans. He ſought to ſee Jeſus. And afterwards received him joyfully. When the multitude ſaw this, they all murmured, ſaying, that he was gone to be gueſt with a man that is a ſinner.* But he was a true penitent, and ſo ſincere and warm was his zeal, *that he gave the half of his goods to the poor*, Luke xix. 2—8. and engaged to make ample reſtitution, if he had wronged any in the way of his employment.

There is alſo recorded in the goſpels a notable inſtance of a perſon of a ſinful courſe of life, who came to our Lord, and ſhowed proofs of repentance, and paid him the higheſt tokens of affection, reſpect and honour: and all this, without the approbation, or leave of the phariſee, at whoſe houſe Jeſus then was, and contrary to the rules and maxims of the governing ſect among the Jewiſh people.

3. Among people of a forward and reſolute zeal are to be reckoned the gentiles, who ſeemed not ſo likely to embrace the principles of true religion. But they alſo took the kingdom of heaven by force.

There were ſome early and remarkable inſtances. A centurion, whoſe ſervant was ſick of the palſy, ſent meſſengers to our Lord. *Jeſus ſaid he would come, and heal him. But the centurion anſwered, and ſaid: Lord, I am not worthy, that thou ſhouldſt come under my roof. Speak the word only, and my ſervant ſhall be healed.* Whereupon, it is ſaid, that *Jeſus marvelled, and ſaid to them that followed him: I have not found ſo great faith, no, not in Iſrael*, Matt. viii. 6—10.

The woman of Canaan is another of theſe violent people, of whom our Lord here ſpeaks in the text, who preſſed into the kingdom of heaven, and ſtrove to partake in its bleſſings and privileges. *She cried unto him, ſaying: have mercy on me, O Lord, thou ſon of David, my daughter is grievouſly vexed with a devil.* Our Lord was pleaſed to

try her faith, that the truth and eminence of it might be unqueſtioned. *But he anſwered her not a word. His diſciples came, and beſought him, ſaying: ſend her away, for ſhe crieth after us. But he anſwered, and ſaid: I am not ſent, but unto the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael.* Yet ſhe is not diſcouraged. *Then came ſhe, and worſhipped him, ſaying: Lord, help me. But he anſwered, and ſaid: it is not meet to take the children's bread, and caſt it to dogs. And ſhe ſaid: truth, Lord. Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs, which fall from the childrens table. Then Jeſus anſwered, and ſaid unto her: O woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee, as thou wilt,* Matt. xv. 22—28.

And ſo it was alſo afterwards. When the kingdom of heaven was more fully manifeſted to men, upon the aſcenſion of Chriſt, and the publication of the goſpel to the gentiles; there were more of theſe who believed, and came into the kingdom of God, than of the Jews: though the goſpel was firſt preached to them, and though the unbelieving Jews, every where, did all that lay in their power to obſtruct the reception of the gentiles, and forbad the apoſtles to preach to them, *that they might be ſaved,* 1 Theſſ. ii. 16.

I do not ſtay to allege proofs, or inſtances of this, out of the Acts, or the Epiſtles, where they may be eaſily found. I ſhall only refer to Acts xiii. 42—48. Where is the account of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas in the ſynagogue at Antioch in Piſidia. *And when the Jews were gone out of the ſynagogue, the gentiles beſought, that theſe words might be preached to them the next ſabbath. And the next ſabbath day came almoſt the whole city to hear the word of God. But when the Jews ſaw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and ſpake againſt thoſe things which were ſpoken by Paul, contradicting, and blaſpheming. But the gentiles rejoiced, and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as were ordained,* or diſpoſed, or prepared, *for eternal life, believed.*

All which was often prophetically repreſented beforehand by our Lord in divers of his beautiful parables. With regard to this event, he alſo ſaid: *The firſt will be laſt, and the laſt firſt.* And after the commendation of the centurion's faith: *I ſay unto you, that many ſhall come from the eaſt, and from the weſt, and ſhall ſit down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom,*

*kingdom*, who had ſo many ſuperior advantages, *ſhall be caſt out into outer darkneſs.*

Thus I have endeavoured to explain the nature of the violence, which our Lord here ſpeaks of, and have mentioned ſome inſtances of it.

To uſe the words of a pious and pathetic writer †‡ upon this ſubject. 'Now it was, that multitudes ſhould throng 'and crowd to enter in at the ſtrait gate, and preſs into the 'kingdom: and the younger brother ſhould ſnatch the inhe-'ritance from the elder: the unlikely from the more likely: 'the Gentiles from the Jews, the ſtrangers from the natives, 'and publicans and ſinners from the ſcribes and phariſees. 'Who like violent men ſhall by their importunity, obe-'dience, watchfulneſs and diligence, ſnatch the kingdom 'from thoſe, to whom it was firſt offered.'

Application. I ſhall now conclude with a few remarks, tending to illuſtrate this argument, and to confirm the explication, which has been given of the text.

1. From what has been ſaid, we may perceive, that when our Lord ſays, the kingdom of heaven *ſuffers violence, and the violent take it by force:* the primary meaning of *the kingdom of heaven* is *the kingdom of God* under the Meſſiah, or the goſpel-diſpenſation. But as embracing the doctrine of the goſpel, and obeying its rules and precepts, is the ſure way to obtain the happineſs of heaven; it is alſo true, that the future happineſs is likely to be the portion of thoſe, who practiſe the zeal and reſolution here intended.

2. True Chriſtians are the moſt unlikely of any men, to do any wrong, or violence to others, for the ſake of the honours, riches, or other advantages of this world. For they are men, who take the kingdom of heaven by violence. Truth, the principles of religion, improvement in virtue, and the future everlaſting happineſs, are the things they are moſt intent upon: for the promoting, and ſecuring of which, they are willing to part with all earthly advantages, if the circumſtances of things ſhould require it.

3. It may be obſerved, that the ſeveral kinds of violence, which have been mentioned, as intended in theſe expreſſions, may be all found united in one and the ſame perſon. He may reſolve to deny irregular appetites and affections, and bring them into conformity to the ſtricteſt rules of virtue.

†‡ Dr. Jer. Taylor in his Life of Chriſt.

He may embrace the principles of religion, contrary to former prejudices, and notwithſtanding external difficulties and diſcouragements. The ſame perſon may do all this, and likewiſe be one of thoſe, who are of low condition, and who had but a mean education; and who alſo once was involved in a bad courſe of life.

4. The violence, of which our Lord ſpeaks, may be, and ſtill is often practiſed in the world. Still ſome may forſake errors, which had been for a while entertained, and may overcome the prejudices of early age, and gain more generous ſentiments, than had been firſt inſtilled into them.

Whenever great corruptions are brought into the church of Chriſt, and the profeſſion of religion; truth is not to be recovered without a great deal of reſolution. The glorious reformation made in theſe parts of the world from the numerous and groſs corruptions of the church of Rome, was a work of this kind. The violent then took the kingdom of heaven, and ſeized truth by force. They improved their ſentiments by ſerious, diligent, and impartial inquiries after knowledge: when their ſuperiors would have kept them in ignorance and error: by exerting themſelves in the cauſe of liberty, and in favour of an open profeſſion of truth: when princes and prieſts, and the majority of every religious and civil community, to the utmoſt of their power, ſupported thoſe errors and corruptions, which had been long before introduced into the profeſſion of Chriſtianity.

5. Once more, for illuſtrating this point, it may be obſerved, that the violence, which our Lord here ſpeaks of, is the ſame thing which is recommended in ſome precepts, and repreſented likewiſe in figurative expreſſions. For it is the ſame, as *ſtriving to enter in at the ſtrait gate*, and *ſeeking the kingdom of heaven and its righteouſneſs in the firſt place.* It is alſo repreſented in ſuch parables as theſe. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treaſure hid in a field .... the which, when a man has found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and ſelleth all that he hath. and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, ſeeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went, and ſold all that he had, and bought it.* Matt. xiii. 44, 45, 46.

Let the ſame laudable diſpoſition of mind be in us. Let the ſame juſt eſtimation of things be the principle of our action.

action. Let us *buy the truth* at any rate, but *not part with it*, Prov. xxiii. 23. for any worldly conſideration whatever. And let us hold faſt our integrity, and be ſteady to the intereſts of truth, and the rules of virtue, unmoved either by the frowns or the ſmiles of this deceitful world. So ſhall we ſecure the true riches, and that honour, which will never be ſullied.

## SERMON XIV.

### VIRTUE RECOMMENDED UNDER THE SIMILITUDE OF WHITE RAIMENT.

REV. iii. 18.

*I counſel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayeſt be rich: and white raiment, that thou mayeſt be clothed, and that the ſhame of thy nakedneſs do not appear: and anoint thine eyes with eye-ſalve, that thou mayeſt ſee.*

VIRTUE is in itſelf reaſonable and excellent: and, impartially beheld in its native beauty, might attract and charm every rational being. But in this imperfect ſtate of the human nature, thoughtleſs and unattentive, or engaged by mean and worthleſs objects, or biaſſed and prejudiced by ſome ſordid affection, or the appearance of preſent intereſt; abundance of care and labour, repeated applications, and a variety of methods, are needful to excite their attention to the greateſt excellence, and to enlighten and direct them, leſt they miſtake the truth, and purſue vanity and miſery, inſtead of laying hold of ſubſtantial and durable happineſs.

Virtues are the habits and diſpoſitions of the mind. But inviſible and ſpiritual things are often repreſented by expreſſions, borrowed from things corporeal and ſenſible. There is a kind of neceſſity of it in the preſent condition. Such deſcriptions are of ſpecial uſe to affect the mind, and excite in it a regard to the lovelineſs of virtue; which, as it is valuable, is repreſented by riches; as it is ornamental, by a white or ſplendid garment. And becauſe

the practice of it is extremely reasonable, and is founded upon the justest notions and principles, and is therefore the truest wisdom; it is compared to what helps the sight, and enables men to discern things in a clear and proper light. These several representations do all occur in this text.

And, as the practice of virtue is in this world attended with difficulties, and good men are liable to opposition from others; their life is also represented by a warfare, and those dispositions, that are helpful to secure their success and perseverance, are recommended under the notion of armour: as in the well known passage of St. Paul in the sixth chapter to the Ephesians.

The words of the text are a part of the message of our exalted Lord to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, and in him to the whole church: ver. 17 *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.* There is a gradation. It is a great thing to be rich. It is still more, to be increased, or abound with goods. But it is the height of prosperity, to have need of nothing. This was their opinion of their state. And so many are apt to think of themselves, who embrace the principles of religion, and profess christianity. They suppose, that they want nothing necessary to salvation, and that they are high in the favour of God.

*And knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* But notwithstanding that high conceit of your circumstances, you are indeed *wretched, and miserable:* and so unhappy, as to be the greatest objects of compassion. You are *poor*, quite destitute of true riches: *and blind*, not having a just discernment of things, and of your own case: *and naked*, wanting that righteousness, which is the proper and best clothing of men and Christians, without which you cannot appear before God with acceptance.

*I counsel thee.* He might command as a master. But he rather adviseth as a friend, concerned for their welfare.

*I counsel thee, to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.* To buy is to secure and obtain by prayer and entreaty, serious care and endeavour, diligent labour and pains. The seeking of wisdom is often compared to merchandise. Says Solomon: *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteh understanding. For the merchandise thereof is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain*

*gain thereof than fine gold*, Prov. iii. 13, 14. And he directs men to *buy the truth, and sell it not*, ch. xxiii. 23. And says our Lord himself: *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went, and sold all that he had, and bought it*, Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

*Gold tried in the fire:* that is, the purest gold: true virtue, that true holiness, which is of the highest value: that *thou mayest be rich* indeed, not in opinion and thought only: and *mayest* also abound, or *be increased with goods.*

Other texts of scripture will confirm this interpretation. *Now ye are full*, says St. Paul to the Corinthians, *now ye are rich. Ye have reigned as kings without us. And I wish ye did reign, that we also might reign with you*, 1 Cor. iv. 8. Again: *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich*, 2 Cor. viii. 9. And the same apostle directs Timothy to *charge those who are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, . . . laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life*, 1 Tim. vi. 17.

Thus it is common to represent wisdom and virtue, and abounding in good works, and also the heavenly happiness, by riches and treasure. When therefore our Lord says here, *that thou mayest be rich*, the meaning is, that these Christians might be truly virtuous, and practise good works, and have a treasure of happiness laid up in heaven.

*And white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed.* By this figure of *white* or splendid *raiment* is meant much the same thing that was before spoken of under the similitude of *gold.* He had told them, that they were *naked*, as well as *poor.* In conformity to that allusive description of their wretched condition, he recommends to them to provide becoming raiment for their covering, even that true righteousness, which is most comfortable and ornamental, and highly acceptable in the sight of God.

*And*, finally, *anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.* Seek also of me a clear knowledge and discernment of things, especially of the principles and obligations of religion. Then you will be able to judge rightly concerning your own case, and will understand what God requires of you, and will not take up with an empty profession

feſſion only, and rely upon external privileges, as a ground of acceptance with God, and a qualification for the happineſs of another life.

*I counſel thee to buy of me white raiment, that thou mayeſt be clothed, and that the ſhame of thy nakedneſs do not appear.*

Theſe words, as may appear from the coherence, and the general explication already given of them, will lead me to treat of holineſs, or virtue, and the practice of it, under the idea of *raiment*, or *white* and ſplendid *raiment*: in doing which I ſhall take the following method.

I. I ſhall obſerve ſome texts of ſcripture, in which this metaphor is uſed.

II. I would ſhow particularly, what is meant by *white raiment*.

III. I ſhall endeavour to ſhow the grounds and reaſons of this metaphorical alluſion.

IV. After which I ſhall conclude with a practical application.

I. In the firſt place I would obſerve ſome texts of ſcripture, where this metaphor is uſed, chiefly thoſe of the Old Teſtament, where there are many examples of it, which have in them ſuch beauty and elegance, as muſt needs reconcile us to the uſe of it, and convince us of its fitneſs and propriety. In this manner is Job's commendable behaviour in the time of his proſperity deſcribed: *I put on righteouſneſs, and it clothed me, and judgment as a robe and diadem*, Job xxix. 14. The Pſalmiſt wiſhes eminent degrees of holineſs in theſe words: *Let thy prieſts be clothed with righteouſneſs*, Pſ. cix. 17. And deſcribing the tranſcendent greatneſs and glory of God, he ſays: *The Lord reigneth. He is clothed with majeſty. The Lord is clothed with ſtrength, wherewith he has girded himſelf*, Pſ. xciii. 1. And, *O Lord my God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with honour and majeſty, who covereſt thyſelf with light as a garment*, Pſ. civ. 1, 2. God's appearing for the deliverance of his people, and the deſtruction of his enemies, is repreſented by the prophet in this manner: *Then his own arm brought ſalvation unto him, and his righteouſneſs it ſuſtained him. For he put on righteouſneſs as a breaſt-plate, and an helmet of ſalvation upon his head. And he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak*, Iſa. lix. 16, 17. Of ſuch as proſper in their evil deſigns the Pſalmiſt ſays:

*Therefore*

*Therefore pride compaſſeth them about as a chain, violence covereth them as a garment*, Pſ. lxxiii. 5, 6. And men of a malevolent ſpirit are ſaid to *clothe themſelves with curſing*, Pſ. cix. 17.

Thus we ſee, that the diſpoſitions and qualifications of rational agents, with their correſponding behaviour, are often emphatically ſet forth by images, borrowed from the attire and covering of the body.

II. I am now to ſhow diſtinctly, what is intended by *white raiment*.

And it is manifeſt, that hereby is not to be underſtood an outward profeſſion of religion: for this there was among theſe perſons. Our Lord had no need to counſel them to buy this of him. They were a church, and had an angel among them. So far from needing to inculcate upon them a profeſſion of religion, it ſhould ſeem, that they were already too much opinionated upon that account. For which reaſon they are introduced as pleaſing themſelves therewith, and ſaying, that they were *rich, and increaſed with goods:* though they were indeed *wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and naked.*

In a parable of our Saviour, where *the kingdom of heaven*, or the ſtate of things under the goſpel-diſpenſation, is likened to a marriage feaſt, which a certain king made for his ſon, he who had not on a *wedding-garment*, Matt. xxii. 11. is manifeſtly one, who made a profeſſion of religion, and of faith in the goſpel: otherwiſe, he had not come to the feaſt, nor appeared among the other gueſts. But he wanted holineſs of life, or that true faith, which produces good works.

Nor are we hereby to underſtand barely an obſervation of the poſitive rites and inſtitutions of the chriſtian religion. For that may be reckoned to be included in what has been already mentioned, a full profeſſion of religion, in which this church does not appear to have been defective. It cannot be ſuppoſed, that by *gold tried in the fire*, or a *white raiment*, our Lord ſhould intend no more, than the obſervation of ſome external rites and ordinances. For in the courſe of his preaching he ſolemnly and diſtinctly declared, that *unleſs men's righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the ſcribes and phariſees, they ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. v. 20. And if religion conſiſt in external rites: if the obſervation of any poſitive appointments be that *wedding-garment*,

*garment*, which renders men fit for the kingdom of heaven: it may be ſaid, that our Lord has but indifferently conſulted the honour and intereſts of religion, by ſubſtituting a ſmall number only of ſuch appointments, and thoſe very plain and ſimple, in the room of the numerous, expenſive and ſhowy ceremonies of the law of Moſes. Nor would it then be ſo hard to be ſaved, or ſo difficult to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and to walk in the way to life, as he continually repreſented it to be in his moſt excellent diſcourſes.

What is this *white raiment*, or the *wedding-garment*, we are expreſsly told in the eighth verſe of the nineteenth chapter of this book of the revelation, where it is ſaid to be *the righteouſneſs of the ſaints*.††

That is a ſummary and general deſcription of this *white raiment*. And from the many exhortations to virtue, in the New Teſtament, conveyed under this ſimilitude, it appears to be compoſed of all the virtues and excellencies, that can adorn the life of a Chriſtian. It is therefore very frequent for the apoſtles to ſpeak of *putting off*, or laying aſide *evil works* and habits, and *putting on Chriſt*, the habit or dreſs of a Chriſtian: which is the *white raiment*, here recommended.

So ſays St. Paul to the Romans: *The night is far ſpent. Let us caſt off the works of darkneſs, and put on the armour*, or dreſs, *of light. Let us walk honeſtly, as in the day*, with a becoming decency: *not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and make no proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof*, Rom. xiii. 12—14. And to the Galatians. *As many of you as have been baptized into Chriſt, have put on Chriſt*, Gal. iii. 27. the habit of a Chriſtian. To the Epheſians in like manner. *That ye put off concerning the former converſation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful luſts: and be renewed in the ſpirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs*, Eph. iv. 22, 24. And very particularly, and at large in the epiſtle to the Coloſſians: ch. iii. 8—10. and 12—14.

St. Peter has an exhortation to chriſtian women in this alluſive way: *Whoſe adorning let it not be that outward adorning*,

†† 'That is, *the righteous acts of the ſaints*. So δικαιωματα evidently ſignifies.' Doddridge upon the place.

*of*

*of plaiting the hair, and 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. For after this manner in the old time the holy women alſo, who truſted in God, adorned themſelves,* 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4. comp. 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. And he has an exhortation to all in general: *And be ye clothed with humility,* 1 Pet. v. 5.

This is the *white raiment, the wedding-garment,* recommended to Chriſtians, ſobriety, modeſty of ſpeech and behaviour, tenderneſs of ſpirit, bowels of mercy, humility of mind, gentleneſs, meekneſs, forbearance, forgiveneſs, love, and all its works and offices, which are ſo agreeable and ornamental.†‡†

III. Which brings me to the ground and reaſon of this alluſive way of ſpeaking.

But preciſe exactneſs in accounting for ſuch a form of ſpeech ſhould not be expected. Let then theſe few following thoughts ſuffice for ſhowing the reaſon and origin of it.

1. The alluſion is partly founded in the ornament that clothing gives the body. In like manner the temper, or the practice of virtue, is exceeding amiable and ornamental, and puts a grace and luſtre on men. In places, before cited, Job ſpeaks of his putting on righteouſneſs as a diadem. And St. Peter recommends meekneſs and quietneſs of ſpirit as ornamental. Solomon ſpeaks of Wiſdom's rules, and obedience to them, as an *ornament of grace unto the head, and chains about the neck,* Prov. i. 9.

2. This alluſion is founded in the fitneſs and diſpoſition for ſociety, which clothing gives to any perſon. Man, by his reaſonable nature, is deſigned for ſociety. And the firſt foundation of politeneſs is laid in the garments that cover nakedneſs. Without clothing no one is fit for ſociety. A rich and becoming dreſs procures admiſſion into the beſt company: nor is one in filthy garments dreſſed for a wedding feaſt, or the entertainment of a prince. In like manner envy, pride, conceit, and other evil affections, make men unſociable: whereas humility, meekneſs, gentleneſs, and mildneſs, render men agreeable and entertaining.

†‡† They who find this ſermon too long to be read at once, may make a pauſe here.

As

Conſequently this alluſion ſerves to ſhow, in a lively and affecting manner, the neceſſity of real holineſs, in order to delightful fellowſhip with God, and admiſſion to his preſence, and the glorious entertainment he has prepared for his people.

As he, who in an improper dreſs intrudes into a royal entertainment, is turned out for that very reaſon: ſo all, deſtitute of righteouſneſs, will be excluded from the kingdom of heaven. A profeſſion of religion, or a deſire of glory and happineſs, is not ſufficient. Any one may wiſh to partake in a princely entertainment: but with ſuch wiſhes there ſhould be alſo ſome care to be a worthy and acceptable gueſt. If we *follow peace with all men, and holineſs, we ſhall ſee God*, Heb. xii. 14. not otherwiſe. They who add works to faith, and they only are juſtified in the ſight of God. And, as St. Peter aſſures us, if we *give all diligence to add to faith virtue, and knowledge, and brotherly kindneſs, and charity; an entrance will be miniſtered to us abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 Pet. i. 5—11.

IV. Application. I come now to the application, which will be in theſe three particulars: that we ſhould hearken to the counſel in the text, and buy of Chriſt this white raiment. They who obtain this raiment ought to prize it, and likewiſe to keep it well.

1. Let us hearken to the counſel here given by Chriſt, and buy of him this white raiment.

Let us view him in his life, and in his death. Let us be at the pains of conſidering ſeriouſly the ſpiritual and heavenly nature of his doctrine, the concern he has ſhown for our welfare, and the end of all his humiliations and ſufferings, which is, that he might *purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. If we attend to theſe things, we ſhall be convinced, that he who is deſtitute of virtue and good works, ought to reckon himſelf as wretched and miſerable in a ſpiritual ſenſe, as he who is deſtitute of neceſſary clothing: and that we muſt add to a fair and open profeſſion of the principles of religion the luſtre of a holy life and converſation.

Let us obſerve St. Paul's exhortation to the Coloſſians, where he recommends ſo many virtues: and let us ſee how we may learn them of Chriſt, or buy of him this white raiment.

*Put*

*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindneſs,* Col. iii. 12. Labour after a kind and merciful diſpoſition, and let every virtue appear in your converſation. Put them on as your clothing, without which you would not willingly be at any time ſurpriſed. And for this end conſider that you have experienced great mercy from God, through Chriſt Jeſus. He has brought you out of a ſtate of darkneſs into great light, and has made you his people, who once were afar off. God clothes himſelf with goodneſs, as his garment. And the ordinary courſe of his providence is beneficial to the human race in general: but you have obtained ſome diſtinction by being brought into the fellowſhip of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt. And are therefore under eſpecial obligations to do thoſe things, which are agreeable to his will.

*Put on*, particularly, *bowels of mercies.* If any among you are afflicted and diſtreſſed, do you, who are at eaſe, and have ability, ſympathiſe with them, bear their burdens, tenderly compaſſionate their caſe, and afford them help and relief, proportioned to their exigence.

*Put on* alſo *kindneſs.* Be not fierce and ſevere toward any, but be affable in your diſcourſe, courteous in your behaviour: ſhow, in all things, ſuch mildneſs and tenderneſs, as by no means to diſcourage and grieve thoſe you converſe with, eſpecially ſuch as are of a broken and afflicted ſpirit.

*Humbleneſs of mind.* Be willing to condeſcend, and to behave, as inferiors, toward thoſe, who ought to ſerve and honour you: even as Jeſus Chriſt was among his diſciples, and others, *as one that ſerves*, Luke xxii. 27.

*Meekneſs:* Not reſenting every injury done you, but quietly ſubmitting to ſome ill treatment, rather than diſturb the peace of your ſociety.

*Longſuffering:* Enduring many and repeated offences, without being provoked to wrath and revenge.

*Forbearing one another:* Mutually bearing with one another's failings and weakneſſes, from which none are entirely exempt.

*And forgiving one another, if any have a quarrel againſt you:* And even forgiving and forgetting injuries, and being willing to be reconciled again, though differences may have ariſen, and ſubſiſted for ſome time. Of this alſo, however great the condeſcenſion may ſeem, you have a pattern in God's dealings with you. And no more is expected from you to

others,

others, that you have experienced from Jeſus Chriſt. *Even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo do ye.*

*And above all theſe things put on charity, which is the bond of perfection:* And upon all theſe put true, and undiſſembled, and ardent love; which, as a girdle, may encompaſs and bind you all about, as one body, and ſecure a complete and amiable harmony and union in the ſeveral parts of your ſociety.

By humble and earneſt prayer, by a ſincere reſolution to deny yourſelves, as to ſome preſent advantages, by often and carefully viewing the example of Jeſus, and the whole of his tranſactions from the beginning to the end, in his humiliation, and abaſement on earth, and in his glory and exaltation in heaven, you may buy and obtain of him this white raiment, that you may be clothed, and may walk with him in white, and be among the noble and honourable of his kingdom.

2. They who have obtained this *white raiment*, the wedding-garment, ought to prize it.

Never therefore ſuffer yourſelves, by ſcoff and ridicule to be put out of countenance in it. A rich and coſtly dreſs may be depreciated by thoſe who want it. And it may excite the envy of ſome others. But it fails not to procure reſpect from many. By this clothing you are in ſome meaſure fit for fellowſhip with God, and Chriſt, and for the ſociety of perfect ſpirits.

It will never cauſe pride in your own hearts, nor excite to a lofty deportment toward others. But the real excellence of it may fill you with a modeſt conſciouſneſs of the worth and dignity which God has put upon you. It is a garment properly your own, which no one can deprive you of without your conſent: which you have obtained by prayer and meditation, watchfulneſs and circumſpection, abſtinence and ſelf-denial: which therefore you have received from Chriſt himſelf. And by wearing it, and appearing in it, as his diſciples, you will do him honour and reſpect, which he will accept and reward hereafter.

3. Laſtly, they who have received from Chriſt this white raiment, ſhould be careful to keep it well.

Amidſt the repreſentation of great afflictions and trials it is ſaid in this book: *Bleſſed is he that keepeth his garments*, Rev. xvi. 15. He who is richly clad, is under eſpecial obligation

obligation to a ſtrict care of his garment, that it may be unſullied. In our converſation in this world, without particular care, this garment will contract ſome diſagreeable defilement. And in ſo rich a dreſs it cannot be overlooked. As a little folly is obſerved in him, who is in reputation for wiſdom, ſo every the leaſt ſpot is diſcernible in a white garment.

In our walk in this world, amidſt a variety of characters, we muſt have our eye about us, and take heed to ourſelves, that our meekneſs be not tarniſhed by haſtineſs of ſpeech or action, and that no ſpot of pride or ambition, or inordinate affection for earthly things ſtain the purity of this raiment.

This may be thought difficult; but it is not impoſſible. It is taken notice of at the beginning of this chapter, to the advantage of ſome: *Thou haſt a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments.* It is added: *And they ſhall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.* Which alſo ſhows, that care and watchfulneſs, on which ſo much depends, though ſomewhat tedious at preſent, will be fully rewarded in the end.

Well then, *Bleſſed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, leſt he walk naked, and they ſee his ſhame,* Rev. xvi. 15. Bleſſed is he, who maintains his watch in every ſtation and condition, and in all the dangerous temptations of this life.

In the warm beams of proſperity this white raiment is very apt to fade: and it can ſcarcely bear them in an intenſe degree, eſpecially for a long ſeaſon, and without interruption. In ſome eaſy circumſtances likewiſe extraordinary care may be needful, that it be not loſt in a deep ſleep of ſecurity. Happy is he, who then *watches, and keeps his garments*, that no man rob him of that which is his chief glory and ornament, and which he cannot loſe without being filled with ſhame and confuſion.

Happy likewiſe is he, who is provided with the double clothing of fortitude and patience: ſo that he is not afraid for the cold of adverſity, nor for the tempeſts of affliction and perſecution. That is another very dangerous circumſtance. But it uſually awakens attention, and is often cleanſing and purifying. And our Lord adds immediately after the words of the text: *As many as I love, I rebuke and chaſten.*

In fact, many *have gone through great tribulation, and waſhed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb*, Rev. vii. 14. By a ſteady faith in their great Lord and pattern, whom they have been made to reſemble in ſufferings, they have become like him in meekneſs and patience. And in thoſe ſuffering circumſtances, the moſt diſpleaſing and affrighting to carnal apprehenſions, their robes have become reſplendent: a part of the heavenly glory has ſeemed to deſcend upon them: the beams of which have enkindled a flame of divine love in the hearts of others, which has inſpired them with a holy ambition of ſharing with thoſe followers of the lamb in ſufferings, and reſembling them in virtue: that they may alſo partake of their uncommon comforts here, and their peculiar rewards hereafter.

# SERMON XV.

## THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

### 1 TIM. iii. 16.

*And without controverſy great is the myſtery of godlineſs: God was manifeſt in the fleſh, juſtified in the ſpirit, ſeen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.*

For diſcerning the coherence we need look no farther back than to the fourteenth verſe. *Theſe things*, ſays the apoſtle, *write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee ſhortly. But if I tarry long, that thou mayeſt know, how thou oughteſt to behave thyſelf in the houſe of God, which is the church of the living God, the piller and ground of the truth. And without controverſy great is the myſtery of godlineſs: God was manifeſt in the fleſh.*

This clauſe ſeems to be added, with a view to excite the care, circumſpection, and diligence of Timothy: conſidering the vaſt importance of the doctrine of the goſpel committed to him. Which alſo juſtifies the concern of the apoſtle for the right behaviour of this evangeliſt, and the care he took to ſend him proper advices and directions, and engage his due regard to them.

*And*

*And without controverſy great is the myſtery of godlineſs.* As if he had ſaid: 'Do not therefore think me too minute 'and particular, or too earneſt and importunate in the 'directions which I ſend unto you. For it is confeſſed, and 'acknowledged by all who are acquainted with it, *that the* '*myſtery of godlineſs is very great*, weighty and important.'

Thus we are coming to the difficult part of our undertaking to explain theſe words: and indeed it has no ſmall appearance of difficulty. But yet I would ſuppoſe, and am apt to think, that the things here intended by the apoſtle, are clear and obvious points, often ſaid in the books of the New Teſtament, in other places; and underſtood and acknowledged by all, who are well acquainted with the Chriſtian doctrine, and its evidences, as contained in the ſcriptures. The obſcurity therefore of this text, I preſume, ariſes from ſome particular expreſſions here made uſe of.

It appears to me very likely, that by *the myſtery of godlineſs* is meant the goſpel-diſpenſation, or the doctrine of the goſpel in its extent and purity: as containing the deſign of God concerning the ſalvation of men, in and through Jeſus Chriſt, without the works, or the ritual and peculiar ordinances of the law of Moſes.

We may be confirmed in this interpretation by obſerving ſome of the many places, in which the word *myſtery* occurs in the epiſtles of this apoſtle. Rom. xvi. 25, 26. *Now unto him, that is of power to eſtabliſh you according to my goſpel, and the preaching of Jeſus Chriſt, according to the revelation of the myſtery, which was kept ſecret ſince the world began, but now is made manifeſt, and by the ſcriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlaſting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.*

Eph. i. 9, 10. *Having made known unto us the myſtery of his will, according to his good pleaſure, which he had purpoſed in himſelf: that in the diſpenſation of the fulneſs of times, he might gather together in one all things in Chriſt.*

Eph. iii. 2—5. *If ye have heard of the diſpenſation of the grace of God, which is given me to you ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the miſtery, . . . . which in other ages was not made known unto the ſons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apoſtles and prophets by the ſpirit: that the gentiles ſhould be fellow-heirs, and of the ſame body, and partakers of his promiſe in Chriſt by the goſpel.* And afterwards in

the ſame chapter, ver. 8, 9. *Unto me, who am leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints, is this grace given, that I ſhould preach among the gentiles the unſearchable riches of Chriſt: and to make all men ſee, what is the fellowſhip of the myſtery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God.*

Theſe texts plainly ſhow, that by the *myſtery* the apoſtle often means *the* whole *diſpenſation of the goſpel*, with its unſearchable riches, and abundant grace and mercy: always determined in the purpoſe of God, but fully revealed to men in theſe late ages of the world.

Once more in the ſame epiſtle. Eph. vi. 19, 20. . . *and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the myſtery of the goſpel, for which I am an ambaſſador in bonds: that I may ſpeak boldly as I ought to ſpeak.*

To the like purpoſe in the epiſtle to the Coloſſians, which we have often obſerved to have a great agreement with that to the Epheſians. Col. i. 25—27. *Whereof I am made a miniſter, according to the diſpenſation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God, even the myſtery which has been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifeſt to his ſaints: to whom God would make known, what is the riches of the glory of this myſtery among the gentiles: which is Chriſt in you the hope of glory.*

And ch. ii. 2. . . . *that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full aſſurance of underſtanding, to the acknowledgment of the myſtery of God, even the Father, and of Jeſus Chriſt.*

And ch. iv. 3. *Withal praying for us, that God would open to us a door of utterance, to ſpeak the myſtery of Chriſt: for which I am alſo in bonds.*

And in this very chapter, the third of the firſt epiſtle to Timothy, ver. 8, 9. *Likewiſe muſt the deacons be grave, . . . . holding the myſtery of the faith in a pure conſcience.*

There can be no doubt then, but that by *the myſtery of godlineſs* the apoſtle means the evangelical diſpenſation, or the doctrine of the goſpel of Chriſt, which he oftentimes calls *a myſtery, the myſtery of the goſpel, the myſtery of the faith:* and here *the myſtery of godlineſs.*

To the like purpoſe in the ſixth chapter of this firſt epiſtle to Timothy. Ver. 2, 3. *If any man teach otherwiſe, and conſent not to wholeſome words, even the words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to the doctrine which is according to godlineſs,*

*he*

*he is proud, knowing nothing.* And the epiſtle to Titus begins in this manner. *Paul, a ſervant of God, and an apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godlineſs.*

This doctrine of the goſpel, the apoſtle ſays in the text, is *great*, unqueſtionably ſo. *And without controverſy great is the myſtery of godlineſs.* By *great* meaning, as we may reaſonably think, every thing, which can be comprehended in that character. It is weighty and important: it is ſublime: moſt true and certain: in all reſpects worthy of God: and carrying in it the beſt and kindeſt deſign toward men: moſt likely and moſt effectual to reclaim them from ſin, and bring them to God and true holineſs here, and to durable and unmixed happineſs hereafter. Upon the compariſon too it ſurpaſſeth in glory, riches, and grace, all former diſpenſations. Finally, it may be ſaid to be great, as it was unſearchable, exceeding all that had entered into the heart of man to conceive: though fully determined by the Divine Being, and often hinted and foretold in the revelations of the prophets, in the more early ages of the world.

Thus far we ſeem to have proceeded with a ſatisfactory evidence and perſpicuity, as to the meaning of the words.

It follows. *God was manifeſt in the fleſh.* Here we have a difficulty well known to learned Chriſtians, and the laborious and diligent interpreters of ſcripture. For whereas we have in our text, *God was manifeſt in the fleſh:* ſome think, we ſhould read, *Which was manifeſt in the fleſh.*

In favour of the reading laſt mentioned it is alledged, that it is found in divers ancient verſions, and in ſeveral Latin authors. On the other hand, in favour of our preſent, and more common reading, it is ſaid, that it is in moſt, and well nigh all Greek manuſcripts that we know of. It is likewiſe obſerved, that ſeveral of the expreſſions which follow, are more properly uſed of a perſon than of a thing. For inſtance: of *the myſtery of godlineſs*, it cannot be ſo properly ſaid, that *it was manifeſted in the fleſh:* nor that it was *received up into glory.*

Without deciding this point, I ſhall now proceed to explain the ſeveral following expreſſions of the text. And I ſuppoſe it will appear, that which ſoever of theſe two readings we follow, the meaning is much the ſame.

The firſt thing here affirmed, whether the ſubject be *the myſtery of godlineſs*, or *God*, is, *was manifeſt*, or manifeſted *in the fleſh*. And certainly, the connection is very good, underſtanding this to be ſpoken of the former of the two. And how it may be ſaid, appears from many of the texts before alledged, when it was ſhown, that by *the myſtery of godlineſs*, is to be underſtood the evangelical diſpenſation, or the doctrine of the goſpel. For in thoſe, and other texts, the apoſtle ſpeaks of *the revelation of the myſtery, which was kept ſecret ſince the world began, but is now made manifeſt:* and, *the myſtery, which had been hid from ages and generations; but now is made manifeſt unto his ſaints. The myſtery of godlineſs*, or the doctrine of the goſpel, had been made manifeſt, by the preaching of John the Baptiſt, of our Saviour himſelf, and his apoſtles after him. It had been manifeſted *in the fleſh*, that is, to, and among men.

But take our preſent, and more common reading. *God was manifeſt in the fleſh.* And the expreſſion will not be very difficult to be underſtood: the ſame thing being often ſaid, and ſpoken of in other places of ſcripture. For God was manifeſted in the human nature of Jeſus Chriſt. As St. John ſays at the beginning of his goſpel: *And the word was made fleſh and dwelled among us.* And at the beginning of his firſt epiſtle: *For the life was manifeſted, and we have ſeen it, and bear witneſs, and ſhow unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifeſted unto us.* And ſays St. Paul, Col. ii. 9. *In him dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily:* that is really and durably, not figuratively and typically, as in a bright cloud or glory, ſometimes appearing under the ancient diſpenſations. The ſame apoſtle therefore ſays of Chriſt, Col. i. 15. that he is *the image of the inviſible God.* And Heb. i. 3. *the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon.* For in him appeared the wiſdom, the power, the truth, the holineſs, the goodneſs, the mercifulneſs of God. In the like manner, and for the ſame reaſon, Jeſus is called *Emmanuel*, or *God with us*, Matt. i. 23. or, as St. Peter expreſſeth it, Acts x. 38. *Ye know, how God anointed Jeſus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghoſt, and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppreſſed of the devil. For God was with him.*

And ſo far as we can perceive, thoſe ancient Chriſtian writers,

writers, who read *which*, underſtood this, and alſo the following particulars, concerning Jeſus Chriſt. ††

. . . *juſtified in the ſpirit*, or by the ſpirit. This is eaſily underſtood either of *the myſtery of godlineſs*, or of *God manifeſted in the fleſh.* For the doctrine of the goſpel was proved and atteſted by many miraculous works. Or, the divine authority and miſſion of the Lord Jeſus were proved and evidenced by the ſpirit. As John the Baptiſt declares in his teſtimony to him. John iii. 34. *He whom God hath ſent, ſpeaketh the words of God. For God giveth not the ſpirit by meaſure unto him.* And our Lord himſelf, Matt. xii. 28. *If I by the ſpirit of God caſt out dæmons, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.* And compare Luke xi. 20. and John v. 36. *The works, which the Father has given me to finiſh, the ſame works that I do, bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me.* And to the like purpoſe elſewhere.

The whole doctrine of the goſpel, the divinity of this diſpenſation, and all things concerning the Lord Jeſus, were confirmed by his reſurrection from the dead. As St. Paul ſays, Rom. i. 4. *Declared to be the Son of God with power by the reſurrection from the dead:* and alſo by the plentiful effuſion of gifts of the ſpirit upon the apoſtles, and other believers, after his aſcenſion, in conformity to his predictions and promiſes concerning that matter. So John xvi. 13, 14. *Howbeit, when the ſpirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth. . . . And he will ſhow you things to come. He ſhall glorify me. For he ſhall receive of mine, and ſhall ſhow it unto you.* And St. Paul reminds the Corinthians, 1 Cor. ii. 4. that he had preached to them *in demonſtration of the ſpirit and power.* See alſo 1 Theſſ. i. 5, 6. and Heb. ii. 3, 4.

†† Quod. Clar. Lat. Vulg. Syr. . . . Hieron. Fulgentius aliique Latini. Qui tamen omnes cum Græcis in eo conſentiunt, quod partem hanc cum ſequentibus in Chriſti perſonam interpretentur. Mill. in loc.

So Mill. I ſhall put down here the paſſages of ſome early Greek writers, who have referred to this text, and underſtood it of Jeſus Chriſt.

Ου χαριν απεστειλε λογον, ινα κοσμω φανη· ος υπο λαν ατιμασθεις, δια αποστολων κηρυχθεις, υπο εθνων επιστευθη. Ep. ad Diognet. p. 501. D. Pariſ.

Ω μυστηριον. Μεθ ημων ειδον οι αγγελοι τον χριστον, προτερον ουχ ορωντες. Clem. A. C. vii. Hypot. citat. ab Œcum. in loc. Vid Clement. Fragm. ap Potter. p. 1015. et J. Ittig. Bib. PP. p. 162.

Εχυ δε ο εμος ιησους αιαλαμβανεσθαι εν δοξη λεγηται. Orig. Contr. C. l. 3. p. 129. Cant. 467. C. Bened. See vol. II. p. 131, 533.

*How ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him: God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will.* And St. Peter 1 Epiſt. i. 12. *Of which ſalvation the prophets have inquired, . . . unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themſelves, but unto us, they did miniſter the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the goſpel unto you, with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from heaven.* That is *juſtified by the ſpirit.*

It follows: *ſeen of angels:* which alſo may be well underſtood of *the myſtery of godlineſs.* For St. Peter, in the place juſt cited from him, ſays of the ancient prophets, *that they did miniſter the things,* which had been lately *reported: . . . which the angels deſire to look into.* And St. Paul Eph. iii. 9, 10. *To make all men ſee, what is the fellowſhip of the myſtery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God. . . . To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wiſdom of God.*

Underſtand this article of *God manifeſted in the fleſh,* or in the human nature of Jeſus Chriſt. And then we may ſuppoſe to be hereby meant the appearances of angels at our Saviour's nativity, their miniſtering to him after his temptation in the wilderneſs, and upon divers other occaſions, and particularly their attendance on him at his reſurrection and aſcenſion.

*Preached unto the gentiles:* that is, to all the world, not to Jews only, but to gentiles alſo. This, as every one immediately perceives, may be properly ſaid either of the myſtery of godlineſs, or of the divine manifeſtation in the perſon of Chriſt. The doctrine of the goſpel in its genuine purity, ſimplicity and fulneſs, was preached by Paul and others both to Jews and Gentiles. And *God was in Chriſt reconciling the world to himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto them,* 2 Cor. v. 19.

*Believed on in the world.* It met with acceptance, and had great effects all over the world. This may be fitly underſtood of either of the two ſubjects ſo often mentioned. Says the apoſtle to the Romans, i. 5, 6. *By whom we have received grace and apoſtleſhip for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name. Among whom are ye alſo the called of Jeſus Chriſt.* 2 Cor. ii. 14. *Now thanks be unto God, which always cauſeth us to triumph in Chriſt, and maketh manifeſt the ſavour of his knowledge*

*knowledge by us in every place.* And Col. i. 5, 6. *We give thanks to God for the hope, which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the truth of the goſpel: which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it does alſo in you, ſince the day ye heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth.*

Finally, *received up into glory.* If this be underſtood of *the myſtery of godlineſs*, or the doctrine of the goſpel, the meaning is, that it was glorioufly exalted: inaſmuch as thereby the knowledge of God had been ſpread over the earth, more than by reaſon alone, or any former revelation: and that it had a more powerful effect and influence than any other doctrine whatever, for enlightening, ſanctifying, and ſaving men.

But this expreſſion may be alſo very properly underſtood of *God manifeſted in the fleſh*, meaning our Lord's glorious aſcenſion. Acts i. 2. . . . *until the day in which he was taken up.* And ver. 11. *they looked ſteadfaſtly toward heaven as he went up.* Indeed the phraſe, *received up into glory*, taken ſeparately, might be very properly uſed concerning our Lord's aſcenſion into heaven. The chief difficulty attending this interpretation is the place, in which it is mentioned, laſt in order: whereas the aſcenſion of Chriſt preceded ſeveral things here obſerved: *preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world.* However, poſſibly, this objection may be ſolved, by only ſuppoſing, that the apoſtle having begun with that particular, *God manifeſted in the fleſh*, meaning his appearance in the human nature of Chriſt, might chooſe to conclude with that which put a period to our Lord's perſonal preſence, and viſible appearance among men in this earth: his triumphant aſcenſion to heaven, and his reception there into glory, at the right hand of God.

Thus I have repreſented the ſeveral ſenſes of theſe expreſſions, and according to my ability briefly explained the whole.

And I preſume, that the truth of the obſervation, mentioned at the beginning of this diſcourſe, may now be more apparent; that there is nothing in this text, but what is perfectly agreeable to many other texts of ſcripture; and that the ſeveral particulars here mentioned, are articles of faith received by all Chriſtians in general; whether the ſubject here ſpoken of be *the myſtery of godlineſs*, or *God* himſelf.

Suppoſe

Suppoſe the firſt. It is known and believed by all Chriſtians, that the doctrine of the goſpel was *manifeſted* to, and among men, by Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles: that it was *juſtified by the ſpirit*, confirmed by miracles wrought by Chriſt himſelf, and by his apoſtles, and others afterwards: *ſeen of angels*, beheld by them with ready approbation, and with ſurpriſe and wonder: *preached to the gentiles*, as well as Jews: *believed on in the world*, received by men of all characters in all nations: *received up into glory*, glorioufly exalted, greatly honoured and magnified by that reception, and by its effects in the hearts and lives of men.

Suppoſe this to be ſaid of God. It is alſo true, and received by all Chriſtians in general. There was an eſpecial preſence, and moſt extraordinary manifeſtation of the Divine Being in the human nature, or perſon of Jeſus Chriſt, who is therefore called Emmanuel, or God with us. The divine authority of Jeſus was *juſtified by the ſpirit*, by many miraculous works, and by a very plentiful effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt upon ſuch as believed in him. He was ſeen, and miniſtered to, *by angels*, *preached unto the gentiles*, *believed on in the world*, and finally *received up into glory* in heaven.

Application. What remains after this paraphraſtical explication of the words of the text, is an application in two or three inferences.

1. We muſt here ſee reaſon for praiſe and thankſgiving to God for the revelation of his will, and for the manifeſtation of himſelf to us in Chriſt, and his goſpel: eſpecially if we ourſelves have not only been favoured with this diſcovery, but have alſo heartily embraced it, and reaped benefit by it. As our Lord ſaid to his diſciples, *to whom it was given to know the myſteries of the kingdom of heaven*, and who had diligently attended to the inſtructions afforded to them. *Bleſſed are your eyes; for they ſee: and your ears; for they hear. For verily I ſay unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have deſired to ſee thoſe things which ye ſee, and have not ſeen them: and to hear thoſe things which ye hear, and have not heard them*, Matt. xiii. 16, 17.

2. We may hence perceive it to be a duty, eſpecially incumbent upon the miniſters of Chriſt, in his church, to ſupport and defend the true doctrine of the goſpel.

It is with this view, that this matter is now mentioned to Timothy. And every thing here inſiſted upon is very pro-

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per to engage and influence thoſe who are in a ſtation at all reſembling his. And it is with redoubled earneſtneſs, that the apoſtle renews his exhortation to this evangeliſt, near the concluſion of the epiſtle, ch. vi. 13, 14. *I give thee charge in the ſight of God, who quickeneth all things, and of Chriſt Jeſus, who before Pontius Pilate witneſſed a good confeſſion: that thou keep this commandment without ſpot, unrebukable, until the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt.*

3. And laſtly, The ſame conſiderations do alſo in a like manner direct the conduct of all Chriſtians in general. They ſhould be engaged to uſe their beſt endeavours to uphold and maintain the doctrine of the goſpel, *the myſtery of godlineſs*, which, confeſſedly, is very great.

It has been *manifeſted*, and has been fully *juſtified by the ſpirit, ſeen of angels, preached* to all nations, *believed* by men of all characters in every part of the world, and glorioufly exalted by its happy fruits and effects.

After this there can be no reaſon to doubt of its truth. And they who have received it, ought to uſe all reaſonable methods to preſerve it pure and entire. It cannot be juſtly expected, that if we loſe the truth, after it has been ſo delivered to us, God ſhould again manifeſt it to us, or appoint a new ſeries of like miracles and wonderful events to give it credit. Inſtead of indulging ſuch vain expectations, we ſhould diligently ſearch the ſcriptures, and labour to know the mind of God contained therein. And *we ſhould give earneſt heed unto the things which we have heard, leſt at any time*, or by any means, *we ſhould let them ſlip*, Heb. ii. 1. And *we ſhould earneſtly contend for the faith, which was once delivered to the ſaints*, Jude ver. 3. Which, as before ſaid, will not be ſo delivered any more, as it once was, by Chriſt himſelf, and his apoſtles. Nor can any thing elſe be ſubſtituted in its room, that ſhall be equally excellent, important and beneficial.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

POST.

# POSTHUMOUS SERMONS

## ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

[FIRST PUBLISHED, WITH THE AUTHOR'S LIFE, IN MDCCLXIX.]

### THE EDITOR'S ADVERTISEMENT.

OF the following Sermons, the firſt four were fairly tranſcribed by the author, but probably had not undergone his laſt correction; the fifth and ſixth (preached at the Tueſday Lecture in the Old Jewry) were not tranſcribed, but had upon them this remark: 'Peruſed, and ſo far 'as I am able to perceive, all is right; and I humbly 'conceive ought to be publiſhed:' the ſeventh was tranſcribed as far as the end of page 584: the eighth and laſt is entirely printed from his notes, and may therefore, with the fifth and ſixth, be conſidered as ſpecimens of his uſual compoſitions for the pulpit.

### SERMON I.

### THE RIGHT IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

EPH. v. 16.

*Redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil.*

WE find this advice twice given in St. Paul's epiſtles: and in both places recommended as a branch of prudence and circumſpection. So it is here: *See then, that ye walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe: redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil.* And in like manner in the epiſtle to the Coloſſians: *Walk in wiſdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time,* Col. iv. 5.

Some

Some expositors suppose, that the right improvement of times the direct meaning and design of the expression, as used in this place: and say, that 'Redeeming is a meta-'phorical expression taken from merchants, who diligently 'observe the fittest time for buying and selling, and 'easily part with their pleasure for gain. So do you also 'deny yourselves in your ease and pleasure, to gain an 'opportunity for doing good.' Again: 'Time past, 'strictly speaking, cannot be recalled. But you are to '*redeem*, or *recover* as far as possible, that time which has 'been lost by a double diligence in improving what 'remains.'[a]

Others think, that the proper meaning of the apostle's direction is, that the Christians to whom he is writing, 'Should secure themselves, by a prudent carriage toward 'all men, from the inconveniences of those difficult times 'in which they lived:' or, '*redeeming the time*; that is, 'gaining as much time as you can, prolonging your own 'tranquillity, and the opportunity of spreading the gospel. 'Observe a prudent behaviour toward unconverted gentiles, 'and unbelieving Jews; that they may be as little exas-'perated as possible by your different sentiments from theirs, 'or by your pure and holy life, whereby you seem to 'condemn and reproach them.'[b]

I shall however take occasion from these words to discourse of the right improvement of time, or *redeeming* it in a more general sense. And I shall consider them, as setting before us the same practice which Solomon recommends: *whatever thy hand findeth to do*, whatever lies before thee, which is useful, or innocent, *do it with thy might*, with vigour and perseverance: *for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest*, Eccl. ix. 10.

And indeed, if we were to suppose this exhortation connected with what precedes, we might be inclined to think, that the apostle intended to stir up these Christians to care and diligence in general, as well as to circumspection in particular, and a prudent carriage toward those who were of different sentiments, for securing and prolonging their tranquillity, and keeping off those evils, which some were

[a] Pool upon the place. The same upon Col. iv. 5.

[b] Lock upon the place. To that purpose, Peirce upon Col. iv. 5.

inclined

inclined to bring upon them. This more enlarged, and general deſign of the exhortation may be argued, I ſay, from the context. Which, if we take it in more fully than we have yet done is this: *Wherefore he ſays, awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light. See then, that ye walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe; redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil.*

The right improvement of time ſeems to imply two things: employing ourſelves in that which is good, and doing that good with care and diligence.

I. I ſhall therefore in the firſt place ſhow, what things we ought to be employed in.

II. And then, ſecondly, how we may beſt improve our time for thoſe good things that lie before us.

III. To which I intend to add, in the third place, an exhortation.

I. The firſt thing to be conſidered by us is, in what things we ought to employ ourſelves. Here I ſhall mention theſe ſeveral particulars.

1. *The ſervice of God.* For God is the creator of all things, and their lord and ſovereign. He it is who gives us all things to enjoy. And in him we live and move and have our being. We breathe in his air, and tread on his earth, and live upon the proviſions he affords us. Every moment of our time produces freſh inſtances of his bounty and goodneſs.

He is the great governor of the whole world, not of one part or portion only, but of the whole univerſe; and therefore he is able, and does direct and over-rule all things with a wiſe and almighty inſpection and providence. A continued ſupply is made for us, and for all creatures in general. He alſo over-rules the ſpirits of men, ſo that notwithſtanding the unreaſonable and exorbitant deſires of many, their violence does not break forth to diſturb the general peace and tranquillity of the world: in which peace and tranquillity we have our ſhare, and quietly enjoy ourſelves, our goods, and our friends.

We ſhould therefore very much employ our thoughts in admiring and adoring God; in praiſing him for his goodneſs, and in praying to him for the continuance of his favour and good will, and for every thing neceſſary to our comfort and happineſs.

Some

Some time will be fitly ſpent in ſecret, in meditating upon his glorious perfections, in contemplating his great and wonderful works, and in recollecting the many benefits beſtowed upon us hitherto in the paſt ſtages of life.

And we ſhould allow ſome time for the united and public worſhip of God, which is an obligation founded in reaſon, and is preſcribed by revelation.

Can any of us think we have well employed our time in this world, if we have never, or rarely with ſerioufneſs and attention, thought of that Being, who is the moſt perfect, ſurpaſſing all the united perfections of the whole creation: without whom nothing would have been, of whom are all things, and by whom they ſubſiſt?

2. We ought alſo to employ ourſelves, and improve our time in ſecuring and advancing our own ſpiritual intereſts. We ſhould endeavour to know the ſtate of our own ſouls: what are our chief paſſions; what our greateſt temptations. It may require ſome time and care to form a right judgment of ourſelves. There ſeems to be good reaſon to ſay that few men know themſelves. The heart is deceitful. Many deceive others; ſome miſtake and are deceived about themſelves.

It may not be improper therefore to allot ſome time for this: to conſider, what is the bent of our mind, in what courſe we are, and whither it leads: and whether our behaviour is agreeable to our profeſſion and principles.

Our mind is ourſelves, and our chief care ought to be its culture and ornament. There is nothing of equal importance with this. When we remove hence, when death puts a period to our preſent ſtate of action and exiſtence, we leave behind us our eſtates and treaſures, we drop our titles, and all external ornaments. But we ſhall carry with us the ſame temper and diſpoſition which we had here: and our works will follow us. Are we here unholy? We ſhall be hereafter lodged in the company of ſuch beings, who will be torments to themſelves, and tormentors to each other. Are we now proud? We ſhall then be abaſed. Are we humble? We ſhall then be exalted. Are we pure in heart? We ſhall then ſee God. Are we merciful? We ſhall then obtain mercy.

It is incumbent on us therefore to employ ſome time in conſidering the nature and obligation of thoſe virtues and diſpoſitions of the mind, upon which ſo much depends; to confirm

confirm ourſelves in the love and practice of them, and to watch againſt temptations that might enſnare us, and carry us off from the courſe which leads to happineſs. It behoves us, as St. Peter ſays, *to give all diligence, to add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godlineſs, and to godlineſs brotherly kindneſs, and to that charity: and to make our calling and election ſure. For,* ſays the ſame apoſtle, *if ye do theſe things, ye ſhall never fall. For ſo an entrance ſhall be miniſtered unto you abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt,* 2 Pet. i. 5, &c.

The obligation to theſe virtues ſeems not to lie far out of ſight. But might be ſoon diſcerned, if men would be perſuaded to attend, and to exerciſe their rational powers and faculties. However it is certainly obvious to all who are acquainted with the Chriſtian revelation.

The importance of ſecuring our eternal ſalvation is evident upon the firſt thought about ſuch a matter. But we are ſurrounded by temptations. The things of this world make ſtrange and ſudden impreſſions upon us, and carry us away, ſometimes, before we are aware. But he who frequently employs himſelf in conſidering the duties of his ſtation, and the reaſonableneſs of them, in obſerving the real excellence of holineſs, and every branch of it, and impreſſing on his mind the motives and arguments there are to the practice of it, is likely to be prepared for a time of temptation, and to ſtand and overcome in it.

Yea a few hours, at ſome one time, ſeriouſly employed in conſidering the duties of the preſent condition, and the vaſt moment of our behaviour in this world, with reſpect to another ſtate of endleſs duration, may be of great ſervice for ſecuring our choice and determination in favour of virtue. And having once found the benefit of ſerious conſideration, it is very probable we ſhall be diſpoſed to renew at ſome ſeaſons the like exerciſe and employment of the mind.

3. Another thing, in which we ought to employ ourſelves, is the buſineſs of our calling. We are not to neglect that out of ſloth and idleneſs, nor from a pretence of minding the things of the ſpiritual life, nor for the ſake of attending to the concerns of other men. For the buſineſs of our calling is a main part of our duty, and a fundamental obligation, upon which every thing elſe depends.

pends. God has ſo formed us, that we have many wants, which are continually renewed upon us, and which, in dependence on Divine Providence muſt be ſupplied by our own induſtry and care. What good reaſon have we to rely upon the charity of others, if we have ſtrength to provide for ourſelves? Or what right has he to the privileges of any community, who contributes nothing to its proſperity? Yea, what man, who has any ſpirit, would chooſe to depend upon others, who can ſubſiſt by his own ſkill? And what wiſe and good man would willingly receive that, for which he has given no valuable conſideration of care and labour?

I might inſiſt, that ſloth and idleneſs expoſe men to temptations of every ſort. But I chooſe rather to obſerve and ſay, that a man's weight and influence in this world muſt, for the moſt part, depend upon ſkill in ſome calling, and diligence in it: and that the very pleaſure of life is advanced thereby. How inſipid are amuſements to thoſe, who know not what labour either of body or mind is! Moreover, it is in itſelf very deſirable to have wherewithal to give to thoſe that need. Poor and indigent perſons there will always be in this world of ours. Some are left orphans in their childhood, before they can help themſelves. Some labour under the decays of age. Other ſome experience the waſte and expence of continued ſickneſs. Some are reduced by ſtrange and unexpected accidents. Some are unjuſtly plundered by violence.

He who by care and diligence, and a prudent improvement of his time, and the ſeveral advantages that have been put into his hand by the kind providence of God, has gained wherewithal to relieve and help any ſuch neceſſitous perſons, has good reaſon to rejoice. Which leads me to another particular.

4. Some time ought to be employed in ſerving others. Man is naturally a ſociable creature. The chriſtian religion teaches us to conſider ourſelves, as members of one and the ſame body. It is a particular and expreſs direction of St. Paul: *Look not every man on his own things: but every man alſo on the things of others*, Phil. ii. 4.

Some have perplexed and difficult affairs before them: and they want the aſſiſtance and the united counſels of others. If men of underſtanding carefully improve their time, and diſpatch their own affairs with diligence, they may have leiſure

to adviſe, help, and ſolicit for others, in thoſe intricacies in which they happen to be involved.

Some are weak through want of knowledge, or experience and credit in the world: and they are overpowered by men of ſuperior might, who are artful, and ſkilful in carrying on oppreſſive meaſures, and then ſecuring and defending themſelves by ſpecious pretences againſt the reſentment due to their unjuſt proceedings. Will it not be an act of great virtue, to afford ſome help to the weak cauſe, when upon good grounds we know it to be right? Among thoſe things which Job urges in his own vindication, he does not omit this part of his character: *I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cauſe, which I knew not, I ſearched out. I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the ſpoil out of his teeth*, Job xxix 15—17.

That is a grand performance; but it is reſerved for thoſe who have well improved their time in cultivating their own minds: and who know how to diſcharge the encumberances of their own affairs with expedition.

II. I now proceed to ſhow, how time may be beſt improved in theſe good works, and for carrying on theſe good deſigns and purpoſes.

1. We are to do theſe things with all our might. What we do, or engage in, we are to be intent upon, in proportion at leaſt to its importance. If we are about our own work, in the buſineſs of our calling; we are to mind it, and not be ſlothful therein: but to do it with diligence, that it may be diſpatched, and we may not be hindered from the ſervice of God, or our neighbour.

If we are engaged in the ſervice of God, we are to mind that, and not to ſuffer other things then to occupy our thoughts. Cold and indifferent ſervices will neither be acceptable to God, nor profitable for ourſelves. Do we think to obtain thoſe bleſſings, which we aſk but faintly? Will thoſe inſtructions do us any good, which we ſcarce regard when given? Or, have thoſe inſtructors diſcharged their duty, who have propoſed indeed reaſonable admonitions, and weighty arguments, but without inward affection, or viſible zeal and concern; as if the things diſcourſed of, were indifferent, of little or no moment. It is no wonder, if the time allotted even to the worſhip of God runs waſte, if we are unattentive and negligent.

So

So likewiſe, when you undertake any ſervice for another, you are to do it with all your might, as if it were your own. You are to ſtudy the moſt proper and effectual means of ſucceeding that can be thought of. Whatever good cauſe you eſpouſe, you are to do it heartily; for otherwiſe you betray, inſtead of promoting it.

2. Another way of improving time is to lay aſide as much as poſſible ſuch things as are trifling, unneceſſary, and of ſmall moment; and to contract the number and length of our recreations. Hereby we gain more time for thoſe things, which are material and important.

It is true, the mind ought to be diverted, and cannot be always intent upon great matters; but we ſhould take care, that diverſions are not ſo indulged, as to unfit us for buſineſs afterwards. This is the proper uſe and deſign of relaxation, to fit us better for things of weight. But ſome by giving way to amuſements and diverſions, by exceeding therein as to length of time, contract ſo light a habit, as to be diſguſted at every thing grave and ſerious.

The body too needs to be refreſhed by reſt; but, certainly, we were not born to ſleep only. And it has been often obſerved, that when that is indulged beyond the proportion which nature requires, all the powers of the bodily frame, inſtead of being invigorated and ſtrengthened, are ſlackened and enervated.

3. Another thing that will be of ſervice for improving, or redeeming time, is to lay hold of, and take the advantage of opportunities.

Every one knows, that this is of great importance in commerce, and in all the affairs of life. There are likewiſe opportunities, or ſpecial ſeaſons for gaining religious knowledge, and advancing the good diſpoſitions of the mind. Such is the friendſhip and converſation of a ſerious, underſtanding and communicative Chriſtian. The Lord's day is an opportunity for our ſouls, as it is a day of reſt and leiſure from the cares and buſineſs of this preſent life. It may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that then, when we are diſengaged from other things, we may give a cloſer attention to thoſe inſtructions, which are propoſed to us in the public worſhip of God: and we may then likewiſe, eſpecially in private, without inconvenience carry on our meditations to a greater length than we can ordinarily do on other days.

There may likewiſe alſo be opportunities ariſing from the temper of our minds. Poſſibly we do at ſome ſeaſons, and in

ſome circumſtances, perceive in ourſelves a more ready, or a more pliable diſpoſition than at others. Theſe are ſpecial opportunities. We ſhould not let them ſlip, but by all means take the advantage of them for adjuſting maturely the great principles of reaſon and religion, upon which we are to act, and for ſettling in our minds a full perſuaſion of the vanity of this world and all its glories; and for confirming the reſolutions of virtuous and holy obedience, which are juſt and reaſonable.

As there are ſuch ſeaſons as theſe, favourable to our own beſt intereſts, ſo opportunities may offer for the ſerving others; either for giving them advice and counſel, or reproof, or for interpoſing with other perſons in their behalf, and to their advantage.

4. It will be of great uſe for redeeming, or the right improving of time, to diſpoſe our ſeveral affairs and concerns in good order. This contrivance and diſpoſal of things may, itſelf, take up ſome thought and time, and ſeem to retard our progreſs for the preſent; but it will be amply recompenſed afterwards. It will afford pleaſure not to be conceived beforehand. All the perplexity of confuſion and diſorder will be avoided: and many things will be done and effected with eaſe, which otherwiſe would have been left undone to our own great vexation, and the loſs and detriment of others.

5. Time may be upon ſome occaſions wiſely redeemed by avoiding contention about trifling things of little value.

This I apprehend to be one reaſon why our bleſſed Lord, in ſuch emphatical expreſſions, recommends to men to acquieſce and ſit down contented under leſſer injuries and abuſes, rather than withſtand them, or ſeek ſatisfaction for them. *I ſay unto you, that ye reſiſt not evil: but whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other alſo. And if any man will ſue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo. And whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a mile, go with him two,* Matt. v. 39—41.

It is a point of prudence, as well as virtue, to paſs by leſſer offences. Better it is to loſe a ſmall ſum, than run the hazard of waſting a great deal in a long and tedious proſecution, which may never ſucceed at laſt. Or, it is better to let it go at once, without farther concern, than to ſpend time in the recovery, which may be employed to more advantage another way.

The like may be ſaid with regard to many other things, which are cauſes of ſtrife and difference among men. Begin not

not a ſtrife about trifles, leſt you ſhould thereby be drawn into a long and ruinous contention. The obſerving this rule may be of great and ſingular uſe on the point before us, of redeeming time.

6. Laſtly, Time is to be redeemed by a prudent, circumſpect and inoffenſive behaviour to all men. This is ſuppoſed to be what is particularly intended by the apoſtle: if ſo, it is of near affinity with other directions elſewhere. *If it be poſſible, as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all men*, Rom. xii. 18. And, *Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God*, 1 Cor. x. 32. Solomon's obſervation may be reckoned applicable here, as well as upon other occaſions: *A ſoft anſwer turneth away wrath, but grievous words ſtir up anger*, Prov. xv. 1.

In this way redeem time to yourſelves, for all the good purpoſes of life. In this way ſeek the prolongation of your peace and tranquillity, by avoiding all needleſs offence and provocation, by mildneſs and affability of diſcourſe, prudence of behaviour, meekneſs of anſwer to all thoſe who inquire after your belief, and the grounds and reaſons of it. By a readineſs to good offices, watching your temper, guarding againſt ſuch diſcourſes and actions, as are offenſive and diſagreeable to many about you, and which your peculiar principles do by no means oblige you to: hereby, I ſay, do you redeem and gain time for the worſhip of God, for your own intereſts, and for the good of your friends, and indeed for every uſeful deſign which you have at heart, and you are at all qualified for.

III. I beg leave to add, in the third place, as at firſt propoſed, a ſerious exhortation, which ſhall conſiſt of two parts. Firſt, an addreſs to perſons of different ages, ſtations and characters: and then, ſecondly, ſome conſiderations by way of motive and argument.

1. Let me ſay ſomewhat by way of counſel and advice upon this ſubject, to perſons of different ages and characters.

Are any ſtill in a ſinful courſe, and under the power of evil habits? Do any daily add ſin to ſin? They do ſomewhat worſe than barely waſte time: for they employ it to bad purpoſe.

Are there any who have not yet ſincerely devoted themſelves to God, with full purpoſe of heart to ſerve and obey him? There is ſomewhat yet undone, which muſt be done, or you are miſerable beyond redreſs. Be perſuaded to take

ſome time to conſider the courſe you are in. Probably, you will then ſee reaſon to alter it, and enter upon a new way of life. *I thought on my ways*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies. I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy commandments*, Pſ. cxix. 59, 60.

They who have devoted themſelves to God in Chriſt Jeſus, may do well to conſider, that their engagement to be the Lord's, implies an obligation to ſerve him with all their might. Good habits ought to be improved and ſtrengthened. You are to glorify God with your ſoul and your body, which you have conſecrated to him. You ought to ſtir up and awaken men to attend to the great things of religion, and their moſt important concerns. You are to invite and draw as many as you can into the paths of virtue and holineſs. So your time of life will be well employed: and in the end you will receive from the Lord, whom you ſerve, a very abundant reward.

Young perſons may perceive from what has been ſaid, how great an advantage may be made by an early dedication of themſelves to God. You are in, or approaching to, the beſt part of life. Have you no deſire, that it may be employed to ſome good purpoſes? Is it not a pity that the world and you ſhould loſe your beſt time, and all the vigour and activity of your higheſt powers?

Improve then the early days of life in preparatory ſtudies and labours for future uſefulneſs; that you may be qualified to diſcharge the duties of your ſtation with reputation and credit. How great is their happineſs, if they know how to improve it, whoſe parents furniſh them with the beſt helps for knowledge and wiſdom, ſecular and religious, and who conſtantly watch over their conduct, and quicken and encourage their purſuit of every thing excellent and laudable! Great likewiſe is their privilege, who, when their neareſt relatives are ſtraitened, are kindly forwarded and aſſiſted by others of generous minds, who liberally afford them all proper helps for attaining the knowledge ſuited to their rank and condition. Theſe are accountable for ſuch a privilege, and ſhould improve the time allotted for attaining that ſkill and ſcience, which may enable them to live comfortably in the world.

Are you in years? Have you paſſed the morning and noon of life? and are you drawing toward the very evening? and has all that time been waſted? It is time to think and conſider,

conſider, and take care to improve what remains. This every one muſt be convinced of; but perhaps ſome may be apt to deſpair of doing any good now. To ſuch I would ſay: that regard for time paſt and loſt, ſhould not by any means exceed ſo far as to prevent the improving of what is left. As yet you have an opportunity. Nature may be impaired; but then, poſſibly, you have fewer avocations. And ſome temptations, that were ſtrong, have loſt their force. Endeavour then to do this good at laſt, by immediate care and diligence in the great work and buſineſs of this life, the ſervice of God, and ſerious preparation for another world, to leave behind you the teſtimony of a full conviction, that after having tried the ways of ſin, the way of holineſs and virtue is to be preferred.

Are you rich and exalted in this world? You are by your condition diſcharged from many of the low offices of life, which are performed for you by others. You may therefore employ yourſelves in things of a higher nature: in contemplating the works of creation and Providence, in ſtudying the principles of natural and revealed religion. So you may furniſh your minds with a rich treaſure of delightful and uſeful knowledge. And you may have opportunities of communicating excellent inſtruction to thoſe whoſe mean employments hinder their making many reflections for themſelves. Or, you may aſſiſt, direct, relieve, ſuch as are in want and perplexity.

Are you poor? By that condition of life you are eſpecially neceſſitated to redeem time by aſſiduity and diligence in your calling. Sloth and idleneſs would throw you into want and diſtreſs: and at the ſame time diſhearten others from giving you relief.

Diligence is one of the proper virtues of your ſtation, and the chief merit you can attain to. It will therefore recommend you to the regard of others, and induce them to lend you their helping hand for your ſupport; eſpecially, if, notwithſtanding your beſt care, you ſhould come into any remarkable ſtraits and difficulties: whereas, if, whilſt you are in poor and low circumſtances, you are idle and unactive, by this demonſtration of a worthleſs mind, at leaſt a very great defect of virtue, you check the charity even of thoſe who are of a kind and benevolent diſpoſition.

And let me obſerve, that as the nature of your condition very much engages your time and thoughts in providing the

neceſſaries of life; you ought moſt carefully to improve the reſt of the Lord's day for the concerns of your ſouls and another life.

II. Having mentioned theſe advices and counſels, I ſhall now conclude all with ſome conſiderations by way of motive and argument.

1. Conſider, that time is precious, and the improvement of it is of great importance. It is the ſeaſon and opportunity of ſerving and glorifying God, and ſecuring the eternal welfare and ſalvation of our ſouls.

Though there are ſpecial opportunities in the time of life, it may be all conſidered as an opportunity, which God has given us of preparing and qualifying ourſelves for another and better life. How careful ſhould we be to improve that time and ſeaſon on which ſo much depends; no leſs than everlaſting glory and happineſs, or final ruin and miſery.

2. Conſider, that time is ſhort and uncertain. There is no very long ſpace between the day of our birth, and the day of our death. How ſtrongly, by a variety of compariſons, does Job repreſent the ſhortneſs of human life, and the ſwift and irrevocable progreſs of time! *Now my days are ſwifter than a poſt: they flee away. They are paſſed away as the ſwift ſhips: as the eagle that haſteth to the prey*, Job ix. 25, 26. And in another place, *My days are ſwifter than a weaver's ſhuttle*, Job vii. 6.

3. Proportionable to your care and diligence will be your progreſs and improvement. So it is often ſeen in the affairs and buſineſs of this world. Among many, who have the ſame or like outward advantages, he uſually is the moſt ſucceſsful who is the moſt diligent and punctual. In the purſuit of knowledge he likewiſe has, for the moſt part the advantage, who beſt employs his time. It is the ſame in religion. The diligent, the watchful, the circumſpect Chriſtian, is the growing and improving Chriſtian.

Perhaps you know ſome, who ſet out with you in the Chriſtian courſe. You began together with equal ardour, and have enjoyed in a great meaſure the ſame external means and helps: but yet, their improvements you think, are by far more conſiderable than your's. Their knowledge of religious truths appears more diſtinct and clear. Their faith of inviſible things is lively and affecting. They are prepared both for life and for death. They have no tormenting fears of the one, nor ſolicitous deſire and concern for the other. Their moderation

moderation of affection toward the good and the evil things of this life, you evidently perceive, is not inſenſibility and ſtupidity: but a wiſe and reaſonable, and determined preference of things heavenly and eternal, to things earthly and temporal.

They are ſeldom moved by anger: whereas you often fall into exceſſes of that paſſion. They can overlook and forget an injury, when almoſt every little offence produces deep reſentment in your breaſt. They bear courageouſly very afflicting ſtrokes of providence. You ſhrink under the weight of ſmall burdens.

What is the reaſon of this? Is it not, that you have too much depended upon the fervour of your firſt reſolutions, and have much neglected the means of your progreſs and improvement? Whereas they have been careful in redeeming their time by frequently impreſſing on their minds the obligations they are under, and reviving the ſenſe of the engagements they have entered into. They allot time for ſerious meditation and conſideration. When they pray, or hear, or engage in other religious ſervices, they are intent, and do it with all their might, as in the preſence, and under the eye of God.

They not only read, but think. They not only hear, but recollect alſo, and meditate afterwards. They have not only been intent and fully engaged in their private and public devotions, but they have alſo gladly embraced opportunities of edifying converſation and conference; and have carefully treaſured up many valuable obſervations which they have made themſelves, or received from others. By theſe and other means they are continually on the improving hand, and grow daily ſtronger and ſtronger in the Lord.

4. For better exciting to the right improvement or redeeming of time, you may do well to obſerve ſome great examples of diligence and zeal. Such an one was the apoſtle Paul, who was in labours more abundant, and carried the knowledge of true religion to a vaſt extent in the compaſs of his indefatigable life. And ſuch was Jeſus Chriſt our Lord and Saviour, who, as St. Peter juſtly ſays, *went about doing good*, Acts x. 38. And himſelf once ſaid: *I muſt work the works of him that ſent me, whilſt it is day. The night cometh, wherein no man can work*, John ix. 4. And how well every portion of the ſhort time of his miniſtry was employed, we evidently perceive from the hiſtory of it in the goſpels: which hiſtory, though very

very brief and compendious, ſets before us the moſt eminent example of zeal for the glory of God, and the welfare of men, and of diligence in purſuing thoſe great ends that ever the world ſaw.

5. Laſtly, conſider, that time well improved will afford comfort and peace in a day of affliction, and in the hour of death: eſpecially, if you begin early to mind the true buſineſs of life, and proceed with ſteadineſs in the way of religion and virtue. You will not have reaſon for boaſting, nor will you be diſpoſed to it. You will never be proud of your good works, but will humbly own your defects, and cheerfully aſcribe the glory of what has been well done to God, the fountain of all perfection, who has upheld, guided, taught and ſtrengthened you. But ſtill it will be very pleaſing and delightful to be conſcious of thoſe virtuous diſpoſitions and ſervices, which God himſelf approves and will reward. And you may be able in the end to ſay with the apoſtle, and with a like joy and triumph: *I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous judge will give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them alſo that love his appearing,* 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

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## SERMON II.

### JESUS MADE A CURSE FOR US.

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GAL. iii. 13, 14.

*Chriſt has redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us: for it is written, curſed is every one that hangeth on a tree. That the bleſſing of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Jeſus Chriſt; that we might receive the promiſe of the ſpirit through faith.*

EVERY one knows, that the main deſign of the apoſtle in this epiſtle, is to diſſuade the Galatians from coming under the yoke of the law of Moſes, as neceſſary to acceptance with God, and eternal ſalvation.

As theſe Chriſtians were his own converts, and they had paid too great regard to ſome artful men, ſince come in among

among them; he reproves them with ſharpneſs, and ſets arguments before them with warmth and earneſtneſs. *O fooliſh Galatians*, ſays he in this third chapter, *who has bewitched you, that ye ſhould not obey the truth? before whoſe eyes Jeſus Chriſt has been evidently ſet forth crucified among you? He therefore that miniſtereth the ſpirit to you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteouſneſs. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the ſame are the children of Abraham. And the ſcripture foreſeeing, that God would juſtify the heathen through faith, preached before the goſpel unto Abraham, ſaying: in thee ſhall all nations be bleſſed. So then they which be of faith, are bleſſed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curſe. For it is written: curſed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is juſtified by the law in the ſight of God, is evident. For the juſt ſhall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but the man that doth them ſhall live in them. Chriſt has redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us. For it is written: curſed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the bleſſing of Abraham might come upon the gentiles through Jeſus Chriſt.*

I ſhall firſt endeavour to ſhow, what is meant by Chriſt's being made *a curſe for us:* after which we will obſerve the end and deſign of it.

1. The meaning of the expreſſion is, that our Lord had ſuffered the death of the croſs. *Chriſt*, ſays he, *has redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us.* The word, indeed, is harſh; but I ſay it truly: and I may juſtly ſo expreſs myſelf. *For it is written* in the law: *curſed is every one that hangeth on a tree.* The text, here referred to, is in Deuteronomy. *And if a man have committed a ſin worthy of death, and be be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree, his body ſhall not remain all night upon the tree; but thou ſhalt in anywiſe bury him that day. For he that is hanged is accurſed of God: that the land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance*, Deut. xxi. 22, 23.

The uſual puniſhments among the Jews were ſtrangling and ſtoning: and it is generally ſuppoſed, that by the hanging in Deuteronomy is intended the doing ſo after death. This appears from the preceding words, which ſpeak of the man's being put to death before his ſuſpenſion; which ſhows

that

that this puniſhment was not exactly the ſame as the Roman crucifixion: for they crucified men alive, whereby they expired before they were taken down. But this was only hanging up their bodies after they were dead, expoſing them to open ſhame for a time.

So ſay very judicious expoſitors. And if this be right, then, by our Lord's being on a croſs ſo as to die there, he was made a curſe in a very emphatical ſenſe.

This *hanging on a tree*, according to the law of Moſes, was a ſuſpenſion of men, after they had been put to death for idolatry or blaſphemy, or ſome other great offence. But Jeſus ſuffered the pain of crucifixion, and died upon a croſs.

The words of the law, before cited, are, *If thou hang him on a tree, his body ſhall not remain all night upon the tree: but thou ſhalt in anywiſe bury him that day. For he that is hanged is accurſed of God: that thy land be not defiled.*

That is, he is an object of execration, which ought to be taken out of the way; or he that is hanged on a tree, is an abomination: that is, the dead body of a man hung up and expoſed above ground, is a thing extremely impure, and offenſive, and diſagreeable, and therefore it muſt be ſoon taken down and removed out of ſight.

Our Lord therefore was treated, as if he had been accurſed and abominable in the ſight of God and men.

The hiſtory of our Lord's death in the goſpels is a comment upon this text, and is well known to all. He was apprehended, tried, condemned, and crucified as a criminal. And he ſuffered death at the common place of execution without the gates of Jeruſalem.

Every one did not conſider him as an offender, or guilty of any thing worthy of death. But the voice of the people, concurring with the opinion of their great council, prevailed; and the ſentence was executed without abatement.

Nor ſhould we omit to obſerve the word *made: being made a curſe for us.* He was innocent, but was treated as an offender: and that, according to the permiſſion, will and appointment of God the Father, in which our Lord acquieſced. *Therefore does my Father love me*, ſays he, *becauſe I lay down my life; that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myſelf. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father*, John x. 17, 18.

For

For this great trial he prepared himſelf by prayer and meditation. When it drew near, he earneſtly requeſted *that the cup might paſs from him:* but added: *not my will, but thine be done.* Prayer being ended, he roſe up, and went cheerfully through the ſcene of ſufferings that was allotted to him. So Chriſt was made a curſe for us. Or, as it is expreſſed in another text: *For he hath made him to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him,* 2 Cor. v. 21.

2. In the next place therefore we are to conſider the ends and effects of this appointment, which are here expreſſed in a two-fold phraſe: *redeeming us from the curſe of the law,* and obtaining *the bleſſing of Abraham.*

Theſe words may be eaſily underſtood by obſerving the context, which was read at the beginning of this diſcourſe. *For as many as are of the works of the law,* ver. 10. that is, who aim to be juſtified by the works of the law, *are under the curſe. For it is written, curſed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;* which is next to impoſſible: and therefore every one who adheres to the law, comes under a ſentence of condemnation. *But Chriſt has redeemed us from the curſe of the law:* having ſet us free from an obligation to it, and taught us how we may be juſtified by faith, or according to the rule of his goſpel.

Which is the ſame as the other privilege here mentioned, *that the bleſſing of Abraham might come upon the gentiles through Jeſus Chriſt:* that is, that the gentiles might be juſtified in the ſame way that he was, by faith, without the works of the Moſaic law, which were not then introduced or inſtituted. *Even as Abraham believed, and it was accounted to him for righteouſneſs. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, that is,* who believe, as *Abraham* did, *the ſame are the children of Abraham,* ver. 6, 7. and are accepted of God as his people. *And the ſcripture foreſeeing that God would juſtify the heathen through faith,* ver. 8. that is, that the time would come, when all men ſhould be aſſured of juſtification and acceptance with God in the ſame way, *preached before the goſpel unto Abraham, ſaying, in thee ſhall all nations be bleſſed. So then they which be of faith,* who believe, and look for juſtification by faith, according to the goſpel, the law and rule of real, ſincere holineſs and virtue, *are bleſſed with faithful Abraham,* ver. 9.

This, I think, is the deſign and meaning of the apoſtle in this place. And it is what he often teaches; that by the death

death and crucifixion of Chriſt the law has been abrogated, or rendered uſeleſs.

it is, I ſay, a thing which he often ſpeaks of, as the deſign of Chriſt's death, to deliver us from an obligation to the law of Moſes, and from the penalties and inconveniences hanging over them that diſobeyed the ritual ordinances of it. *Even ſo we, when we were children*, infants under age, *were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulneſs of the time was come, God ſent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,—that we might receive the adoption of ſons*, Gal. iv. 3, 4, 5. that we might be henceforth delivered from the numerous and burdenſome rites of the law of Moſes, which had in them no real excellence, and that we might be treated as ſons, or children arrived to maturity; and might be accepted, and have acceſs to God in the ſincere performance of a truly holy and ſpiritual worſhip and ſervice, which is reaſonable in itſelf, perfective of our nature, and obligatory at all times.

And at the beginning of the third chapter of this ſame epiſtle: *O fooliſh Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you ſhould not obey the truth:* that ye ſhould not continue ſteady to the truth of the goſpel, in its genuine plainneſs and ſimplicity, without Jewiſh rites and ceremonies? *before whom Jeſus Chriſt has been evidently ſet forth, crucified among you:* to whom Chriſt's death, and the ends and deſigns of it, were once ſo clearly repreſented.

And in the epiſtle to the Epheſians, ch. ii. 14—16. *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having aboliſhed in his fleſh the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, to make in himſelf of twain, one new man, ſo making peace. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the croſs; having ſlain the enmity thereby.*

To the like purpoſe alſo in the epiſtle to the Coloſſians, ch. ii. 13—15. *And you being dead in your ſins, and the uncircumciſion of your fleſh, he hath quickened together with him, having forgiven you all treſpaſſes; blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was againſt us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his croſs. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in reſpect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the ſabbath days; which are a ſhadow of things to come; but the body is of Chriſt.*

In

In these places the apostle seems plainly to represent the abolishing of the ritual ordinances of the law, as an effect, or at least a consequence of Christ's death. But it may be asked: what influence had the death of Christ to this purpose? How did Christ redeem us from the curse of the law by suffering himself an accursed death? How did he by his death on the cross, abolish the obligation of those ordinances which are not of a moral nature?

This question has in it some difficulty: nor did all at the time of the first preaching the gospel after our Lord's ascension discern the law to be abrogated.

Let us therefore observe a few particulars for the solution of this difficulty.

1. When St. Paul speaks of this, as having been effected by the cross of Christ, he may thereby intend the whole of his doctrine: as it is common, in many cases, to express the whole by a part.

*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness: —But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God,* 1 Cor. i. 18, 23, 24. For *I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,* 1 Cor. ii. 2. He does not mean Christ's crucifixion only: for he had taught the Corinthians Christ's resurrection, and the whole doctrine of the gospel. His meaning is, that he resolved not to preach among them any philosophical speculations, but the Christian religion only, and particularly Christ's death, with all the articles depending upon it. So likewise: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus,* that is, in the dispensation by him, and according to his doctrine, *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision: but a new creature,* Gal. vi. 14, 15.

We may therefore understand by the cross of Christ, his whole doctrine confirmed by his death; and easily perceive, how Christ may be said thereby to have abolished the law. For he taught only the great principles of religion, and the moral precepts of real holiness, in the greatest extent and perfection, as reaching the heart. And he assured men, that they who received that doctrine, and acted according to it, would

would build upon a good foundation, and might depend upon acceptance with God, and future happiness.

Yea, he did himself say such things as amounted to a declaration, that the peculiarities of the law were no longer obligatory. For he taught, that no part of divine worship was any longer to be confined to the temple at Jerusalem, or any other place: that God is a *spirit*, and they that worship him must worship him in *spirit* and truth: and that those evil things only, which proceed from the heart of man are defiling.

2. The ceasing of the obligation of the Mosaic institution, may be spoken of as an effect or consequence of the death of Christ; inasmuch as his death was the conclusion of his ministry, and the accomplishment of all things foretold concerning the Messiah.

As the law was designed to be a type and adumbration only of good things to come, the obligation of it ceased upon Christ's being fully manifested: who was the end of the law, to whom it pointed, and directed men.

The apostle speaks to this purpose, particularly in the argument before taken notice of in the epistle to the Colossians. *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day:—which are a shadow of things to come: but the body*, the substance, *is of Christ.*

Christ may be said, to have been fully come, and the things foretold concerning him, may be said to have been accomplished at his death, and his resurrection. As he said to the disciples: *These are the words which I spake unto you, whilst I was yet with you: that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me*, Luke xxiv. 44.

Christ then being come, and all things foretold of him having been fulfilled in his ministry, and death, and subsequent resurrection: the law, and its rituals, which had been brought in, and appointed to be in force only till he came, ceased to have longer any obligation. *Wherefore then serveth the law?—It was added, because of transgression, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made;—but before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith, which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our school-master,* or child's guide, *to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*, Gal. iii. 19, 23—26.

3. Which

3. Which brings me to one thing more, by way of solution of this difficulty. Upon the death of Christ the obligation of the law ceased, because by his excellent doctrine, and miraculous works, his self-denying ministry and death, he has rendered all these ordinances of the law useless and unnecessary.

They had been of use formerly: by their number and variety, their show and splendour, they were serviceable to engage and employ the Jewish people, and those who joined themselves to them, and to hinder them from revolting to idolatry, and taking up the customs of the people around them. But they are now no longer necessary. For by the perfect doctrine, the holy and exemplary life, and the painful and ignominious death of the Lord Jesus, such an argument has been exhibited for true holiness; heavenly-mindedness, the sincere and constant worship and service of God, that these ritual ordinances are no longer requisite or useful. There needs not now any great number of external, discriminating rites and ordinances, to keep the people of God distinct and separate from the rest of the world. For in the death and resurrection of Christ, are afforded such powerful inducements to virtue, as may effectually preserve men from idolatry and apostacy from God, without the guards and fences of ritual ordinances.

This then was one end of Christ's submitting to the fatigues and inconveniences of his laborious ministry, and to the pain and ignominy of the death of the cross: that he might deliver his people, and all who believe in him, from the numerous and burdensome appointments of the law of Moses.

He was *made a curse for us*, he was exposed to the opprobrious death of the cross, and all the grievous circumstances of it, that we might be *redeemed from the curse of the law*, and no longer fear any penalties for neglecting any of its unnecessary institutions: and that we might enjoy *the blessing of Abraham*, that privilege which was promised to be conveyed to the world through him, and which himself once enjoyed in his own person, free from the appointments of the law, afterwards enjoined with assurance of the divine favour and acceptance, solely upon the ground of a reasonable and truly holy service and obedience.

III. Nothing now remains, but that I add a few remarks.

1. We may now diſtinctly perceive, for whom Chriſt was made a curſe.

Chriſt ſays the text has redeemed us from *the curſe of the law.* Thereby ſome would underſtand particularly the Jews, who they ſay, alone were under the law. But I think it evident, that the apoſtle means gentiles as well as Jews. For he here ſays, that *Chriſt has redeemed*, or delivered *us from the curſe of the law, that the bleſſing of Abraham might come upon the gentiles.* And our Lord himſelf, in the time of his own miniſtry, when the call of the gentiles was not fully opened, expreſsly ſays, he died for all, and not for thoſe of the Jewiſh nation only. *And I lay down my life for the ſheep. And other ſheep I have, which are not of this fold: them alſo I muſt bring in*, John x. 15, 16.

Indeed all were in ſome meaſure under the law till Chriſt came: obedience to it being the only way of obtaining a ſhare among the profeſſed people of God, or his viſible church.

The Chriſtians in Galatia were not Jews, but were converted from gentiliſm. Yet the apoſtle writes to them in this manner: *But now, after that ye have known God,— how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye again deſire to be in bondage?* Gal. iv. 9. They never had been Jews nor proſelytes to Judaiſm. The ſenſe of the apoſtle's words therefore is this: how can ye deſpiſe the freedom of the goſpel, and approve of, and chooſe that ſtate of things which prevailed before? When all were required to receive the law of Moſes, as the external badge of relation to God, and his family.

And afterwards he ſays, *Stand faſt therefore in the liberty wherewith Chriſt has made us free, and be not entangled again with that yoke of bondage*, Gal. v. 1. Which expreſſions ſhow, that the apoſtle ſuppoſed gentiles as well as Jews to have been by Chriſt ſet at liberty from the law of Moſes: or, as in the text, that he had *delivered us from the curſe of the law.*

For before that, according to the conſtitution of things introduced by the law of Moſes, ſince the Abrahamic covenant, all were to be proſelyted to the Jewiſh religion. There was no other way of admiſſion to religious communion, or civil converſation with the people of God.

The character of Cornelius in the Acts, is, that *he was a devout* or good *man, who feared God with all his houſe*, Acts x. 2.

x. 2. Nevertheleſs Peter, till farther enlightened, and better inſtructed in the Chriſtian ſcheme, and particularly directed, ſcrupled to go to him. And when he came to his houſe, he ſaid: *Ye know, how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come to one of another nation. But God*, through Chriſt, *has ſhowed me, that I ſhould not call any man common or unclean*, Acts x. 28.

2. We here ſee reaſon to admire the love of God, and of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; and what a tribute of gratitude, reſpect and obedience is due to him who was *made a curſe for us*: who, according to the will of the Father, reſigned himſelf to a moſt painful, and above all, a moſt ignominious death: who ſuffered as a malefactor with men of the worſt characters. How reproachful this in the eye of the world! How grievous an affliction muſt this have been to the Lord Jeſus, after all the honours of his miraculous miniſtry! Here is every thing grievous and reproachful that can touch an innocent and generous mind!

Yet our Lord went through it patiently and meekly, with a view to the great and deſirable ends propoſed by it: and therefore his death is indeed moſt glorious; and it has been greatly rewarded. But it was a mixture of very bitter ingredients which he taſted of: and it was for our ſake; and in particular, that we might be delivered from the burden of the law, and from all the penalties annexed to neglect and diſobedience to it. And it is through him, that we, who once were afar off, have been brought nigh unto God: that we, who before were aliens, are made heirs and fellow-citizens, and of the houſhold of God, without any of the burdenſome inſtitutions of the law of Moſes, which muſt ſtill have been in force, and we muſt have ſubmitted to them, in order to our being of the people of God, and members of his church, if Chriſt had not by his death given ſuch atteſtations as he has done to the truth of that doctrine of pure religion which he had taught. And if he had not alſo thereby inſpired his immediate diſciples and followers with an invincible love and zeal for truth and virtue, enabling them to withſtand and ſurmount the greateſt allurements, and the moſt frightful diſcouragements of the preſent life.

3. A ſerious attention to this text, and argument, may aſſiſt us to underſtand ſome other texts, where Chriſt is ſaid to have died for us, for our ſins.

It ſeems that the death of Chriſt was not, properly ſpeaking, ſo neceſſary on God's part as on ours. God never valued nor delighted in the external ordinances of the law of Moſes. What he looked for, and required, chiefly, was *truth in the inner parts. He deſired mercy rather than ſacrifice, and the knowledge of God the Lord more than burnt-offerings, &c.*

He was not at all unwilling that men ſhould be releaſed from the obligation of numerous ritual inſtitutions. Find but out a way to bring men to good underſtanding in things of religion, and a love of real holineſs: ſo that they ſhall no longer be in danger of caſting off the divine fear, and going after idols that are not able either to hear or ſave thoſe who ſerve them: and he would be willing that ordinances of poſitive appointment ſhall be laid aſide.

This way he has himſelf graciouſly diſcovered and approved of; ſending his Son, the Meſſiah, and appointing the humiliation, as well as other circumſtances of his life and death, in which he acquieſced. Whereupon the many peculiarities of the law of Moſes were aboliſhed and laid aſide with the conſent and approbation of him who had appointed them.

In like manner God was not unwilling to pardon ſinners, if they could but be brought to repentance. For this purpoſe the life and death of Chriſt are admirably ſuited, by affording more forcible conſiderations to awaken and reclaim ſinners, and confirm the virtue of good men, than all the diſcoveries of reaſon, aided by former revelations. God needed not to be appeaſed. But ſinners needed to be amended. When they are ſo he readily accepts them. God is in himſelf gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger, and abundant in goodneſs and truth. He deſires not the death of ſinners, but their life and ſalvation. If ſinful men will but be perſuaded to forſake their evil ways, which are diſpleaſing to a pure and holy God, the controverſy between him and them will be made up. This is the doctrine of the Old and New Teſtament. Says God by the prophet Iſaiah: *Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Iſaiah lv. 7.

It is the ſame under the diſpenſation of the goſpel. There alſo forgiveneſs is annexed to repentance. This is the important doctrine preached by Chriſt himſelf, and his forerunner John the baptiſt, and his apoſtles after him.

Of

Of John the baptiſt, St. Luke ſays: *And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptiſm of repentance for the remiſſion of ſins*, Luke iii. 3. The ſame is the character of our Lord's miniſtry, in all the Evangeliſts. *From that time Jeſus began to preach, and to ſay, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* So in Matthew, ch. iv. 17. To the like purpoſe in Mark, ch. i. 14, 15. And our Lord, when riſen from the dead, tells his diſciples, that now *repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem*, Luke xxiv. 47. And after our Lord's aſcenſion, when the Jews at Jeruſalem were much moved by the diſcourſe Peter had made, and *ſaid to him, and the reſt of the apoſtles, men and brethren, what ſhall we do? Then Peter ſaid unto them: repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins; and ye ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt*, Acts ii. 37, 38. And afterwards, Peter, in the preſence of the Jewiſh council, ſays: *Him hath God exalted—to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Iſrael, and forgiveneſs of ſins*, Acts v. 31.

St. Paul reminding the elders at Miletus of his paſt conduct among them, obſerves, *how he had kept back nothing that was profitable to them, but had ſhowed them, and taught them publicly, and from houſe to houſe: teſtifying both to the Jews, and alſo to the Grecks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, Acts xx. 20, 21. And giving an account of his conduct, and the doctrine taught by him, ſince his converſion to the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, he declares to king Agrippa, and the great company with him, how he had *ſhowed firſt unto them of Damaſcus, and at Jeruſalem, and throughout all the coaſts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they ſhould repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance*, ch. xxvi. 20.

Sincere repentance therefore is the condition, upon which ſinful men may obtain the forgiveneſs of their paſt ſins. Yea our Lord aſſures us, *there is joy in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth.* He alſo ſays, that *there is joy in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine juſt perſons, which need no repentance*, Luke xv. 7—10.

It is certain therefore, that God in his great goodneſs, will pardon and accept of penitent ſinners. But the great difficulty is to bring men to forſake their ſins, and return to the practice of virtue. This, and our great want of conſideration, our affection for earthly and ſenſible things,

the little regard which men have for the things of religion, have rendered the moſt awakening arguments neceſſary. Theſe are ſet before us in Chriſt Jeſus. And Chriſt has died, in order to bring us to God, and to induce us to continue in the ways of righteouſneſs. *Who his ownſelf bare our ſins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to ſin, ſhould live unto righteouſneſs: by whoſe ſtripes ye were healed. For ye were as ſheep going aſtray: but are now returned unto the ſhepherd and biſhop of your ſouls,* 1 Peter ii. 24, 25.

4. And laſtly. Our meditations on this text may aſſiſt us in diſcerning the divine wiſdom in the time of the Chriſtian revelation.

The apoſtle ſays, *When the fulneſs of the time was come, God ſent forth his Son,—made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of ſons,* Gal. iv. 4, 5. The purpoſe was formed very early. And Chriſt is ſpoken of as *the lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world,* Rev. xiii. 8. But the full manifeſtation of this deſign was deferred. The world was not ſooner fit for the mild and gracious diſpenſation of the goſpel. It is true, that Abraham, and the Patriarchs, were free from many incumbrances afterwards introduced. And for a while true religion, the worſhip of God, was upheld by the piety of the heads of that family. But when that family became a nation, it evidently appeared, that a number of diſcriminating rites was needful to keep them ſeparate from their idolatrous neighbours, and to maintain true religion in that which was the only nation and people, that worſhipped the only true God.

We ought not therefore to ſurmiſe, that the coming of the Meſſiah was too long deferred. If the expectations of men had not been raiſed before-hand, if there had not been great preparations made for his reception: the Chriſtian revelation, and the death of Chriſt itſelf, might have been either in vain, or however, not to ſo good purpoſe, as it was.

Let us then acknowledge and celebrate the wiſdom of the Divine Being in affording the world the advantage of ſo reaſonable, ſo ſpiritual, and ſo gracious an inſtitution. Let us be thankful, that the knowledge of it has been brought to us, and that the evidences of the divine original of this religion are ſtill ſo clear and ſatisfactory.

And

And as we in theſe late ages of the world have the bleſſing of Abraham, which was ſo early deſigned, free from the incumbrances afterwards introduced, and impoſed even upon his own poſterity by nature; let us prize it, and ſteadily adhere to the eſſential articles, and indiſpenſable laws of it, cheerfully *ſerving God in holineſs and righteouſneſs all the days of our life*, Luke i. 74, 75.

# SERMON III.

## THE PROMISE ANNEXED TO GODLINESS.

1 TIM. iv. 8.

*For bodily exerciſe profiteth little: but godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

THESE words compriſe in them three propoſitions.

I. Bodily exerciſe profiteth little.

II. Godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having, particularly, promiſe of the life that is to come.

III. Godlineſs has alſo promiſe of the life that now is.

I intend to conſider each propoſition, in the order juſt mentioned.

I. *Bodily exerciſe profiteth little.* Which words are differently explained by expoſitors.

1. Some interpret theſe words in this manner: all that men do outwardly in religion, though commanded by God, if it be ſeparated from the devotion of the heart, profiteth little. This cannot procure acceptance with God, nor make amends for defects and miſcarriages, in point of true holineſs.

But there ſeems to be little ground for this interpretation. It is not favoured by any part of the connection, except that godlineſs, which is oppoſed to bodily exerciſe, does indeed undoubtedly include in it the devotion of the heart, as well as outward acts and performances of religion.

2. Some ſuppoſe the apoſtle herein to refer to the exerciſes of the Greeks, in their olympic and other games, and

any exerciſes of the body preparatory to thoſe public contentions.

This interpretation has an appearance of probability. St. Paul had juſt before exhorted Timothy to exerciſe himſelf unto godlineſs. And the original word for exerciſe is a technical word, often uſed concerning the preparatory exerciſes of the Grecian racers and combatants, and the vigour and activity which they exerted in the public contention.

The apoſtle then adds: for bodily exerciſe, ſuch as that of thoſe who contend for victory in the celebrated games of Greece, or polite parts of the world as they are eſteemed, though it be very difficult, painful and laborious, profiteth little. It may conduce to the increaſe of bodily ſtrength and vigour, and ſecure the victory in thoſe combats, and the crown, and other honours, and temporal advantages annexed to it in this world. But all this is a trifling matter in compariſon of the advantages of godlineſs. And after this manner St. Paul writes to the Corinthians.

3. Hereby ſome underſtand a ſevere and exceſſive diſcipline, practiſed by ſome perſons, which is mere will-worſhip, conſiſting of long and painful faſtings, and abſtinence from things in themſelves lawful and innocent.

Bodily exerciſe, ſays a learned expoſitor, is here bodily diſcipline, lying in abſtaining from certain meats, keeping ſet faſts, watchings, lying upon the ground, going barefoot, wearing ſack-cloth, or hair-cloth, abſtaining from wine, or marriage: all this is of little advantage: the mind of man is not bettered hereby.

This interpretation ſeems to be not a little favoured and ſupported by the coherence. Now the ſpirit ſpeaketh expreſsly, ſays the apoſtle at the beginning of the chapter, *that in the latter times ſome ſhall depart from the faith,—ſpeaking lies in hypocriſy,—forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtain from meats, which God has created to be received with thankſgiving of them which believe and know the truth.—If thou put the brethren in mind of theſe things, thou ſhalt be a good miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt.—But refuſe profane and idle fables; and exerciſe thyſelf rather unto godlineſs. For bodily exerciſe profiteth little: whereas godlineſs is profitable unto all things.*

This ſenſe is received by many expoſitors of good note: bodily exerciſe, ſays one, intends uſeleſs mortifications and macerations of the body, and other ſuperſtitious practices then

then in uſe among the Jews and ſome other people. And, ſays another, by bodily exerciſe St. Paul means abſtinences and auſterities, which ſimple or hypocritical men had introduced. And he makes uſe of an expreſſion, which properly ſignifies the combats or exerciſes of thoſe who contended in the Grecian games: becauſe thoſe perſons obſerved a certain diet, or regimen, to render themſelves more fit for the combats. The apoſtle's obſervation in this place may be illuſtrated by what he ſays to the Coloſſians, ch. ii. 20—23. *Wherefore, if ye be dead with Chriſt from the rudiments of the world; why, as though living in the world, are ye ſubject to ordinances? (touch not, taſte not, handle not; which all are to periſh with the uſing) after the commandments and doctrines of men:—which things have indeed a ſhow of will-worſhip and humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honour to the ſatisfying of the fleſh.* A paſſage likewiſe of a polite Jewiſh writer, contemporary with our Saviour and his apoſtles, though no Chriſtian, may caſt ſome light upon this interpretation. If, ſays he, you ſee a man deſignedly mortifying himſelf with hunger and thirſt when the circumſtances of things lay him not under any ſuch neceſſity, omitting the uſual refreſhments of bathing and anointing, greatly negligent, or even ſordid in his dreſs, often lying upon the bare ground inſtead of a bed, and pleaſing himſelf with ſuch ſort of temperance; have pity upon him, and ſhow him wherein that virtue (of temperance) conſiſts: for all thoſe exerciſes are uſeleſs torments of body and mind.

The apoſtle's deſign then is this: bodily exerciſe, ſuch as is practiſed in the public games of Greece, or in the preparatory exerciſes: and that which ſome others obſerve according to rules and inſtitutions of human invention, is of little advantage.

That is the firſt propoſition.

II. The ſecond propoſition contained in the text is, that godlineſs is profitable for all things, having, in particular, promiſe of the life that is to come.

This indeed ſtands laſt. But I have choſen to invert the order, and ſpeak of this firſt, becauſe the promiſe, or happineſs of the life that now is; as to godlineſs, or godly perſons; very much depends upon the promiſe of the life that is to come: for which reaſon I hope this method will not be diſapproved.

By

By godlineſs I think we are here to underſtand every branch of religion and virtue, which is reaſonable in itſelf, or expreſsly required and commanded of God. Indeed the word is ſometimes uſed in a more reſtrained ſenſe, for that part of our duty which more immediately reſpects God: as when it is ſaid, that we are taught by the goſpel to live *ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world*, Tit. ii. 12. But at other times the word has a more comprehenſive meaning. So at the end of the preceding chapter of this epiſtle to Timothy, ch. iii. 16. *And without controverſy, great is the myſtery of godlineſs.* Again, in another chapter, 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4. *If any man teach otherwiſe, and conſent not to wholeſome words, even the words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the doctrine which is according to godlineſs; he is proud, knowing nothing.*

What the apoſtle intends by godlineſs here we may learn from a parallel exhortation in the ſecond epiſtle to this ſame evangeliſt: *Flee alſo youthful luſts; but follow righteouſneſs, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart; but fooliſh and unlearned queſtions avoid*, 2 Tim. ii. 22, 23. There he directs Timothy to follow the ſeveral branches of that godlineſs, to which here in the text he only in general exhorts him to exerciſe himſelf.

Undoubtedly godlineſs in the comprehenſive, which is a juſt ſenſe of the word, includes every thing holy and virtuous, the love of God and our neighbour, and all the duties included in theſe general precepts and principles of religion.

It includes the fear or reverence of God, truſt in his care and providence, faith in his promiſes, and a readineſs to bear and endure whatever he lays upon us.

It includes likewiſe the practice of truth, righteouſneſs and goodneſs toward men. We ſhould alſo be meek, patient and long-ſuffering. And we are to govern and regulate our affections, ſenſes and appetites, according to the rules of reaſon, uſing all the comforts and innocent enjoyments of this life with ſobriety and moderation.

If we will complete the character of godlineſs, we ſhould walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameleſs, without any wilful, deſigned, or allowed exceptions and omiſſions, or preſumptuous tranſgreſſions whatever.

And

And we ſhould maintain and profeſs the truths, which God has made known to us, whether by reaſon or by revelation, whoever denies or oppoſes them.

This is godlineſs, which, as the apoſtle here ſays, *is profitable for all things*, and in particular *has a promiſe of the life which is to come.*

They who live godly, who adhere to and obſerve the doctrine which is according to godlineſs, and practiſe the ſeveral parts of piety juſt deſcribed, ſhall obtain everlaſting life; happineſs and glory in a future ſtate, when the life that now is has a period.

This is ſo certain and ſo manifeſt a truth, that to you it needs no proof or demonſtration. Jeſus himſelf aſſures us, he came, that his people *might have life*; *and that they might have it more abundantly*, John x. 10. He has declared, that when he ſhall come again to judge the world, and ſhall finally ſeparate men according to their different characters, *the righteous ſhall go away into life eternal*, Mat. xxv. 48. He ſaid to his diſciples: *If I live, ye ſhall live alſo:* John xiv. 19. and bid them *not to fear*, though a little *flock*, ſince it *was their Father's good pleaſure to give them a kingdom*, Luke xii. 32. This is, as it were, his laſt will and teſtament: *Father, I will that they whom thou haſt given me be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou haſt given me*, John xvii. 24. It would be tedious, to recite only a ſmall part of the paſſages of the goſpels and epiſtles of the New Teſtament, where this is clearly taught. I ſhall only remind you of the beginning of the ſecond epiſtle to Timothy, and of the epiſtle to Titus. The former is: *Paul an apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, by the will of God, according to the promiſe of life, which is in Chriſt Jeſus.* The latter: *Paul, a ſervant of God, and an apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godlineſs: in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promiſed before the world began.*

Upon the foundation of this well-grounded hope, the apoſtles recommend it to men to forſake all ſin, and practiſe all virtue. For, ſays St. Paul, *If ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die; but if ye through the ſpirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live*, Rom. viii. 13. And in the laſt chapter of this epiſtle to Timothy, 1 Tim. vi. 17—19. *Charge them that are rich in this world,—that they do good, that they be rich in good works,—laying up in ſtore—a good*

*foundation*

*foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life,* 1 Tim. vi. 17—19.

*This then is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation.*

III. The third propoſition in the text is, that *godlineſs has alſo the promiſe of the preſent life, or the life that now is.*

This, poſſibly, may require ſome proof and evidence. The former propoſition, ſome may be ready to ſay, is indeed unqueſtioned, and without controverſy true and certain. There does *remain a reſt to the people of God,* Heb. iv. 10. When Chriſt ſhall come again to render to every one according to his work, there will be equal and exact retributions made to all. And the righteous ſhall receive a full recompenſe of all their ſervices, labours and ſufferings. But here it is not ſo. Here the religious and virtuous ſeem not to have any very deſirable portion allotted to them. They are often neglected and ſcorned: and even hated and oppreſſed. They are truly and properly ſtiled pilgrims and ſtrangers on this earth. And this world is to them a very vale of tears. Did not Paul and Barnabas, as they went on confirming the churches which they had planted, acknowledge, *that we muſt through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God,* Acts xiv. 22. Does not St. Paul likewiſe ſay, that *all who will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution,* 2 Tim. iii. 12. And Solomon under the ancient Moſaic diſpenſation, when promiſes of temporal good things for the righteous are thought to have been more expreſs, declares from his obſervation of things: *that no man knows love or hatred by all that is before him* and that *all things come alike to all,* Eccl. ix. 1, 2.

To which I would anſwer, that nevertheleſs it ought to be ſuppoſed, that there is a truth in the obſervation of the text, that *godlineſs is profitable for all things, and has promiſe of the life that now is.* We have no good reaſon to charge the apoſtle with inconſiſtency. Nor has he forgot what he ſaid upon other occaſions, of the afflictions and perſecutions endured by himſelf or others in the ſervice of truth. No, theſe things were ever preſent to his mind. And he immediately adds after the words we are conſidering: *This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation. For therefore we both labour and ſuffer reproach, becauſe we truſt in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, eſpecially of them that believe.*

Let me attempt an illuſtration of this point in the following obſervations.

1. It

1. It is certain, that God's providence is over all his works, and that he has an eſpecial, and more favourable regard to righteous and ſincerely good men than to others. As David ſays: *The righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs, his countenance doth behold the upright*, Pſ. xi. 7. which ought to be admitted as an undoubted maxim, never to be called in queſtion: and is equivalent to what St. Paul ſays in the words cited juſt now, *God is the Saviour of all men, eſpecially of them that believe.*

2. It ought to be owned, that the great promiſe of the goſpel is eternal life, or happineſs in a future ſtate, the life which is to come, as it is expreſſed in the text. *And this is the promiſe that he has promiſed us, even eternal life*, 1 John ii. 25. Again, *And this is the record, that God has given us eternal life: and this life is in his Son*, ch. v. 11. And to the like purpoſe many other texts of the New Teſtament. See 2 Tim. i. 1. Tit. i. 1—3. Heb. viii. 6.

3. Nevertheleſs there are under the goſpel diſpenſation promiſes and aſſurances of comfort, peace and happineſs to good men in the preſent world. Says our Lord, *Bleſſed are the meek: for they ſhall inherit the earth*, Matt. v. 5. Arguing againſt ſolicitude for the things of this preſent life, he ſays: *Therefore take no thought*, that is, be not anxious, *ſaying, what ſhall we eat? or what ſhall we drink? or wherewithal ſhall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of theſe things. But ſeek ye firſt the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs: and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you*, Matt. vi. 31, 32. And, *every one that hath forſaken houſes, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's ſake, ſhall receive an hundred fold, and ſhall inherit everlaſting life*, Matt. xix. 29. Or, as in another goſpel, *ſhall receive an hundred fold, now in this preſent time, houſes, and brethren, and ſiſters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with perſecutions: and in the world to come, eternal life*, Mark x. 30. And when he forewarned the diſciples, that *in the world they ſhould have tribulation*, John xvi. 33. he ſufficiently aſſured them, that through him they would have peace and comfort.

4. But yet neither the law nor the goſpel makes promiſes and aſſurances of remarkable proſperity and greatneſs to all good men in this world. Not much wealth, or great honour and reſpect from men: but rather only a competence of good things, favour and eſteem with good men, and thoſe among

among whom they live. This ſeems to be what our Lord means, when he ſays, all theſe things, food and raiment, before ſpoken of, ſhall be added unto you.

Nor is it any thing more that is promiſed in the Old Teſtament. So particularly in the thirty-ſeventh Pſalm, a remarkable portion of ſcripture, with regard to this point. *Truſt in the Lord, and do good. So ſhalt thou dwell in the land and verily thou ſhalt be fed*, Pſ. xxxvii. 3.—*For the meek ſhall inherit the earth, and ſhall delight themſelves in the abundance of peace*, ver. 11.—*I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not ſeen the righteous forſaken, nor his ſeed begging bread*, ver. 25. And at the ſixteenth verſe of that pſalm: *A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked.* Which is entirely conformable to what our Lord obſerves: *A man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance which he poſſeſſeth*, Luke xii. 15. And conſidering the ſnares and temptations of this preſent world, ſome wiſe men have choſen a competence as the moſt deſirable condition, preferable, as to want, ſo alſo to abundance. Says Agur: *Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty, nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: leſt I be full, and deny thee, and ſay, who is the Lord? or leſt I be poor, and ſteal, and take the name of my God in vain*, Pro. xxx. 8, 9.

5. Some inequality and diverſity of circumſtances, with a variety of afflictions, is not unſuitable to the preſent ſtate and condition. In this world the nature and conſtitution of all men is frail and mortal; it is a ſtate of trial, not of recompenſe. All therefore muſt unavoidably be liable to ſome, yea to many inconveniences, troubles, pains, ſorrows and diſappointments. And all without exception muſt in the end ſubmit to the ſtroke of death.

Good men, as well as others, may meet with trials and afflictions. It is the neceſſary conſequence and reſult of the preſent frame of things. It cannot be otherwiſe, without a continued ſeries of miraculous interpoſitions, and over-throwing the preſent courſe of nature, and turning this world, which appears to be a ſtate of trial into a ſtate of remuneration and reward. Good men being mortal as well as others, they are liable to various bodily weakneſſes and indiſpoſitions, to pining and tedious ſickneſſes, and even to long-continued, exquiſite and tormenting pains. And they may be tried and exerciſed with other diſaſters and afflictions, the death of children or other relatives and friends; at other times,

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by the unkindneſs and ſad miſcarriages of thoſe whoſe ſpiritual and eternal intereſts are moſt precious and deſirable to them.

In ſuch a world as this, wherein all are frail and mortal, where there are different characters, wiſe and fooliſh, good and bad; where there are different tempers and diſpoſitions, where there is much peeviſhneſs and perverſeneſs, as well as mildneſs and compliance; there will be a great deal of uneaſineſs and unhappineſs, and a very conſiderable diverſity of circumſtances. Some bad men may attain to abundance of outward grandeur and worldly proſperity: and ſome good men may be depreſſed, abuſed and ill-treated. At the ſame time, conſidering, that neither the affliction of the one, nor the proſperity of the other can laſt always; and that neither condition is unmixed, and entirely throughout uniform and of a piece, the inequality is not vaſt. For in much outward proſperity, the moſt eſtabliſhed and ſecure, there will be cares and fears, and there may be ſtinging reflections. And in afflictive caſes there are uſually ſome intervals of eaſe, ſome alleviations and abatements of pain and grief, ſome refreſhing ſupports, cordials and conſolations.

Which leads us to obſerve farther:

6. Piety has many advantages relating to this preſent life, and good men have grounds of ſupport and comfort in every condition: whereby the *promiſe of the life that now is*, is fulfilled and made good to them.

But the farther conſideration of this point muſt be deferred to another ſeaſon.

SERMON

# SERMON IV.

## THE PROMISE ANNEXED TO GODLINESS.

1 TIM. iv. 8.

*For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

I HAVE already shown, what we are to understand by bodily exercise, and that godliness has promise of the life which is to come.

III. The third thing is, that *godliness has promise of the life that now is.* And for illustrating this point several observations have been mentioned.

1. It is certain, that the Divine Providence is over all his works, and that God has an especial, and more favourable regard to righteous and truly good men than to others.

2. It ought to be owned, that the chief promise of the gospel is eternal life, or happiness in a future state.

3. Nevertheless there are under the gospel-dispensation promises and assurances of comfort, peace and happiness to good men in this world.

4. But yet neither the law nor the gospel makes promises and assurances of remarkable worldly prosperity and greatness to all good men in this world.

5. Some inequality and diversity of circumstances, with a variety of afflictions and troubles, is not unsuitable to the present state and condition.

6. Piety has many advantages relating to this present life, and good men have grounds of support and comfort in every condition; whereby the promise of the life that now is, is fulfilled and made good to them.

This was just mentioned the last opportunity. And it is the main point, which is now to be made out by us.

And I presume, that all may by this time be sensible of the reasonableness of the method in which we have proceeded: first insisting upon the promise of the life which is to come: inasmuch as that promise, and the hope of future eternal

eternal life, cannot but be an immediate ſource of comfort and joy. And without that promiſe and hope, the practice of virtue and the profeſſion of truth, if poſſible, would in ſome caſes be extremely difficult and uncomfortable. For what ſhould induce men to hazard all their preſent intereſts for the ſake of truth? With what ſatisfaction could an upright friend and patron of religion and virtue reſign this preſent life, and ſubmit to and undergo a painful death for the ſake of truth, if there were no life to come where ſome recompenſe may be received.

In ſhowing, then, the advantages and comforts of piety here, and its promiſe of the life that now is, the promiſe of the life which is to come muſt be ſuppoſed, and taken for granted, or well proved: as indeed it is a certain truth, or faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation.

In making out this point I intend to inſiſt on the ſeveral following particulars.

We will compare the condition of good and bad men in this world. In the next place we will obſerve ſome temporal advantages which piety will be attended with, and may be the means of. It alſo ſecures from ſome temporal evils and troubles: and finally it affords comforts and enjoyments which are not to be had without it.

1. Let us compare the condition of good and bad men in this world. For poſſibly, if we do ſo, it may appear, that the irreligious, who mind nothing but the affairs of this world, have ſeldom even now, upon the whole, any great advantage or ſuperiority above the truly good and virtuous.

It is true, there are ſome inſtances of bad men, or of ſuch as concern themſelves about nothing more than a form of godlineſs, who have a great deal of outward worldly proſperity: and there are ſome good men in very low and mean circumſtances, who meet with a great deal of worldly trouble and affliction; but it is not always ſo: neither do all bad men proſper: nor are all good men in adverſity. Succeſs does not always attend unrighteous or hypocritical men in their unrighteous deſigns. If they are unſucceſsful; if they are diſappointed in their aims and purſuits, how diſtreſſed then is their condition! how great their grief and vexation! which a good man avoids, or very much moderates upon like occaſions.

Suppoſing the covetous and ambitious to proſper, and obtain the advantages they aim at; ſtill thoſe advantages are

exeeeding uncertain and vain. They cannot afford a great deal of ſatisfaction. For they are accompanied with cares and fears, and may be all loſt. If they are not loſt, they muſt be ſoon left: how ſoon, man knows not. *Riches*, as the wiſe man obſerves, *certainly make to themſelves wings: they flee away as an eagle towards heaven*, Prov. xxiii. v. And, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *Man that is in honour abideth not*, Pſ. xlix. 12.

There is no ſtability in earthly things, and but little ſatisfaction to be had from them whilſt they are poſſeſſed. How unſettled, for the moſt part, is the condition of thoſe who are in places of honour and preferment! How numerous, and how watchful are their enemies and oppoſers! For which reaſon fears and jealouſies oftentimes perplex and torment the minds of thoſe who are in the moſt exalted ſtations. And though men are much advanced, the greater power, honour and ſplendour of ſome others may occaſion envy, pining grief and vexation. Whilſt men have many and great advantages, and almoſt every ingredient of worldly felicity, ſome one trouble or affliction, or a reſtleſs deſire of ſome one thing ſtill wanting may imbitter every enjoyment.

There is not then, any thing very tempting in the moſt ſplendid circumſtances of bad men.

2. It ſhould be conſidered, that there are many temporal worldly advantages, which do uſually attend the practice of piety, and which it is the means of. Sobriety and temperance conduce to the health of the body, which is a very great bleſſing, and to the clearneſs of the underſtanding, the vigour of the mind, and all the intellectual faculties.

The health of the body, which is a very great bleſſing, the clearneſs of the underſtanding, the vigour of the mind, and all its intellectual faculties attend upon, and are fruits of piety. Sobriety, with frugality and diligence, will ordinarily go a great way toward obtaining and ſecuring a competence of all things needful and convenient: and the meek ſhall inherit the earth. Mildneſs of diſpoſition and temper, and moderate affections, conduce to health and long life. Theſe alſo, together with a prudent and agreeable behaviour toward all thoſe we converſe with, if they advance not to honour, will procure the favour and good will of ſome, and good repute with the wiſe and diſcerning. *He that will love life*, ſays St. Peter, *and ſee good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they ſpeak no guile. Let him eſchew evil, and do good; let him ſeek peace, and enſue it.*

*it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is againſt them that do evil,* 1 Pet. iii. 10—12. It is the advice of Solomon: *Commit thy ways unto the Lord, and thy thoughts ſhall be eſtabliſhed,* Pr. xvi. 3. Again: *When a man's ways pleaſe the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him,* ver. 7. He alſo obſerves: *A man's wiſdom maketh his face to ſhine,* Eccl. viii. 1. Which is not more true of that part of wiſdom, which conſiſts in knowledge and underſtanding, and an ability to reſolve difficult queſtions, than in that wiſdom, which conſiſts in a virtuous conduct, and a mild, diſcreet, and obliging behaviour among men. Goodneſs and beneficence ſecure men reſpect in the time of their proſperity. And if their circumſtances change, and they be brought into trouble, they will ſtill be beloved and eſteemed. and they will meet with ſome to protect and ſupply them, and intereſt themſelves in their favour, as the exigence of their caſe requires.

3. Another thing to be ſaid in the behalf of godlineſs is, that it tends to prevent, or ſecure from many evils. This is implied in the laſt-mentioned particular. Let me however ſhow this more diſtinctly.

Many evils, ſome inward, others outward, are prevented by the ſeveral branches of piety. The ſober and temperate avoid the bad effects and conſequences of intemperance and licentiouſneſs. He who governs his paſſions and affections lives free from many uneaſineſſes and diſquietudes that torment and pierce others of ungoverned affections and paſſions. The truly pious man, that is not ambitious of honour and preferment, ſtate and grandeur, who is not covetous, who enlarges not his deſires after much wealth and large revenues, avoids ſolicitude and perplexity. The humble man that overlooks neglects and ungrateful returns and ſome ſcornful and diſdainful treatment, poſſeſſeth himſelf in peace, when others deſtitute of that virtue are rendered unhappy, or rather make themſelves unhappy by the miſconduct of other men.

The meek and patient, who can paſs by, or bear with ſome injuries and offences, avoid ſtrife and contention, and all the diſagreeable conſequences thereof, and the train of evils that attend them. Ungoverned exceſſive anger, deep and laſting reſentment, beſide the inward uneaſineſs they produce, oftentimes involve men in great and inextricable difficulties which

might have been avoided. And whilſt the man of ungoverned paſſion loſes the favour and affection of friends, the mild and diſcreet ſubdues the hearts of enemies, and gains their good will and eſteem.

4. Laſtly, Good men have many comforts and enjoyments which others are deſtitute of. Solomon recommending wiſdom, openly declares (not at all fearing to diſappoint thoſe who ſhould hearken to his counſel, and make the experiment) *Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her*, Prov. iii. 17, 18. And in another place he ſays: *A good man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf*, ch. xiv. 14.

A diſcreet and thoughtful perſon, who has conſidered the nature of religion, and the extent of its precepts and obligations: who has formed to himſelf juſt ſentiments concerning God and the way of ſerving him: and who does actually perform the duties ſuited to his capacities and circumſtances; revering, honouring, and worſhipping God, infinite in perfection, and the fountain of all good; loving, relieving, helping his fellow-creatures according to his power, with fidelity and readineſs; will ordinarily enjoy much peace and tranquillity of mind.

If at any time he have been miſled from the paths of virtue, he has now repented of all his ſins, and truſts in the forgiving grace and mercy of God, who pardons and accepts repenting and returning ſinners: and he keeps himſelf in his favour by carefully avoiding all known ſin, and performing ſincerely every known duty.

He has now the pleaſure of integrity, though not of perfection. And being in the frame of his mind and the conduct of his life, obedient and conformed to the will of God, he has a perſuaſion of his favour and acceptance, which is the trueſt joy and ſatisfaction.

Such an one is happy in every circumſtance. Alteration of outward condition will not utterly deſtroy his peace and tranquillity, ſatisfaction, comfort and joy. The ſentiments and language of the Pſalmiſt are thoſe of all good men in general. *There be many that ſay, who will ſhow us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increaſed*, Pſ. iv. 6, 7.

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If he be in proſperity, he owns God to be the giver of every good and perfect gift, and with delight offers up to him ſacrifices of praiſe and thanks.

Is he brought into trouble and affliction? He has reſources of peace and comfort, which others want. He ſtill truſts in God, and caſts his care upon him. He has a great deal of comfort in the conſideration, and full perſuaſion, that the providence of God, who is righteous, and loveth righteouſneſs, is over all: and he thereupon concludes, that all things ſhall be over-ruled for the good of thoſe who adhere to the laws of reaſon and virtue.

As ſpiritual good is in itſelf, and in his eſteem, the moſt valuable good, and durable happineſs in a future ſtate is the ultimate end of man; he is reconciled to preſent afflictions, by conſidering them as the chaſtiſements of his heavenly Father, appointed and laid upon him, for making him more pure and perfect, and more meet for unmixed happineſs; or even for ſecuring his welfare and ſafety, and preventing his ruin, that he might not finally periſh with the world of thoughtleſs and inconſiderate men.

Certainly, when under afflictions, he will have different thoughts and apprehenſions concerning them from what others have. His affections were not before ſo ſet upon this world and the things of it, as thoſe of ſome others are: though, poſſibly, he too has exceeded in his regard for them. However, his moderation of affection for them is now of great benefit. And theſe things never having been eſteemed as his ſole or main portion, he is not ſo totally dejected and diſconcerted, as ſome others are in like circumſtances. This is no ſmall advantage in a world where all things are uncertain, and the circumſtances of men frequently vary and alter.

And if he actually find afflictions to be of uſe to him, of ſervice to his ſpiritual intereſts, he is mightily reconciled to them. His troubles may appear almoſt ſhocking and unſufferable to other men, and the meanneſs of his outward circumſtances may lead them to deſpiſe him. Still he can be pleaſed, if he find himſelf humbled in the frame of his mind, more affected with the evil of ſin, more fully determined for the ſervice of God, and the performance of every duty lying before him. He is ſatisfied if theſe afflictions have proved the means of ſuch good, and have better fitted and prepared him for that world where all ſorrow and ſighing ſhall flee away; which they never will here. In this manner there-

fore David speaks of the troubles he had met with: *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes,* Ps. cxix. 71. *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me,* ver. 75.

This is said with regard to the common afflictions and troubles of this life.

But farther, are good men brought into difficulties, on account of the profession of truth, and acting agreeably to convictions of their conscience, and deliberate judgment concerning things? Upon such an occasion they have special supports and consolations. They have now a strong persuasion that their faithfulness is well-pleasing and acceptable to God. And they have a humble hope, that if they can persevere to the end, they shall be saved, and receive an abundant reward.

The declarations of scripture upon this head are full of comfort and encouragement to all who are brought into this trial. *My brethren,* says St. James, *count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations: knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing,* Jam. i. 2, 3. St. Paul encountered many difficulties in the service of true religion. And the acknowledgments he had made with regard to his own and others' experience, who laboured with him at that time, are very observable. *As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ,* 2 Cor. i. 5. *And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing, that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us,* Rom. v. 3—5. In another place: *For which cause we faint not. But though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen, are temporal: but the things which are not seen, are eternal,* 2 Cor. iv. 16—18.

Whereby we perceive the true and effectual blessing, which our Lord bequeathed his disciples: *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,*

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John xiv. 27. *Theſe things I have ſpoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye ſhall have tribulation. But be of good cheer: I have overcome the world,* John xvi. 33. And the Pſalmiſt of old could ſay: *Great peace have they that love thy law; and nothing ſhall offend them.*

As a good man, of any rank, in any ſtate and condition, proceeds and perſeveres in the practice of piety and virtue, he has an encreaſing joy. His perſeverance in the way of God's commandment, and continued reſpect to the divine precepts, confirms the perſuaſion of his integrity, and he aſſures his heart before God. His peace and ſatisfaction are very likely to prevail more and more toward the period of his time here on earth. For he has pleaſing reflections and comfortable proſpects, to which others are ſtrangers, and which others cannot have. So ſays the Pſalmiſt: *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace,* Pſ. xxxvii. 37. And this is an important point, to conclude well.

All which conſiderations, I preſume, ſufficiently prove the truth of the obſervation in the text; that *Godlineſs is profitable for all things, having promiſe of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.*

Having now ſufficiently conſidered the ſeveral propoſitions of the text, I ſhall conclude with ſome inferences by way of application.

1. We may hence learn to be cautious, how we paſs any ſevere cenſures upon men on account of the diſadvantages of their preſent condition, or the outward troubles and afflictions, which they meet with here. This inference follows juſtly from things before ſaid. This is not a ſtate of recompenſe, but trial: all things, all outward things, come very much alike to all. There is no knowing good and evil, love and hatred, certainly, by thoſe things which befall men here. Nor are all men miſerable, who lie under external diſadvantages. Some may be greatly afflicted, as we have ſeen, and yet be peaceful, joyful and comfortable. Some may meet with many and long continued troubles and afflictions, who yet are not abandoned of God, but approved by him: who are ſincere and upright, and perſuaded of their acceptance with God. There are good reaſons for ſuch a diſpenſation. Valuable ends and purpoſes are anſwered thereby. Good men are improved and made better by the ſufferings they endure. Others of more imperfect virtue are made more perfect, and

learn from them the duty of patience and reſignation. And many by obſerving the great examples of patience and fortitude of ſome good men under various trials, may be convinced and perſuaded of the truth, power and excellence of the principles of religion.

2. Young perſons, and others, who are diſpoſed to ſeek and ſerve the Lord, and to walk in the way of his commandments, may be hence convinced, that they have no reaſon to be diſheartened and diſcouraged, as if they ſhould find no pleaſure, and obtain no advantages in the way of religion and virtue. I hope ſuch will be pleaſed to conſider ſeriouſly what has been ſaid. For a principal deſign of theſe diſcourſes has been to remove ſuch a prejudice againſt religion and ſhow fully, that it is falſe and groundleſs: and to perſuade men to come to a ſpeedy and immediate determination for virtue, which is really profitable for all things.

3. However, certainly, it is very fit and prudent, at firſt ſetting out in the way of virtue, and taking upon us the profeſſion of true religion, to conſider the outward diſadvantages and ſufferings, that may attend ſuch a courſe, and do ſometimes befall the ſincere and conſcientious. By this means we become prepared for all events. Our reſolutions are more confirmed; our obedience will be the more uniform; and a good iſſue becomes more likely. We ſhall not only begin, but alſo finiſh well. The path of ſuch will be as the morning light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.

4. It ſeems to be a probable truth, that the higheſt attainments in virtue and holineſs will have the largeſt ſhare of comfort and happineſs in this preſent life. The moſt complete in virtue will obtain many advantages, and eſcape many evils, and have the beſt ſupports and conſolations: for theſe know beſt how, and are beſt able to truſt in God. They are moſt reſigned to his will. They have the moſt lively hope of an heavenly and everlaſting inheritance. They, uſually, have the moſt comfortable perſuaſion of the divine favour and acceptance. Their affections are the moſt mortified to earthly and ſenſible things. They have the fulleſt command of their appetites and paſſions. They have leſs anxiety and ſolicitude about earthly things. They are beſt contented with their condition. They are freeſt from envy, ill-will, jealouſy, and other troubleſome and tormenting emotions and diſeaſes of the mind. This ſoundneſs and vigorous health of the ſoul cannot but have delightful effects. As then

godlineſs

godlineſs is profitable for all things, the greateſt attainments in piety will uſually have the beſt portion of comfort in the life that now is, as well as the greateſt reward in the life which is to come.

5. Let us not, then, having begun well, be ever induced by any means to forſake the practice of piety. Let us not take offence at the troubles and afflictions, which may for a while lie upon us, or upon ſome others, who are ſincerely devoted to the ſervice of God. For it is a certain truth, that godlineſs is profitable unto all things. If we perſevere and advance therein, we ſhall be more and more convinced of this truth, *that light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart.* Let us not then be impoſed upon by ſome ſpecious appearances, or put in for a portion with every one, who makes a ſhow of mirth and gaiety. Let not any thing tranſport us beyond the bounds of ſerious thought and conſideration. If we weigh things carefully in an equal balance, piety will have the preference in our judgment above irreligion and wickedneſs. And knowing the inconſtancy of our tempers, and the dangerous tendency of ſome worldly temptations, we ſhall be earneſt with God, to eſtabliſh the good and wiſe purpoſes of our heart, once ſeriouſly formed: to turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken us in his precepts.

The juſt ſentiments of the apoſtle in this text and context deſerve our notice. He ſpeaks lightly of bodily exerciſe, as a ſmall matter: whilſt he highly prizes, and earneſtly recommends ſincere piety. And he cenſures ſuch as ſhould forbid to marry, and require men to abſtain from meats, which God has created to be received with thankſgiving. It is the ſame, which our Saviour ſaid and taught in the hearing of all the people: *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man: but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man,* Mat. xv. 11. The Chriſtian religion, which is true religion only, inſiſts not upon grievous auſterities, and ſevere and unneceſſary mortifications of the body. Chriſtians, if they underſtand their religion, are free from all ſuch yokes of bondage or ſlavery, which are below ingenuous minds. And it certainly is no ſmall advantage to be freed from burdenſome impoſitions, and needleſs reſtraints of this kind; and to be able without ſcandal to partake of all the innocent enjoyments of life: provided men do not ſet up ſome other ſort of orthodoxy, as vain and inſignificant; equally unprofitable to thoſe who

who pride themſelves in it, and equally troubleſome to the world around them.

6. Finally, let us exerciſe ourſelves unto godlineſs. Bodily exerciſe profiteth little. It has no divine goſpel promiſe of any good thing whatever. But godlineſs is profitable unto all things: and has promiſes of life and happineſs hereafter, and of peace, joy and comfort here. Let us exerciſe and improve ourſelves in this true excellence, by meditation and prayer, watchfulneſs and circumſpection: reſtraining irregular appetites, purifying ourſelves more and more, and adding one virtue to another, being ready to every good word and every good work, and growing daily more perfect in ſobriety, meekneſs, patience, and every other part of true real piety.

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## SERMON V.

### INTERNAL MARKS OF CREDIBILITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

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### 2 PETER i. 15, 16.

*Moreover, I will endeavour that you may be able after my deceaſe, to have theſe things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly deviſed fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but were eye-witneſſes of his majeſty.*

We are ſetting before you, the grounds upon which we receive the Chriſtian religion as true and divine. No religion can come from God which contains principles, or rules of life unworthy of him; part of this deſign therefore is, to ſhow the excellency of the principles of our religion, and the goodneſs of its precepts: that they are ſuitable to the divine perfections, and ſuch as may proceed from him, without any derogation to him; if not ſuch as could come from none but God himſelf. Another part of the deſign is, to conſider the miracles ſuppoſed to be wrought by our Saviour, and his apoſtles, and the predictions of uncertain events, as atteſtations of a divine commiſſion for giving theſe religious inſtructions to mankind.

But

But it is needful we have ſome ſatisfactory proof of the truth and reality of theſe. They who were eye-witneſſes of any wonderful works, are ſatisfied by their own ſenſes: but for us, who live many ages after the promulgation, and ſuppoſed atteſtation of this religion, it is neceſſary we conſider what evidence there is of the account we have of them. There being no miracles wrought before us for the confirmation of our religion, we ought to be convinced of the truth of thoſe that were done in the firſt ages of it. If it be made appear that many extraordinary works were done as proofs of a commiſſion from heaven, that predictions were made of diſtant and uncertain events, which were afterwards accompliſhed, this will prove the divine original of the chriſtian religion. What lies before me therefore is to ſhow, that the account we have of theſe things in the hiſtory of the goſpel, and particularly in the books of the New Teſtament is credible, and ſuch as may be received by impartial and unprejudiced perſons: that Jeſus Chriſt dwelt in Judea, and, in the name of God, taught the moſt pure and excellent principles of religion, worked many miracles, healing all kinds of diſtempers by his word, raiſing the dead, and the like: that he foretold many uncertain events, which afterwatds came to paſs;—his own death, reſurrection, the pouring out of the Holy Ghoſt on his followers, with power to do the like, or greater works than he had done himſelf; the converſion of the world to his doctrine, and the deſtruction of the Jewiſh ſtate: that he was crucified, roſe from the dead, and aſcended up to heaven: that his apoſtles and others, after this, did work many miracles by powers they received from him, and propagated in a great part of the world the doctrine he taught.

The particular conſideration of the miracles and predictions of our Saviour and his apoſtles is in other hands. What lies before us at preſent is, the credibility of the account we have of them, and of the riſe of our religion. That it is not a forged and invented ſtory, but a faithful narrative of matters of fact; for we have not followed cunningly deviſed fables, as the apoſtle here ſays, but have delivered to you only an account of what we ſaw done before our eyes: and he ſays it when he was in expectation of leaving this world in a very ſhort time: *Knowing that ſhortly I muſt put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath ſhowed me*, 2 Pet. i. 14. St. Luke likewiſe avers in the beginning of his goſpel, that he had perfect underſtanding from the firſt, of the things concerning which he

he was about to write: and St. John says, in the beginning of his first epistle, *that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you*, chap. i. 2, 3.

I propose to set before you the internal marks and characters there are of truth and probability in the account itself, the history of the New Testament.

1. I would just observe, that the books we receive this history from have the names of particular persons; and this is an argument they are genuine, when there is no particular reason to the contrary. The positive proofs which there are of their being really written by the persons whose names they bear, belong to another argument. All that I insist upon now is, that they were handed down to us in the names of the persons who take upon them this character of living at the time the things they relate were transacted.

As for the four gospels, the names of their several authors are not indeed inserted in them. Two of them, Matthew and John, were of the twelve disciples, and followers of Christ: Mark was a companion of Peter in his travels and preaching: and Luke was a companion of Paul. Some have supposed they were both of them of the seventy-two that were sent forth by our Saviour in his life-time. In the epistles the name of the writer is inserted in the salutation of the person to whom they are sent, excepting that one of the epistle to the Hebrews, which, if written by Paul, as is generally supposed, might be omitted for special reasons.

2. These books are written in a language and in a stile suitable to the character of the persons whose names they bear. The language is Greek, which obtained very much in that country, in Syria and Judea, and in Egypt, after the conquest of Alexander, and the division of the countries he had subdued amongst his generals. The language is Greek, but some words are used in a different sense from what they have in the ancient writers that dwelt in Greece and its colonies, and there are some few Syriac words, and some borrowed from the Roman language, and there are phrases that have somewhat of the Syriac or Chaldee idiom.

3. Here are many characters of time inserted, which are arguments that it is a real history of facts. There was, saith St. Luke, *in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia*, Luke i. 5. The time of our Saviour's birth is set down with particular characters by the same evangelist. *And it came to pass in those days, that*

*there*

*there went out a decree from Cæſar Auguſtus, that all the world ſhould be taxed*; not only the city of Rome, but all the provinces of the empire: *(and this taxing was firſt made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria)* Luke ii. 1, 2. or, as the words ought to be rendered, according to the judgment of the beſt critics; *this taxing was before that, made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria*, to diſtinguiſh it from that which was really made ten years after, and which proved very fatal to the Jewiſh nation, by the ſedition raiſed upon the occaſion of it by Judas Gaulonites, and which gave riſe to the troubles that laſted a long time. St. Matthew ſays likewiſe, *Now when Jeſus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king*, Matt. ii. 1. The firſt preaching of John the baptiſt has likewiſe very particular characters of time ſpecified. *Now in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæſar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrach of Iturea, and the region of Trachonitis, and Lyſanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high prieſts; the word of God came unto John the ſon of Zacharias in the wilderneſs*, Luke iii. 1, 2. *At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jeſus*, Matt. xiv. 1. And in the Acts of the apoſtles we have an account of the oppoſition raiſed by the Jews againſt Paul at Jeruſalem; of his being taken out of their hands by Claudius Lyſias the chief captain; of his being ſent by him to Felix at Ceſarea; and, of his being delivered up by him to Portius Feſtus his ſucceſſor. All theſe are ſuch marks of time, as give ſome appearance of a true hiſtory of facts.—But to proceed:

4. The great deſign of this hiſtory, and of the firſt preaching of the goſpel, has nothing in it that ſhould tempt men to forgery and invention. The deſign evidently purſued is, the rectifying the conceptions of men relating to the nature of God, and the way of worſhipping him; to convince them of their ſins, and to turn them from them. Men are informed of their duty, exhorted to repentance. The Jews are admoniſhed not to depend upon external privileges, but to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Gentiles are exhorted to turn from idols, and all abominable vices. The ſtricteſt regimen of thoughts and affections, of words and actions, is enjoined upon the ſole conſideration of a regard to God and a future account. Had it been an attempt to erect a civil government, or an eccleſiaſtical polity, there might have been ſome ground of ſuſpicion of the miracles urged in its favour;

favour; though a bare ſuſpicion muſt have given way to plain proofs. And, indeed, the goſpel has this advantage of the Moſaic diſpenſation. His commiſſion was manifeſtly proved by the wonderful things he wrought. But he formed a numerous people into political government, and ſettled an honourable prieſthood in his family upon his brother, and his deſcendents. But the goſpel deſign, as repreſented in the New Teſtament, will not ſuggeſt any ſuſpicions to them that obſerve it. This is all I urge at preſent, that the great deſign promoted in this hiſtory, does not ſeem to carry in it any temptation to forgery and invention.

5. We have in this hiſtory, in the books of the New Teſtament, a very natural repreſentation of things, with all the appearances of likelihood and probability. The chief ſubject of the four goſpels are our Saviour's diſcourſes and miracles, his hiſtory and reſurrection, the reception he met with, the reflections the people made upon him, the exceptions of the people and phariſees againſt him, all which are ſuitable to the character of the perſons, and the principles that obtained among them. When they had heard ſome of his diſcourſes, the people ſoon apprehended a difference between his doctrine, and that they had been wont to hear from their Rabbies. *When Jeſus had ended theſe ſayings, the people were aſtoniſhed at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the ſcribes*, Matt. vii. 28, 29. After he is ſaid to have cured divers infirmities, reſtored ſight to the blind, and ſpeech to the dumb, and delivered ſome that were poſſeſſed with evil ſpirits. After he had wrought ſome cures, it is highly reaſonable to ſuppoſe he ſhould have a concourſe of people flock to him, to reap benefit from his hands. *And great multitudes came unto him, having with them thoſe that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and caſt them down at Jeſus' feet, and he healed them: inſomuch that the multitude wondered, when they ſaw the dumb to ſpeak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to ſee: and they glorified the God of Iſrael*, Matt. xv. 30, 31. *The multitude marvelled, ſaying, it was never ſo ſeen in Iſrael: but the phariſees ſaid, he caſteth out the devils through the prince of the devils*, Matt. ix. 33, 34. Some were offended at the meanneſs of his parentage and education. *Whence hath this man this wiſdom, and theſe mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's ſon? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joſes, and Simon, and Judas? and*

*and his ſiſters, are they not all with us? whence then hath this man all theſe things? and they were offended at him*, Matt. xiii. 54—57. *The Jews then murmured at him, becauſe he ſaid, I am the bread which came down from heaven: and they ſaid, is not this Jeſus the ſon of Joſeph, whoſe father and mother we know? how is it then that he ſaith, I came down from heaven*, John vi. 41, 42. Again: *And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: (viz.* at *Jeruſalem) for ſome ſaid he is a good man; others ſaid, nay, but he deceiveth the people. Howbeit, no man ſpake openly of him (i. e.* in favour of him) *for fear of the Jews. Now about the midſt of the feaſt, Jeſus went up into the temple and taught: and the Jews marvelled, ſaying, how knoweth this man letters, having never learned?* John vii. 12—15. *And many of the people believed on him, and ſaid, when Chriſt cometh will he do more miracles than this man hath done?* ver. 31. *Many of the people therefore, when they heard this ſaying, ſaid, of a truth, this is the prophet: others ſaid, this is the Chriſt: but ſome ſaid, ſhall Chriſt come out of Galilee?* ver. 40, 41.

The ninth chapter of St. John's goſpel is an account of the miracle wrought upon a blind man whom he reſtored to ſight; the ſcruples of divers of the people; the inquiſitiveneſs of the phariſees about it; the ſhyneſs of the parents of the blind man to anſwer all their queſtions; the reflections of the phariſees, the reply of the blind man are altogether ſo natural, that the ſtory can be nothing elſe but a bare repreſentation of a real matter of fact: the chapter cannot be abridged, but may be read at your leiſure, with the view for which I refer to it with great ſatisfaction. *There was a diviſion*, or argument, *among the Jews for theſe ſayings. And many of them ſaid, he hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others ſaid, theſe are not the words of one that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?* John x. 19—21. And, at ſome times, great numbers of people were ſo moved by the ſight of his miracles, and the new and ſurpriſing nature of his diſcourſes, that they entertained a very ſtrong perſuaſion he muſt be the deliverer they expected, and therefore invited him to take the authority and ſtate of a king, and undertake to deliver them from the Roman government, particularly after he had fed five thouſand with five loaves and a few ſmall fiſhes, *When they had ſeen the miracle which Jeſus had done, ſaid, this is of a truth that prophet that ſhould come into the world.* So that perceiving *they would come and take him by force, to make him a king,*

*a king, he* was obliged to depart *into a mountain alone*, John vi. 14, 15. to fruſtrate this their deſign, ſo contrary to all his intentions. At another time, great numbers are ſaid to have conducted him in triumph into Jeruſalem: *And a very great multitude ſpread their garments in the way, others cut down branches from the trees and ſtrawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, ſaying, Hoſanna to the ſon of David: bleſſed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hoſanna in the higheſt*, Matt. xxi. 8, 9. Nevertheleſs, as the multitude are variable in their affections, and as the Jewiſh people were in great ſubjection to the phariſees, and their rulers the inveterate enemies of our Saviour, and being, it is likely, tired out with his delays to take upon him temporal authority, and make ſome change in the government, as they expected he ſhould, they at laſt cried out, 'Crucify him! crucify him!' Matt. xxvii. 20. deſired the life of Barabbas, and that Jeſus ſhould be deſtroyed. But though the common people were divided in their opinion concerning him, and varied at times in their affection for him, the phariſees are repreſented as ſteadily oppoſing him with the greateſt malice from the firſt to the laſt. He had with great freedom corrected their miſrepreſentations of the law; cenſured their additions to it, which were ſuch as to ſubvert and make void the main branches of it; rebuked them for their pride and ambition, and hypocriſy. It is very likely therefore they ſhould be implacable to him, as they are repreſented, and ſeek all opportunities to defame and deſtroy him. When ſome of their officers, whom they had ſent out to apprehend him, returned without executing their orders, and expreſſed ſome approbation of his diſcourſes, they anſwered, ſaying, *Are ye alſo deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the phariſees believed on him? But this people, who know not the law, are curſed*, John vii. 47, 48. And they were continually making thoſe exceptions againſt him, which might have a tendency to make him odious to the people. *Then came to Jeſus, ſcribes and phariſees, which were at Jeruſalem, ſaying, why do thy diſciples tranſgreſs the tradition of the elders? for they waſh not their hands when they eat bread*, Matt. xv. 1, 2. They reflected upon him for his free converſation, in, that he eat with publicans and ſinners. Matt. ix. 11. They objected againſt him, that his diſciples did not faſt, and practiſe other auſterities in much eſteem at that time. *Why do the diſciples of John and of the phariſees faſt: but thy diſciples faſt*

*faſt not?* Mark ii. 18. It was a very great objection againſt him, with which they endeavoured to ſcandaliſe him, that he wrought cures upon infirm people even on the ſabbath day, and becauſe his diſciples, as they went through the corn fields, plucked ſome ears of corn on the ſabbath day. Mark ii. 23. They charged him with blaſphemy, and aſſuming to himſelf the prerogatives of God himſelf, in that healing an infirm perſon, he ſays unto him, *thy ſins are forgiven thee*, ver. 5. At another time they affixed this odious charge upon him for ſtyling God his father, thereby making himſelf as they inferred, equal with God. John v. 18.

The repreſentation of the apprehenſions of the diſciples concerning our Saviour are extremely natural: from the words they had heard him ſpeak; from the manner in which he taught; from the many wonderful works they had ſeen him perform; thence they entertained a ſtrong perſuaſion he muſt be the Meſſias: and when he inquired what thoughts they had of him, they readily replied that he was Jeſus the Son of the living God. But when he ſpoke to them of his ſufferings, that the ſon of man ſhould be delivered into the hands of men, and they ſhould kill him, and after that he was killed, he ſhould riſe again the third day; they underſtood not that ſaying, and were afraid to aſk him. Mark ix. 31, 32. And in divers other places. They were poſſeſſed with the common prejudices of their countrymen, and were in continual expectation of ſeeing him in the higheſt ſplendour and power. This was the thing that was twice the foundation of the hopes they had of authority and power themſelves as his favourites, ſince they were his intimate acquaintance and conſtant companions. This was the reaſon of their abandoning him at the laſt, under his diſgrace and ſufferings; and by this we may account for Peter's denial of his maſter, when he ſaw him ſubmit to trouble he had no expectation of. This was likewiſe the reaſon of the great difficulty there was of convincing them it was really he, when he came among them after his reſurrection. I might refer to the moving ſcene that paſt between our Saviour and his diſciples the night before his being apprehended. The ſorrow they all manifeſted upon the declaration he made of the near approach of his death; the conſolations he ſuggeſted to them; the prayer he put up for them; the profeſſions they made of affection for him; the warnings he gave them; the promiſes they made

of fidelity to him, and that they would rather die with him than deny him: are all ſuch as none can read, I ſhould think, but muſt be perſuaded it is no other than a faithful narrative of a real tranſaction. The declaration likewiſe that Peter made, though all ſhould be offended he would not, Mark xiv. 29. was agreeable to the forwardneſs and zeal he had ſhown upon divers other occaſions. And are not the ſcoffs of the people, and the triumphs of the phariſees, ſaid to be delivered by them againſt our Saviour when hanging upon the croſs, juſt ſuch as might be expected upon the occaſion from the cruel inſolence of one and the malicious ſatisfaction of the other? *And they that paſſed by, reviled him, wagging their heads, and ſaying, thou that deſtroyeſt the temple, and buildeſt it in three days, ſave thyſelf: if thou be the Son of God, come down from the croſs. Likewiſe alſo the chief prieſts mocking him, with the ſcribes and elders, ſaid, he ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave: if he be the king of Iſrael, let him now come down from the croſs, and we will believe him. He truſted in God: let him deliver him now if he will have him: for he ſaid, I am the Son of God,* Matt. xxvii. 39—42. And though I paſs over many particulars, I muſt not omit to refer you to his compaſſionate lamentation of the miſeries of Jeruſalem and the Jewiſh nation, when the prediction of their deſtruction by him is related, which could proceed from no other but one who was really the perſon the evangeliſts have repreſented our Saviour to be. *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them which are ſent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not,* Matt. xxiii. 37. *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, ſaying, if thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes,* Luke xix. 41, 42.

If we proceed to the hiſtory of the acts of the apoſtles, we ſhall find ſtill the ſame juſt and natural repreſentation of things. The charge ſaid to be made againſt Stephen by the leading men of the Jewiſh nation, was the moſt popular that could be imagined, and moſt likely to reconcile the people to his deſtruction, which they aimed at. *And they ſtirred up the people, and the elders, and the ſcribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him before the council, and ſet up falſe witneſſes againſt him, which ſaid, this man ceaſeth*

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*not to ſpeak blaſphemous words againſt this place and the law,* Acts vi. 12, 13.

The reception Barnabas and Paul met with at Lyſtra is as agreeable to the ſentiments of ſuperſtitious heathens, ſurpriſed at firſt into ſuch a high veneration for them, upon account of a miracle they had ſeen them work: that they were ready to pay them ſuch honours as they gave their deities, and were as ſoon enraged againſt them when they diſdained their idolatrous honours and denied their gods. *When the people ſaw what Paul had done* (He had cured a man impotent in his feet, who had been a cripple from his mother's womb) *they lift up their voices, ſaying in the ſpeech of Lycaonia, the gods are come down to us in the likeneſs of men,* Acts xiv. 11. But *when there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who perſuaded the people, they ſtoned Paul, and drew him out of the city, ſuppoſing he had been dead,* ver. 19. And the uproar at Epheſus, upon the progreſs Paul had made, in drawing off ſome perſons from the received ſuperſtition, was no other than might be expected in a city where the livelihood of a vaſt number of perſons depended upon the ſale of images and ſhrines of the goddeſs *Diana,* Acts xix. This juſt and natural repreſentation of things is an argument of the truth and credibility of any hiſtory; when the reflections, objections, and whole behaviour of perſons of the better and meaner ſort are all conformable to their ſeveral characters, the opinions and ſentiments that obtain among them, and the circumſtances they are ſuppoſed to be in.

6. The impartiality of the hiſtory of the New Teſtament is another argument of its truth, and makes the whole appear credible. This is a rare and uncommon character, and I think is not more conſpicuous in any hiſtory than in this. I would give you ſome few inſtances of it under theſe three heads.

1. Many things are here mentioned, that were in appearance, and in the eye of the world, diſadvantageous to our Saviour.

2. The writers have not omitted thoſe things that were really diſadvantageous to themſelves, and their companions, ſome of them in the eye of the world, and others really ſo; their own faults and miſcarriages.

3. There are many diſorders and miſcarriages mentioned among the firſt converts to Chriſtianity.

As to the first head, things that were to outward appearance, and in the eye of the world, disadvantageous to our Saviour, are, the low circumstances of his parents; the mean accommodations of his birth; that when he appeared publicly to the world, his townsmen and near relations despised and rejected him; that among his followers, there were few who were considerable for their knowledge of the law, for wealth or dignity; that the rulers, the scribes, and pharisees, disowned his pretensions, and opposed him continually; that some, who for a time followed him, afterwards went off from him, and deserted him; that he was betrayed into the hands of the high priest and rulers, by one of those who had been chosen out for his constant companions, and had had an intimacy with him; that he was crucified in the most ignominious manner with two malefactors. Had it been a story invented, these particulars had never been part of it. Had it been a contrivance, they would never have thought of recommending to the generality of the Jews, a person, whom their rulers, and that sect which had the highest veneration among them, condemned and rejected; nor to the Gentiles, a person disowned and crucified by his own nation. Had the whole been a fiction, a crucifixion had certainly never been a part of the story. Had not they heard of the translation of Enoch? Was not the assumption of Elijah, who was carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, 2 Kings ii. 11. a model they might easily have followed and improved? Would not this have been much more glorious than a crucifixion, though afterwards succeeded by an ascension? Was it possible this fact should have been overlooked by any one person; much less by a college, or number of persons, who had attempted an agreeable story to be recommended to mankind? Certainly their view could be no other than the relating of real matter of fact.

Another proof of their impartiality is, what they have mentioned really, or to appearance, disadvantageous in their own character and conduct, and that of the other chief followers of Christ. They have inserted in this account, the mean original and occupation of several of themselves; that they were but fishermen; and the infamous employment of Matthew, who was a publican. Many of their own faults and failings are mentioned in such a manner, that one would not imagine they had concealed any of the

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aggravating circumſtances of them: nor do they ſeem to have ſoftened the harſhneſs of the reprimands their maſter gave them: and many of them are ſuch as they might have kept a ſecret among themſelves. Some of them were originally known only to Chriſt and the twelve, and divers of them, but two or three of the number could be privy to. This account repreſents the twelve infected with ambitious views of honour in a temporal kingdom; they had a contention which of them ſhould be the greateſt: it was a diſpute they had one with another as they were travelling without other company. The importunate ambition of the two ſons of Zebedee, and their mother, for the firſt and ſecond poſt in the Meſſiah's kingdom. Their fears and diffidence when they were in a ſtorm, though Chriſt was with them. How ſevere a rebuke have they given us an account of, which they received from Chriſt, when they had underſtood him to ſpeak concerning temporal proviſions, and he had been admoniſhing them concerning the leaven of the phariſees? *Why reaſon ye, becauſe ye have brought no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither underſtand? Have ye your heart hardened? Having eyes, ſee ye not? And having ears, hear ye not? And do ye not remember?* Mark viii. 17, 18. And what a contemptible figure did they make, whom Chriſt had left behind him when he went up into the mountain with Peter, James and John? for when he came down again, he found a great multitude about them, the ſcribes and phariſees queſtioning with them, and a man haſting to him, bringing his ſon to him with a dumb ſpirit, telling him, *I ſpake to thy diſciples, that they ſhould caſt him out, but they could not*; Mark ix. 15—18. upon which they received that juſt reprimand of their unbelief even before the multitude; *Then Jeſus anſwered, ſaying, O faithleſs and perverſe generation, how long ſhall I be with you? how long ſhall I ſuffer you? Bring him hither to me*, Mat. xvii. 17. And what could be more ſhameful than their forſaking Chriſt, and leaving him when he was apprehended by the officers of the high prieſt? except only the denial of Peter, repeated again and again, with circumſtances unbecoming a man of honour, a worſhipper of the true God, and much more a companion and diſciple of Chriſt. Indeed, if the honour of any of them were to be conſulted, it was Peter's: yet we find he is not ſpared at all, any more than the reſt. He was one of them whom Chriſt called to be with him at the

firſt; had made the moſt expreſs declaration of his character; had been the firſt inſtrument of opening the goſpel after our Saviour's reſurrection, both to Jews and Gentiles; and yet we have as many ſhameful miſcarriages mentioned concerning him, as concerning any of the reſt. When *Jeſus began to ſhow unto his diſciples, how that he muſt go unto Jeruſalem, and ſuffer many things of the elders, and chief prieſts, and ſcribes, and be killed, and be raiſed again the third day*; Mat. xvi. 21. then Peter took upon him to rebuke his maſter, as if what he had ſaid proceeded from melancholy fears that aroſe in his mind, and not from a certain knowledge of what was to befall him, ſaying, *Be it far from thee, Lord: this ſhall not be unto thee*: ver. 22. upon which he received the ſevereſt reprimand recorded, as given to any of the twelve: *But Jeſus turned and ſaid unto him, get thee behind me, ſatan, thou art an offence unto me; for thou ſavoureſt not the things which be of God, but thoſe that be of men*, ver. 23. He was doubtleſs engaged with the reſt in the contention for precedency: he was guilty of diffidence when Chriſt called to him to come to him upon the water: he was drowſy and overcome with ſleep when he was with Chriſt in the garden, when he was in an agony that might have filled thoſe preſent with him with the higheſt concern, and tendereſt compaſſion for him: he diſowned Chriſt in a moſt hardy and peremptory manner, when his maſter was in his view, under an unrighteous perſecution, immediately after the warmeſt and moſt confident profeſſions of zeal and affection: and we have notice taken of a diſſimulation he was afterwards guilty of, in favour of the Chriſtians that were of the uncircumciſion, to the prejudice of the ſimplicity of the goſpel, Gal. ii. 11, 12. I might obſerve the contention between Paul and Barnabas, which is recorded in the Acts: ſo that though for a long time they had been companions in preaching the goſpel, they ſeparated, and went aſunder for the future.—But enough has been ſaid.

Laſtly. The impartiality of the hiſtory appears in the accounts that are given of the firſt converts to Chriſtianity after our Saviour's aſcenſion. If we ſhould read the hiſtory of any particular reign, filled with high encomiums of the poſture of affairs, and find it repreſented as a time wherein the arts of peace and war flouriſh; in which all arts and ſciences are promoted and encouraged by a wiſe and prudent adminiſtration: the government juſt and mild; the people

people tractable and obedient; no impediment in the counſels, nor miſcarriages in the execution; the negotiations abroad, as well as councils at home, managed with the utmoſt ſagacity; armies ever victorious; no interruption of commerce, nor diſaſters in war: no wonder if poſterity judge ſuch a performance a panegyric, a romance, or any thing rather than a hiſtory: or, if the accounts given of the ſtate of Chriſtianity in its infancy had reſembled the pictures which have been ſince drawn by ſome modern repreſentations of the manners of the firſt converts: that they were univerſally eminent prodigies of virtue and piety, ſcarce any tokens of human frailty, with now and then a rapturous exclamation on the unanimity and harmony of ſentiments and affections that prevailed among them: one might very well have ſuſpected matters of fact muſt have been falſified and miſrepreſented, that it was a ſtory very much improved, if not altogether invented. But this is not the caſe. In this, as well as in every other part of this hiſtory, there appears a perfect impartiality. It is indeed related to the honour of the converts to Chriſtianity at *Jeruſalem*, that *the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and of one ſoul; neither ſaid any of them that ought of the things which he poſſeſſed was his own; but they had all things common: neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were poſſeſſors of lands or houſes, ſold them, and brought the prices of the things that were ſold, and diſtribution was made unto every man according as he had need*, Acts iv. 32—35. And we may eaſily believe there was ſuch an harmony among them at firſt, when the ſame author has acquainted us, that in a ſhort time afterwards, when the number of the diſciples was multiplied, *there aroſe a murmuring of the Grecians*, or Helleniſts, *againſt the Hebrews, becauſe their widows were neglected in the daily miniſtration*, Acts vi. 1. Nor can we have any reaſon to diſcredit the fore-mentioned account of the generoſity of them who were poſſeſſed of houſes and lands, that they put the price of them into a common ſtock for the relief of thoſe that wanted. I ſay, we have no reaſon to doubt that this generoſity was general, when the ſame author has been ſo particular, as to record the diſſimulation of two of the number, of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, Acts v. 1. who endeavoured to put a cheat upon the apoſtles, and kept back a part of the price of their lands

when they pretended to make a contribution of the whole value. The prepoſterous fondneſs of the Hebrew converts for the rites and ceremonies of the Moſaic law is likewiſe recorded; and the diſturbance they gave the gentile converts on that account.

In the epiſtles of the apoſtles that have been handed down to us, are preſerved memorials of many particulars not very honourable to the firſt converts to Chriſtianity. The readineſs of the churches of Galatia to depart from the purity and ſimplicity of the goſpel. The ſcandalous diſorders of the church of Corinth in ſome ſolemn parts of their worſhip; the contentions among them in behalf of their teachers; their prepoſterous uſe of the gift of tongues proceeding from vanity and oſtentation; the unaccountable conceits of others, who depended upon an empty faith without works, and a ſpeculative knowledge without a ſuitable practice, referred to in the epiſtles of St. James and St. John. Upon the whole, it ſeems moſt evident from the facts related in this hiſtory of what ſeems diſadvantageous to Chriſt himſelf, what was ſo to the writers themſelves, and the firſt Chriſtians; that thoſe perſons from whom we have received theſe accounts, had a very particular regard to truth, and preferred its intereſt before all ſelfiſh conſiderations.

7 The remarkable plainneſs and ſimplicity of the narration is another argument, and internal character of the credibility of the hiſtory. Matters of fact, all related without any remarks of the writers. There is, as one obſerves,* 'No preparation of events; there are no artful 'tranſitions or connections; no ſet character of perſons 'to be introduced; no reflections on paſt actions, nor 'the authors of them; no excuſes or apologies for ſuch 'things as a writer might probably foreſee would ſhock 'and diſturb his readers; no coloured artifices or arguments 'to ſet off a doubtful action, and reconcile it to ſome other, 'or the character of the perſon that did it.' Thus far this author. How ſimple and plain, how free from all pomp and oſtentation is the beginning of every goſpel. The writer enters immediately upon the matters of fact he has to relate, without any laboured introduction, without any attempt to raiſe the expectation, or engage the affections of the reader. If it had been an artificial ſtory, invented and compoſed with deſign,

* Gaſtrel's certainty of the Chriſtian revelation, p. 52.

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we ſhould have many other particulars in it than now there are. They have not ſought out occaſions to enhance their maſter's honour. The former part of his life is almoſt entirely paſt over, and, beſides his miraculous birth, the obeiſance paid him by the wiſe men, and ſome extraordinary circumſtances at the temple at the purification of the virgin, ſcarce any notice of him from that time to his public appearance at about the age of thirty, excepting that one fact of his arguing with the doctors in the temple. Luke ii. 46. Had it been a ſtory forged and contrived, his infancy and youth had not been thus ſlightly paſſed over; we ſhould have had many accounts of wonderful preſervations, and a miraculous providence attending him all along; there would have been related divers omens and preſages of the figure he was afterwards to make in the world; numerous ſpecimens of a pregnant capacity and zeal: whereas the hiſtorians have almoſt immediately entered upon his public appearance; which was what mankind was chiefly concerned in. When they have mentioned the meanneſs of their Lord's circumſtances, or of their own original employment they have added no apology for it, nor concerned themſelves to account for their maſter's choice of ſuch followers; many failings of their number related, but no vindication, apology, or mitigation added; nor have they filled their accounts with tedious complaints of the injuſtice, malice, or unreaſonableneſs of their own, or their maſter's enemies; they have not beſtowed any ſet encomiums upon Chriſt himſelf. The character indeed that reſults from the facts they have mentioned, is the moſt perfect that can be conceived: but yet, here are no hints at the maſterly ſtrokes of his character; no enlarging on the juſtneſs, propriety, aptneſs, beauty of his parables; no enhancing of his miracles from the number, greatneſs of them, or the manner of their performance; but only a plain ſimple narrative of his diſcourſes and behaviour, with the reflections that were made upon him by others, which are likewiſe delivered with a remarkable plainneſs and ſimplicity.

I may have dwelt too long upon theſe two or three particulars; but I own a diſcovery of naked ſimple truth in hiſtory is enchanting. It gives one uncommon delight to obſerve it in any hiſtory, though of no extraordinary importance; one is ſo often diſguſted with that favour

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on the one ſide, ſpite and malice on the other, which do ſo continually occur in the works of the moſt celebrated hiſtorians of all ages and nations, of all ſects and religions. To find it therefore in the moſt early accounts of our religion, is a peculiar ſatisfaction; and though theſe accounts may be deſtitute of ſome ornaments, not altogether inconſiſtent with truth and faithfulneſs, yet they have what illuſtrates and recommends them much more than exactneſs of method, purity of ſtile, the harmony of periods, and the moſt elaborate and finiſhed oratory of ſet ſpeech could ever have done.

There is but this one point of practice I would take this opportunity to recommend to you; and that is, the frequent and diligent reading of the ſcriptures, eſpecially of the New Teſtament; and that you would not read them now and then a chapter; but ſome large portions at a time, when you have leiſure, and find yourſelves diſpoſed for ſerious conſideration, and beſt fitted for making reflections. You might thus for yourſelves make ſuch remarks, whereby you might be charmed with the natural repreſentation of things, the plain ſimplicity of the narration, and be more fully convinced of the credibility of the whole narration, and conſequently be more perſuaded of the truth and divine original of that religion you profeſs, which is the foundation of comfort under the troubles and afflictions you are exerciſed withal in this world, and of the hope you have of happineſs for yourſelves and your friends in the next.

## SERMON VI.

### INTERNAL MARKS OF CREDIBILITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

2 PETER i 16.

*For we have not followed cunningly deviſed fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but were eye-witneſſes of his majeſty.*

We are laying before you the arguments for the truth of our religion; a deſign that needs no apology, and that

that may juſtly be undertaken without any particular provocation. It would be neceſſary and uſeful though there were none that conteſted the truth of it, or that offered any objections againſt it: for every man ought to have grounds for the religious principles he entertains.

Without therefore any harſh reflections upon others, I ſhall calmly proſecute my argument, and proceed to ſet before you ſome farther evidences of the credibility of the goſpel hiſtory, namely, that Jeſus Chriſt dwelt in Judea at the time mentioned in the goſpels, taught in the name of God, wrought many miracles, and foretold many events which afterwards came to paſs, in confirmation of his miſſion from heaven, ſuffered on the croſs, roſe again, and aſcended into heaven, and that the apoſtles and others, by powers derived from him, confirmed his doctrine by many wonderful works, and propagated it in many parts of the world.

If the account we have received of theſe things be credible, we have the higheſt reaſon to believe our religion is true, and of divine original.

I propoſed in a former diſcourſe, you may remember, to conſider the marks and characters there are of truth, in the account we have of theſe things in the books of the New Teſtament.

I have already made conſiderable progreſs in theſe internal teſtimonies, theſe marks and characters of truth, obſervable in the writings of the New Teſtament which render the account we have received highly probable, and ſuch as may be admitted by reaſonable and inquiſitive perſons. Some of them were the juſt and natural repreſentation which is here given of all matters related and treated of, the impartiality of the hiſtory, the plainneſs and ſimplicity of the narration. I ſhall not now ſtay to rehearſe any other particulars than thoſe now mentioned. I may by and by go them all over again, when I ſum up the argument. For the preſent I proceed to what remains.

8. Here are many facts and circumſtances ſet down, ſo that if the relation were not true, they might have been eaſily confuted. This is a good argument of the truth and credibility of any hiſtory, and is very obſervable in this. For men writing a forged and invented ſtory, to have taken this method, had been to expoſe themſelves to an eaſy and certain confutation, and all the reproaches of falſhood

falſhood and impoſture, and would have been declined and avoided by all perſons of an ordinary ſagacity.

The ſcenes of the moſt material actions are not the deſerts of Arabia, or ſome other obſcure and unfrequented places; the time fixed is not ſome diſtant age, nor is the account given obſcure and general.

The facts are related as lately done, ſome of them as tranſacted at Jeruſalem, then under ſubjection to the Roman government, and garriſoned by a band of Roman ſoldiers, others at Ceſarea, others in cities of great reſort in Syria, and other parts: ſo far is the account from being general and obſcure, that here are notes of time, circumſtances of place, names of perſons, occaſion of action, and many other particulars that might facilitate inquiries, and render a detection no difficult matter, if the relation had not been true. Thus, *theſe things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing*, John i. 28.

The chief ſeat of our Saviour's preaching and miracles was Gallilee, and the towns and villages bordering upon the ſea of that name, called likewiſe the ſea of Tiberias: his frequent croſſing of that ſea from one ſide to the other; what things happened on one ſide, what on the other, are for the moſt part ſet down very diſtinctly: and for this reaſon, among others, probably, was this place choſen; that by paſſing over to the other ſide of that water, he could avoid that concourſe of people his miracles might otherwiſe have occaſioned, and which was neceſſary for preventing all umbrage of tumult or diſturbance in the government: and this was a country at no great diſtance from Jeruſalem: from whence the high prieſt and phariſees might eaſily ſend officers to ſee what was done, or was related to have been done there, and might inquire into the truth of matters. This country was likewiſe very near to Ceſarea, at this time the ſeat of the Roman proconſul, and inhabited by great numbers of Jews, as well as Greeks and Syrians: *And they came over unto the other ſide of the ſea into the country of the Gadarenes; and when he was come out of the ſhip, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean ſpirit*, Mark v. 1, 2. Him, our Saviour delivered; after which, upon our Saviour's permiſſion, the evil ſpirits that came out of the man, entered into ſwine feeding there, which ran violently into the ſea: *and when Jeſus was paſſed over again by ſhip unto the other ſide*, ver. 21. he cured the daughter

daughter of one of the rulers of the ſynagogue, Jairus by name.

There are accounts of miracles wrought, in which vaſt numbers were concerned, which muſt render inquiries eaſy. Five thouſand men, beſides women and children, were fed with five loaves and two fiſhes. This was done in a deſart place, belonging to the city Bethſaida. Luke ix. 10, 11.

Our Saviour is ſaid to have been crucified at Jeruſalem, at the time of the paſſover.

The gift of tongues is ſaid to have been beſtowed likewiſe at Jeruſalem, at Pentecoſt; and at theſe two feaſts, it is well known, there uſed to be at that time a reſort of vaſt numbers of people, Jews and proſelytes, to Jeruſalem; not only from all parts of Judea, but alſo from many other countries.

The firſt inſtance of the invitation of a heathen into the religion of Chriſt, was Cornelius, a Roman, an officer at Ceſarea, a conſiderable perſon in a noted city. The mention of ſuch facts as theſe, in this manner, if not true, muſt have laid them open to an eaſy confutation, and all the reproaches of impoſture.

But there are other particulars related, which had a tendency to raiſe reſentment in perſons of figure and power, and, if falſe, muſt ſome of them have expoſed them to puniſhment, without any grounds for pity or juſtification from any. The account given of the perſecution of our Saviour, by the high prieſts and phariſees, is of this nature; and his condemnation by Pilate, governor of Judea: of this kind is the account given of the beheading of John the baptiſt, and the occaſion of it. Mat. xiv. Nor would it have been ſafe to have told ſuch a ſtory as is done, of St. Paul's being ſeized in the temple by a great number of Jews, and carried thence to be ſtoned by them; Acts xxi. of his being taken out of their hands by Lyſias the chief captain; of the Jews that devoted themſelves afterwards, under a curſe, to kill Paul; of Lyſias ſending him afterwards under a guard to Felix, the governor of Ceſarea; Acts xxii. of Paul's preaching before Felix and Druſilla; and that Felix trembled when Paul reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment to come, and that he hoped to have had money given him of Paul, that he might looſe him; and that Felix delivered over Paul to Portius Feſtus, his ſucceſſor, willing to do the Jews a favour; Acts xxiv. 25, 26.

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nor would they have related an appearance of Paul before king Agrippa and Bernice, who came to Ceſarea to ſalute Feſtus; Acts xxv. 13. nor the apology he made for himſelf before them. Such facts as theſe, would never have been mentioned in this manner, if not true. This then is another argument of the credibility of this hiſtory.

9. Another internal teſtimony of the truth of this hiſtory is, the marks of honeſty and integrity of the perſons engaged in the firſt publiſhing the goſpel, and who were the witneſſes of the main facts here related, which appear in the writings of the New Teſtament. Theſe we may learn by nicely obſerving their conduct in the proſecution of this deſign.

There is indeed another way of making out the honeſty of theſe perſons; for the proving of that, and that the goſpel was no invention, or cunningly deviſed fable, as the apoſtle's expreſſion is in the text, but what they were fully perſuaded of in their own minds, we might argue in this manner.

Was it likely, that a few perſons of an obſcure birth in Judea, ſupported by no conſiderable alliances, ſhould entertain a thought of ſubverting the religious worſhip and cuſtoms of their own country, and of the reſt of the world, unleſs they were fully perſuaded they had ſpecial illuminations and extraordinary aſſiſtance from God; and ſhould be ſupported by him with a power of working ſuch miracles as this hiſtory relates they performed? Were they ignorant of the bigotry and ſtiffneſs of their own countrymen, or of the circumſtances of other people in the world, whoſe religions were ſupported by antiquity, great unanimity, by the power of the nations in which they obtained, by the influence and arms of the Roman empire, then ſpread over almoſt all the known parts of the world; all which religions were very inviting and engaging, by the vaſt indulgence they gave to the corrupt inclinations of men? Could they imagine they ſhould be able by mere artifice, or bare force of argument, to propagate a religion entirely new, that would lay a diſgrace on the rites and ceremonies inſtituted by Moſes, as mean and inſignificant, that paid no honour to their temple, or their ſacrifices, or their ſolemn feaſts, and denied altogether the traditions of the elders, for which the Jews had ſo high a veneration: in a word, that retained ſcarce any part or principle of that religion, beſides

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the one article of the one God, that made the heavens and the earth; and that would aſſert the gods of all other countries and people were devils, or ſenſeleſs idols, and repreſent their religious principles and practices as abſolutely abſurd and abominable?

Was it likely that any perſons ſhould, for the ſake of a forgery, run the hazard of all thoſe ſufferings and inconveniences they could not but expect in the proſecution of ſuch a deſign? What could they expect but diſgrace and contempt at leaſt, to be deemed madmen at beſt, that would propagate notions contrary to all the reſt of mankind, perhaps to be treated as ſeditious and turbulent, men that had bad deſigns, contrary to the common belief of the civil conſtitutions of the world? No advantage poſſible to be obtained without great fatigue and many dangers: they muſt encounter the paſſions as well as the ſentiments of mankind. Would any men undergo this for the ſake of a mere invention? What is there ſo taking in being the head of a party? eſpecially, could it be likely that men of a low education, as moſt of theſe perſons were, ſhould be ſeized with this ſort of ambition, and enter on a deſign encumbered with ſo many difficulties? Would they not rather chooſe peace and quietneſs at home, and a competence in the callings they were bred up in? As for Paul in particular, what temptation of gain or honour could he have in this undertaking? Was he not bred up in the moſt honourable and flouriſhing ſect in his own nation, under a maſter of conſiderable reputation, and muſt he not here have the faireſt view of all that could flatter his pride and ambition, if theſe were the principles that governed him?

But in anſwer to all this, it may be ſaid, this does not ſeem very likely. However, it is not impoſſible, and can never be proved, that no men may form projects, which have not at firſt appearance any proſpect of ſucceſs; ſome men are fond of their own ſchemes, and have an high opinion of their own abilities; imagine they can ſurmount very great difficulties, and by addreſs and artifice, break through a great deal of oppoſition. Some have engaged in great and hazardous deſigns, and have ſucceeded beyond what the moſt could have imagined; and the few inſtances there have been of this kind, may give encouragement to others of a bold and preſumptuous imagination.

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As to the mean occupations of moſt of the twelve, ſome ſuch perſons have had high ſpirits, and have been carried by their ambition into vaſt deſigns: as for the pains they muſt take, the fatigues they muſt undergo, many perſons will forego outward eaſe, and ſenſual pleaſure, and be at a great deal of pains to carry a point they have once propoſed to themſelves. As for the ſufferings and inconveniences they run the hazard of, all men do not judge alike of theſe things: the timorous and the daring are very differently affected by them. Some imagine difficulties in every thing; others reckon every thing they have a mind to, eaſy to accompliſh. Some men's ſpirits are ſharpened by the appearance of difficulties, and they are even fond of ſuch undertakings. As to Paul's proſpects of honour and advancement in his own nation and his own ſect, it might be ſo as has been repreſented; but perhaps he had met with ſome check, and his pretenſions were not gratified, and in a diſguſt he might reſolve revenge, and enter into a deſign that ſhould ruin the ſect that had ſhown him unkindneſs. So that a great deal may be ſaid on both ſides, in this general ſpeculation, on the paſſions, intereſts, views, and inclinations of men.

I cannot ſay we need decline this way of arguing as if we had no advantage in it: for certainly, conſidering the ſtate of the world at that time, the circumſtances of Jews and gentiles, the apoſtles muſt have had a very unaccountable turn of mind, and have been very different from the reſt of their ſpecies, if by their own ſkill and contrivance they imagined they could bring any great number of perſons over to their opinions, which were ſingular, and oppoſite to all others; and if they had not entertained hopes of making a conſiderable number of proſelytes, they could not act upon ſecular views and conſiderations. However, at preſent I dont inſiſt upon this; and the courſe of my argument leads me to the other method of ſurveying and examining their conduct, to ſee what marks they give of deſign, what of honeſty and integrity. This ſeems to be more deciſive than the other way. We have, in the writings of the New Teſtament, ſufficient materials to go upon in this inquiry.

That they did not ſet out in this undertaking with ſecular views, and were not actuated by them in the proſecution of it,

it, appears in all the parts of their conduct; they did not aim at pleaſure and eaſe, at wealth or honour.

That they did not ſeek eaſe and bodily pleaſure, appears from the fatigues they underwent, the journeys they took; and that impriſonment, ſtripes, and ſcourging, did not diſcourage them in proſecuting their deſign. But this is ſo evident that it need not be inſiſted on.

And if men propoſe the aggrandizing themſelves by heaping up wealth, or by raiſing to themſelves authority and power, they will often forego and neglect bodily pleaſure: but neither did they ſeek wealth, for they made no profit of the religious inſtructions they gave men, nor of the powers they claimed and put in practice, of healing diſtempers, and removing other bodily inconveniences men laboured under. They freely employed this power on the poor and neceſſitous, ſuch as were able to make no requitals for it; though they were far from being poſſeſſed of any ſuperfluous riches. Peter and John, of mere benevolence healed the lame man that was daily laid at the gate of the temple to aſk alms of them who entered into it: and Peter ſaid unto him, *Silver and gold have I none; but ſuch as I have give I thee: in the name of Jeſus of Nazareth riſe up and walk,* Acts iii. 6. Men that are rich will give any part of their ſubſtance to recover their health, and preſerve life, when under painful and dangerous illneſſes; and any advantages might be made of this power, ſuppoſing it poſſible to be lodged in men of a ſordid ſpirit, or a worldly mind; eſpecially if we conſider that the apoſtles are repreſented, not only as poſſeſſed of the power of healing themſelves, but likewiſe of a capacity of beſtowing gifts of the Holy Ghoſt on others. Selfiſh and covetous perſons would have purchaſed ſuch a gift at any rate: but the apoſtles deteſted ſuch a thing as making profits of this part of their power. They met with temptations of this kind, but rejected them with the utmoſt abhorrence and indignation. When the goſpel had been received by ſome at Samaria, and the apoſtles had conferred ſome gifts on ſome of the converts; *When Simon ſaw that through laying on of the apoſtles' hands the Holy Ghoſt was given, he offered them money, ſaying, give me alſo this power, that on whomſoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghoſt; but Peter ſaid unto him, thy money periſh with thee, becauſe thou haſt thought the gift of God may be purchaſed with money; thou haſt neither part nor lot in this matter,* Acts viii. 18—21.

In divers places where Paul ſpent a conſiderable time in ſowing the ſeed of religious principles, in convincing and teaching, he refuſed all gratuities, though he did, it is true, accept of ſome ſupply from others. *When I was preſent with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man; for that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia ſupplied; and in all things I have kept myſelf from being burdenſome unto you:* 2 Cor. xi. 9. but all this appears, from the expreſſion made uſe of, to have been only a ſupply for the preſent, and what could not laſt long. And it is plain from what St. Luke relates, that during part of his ſtay at Corinth, he worked with his own hands for the gaining what was neceſſary for the ſupport of life: *After theſe things, Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth, and found a certain Jew named Aquila, with his wife Priſcilla; and becauſe he was of the ſame craft he abode with them, and wrought, (for by their occupation they were tent-makers)*, Acts xviii. 1—3. At Theſſalonica likewiſe this was the caſe: for he tells the Theſſalonians: *You remember, brethren, our labour and travel: for labouring night and day, becauſe we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the goſpel of God*, 1 Epiſtle ii. 9. Nor did he ſuffer others to make any conſiderable advantages. *Did I make a gain of you, by any of thoſe whom I ſent unto you? I deſired Titus, and with him I ſent a brother: did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the ſame ſteps?* 2 Cor. xii. 17, 18.

Yea the apoſtle profeſſed himſelf a loſer on the account of this religion, which, whether true or not, might have been known. *Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord, for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Chriſt*, Phil. iii. 8.

It is evident they did not ſeek honour to themſelves, the common charge againſt innovators, the great propenſity, as it is ſuppoſed, of all who affect to be heads of a party. From thoſe that continued their old affection for judaiſm or heatheniſm, they could expect nothing but contempt or averſion—to be thought inconſiderate, miſtaken and deluded wretches, or elſe proud and ſelf-opinionated, perhaps deſigning and wicked. As for them that came over to them entirely, or conceived favour for their doctrine, it is plain they ſought not honour from them; for they refuſed all undue reſpects when offered them. We have an inſtance of this at Lyſtra. Paul and Barnabas cured a man lame from his birth. When

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the people ſaw this, *they lift up their voices, ſaying, the Gods are come down to us in the likeneſs of men.* The prieſt of Jupiter had prepared oxen and garlands, and would have done ſacrifice with the people. It was even dangerous to oppoſe ſuch an attempt of gratitude and reſpect. Yet the apoſtles with the greateſt eagerneſs put by theſe offers, though they could not do it but in a way that muſt lay a diſgrace upon the rites this people were devoted to; *they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, ſirs, why do ye theſe things? We preach unto you that ye turn from theſe vanities, unto the living God. And with theſe ſayings, ſcarce reſtrained they the people, that they had not done ſacrifice unto them,* Acts xiv.

They wrought no miracles in their own name: when they beſtowed any extraordinary kindneſs upon any perſon, they did it in the name of Jeſus Chriſt. And when any were ready to run into a miſtake, and aſcribe to them what did not belong to them, they were careful to rectify ſuch apprehenſions. When the people at Jeruſalem flocked together about Peter and John, upon the cure of the lame man at the gate of the temple, *greatly wondering; when Peter ſaw it,* he ſaid to them, *why marvel ye at this? or why look ye ſo earneſtly upon us; as though, by our own power or holineſs, we had made this man to walk? The God of our fathers hath glorified his Son Jeſus:* the uſe they make of it is, to magnify the goodneſs of God, and the power of Chriſt, and to bring them to true repentance, that they may all ſhare in the favour of God: *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out, when the times of refreſhing ſhall come from the preſence of the Lord,* Acts iii. 19. When Peter was entering in to Cornelius, and he met him, and fell down at his feet and worſhipped him: *Peter took him up, ſaying, ſtand up; I myſelf alſo am a man,* Acts x. 25, 26. They diſclaimed likewiſe all undue reſpects among thoſe that had acknowledged their commiſſion, and received their doctrine. They deteſted all contentions about their own perſons, owned their meanneſs, and referred all to the glory of God. *Now this I ſay, that every one of you ſaith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Chriſt. Is Chriſt divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* 1 Cor. i. 12, 13. They owned their own meanneſs; that God had *choſen the fooliſh things of the world, and weak things, and baſe things of the world*; that he that glorieth might *glory in the Lord,* chap. i. 27, 31. Again, *I was with you in weakneſs*

*and in fear, and my ſpeech was not with enticing words of man's wiſdom, but in demonſtration of the ſpirit, and of power, that your faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God,* chap. ii. 1. *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increaſe. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth: but God that giveth the increaſe.* chap. iii. 5—7. *Theſe things have I in a figure transferred to myſelf, and to Apollos for your ſakes; that you might learn in us, not to think of men above that which is written,* chap. iv. 6. *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy,* 2 Cor. i. 24. *for we preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord; and ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus' ſake,* chap. iv. 5.

I might refer you to the appeals they have made themſelves upon ſome occaſions in behalf of their integrity: ſome of which at leaſt are ſuch as would not have been made, had they not been fully perſuaded of their own ſincerity, and that the perſons to whom they made them, could give no proofs to the contrary, nay, muſt have ſuch evidences of it before them as were undeniable. *For our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our converſation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward,* 2 Cor. i. 12. *But even after that we had ſuffered before, and were ſhamefully entreated at Philippi; we were bold in our God to ſpeak unto you the goſpel of Chriſt,* 1 Theſſ. ii. 2. *Neither at any time uſed we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetouſneſs, God is witneſs. Neither of men ſought we glory, nor of you, nor yet of others,* ver. 5. *Ye are witneſſes, and God alſo, how holily and unblameably we behaved ourſelves among you that believe,* ver. 10. A greater regard may be had to theſe appeals, becauſe there were in moſt of the churches different parties, ſome Judaiſing Chriſtians and their teachers; and if there could have been any exceptions againſt them, it would have been in vain to make them.

But there are ſome other appeals of the apoſtle Paul, which we may certainly lay a great ſtreſs upon, conſidering the occaſion of them, the perſons to whom, and the places in which they were made, and which muſt abſolutely vindicate him in particular from all ſuſpicion of baſeneſs, and from ſelfiſh and worldly views in this deſign of ſpreading the goſpel.

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In Acts xx. 18, 19. is his parting ſpeech to the elders at Epheſus: *Ye know from the time that I came into Aſia, i. e.* that part of Aſia which was then properly called by that name; *after what manner I have been with you at all ſeaſons, ſerving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many fears and temptations.—I have coveted no man's ſilver, or gold, or apparel: yea, you yourſelves know that theſe hands have miniſtered unto my neceſſities, and unto them that were with me,* ver. 33, 34. In Acts xxi, xxii. is an account of the ſeizing of Paul, by a multitude of Jews in the temple at Jeruſalem; of his being taken out of their hands by the chief captain, who came with a band of ſoldiers, and bound him with chains: and when Paul was going up into the caſtle, followed by a great crowd, and had obtained leave to ſpeak to the people, he ſpoke to them in the Hebrew tongue; *Men, brethren, and fathers,—I am verily a man which am a Jew of Tarſus: yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day; and I perſecuted this way unto the death;—as alſo the high prieſt doth bear me witneſs, and all the eſtate of the elders, from whom alſo I received letters, and went unto Damaſcus, to bring them which were there, bound unto Jeruſalem to be puniſhed.* Then he proceeds to relate the extraordinary appearance he ſaw in the way, which was the means of his converſion. Now is it conceivable, that under ſuch circumſtances, when he was in the hands of the chief captain, the people of Jeruſalem incenſed and clamourous againſt him, he ſhould give this account of himſelf, of the name of the perſon by whom he was educated in that city, and who was alſo living at that very time: appeal to the high prieſt himſelf, and the body of the elders, and tell them what was the real cauſe of his converſion; if in all this there had been any falſhood, and if there had been any ill conduct in the former part of his life, for which he had been thrown off by his party, or, if he had met with diſappointment in any pretenſions which might be matter of laſting diſguſt, had it not been eaſy to convict him? and would not a falſhood delivered by him at this time, have been much to his diſadvantage? But nothing of this appears, there was no falſhood in it; they heard him patiently, till in the courſe of his ſpeech, he comes to mention a deſign of God, to ſend him from hence to the gentiles. *They gave him audience to theſe words:* but the bare mention of any favour

of God to the gentiles, threw them into a rage that excluded all thought and conſideration; then they cried out; *Away with ſuch a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he ſhould live.* This was the account he gave of himſelf upon many occaſions; we find it in his ſpeech to Agrippa: *My manner of life from my youth, which was at the firſt among my own nation at Jeruſalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning (if they would teſtify) that after the moſt ſtraiteſt ſect of our religion I lived a phariſee.* See Acts xxiii. 1. Phil. iii. 4, 5. and Gal. i. 13, 14. Theſe are appeals which would not have been made, if they could have been refuted.

It is a ſtrong proof of their integrity, and that they had no ſelfiſh deſigns in ſpreading a new ſet of religious principles, that they did not endeavour to accommodate the principles they delivered as from God, to the corrupt taſte of Jews or Gentiles. It was not a religion made up partly of the one, and partly of the other, modelled and contrived, and adjuſted ſo as to pleaſe all parties. The Jews were implacably incenſed, yet they made no compoſition with them in favour of their temple, their ſacrifices, or their prieſthood. When the Jewiſh converts had a zeal for ſome part of the Moſaic law, and they were ſomewhat indulged as to themſelves, yet they could never lay unneceſſary burdens upon the gentiles, or oblige them to ſubmit to any of the diſtinguiſhing rites of that inſtitution. This was the determination of the apoſtles and elders in a full aſſembly at Jeruſalem. Paul every where declares againſt the neceſſity of circumciſion: and Peter had given his judgment clearly on the ſame ſide, though in a particular inſtance he was guilty in his practice of an improper compliance. As for the gentiles, there was no favour ſhown to any of their gods, or their rites: no indulgence to apply to them as objects of worſhip, or as mediators and interceſſors: but they declared, notwithſtanding the vaſt number of gods which were the objects of general devotion, that there was but one God, and one mediator between God and man: no indulgence to any vicious diſorders, no relaxations of the ſtrictneſs of their rules of life, in behalf of the moſt general cuſtoms, or the ſtrongeſt inclinations: the preaching of the croſs proved a ſcandal (though unjuſtly, and without reaſon) to many, was to the Jews a ſtumbling block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs; yet ſtill they taught Chriſt crucified, as the wiſdom of God, and the power of God. They preached repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt,

Chriſt, to Jews and Gentiles; exhorted the one not to depend upon their privileges, and the others to turn from their vanities to the living and true God.

The freedom they uſed towards thoſe who were converted to Chriſtianity, is another argument of their ſincerity. They connived at no diſorders among them; nor did they uſe flattering words, but charged them to *walk worthy of the Lord, who had called them into his kingdom and glory*, 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21. Blaming even their backwardneſs and ſlow progreſs in Chriſtian knowledge and virtues. *And I, brethren, could not ſpeak unto you as unto ſpiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Chriſt: I have fed you with milk, and not with meat—for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and ſtrife, and diviſions; are ye not carnal, and walk as men. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the firſt principles of the oracles of God, and are become ſuch as have need of milk, and not of ſtrong meat,* 1 Cor. iii. Would any man have talked at this rate, ſpoken in this manner, who was ambitious to be at the head of a numerous party, when the perſons they treat thus, muſt be under very ſtrong temptations from this world, and perhaps ſome likewiſe from their own inclinations, to return to the more ſplendid, and yet more general religions of Judaiſm, or Gentiliſm, which they had lately forſaken?

Laſtly. As to this point, it is a proof they were not influenced by worldly views in this deſign, ſince they perſiſted in it notwithſtanding the very fierce oppoſition they met with from the Jews, and the ſcorn and contempt that was ſhown them by the generality of Heathens: and when in the churches they planted, and among thoſe who had given the moſt favourable reception to them, there were many who received their principles but in part, and did not ſubmit to all their rules of life in their full force; when ſome, who had accompanied them in this work, forſook them, loving this preſent world, others gave way to ſeducers, and denied them that little authority they claimed, which they deſired them to ſhow no other mark of, than by adhering to the principles they had confirmed among them by undeniable evidence; certainly they were animated by other, by higher conſiderations than worldly motives and inducements; for of theſe they met with none; and they muſt have been quite diſcouraged and (for ever) have abandoned their deſign, if they had

not looked more *at the things which are not ſeen, which are eternal, than at the things which are ſeen, which are temporal.*

Theſe are as ſtrong proofs of men's integrity as we can deſire, as convincing as can be given.

10. We may reckon it an argument of the credibility of this account, that the writers of it, and the perſons engaged in the firſt publiſhing the goſpel, and who were the witneſſes of the main facts upon which the whole depends, do appear to be free from enthuſiaſm; that is, they did not believe becauſe they believed, nor act by impulſe and inclination; but they were influenced in their belief and conduct, by reaſon and evidence, not by a ſtrong imagination: their own faith was founded upon evidence and reaſon. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; this declare we unto you,* 1 John i. 1. And what they profeſſed to others, they proved by reaſon and argument. That they were not of an enthuſiaſtic ſpirit, appears in the accounts given in the public preaching of our Saviour. He referred the Jews to the ſcriptures they read daily, and whoſe authority they owned: he appealed to his works. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not,* John x. 37. I might refer you, as a proof of this character, to ſuch exhortations as theſe. *Prove all things, hold faſt that which is good,* 1 Theſſ. v. 21. *Believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits, whether they be of God,* 1 John iv. 1. *Judge ye what I ſay,* 1 Cor. x. 15. Their offering all things to a fair trial and examination.

The full conviction of the apoſtles themſelves, of the divine character of our Saviour, ſeems to be owing to his reſurrection from the dead, and the pouring out of the Holy Ghoſt upon themſelves. And ſtronger evidences could not be given of a commiſſion from heaven.

The ſpeeches we have preſerved in the Acts and in the epiſtles they wrote, are full of reaſons and arguments: ſome points are ſupported by a variety of proofs: you will find a ſtrain of excellent reaſoning in the ſpeeches of Peter, the firſt publiſher of the goſpel, after our Lord's aſcenſion; when, upon the apoſtles' making uſe of a vaſt variety of languages, in the hearing of the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, and of the ſtrangers that were come thither from all parts, at the feaſt of Pentecoſt, ſome wondered, *others ſaid, theſe men are full of new wine: but Peter ſtanding up, ſaid,* among other things,

*theſe*

*theſe are not drunken, as ye ſuppoſe, ſeeing it is but the third hour of the day*, Acts ii. 13—15. or nine in the morning, the time of prayer, to which they generally came faſting. *Ye men of Iſrael, hear theſe words; Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and ſigns, which God did by him in the midſt of you, as ye yourſelves alſo know*, ver. 22. *This Jeſus hath God raiſed up, whereof we all are witneſſes: therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt, he hath ſhed forth this, which ye now ſee and hear*, ver. 32, 33. Are theſe arguments that can be gainſayed? He reminds them of the miracles Chriſt had wrought among them; declares they were witneſſes of his reſurrection, having ſeen and converſed with him ſince his crucifixion and burial; and as a proof of his exaltation by God, appeals to them as witneſſes to what they ſaw and heard, as to the change wrought in themſelves, and the diſcourſes they had heard from them in tongues they had not ſtudied or learned.

See Acts iii. from ver. 2. to the end. iv. 19—29, 31. Peter's ſpeech to Cornelius is of the ſame kind. *That word, you know, which was publiſhed throughout all Judea:—how God anointed Jeſus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghoſt, and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppreſſed of the devil: for God was with him; and we are witneſſes of all things which he did in the land of the Jews, and in Jeruſalem; whom they ſlew and hanged on a tree. Him God raiſed up the third day, and ſhowed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witneſſes,—even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he roſe from the dead; and he commanded us to preach unto the people*, Acts x. 37—42. He refers them to facts, wrought openly, and lately done in all parts of Judea: and as to our Saviour's reſurrection, the apoſtles, and others, who had ſeen him, converſed with him, and to whoſe examination of him, he had offered himſelf, they were certainly competent judges, and ſufficient witneſſes of ſuch a fact.

And I think no one will deny the ſpeech of Peter, in Acts xi. to be full of ſtrong and cogent arguments: when he was come back to Jeruſalem from Cornelius, they who were of the circumciſion, contended with him, ſaying, *Thou wenteſt in to men uncircumciſed, and didſt eat with them*; upon which he related the whole affair to them, gave them an account of the reaſons he had for going to Cornelius, and to baptize him, and at laſt ſhows that he had not acted without good

grounds

grounds in what he had done. *As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, as on us at the beginning.—Forasmuch then as God gave unto them the like gifts that he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life.* A most just conclusion certainly from such premises. In Acts xv. is the same argument or reasoning in the assembly at Jerusalem.

The speech of Paul at Athens is likewise a piece of masterly reasoning, wherein he proves the perfections of the Divine Being, from things visible in the frame of the world; from the powers we ourselves are endowed with, and the benefits men daily receive from him; and proceeds at length to the revelation made to the world by Christ; and exhorts them to repentance, from the consideration of that righteous judgment which should pass upon men by Christ, of which God had given assurance, in that he had raised him from the dead.

And he that considers the other speeches of Paul, may observe they are free from all enthusiasm, suited to the character of the persons he spoke to, and the principles they admitted, before *he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come*, Acts xxiv. 25. Festus indeed told him, upon his finishing his apology made before king Agrippa; *Paul, thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad*, Acts xxvi. 24. But he that considers the speech itself, and the reply he made to Festus, must be sensible what Festus had said arose from prejudice, or great unacquaintedness with some of the matters Paul had treated of. He therefore justly replied to him, 'I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness;' and appeals to king Agrippa, who might be supposed better acquainted with these matters than Festus: 'For the king knows of these things 'before whom I speak; for I am persuaded that none of these 'things are hidden from him: for this thing was not done in 'a corner.'

There are indeed some relations of trances and visions, which may be thought to contradict this representation of the apostles' characters. I will consider a few of them, which I do not select from the rest, as most capable of solution; for as far as I can judge, they are as exceptionable as any that can be instanced in. May not the account given of Peter's trance and vision give just suspicion of his being liable to the impressions

impreſſions of a ſtrong imagination, and to be influenced by them in his conduct; that Peter went up to pray, fell into a trance, ſaw heaven opened, and *a certain veſſel deſcending to him, wherein were all manner of four-footed beaſts, creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, riſe, Peter, kill and eat, but Peter ſaid, not ſo, Lord, for I have not eaten any thing common or unclean. And the voice ſaid unto him, what God hath cleanſed, that call not thou common.* A full reply, I think, may be given to this. Perhaps it is hardly worth obſerving, that this was not in the night time, when the darkneſs of the ſeaſon, the diſpoſition of men's bodies, and ſome common prejudices, render men more ſuſceptible of conceits and impreſſions, or more liable to be deluded by cunning impoſtors; for it happened at the ſixth hour of the day, *i. e.* at noon. He could not well be miſtaken, for the viſion and the voice was repeated thrice: and when he was doubting what this viſion ſhould mean, perſons inquired for him, acquainted him they came from Cornelius, who had been admoniſhed by an angel to ſend for him: when he came thither, he found him in a diſpoſition to receive farther information in matters of religion, and gifts and bleſſings were beſtowed in a viſible manner upon them that attended to him. Such a ſeries of events correſponding to his viſion, might well aſſure him of the reality of his viſion, and the meaning of it; and may fully vindicate the perſon that related this account from all credulity. It is an additional confirmation of the truth and reality of this whole account, that the intent of the viſion, and the uſe made of it, was by no means ſuitable to any preconceived notions we can ſuppoſe to have been in Peter's mind; and therefore nothing but full evidence could incline him to admit the truth of a viſion and voice, that ſent him to perſons uncircumciſed.

The hiſtory of St Paul's converſion is another paſſage that may ſeem to ſavour of enthuſiaſm. But if we carefully examine all the parts and circumſtances of it, I believe we ſhall find it void of all tokens, either of forgery or deluſion; that it could not be a forgery or invention, is evident from the circumſtances ſet forth. It is ſaid to have happened when in company of thoſe that attended him from the high prieſt and elders at Jeruſalem, to put in execution orders for ſeizing perſons at Damaſcus, that had embraced Chriſtianity; it was in the day-time, and it happened upon the road in an open place. That all this was matter of fact, appears in that he boldly told

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this ſtory as the ground of his converſion, without any apprehenſions of confutation: and that the perſons who were with him were ſo ſurpriſed at the light, as to fall to the ground, and to be ſpeechleſs for a time: that blindneſs enſued, and continued upon him for three days; this muſt be known to them that laid their hands on him at Damaſcus. And that he was careful, not to declare any thing more than the truth, appears in that he ſays, They, who were with him, ſaw no man: he does not appeal to them for the truth of any thing more than was before them. The extraordinary light, and a voice, they were witneſs of: but the appearance of Chriſt to him, and the words he ſpoke to him, and his blindneſs afterwards, rely upon his own teſtimony; and, that he was not then himſelf deluded and deceived, appears in that this happened at mid-day; the light was ſo great as to be above the brightneſs of the ſun. A blindneſs continued three days; his cure was wrought by Ananias putting his hand upon him, and declaring that Jeſus, who had appeared to him in the way, had ſent him to reſtore his ſight; whereupon there fell from his eyes as it had been ſcales, and he ſaw. Such an account as this, of an apparition that happened to Paul, not when alone, but in company, and that not in the company of thoſe who were friends, and of the ſame way with him, may well be related by St. Luke without credulity.

*were wrought among you, in all patience, in ſigns and wonders, and mighty deeds.* Our apology for this paſſage, and the apoſtle, would not be complete, if we omitted the manner in which he relates it. He appears to be in pain, and can hardly perſuade himſelf to mention it, as directly relating to himſelf. *I knew a man in Chriſt, above fourteen years ago.* It was not mentioned till a long while after it had happened. He tells us the danger he was in honeſtly of ſome pride and vanity: and we have reaſon to credit what he has here declared, in that he uſes ſo much caution not to ſay any thing poſitively, but what he was certain of; being in doubt whether this was with his ſpirit, or his whole man: *whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth.* Words twice uſed on this account.

And in behalf of theſe paſſages, we may offer this general obſervation; that when men came with a ſet of religious principles, that were beyond all others for their real excellency, their reaſonableneſs, their purity, their tendency to regulate and improve the minds and lives of men, and produced before men's eyes openly works of an extraordinary nature; if they ſhould, upon ſome particular occaſion, relate an account of a viſion, or ſome uncommon appearance, and what was ſaid unto them therein, they would deſerve credit if they were perſons of an unblameable behaviour, if the

grounds in what he had done. *As I began to ſpeak, the Holy Ghoſt fell upon them, as on us at the beginning.—Foraſmuch then as God gave unto them the like gifts that he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; what was I that I could withſtand God? When they heard theſe things, they held their peace, and glorified God, ſaying, then hath God alſo to the gentiles granted repentance unto life.* A moſt juſt concluſion certainly from ſuch premiſes. In Acts xv. is the ſame argument or reaſoning in the aſſembly at Jeruſalem.

The ſpeech of Paul at Athens is likewiſe a piece of maſterly reaſoning, wherein he proves the perfections of the Divine Being, from things viſible in the frame of the world; from the powers we ourſelves are endowed with, and the benefits men daily receive from him; and proceeds at length to the revelation made to the world by Chriſt; and exhorts them to repentance, from the conſideration of that righteous judgment which ſhould paſs upon men by Chriſt, of which God had given aſſurance, in that he had raiſed him from the dead.

And he that conſiders the other ſpeeches of Paul, may obſerve they are free from all enthuſiaſm, ſuited to the character of the perſons he ſpoke to, and the principles they admitted, before *he reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance, and a judgment to come*, Acts xxiv. 25. Feſtus indeed told him, upon his finiſhing his apology made before king Agrippa; *Paul, thou art beſide thyſelf: much learning doth make thee mad*, Acts xxvi. 24. But he that conſiders the ſpeech itſelf, and the reply he made to Feſtus, muſt be ſenſible what Feſtus had ſaid aroſe from prejudice, or great unacquaintedneſs with ſome of the matters Paul had treated of. He therefore juſtly replied to him, 'I am not mad, moſt noble Feſtus, but ſpeak forth the words of truth and ſoberneſs;' and appeals to king Agrippa, who might be ſuppoſed better acquainted with theſe matters than Feſtus: 'For the king knows of theſe things 'before whom I ſpeak; for I am perſuaded that none of theſe 'things are hidden from him: for this thing was not done in 'a corner.'

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The hiſtory of St Paul's converſion is another paſſage that may ſeem to favour of enthuſiaſm. But if we carefully examine all the parts and circumſtances of it, I believe we ſhall find it void of all tokens, either of forgery or deluſion; that it could not be a forgery or invention, is evident from the circumſtances ſet forth. It is ſaid to have happened when in company of thoſe that attended him from the high prieſt and elders at Jeruſalem, to put in execution orders for ſeizing perſons at Damaſcus, that had embraced Chriſtianity; it was in the day-time, and it happened upon the road in an open place. That all this was matter of fact, appears in that he boldly told

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this ſtory as the ground of his converſion, without any apprehenſions of confutation: and that the perſons who were with him were ſo ſurpriſed at the light, as to fall to the ground, and to be ſpeechleſs for a time: that blindneſs enſued, and continued upon him for three days; this muſt be known to them that laid their hands on him at Damaſcus. And that he was careful, not to declare any thing more than the truth, appears in that he ſays, They, who were with him, ſaw no man: he does not appeal to them for the truth of any thing more than was before them. The extraordinary light, and a voice, they were witneſs of: but the appearance of Chriſt to him, and the words he ſpoke to him, and his blindneſs afterwards, rely upon his own teſtimony; and, that he was not then himſelf deluded and deceived, appears in that this happened at mid-day; the light was ſo great as to be above the brightneſs of the ſun. A blindneſs continued three days; his cure was wrought by Ananias putting his hand upon him, and declaring that Jeſus, who had appeared to him in the way, had ſent him to reſtore his ſight; whereupon there fell from his eyes as it had been ſcales, and he ſaw. Such an account as this, of an apparition that happened to Paul, not when alone, but in company, and that not in the company of thoſe who were friends, and of the ſame way with him, may well be related by St. Luke without credulity.

There is one paſſage, which, perhaps, is the hardeſt of all to be accounted for: what Paul has ſaid, of his being taken up into paradiſe, or the third heaven; where he heard unſpeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. However, I think he will be acquitted here, if we conſider the occaſion of mentioning them: namely, the ſubtle methods of deſigning perſons to draw off the Corinthians, whom he had taken a great deal of pains with, from the ſimplicity of the goſpel; their attempt to leſſen him unreaſonably, on account of ſome diſadvantages in his perſon, and his manner of ſpeaking; and poſſibly, becauſe he had not perſonally converſed with Chriſt, as Peter, and the other apoſtles. For this reaſon, he relates this extraordinary favour he had had from God, which he might certainly do if a truth, if he apprehended it might be of uſe to retain the Corinthians in the profeſſion of the purity of the goſpel, though he does not make it the ſole ground of their belief of it, for he refers them in the twelfth verſe of this chapter, as well as in other places, to the miracles he had wrought. *Truly the ſigns of an apoſtle were*

*were wrought among you, in all patience, in ſigns and wonders, and mighty deeds.* Our apology for this paſſage, and the apoſtle, would not be complete, if we omitted the manner in which he relates it. He appears to be in pain, and can hardly perſuade himſelf to mention it, as directly relating to himſelf. *I knew a man in Chriſt, above fourteen years ago.* It was not mentioned till a long while after it had happened. He tells us the danger he was in honeſtly of ſome pride and vanity: and we have reaſon to credit what he has here declared, in that he uſes ſo much caution not to ſay any thing poſitively, but what he was certain of; being in doubt whether this was with his ſpirit, or his whole man: *whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth.* Words twice uſed on this account.

And in behalf of theſe paſſages, we may offer this general obſervation; that when men came with a ſet of religious principles, that were beyond all others for their real excellency, their reaſonableneſs, their purity, their tendency to regulate and improve the minds and lives of men, and produced before men's eyes openly works of an extraordinary nature; if they ſhould, upon ſome particular occaſion, relate an account of a viſion, or ſome uncommon appearance, and what was ſaid unto them therein, they would deſerve credit if they were perſons of an unblameable behaviour, if the principles they taught were pure and holy, and their reaſoning upon all occaſions juſt and good, and they wrought miracles in atteſtation of their miſſion; this may ſecure their credit, and vindicate them from the charge of enthuſiaſm in ſuch particulars as we have now been conſidering, and that they are not under the power of an ungoverned imagination. But all this will be no vindication, or recommendation of others, who pretend to viſions and appearances in behalf of trifles, and who give no ſenſible proofs of a correſpondence between heaven and earth, and who, in their ordinary behaviour, ſhow much greater ſtrength of fancy and imagination, than of reaſon and judgment.

Theſe two laſt particulars may be joined together. We ſuppoſe thoſe matters of fact to be well atteſted, which we receive from perſons of honeſt hearts and ſound underſtandings.

11. That the apoſtles wrought miracles, and conferred extraordinary gifts upon many others, is apparent from their epiſtles, written and directed to thoſe who had ſeen theſe works, and ſhared in theſe benefits. Theſe epiſtles of Paul, and the other epiſtles in the

the New Teſtament, have all the tokens of genuine letters: all except one or two have the name of the perſons that wrote them. Here is the name of the perſon or church, and place to which they were ſent; ſalutations of particular perſons ſent to others by name. Here are references to the particular occaſion of writing them. The ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians has reſpect to the ſucceſs and acceptance of a former letter ſent to them: in ſome, queſtions are anſwered, that are ſuppoſed to have been ſent to the writer for ſolution; ſo that there can be no doubt of their having been really ſent to the churches and perſons they are directed to. I inſiſt only on the marks and characters in theſe epiſtles themſelves, that may aſſure us they are genuine; for I am upon internal teſtimonies only. Now, in theſe epiſtles, the writers take notice of the miracles that they or others had wrought among them, to whom theſe very letters were ſent. *Truly the ſigns of an apoſtle were wrought among you in all patience, in ſigns and wonders, and mighty deeds*, 2 Cor. xii. 12. *He therefore that miniſtereth to you the ſpirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Gal. iii. 5. *For our goſpel came not unto you in word only, but alſo in power, and in the Holy Ghoſt*, 1 Theſſ. i. 5. *God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will*, Heb. ii. 4. The writer doth not labour in the proof of theſe things, he ſuppoſes them well known; he ſuſpects no doubt but they were convinced theſe works had been done among them: the thing he is ſolicitous about is, that they would act ſuitably; and in conſequence of ſuch proofs, that they would be ſteadfaſt in the profeſſion of principles recommended by ſuch teſtimonials; that they would not be moved by the artifices of perſons who could not produce ſuch works. And if we conſider this, that there were ſome diviſions in the churches; that there were ſome perſons who were undermining the intereſt of the apoſtles among them, and endeavouring to overturn the work the apoſtles had begun; we can never imagine they would have expreſſed themſelves thus, but that they knew the perſons they wrote to had a conviction of the truth of what was written. Epiſtles are not treatiſes or hiſtories, ſent abroad to acquaint men of what they had not heard before: nor do theſe epiſtles tell them of wonders wrought in other churches; but, they contain references to works wrought among them, to whom they were ſent.

Yet,

Yet, here is ſomewhat more in theſe epiſtles. Here are reproofs of the miſmanagement of gifts they were themſelves poſſeſſed of: directions given about the better uſe and employment of them. Can this argument of their truth be any way evaded? *I thank my God always on your behalf, that in every thing you are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge,* 1 Cor. i. 4, 5. *Therefore, as you abound in every thing, in faith, in utterance, in knowledge,* 2 Cor. viii. 7. *This only would I know, received ye the ſpirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Gal. iii. 2. In the xii. xiii. xiv. chapters of the firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, are reckoned up divers ſorts of gifts eminent among them; not all indeed beſtowed upon one perſon; but ſome upon one, ſome upon another; though it ſhould ſeem the apoſtles, and perhaps ſome others, had all, or moſt of them. He argues, that as theſe were all derived from one and the ſame ſpirit, into one body, they were not to foment any diviſions on the account of theſe things; and he that had a more ſplendid gift, was not to deſpiſe another who had not one ſo conſpicuous and remarkable; even as in the body, there are members more honourable, others leſs honourable; but all uſeful and neceſſary: they are exhorted ſeriouſly not to value themſelves too much upon theſe gifts; but though it was a privilege to enjoy them, and they were valuable and deſirable, yet they ſhould rather aim to excel in love and charity, and other internal diſpoſitions: *But the manifeſtation of the ſpirit is given to every man to profit withal: to one is given by the ſpirit the word of wiſdom; to another, the word of knowledge, by the ſame ſpirit; to another, the gifts of healing; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, the diſcerning of ſpirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues,* 1 Cor. xii. 7—11. *God hath ſet ſome in the church, firſt apoſtles, ſecondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diverſities of tongues: are all apoſtles? are all prophets? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all ſpeak with tongues? do all interpret?—Covet earneſtly the beſt gifts: and yet ſhow I unto you a more excellent way,* ver. 28—31. *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they ſhall fail; whether there be tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; whether there be knowledge, it ſhall vaniſh away,* ch. xiii. 8. *I would that ye all ſpake with tongues, but rather that ye propheſied: for greater is he that propheſieth, than he that ſpeaketh with tongues, except he interpret*

*interpret that the church may receive edifying*, ch. xiv. 5. *Let all things be done to edifying*, ver. 26. *If any man ſpeak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the moſt by three, and that by courſe, and let one interpret*, ver. 27. Almoſt the whole xiv. chapter relates to this one point. If there were no ſuch gifts among them, would they have been cautioned not to over-value them? If one had not one gift which another wanted, could there have been advices not to deſpiſe another who had not ſo remarkable and ſplendid a gift? If there had not been ſome diſorderly uſe of prophecy, and the gift of tongues, would there have been ſo many directions earneſtly urged upon them concerning the right and prudent uſe of them? Could they tell themſelves whether they had received ſuch gifts or not; and did not they know, whether others among them ſhowed ſuch gifts or not, or practiſed ſuch powers? If theſe things had not been thus, would this method of argument have recommended the perſons, or the doctrine of the apoſtles to them, who were declining from both; would it not have expoſed both to contempt and ridicule? There were then certainly ſupernatural and uncommon gifts beſtowed on the apoſtles, and the firſt converts to Chriſtianity, which were teſtimonies of a divine commiſſion from heaven.

12. I ſhall mention but one particular more. It appears from the books of the New Teſtament, that we have the concurring teſtimony of divers perſons. For the hiſtory of our Saviour's preaching and miracles, has the name of four different writers; and the authors of the epiſtles make references to many of the facts ſet forth. The difference of ſtyle, manner of expreſſion, method and way of arguing upon ſome facts, ſufficiently aſſure us they did not all come from one hand; nay, the omiſſions of ſome things in one goſpel, mentioned by another: the different order in which matters are related; the ſeeming contrarieties in ſome leſſer matters may ſatisfy us that the three former evangeliſts, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are three independent witneſſes; as for St. John, indeed there are reaſons to ſuppoſe he was acquainted with, and had ſeen the other goſpels, before he wrote his. The ſmaller differences in ſome circumſtances of little or no moment, are ſo far from rendering the whole leſs credible, that they really add ſtrength to it, by preventing all ſuſpicion of concert. The agreement is, upon the whole, ſo great, that it is hardly poſſible for four perſons to write a hiſtory of ſo many conſiderable things; to deliver an account

account of ſo many diſcourſes, parables delivered on various occaſions, ſo many miracles, ſo many precepts, rules, reflections, as the hiſtory of our Saviour contains, with a greater harmony and agreement than is here done, unleſs they had met together, or correſponded together for the performance of the work; and as it appears from the difference before-mentioned, there was no concert, ſo far from being a diminution, they are a confirmation of their truth and credibility. The deſign and tendency of the apoſtles preaching, is conformable to the doctrine delivered by our Saviour in his life-time, in the main: he did not indeed addreſs himſelf to Gentiles, in his ordinary preaching, it is true. When he ſent forth the twelve in his life-time, he commanded them, ſaying, *Go not into the way of the Gentiles; and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael,* Matt. x. 5, 6. whereas the apoſtles did after his aſcenſion preach to Gentiles as well as Jews, and aſſerted that they might be ſaved as well as the Jews. But the directions he gave them at firſt, it is plain, were not intended to be always binding. He gave ſufficient hints in his diſcourſes of this event in his life-time, in ſome diſcourſes, made in the hearing of the phariſees, and ſcribes, and others, as far as he thought proper at that time, and as they were able to bear it: he ſpoke very plainly to the woman of Samaria, when he told her, *the hour cometh, when ye ſhall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jeruſalem, worſhip the Father,* John iv. 21. and that the true worſhippers of God, who ſerve him in ſpirit and in truth, in whatever place they called upon him, would be accepted of him; and before he aſcended he gave them orders to teach all nations: *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt,* Matt. xxviii. 19.

Theſe are all the particulars I ſhall produce on the internal credibility of this goſpel hiſtory, the marks and characters of truth obſervable in the books of the New Neſtament. The points I have mentioned are, 1. Theſe books bear the names of particular perſons, except only the epiſtle to the Hebrews. 2. They are written in a language and ſtyle ſuited to the character of the perſons whoſe names they bear. 3. Here are characters and notes of times, as, that ſuch a thing happened when Herod was king of Judea, or when Pilate was governor. 4. The deſign of this hiſtory, and of the firſt preaching of the goſpel, has nothing in it that ſhould tempt men to forgery and invention. 5. We find here a juſt and natural repre-

ſentation of matters, with all the appearances of likelihood and probability. 6. The impartiality of this hiſtory is another mark of its truth: many things are mentioned to appearance, and in the eye of the world diſadvantageous to Chriſt: many things to appearance, and others in reality, diſadvantageous to the firſt diſciples, and firſt publiſhers of the goſpel: and many diſorders and miſcarriages of the firſt converts to Chriſtianity. 7. The remarkable plainneſs and ſimplicity of the narration. 8. Here are many facts and circumſtances related in a manner that they might eaſily be confuted if not true. 9. Here are evident marks of the honeſty and integrity of the perſons engaged in the firſt publiſhing of the goſpel, who were the witneſſes of the main facts here related, and on which the truth of the goſpel depends. 10. Likewiſe that they were not perſons of enthuſiaſtic principles. 11. That miracles were wrought, and extraordinary gifts conferred upon many perſons, appears from directions given in letters to perſons ſuppoſed to have themſelves ſeen theſe works, and ſhared in theſe benefits. 12. It appears from the books themſelves, that here is a harmony and agreement in theſe facts between divers independent witneſſes, who did not write in concert and correſpondence together.

Theſe particulars are ſufficient for the making out this argument, and to ſatisfy us that theſe writers have all the characters of truth and probability, which any hiſtory can have. Perhaps no hiſtory beſides has them all in ſo eminent agreement: ſcarce any facts whatſoever are ſo well ſupported: and if they are true, we have the higheſt reaſon to reſt aſſured our religion is true, and came from God.

This was what I was to prove; and if, in proſecution of this argument, in which I have made numerous references to paſſages of the ſacred ſcriptures, I have illuſtrated any paſſage of ſcripture, or if any thing that has been here ſaid, may ſerve to raiſe your attention to the writings of the New Teſtament, or to direct you in the making farther remarks in the courſe of your private reading; then another valuable end has likewiſe been anſwered.

And ſhall we leave this religion; Chriſt, who has the words of eternal life? Shall we exchange the certain proofs of a future life, for the uncertain obſcure arguments of immortality in Plato and Cicero?

SERMON

# SERMON VII.

## THE MODERATION OF CHRISTIANS TO BE KNOWN TO ALL MEN.

PHILIPP. iv. 5.

*Let your moderation be known unto all men.*

THIS direction being near the end of St. Paul's epiſtles, where are divers exhortations put down without any very nice and exact connection with each other; the coherence may not afford much light for ſettling the preciſe meaning.

I therefore immediately proceed to conſider the meaning of the word moderation. And in the next place (which will be the principal ſubject of our diſcourſe) I would ſhow, what is implied in this exhortation, as addreſſed to Chriſtians, that their *moderation ſhould be known unto all men.*

I. In the firſt place we will conſider, what is the meaning of the word *moderation.* And though the coherence alone may not be ſufficient to determine the preciſe meaning, yet it is not fit that we ſhould quite overlook it. *I beſeech Euodias, and beſeech Syntyche, that they be of the ſame mind in the Lord. And I entreat thee alſo, true yoke-fellow, help thoſe women which laboured with me in the goſpel, with Clement alſo, and with other my fellow-labourers, whoſe names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again, I ſay, rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand: be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known unto God.*

In our language, the word *moderation* may denote moderate affections for worldly things, and contentedneſs of mind with a ſmall portion of the good things of this life, and ſatisfaction in a low, or middling ſtation, or whatever the condition be which we are in, without aſpiring after great things.

But that is not the direct intention of the apoſtle here. And there are ſome other places where the original word is uſed, which will lead us to the proper meaning of it.

Tertullus pleading in behalf of the Jews againſt Paul, entreats the attention of the governor in this manner, as in our tranſlation: *I pray thee, that thou wouldſt hear us of thy clemency, a few words*; Acts xxiv. 4. Where the original word for *clemency* is the ſame, which here in the text is rendered *moderation*: and therefore we are led hereby to underſtand mildneſs, equity. Again: *Now I Paul beſeech you by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt*, 2 Cor. x. 1.

That therefore is the ſenſe, in which we are to take the word in this place. It is equivalent to mildneſs, equity, gentleneſs: and, it is eaſy to be perceived, this virtue has ſome reſpect to offences and injuries, or to ſuch perſons and things as are ſome way offenſive and provoking.

II. In the ſecond place we ſhould conſider what is implied in this direction, or exhortation, as given to Chriſtians.—*Let your moderation be known unto all men.*

They will, I apprehend, fulfil and obey this precept, if their moderation, that is, their mildneſs, be conſpicuous, eminent and remarkable.

And it may be ſuppoſed that the moderation, or the mildneſs, the equity, the gentleneſs of any men will be conſpicuous and well known in the world, if it appear in their conduct toward many perſons, upon a variety of occaſions, in different circumſtances, and if it be general among them: not in ſome few only, but in many, in all, or moſt of them.

1. The mildneſs of any body of men, or of Chriſtians, will be conſpicuous and well known, if it appear in their conduct toward many perſons.

Divers particulars do here offer themſelves to our obſervation: for we may ſoon perceive ſeveral branches of this virtue particularly recommended by Paul in his epiſtles.

And doubtleſs, one inſtance of mildneſs, meekneſs and patience, is carrying it well toward thoſe that differ from us, and treat us as enemies, or in an unkind and unfriendly manner. As a learned interpreter ſays, the apoſtle here conſiders the Philippians as in a ſtate of perſecution: to which ſtate gentleneſs or meekneſs is peculiarly ſuited: and therefore the meaning of this exhortation is, 'However you ſuffer, let 'your moderation and gentleneſs be conſpicuous to all men, 'and particularly to thoſe at whoſe hands you ſuffer.' Or, as another writer paraphraſeth the text, with its ſubſequent motive to obedience: 'Be not rigorous in inſiſting upon

'your

'your utmoſt right, nor impatient in ſuffering wrong; but 'let your temper and compoſure of mind be manifeſt to all 'ſorts of people, and upon all occaſions. For conſider 'that the judge is not far off, who will certainly make you 'amends for all your condeſcenſions, and reward all your 'patience.'

It is very likely that this is one thing here particularly intended by St. Paul, and indeed, it is what muſt tend to render men's mildneſs well known and conſpicuous in the world: if they behave and carry it well under ſufferings, or toward thoſe who are injurious to them, and are the inſtruments of their ſufferings: when they forbear opprobrious and abuſive language, and keep their temper, and behave decently toward all men ſuitably to their ſeveral characters; whether magiſtrates, and others of ſuperior rank, or toward thoſe of mean condition: when they can expreſs good will toward thoſe who perſecute them for innocent opinions, which they think they have good reaſon to believe and profeſs.

If men, inſtead of allowing themſelves the liberty of reproachful language and loud and clamorous complaints upon ſuch occaſions, do with evident tokens of ſincerity expreſs their good will toward thoſe who evil entreat them, praying that they may be convinced of their miſtake, and that the favours of Providence may be poured down upon them; this is a very laudable and amiable behaviour.

Farther, men's moderation will be eminent and conſpicuous, if under ſuch ſufferings they ſhow mildneſs and equity toward their enemies and perſecutors of all ſorts. We can take hard uſage better of ſome than of others. The ſame treatment is more offenſive and provoking in one man than in another. It might be more grievous and afflictive to the Chriſtians in the time of the apoſtles, to ſuffer perſecution from the Jews than from the Gentiles. With the former they agreed in many points. They worſhipped the ſame God. They received their ancient ſcriptures; and believed in him whom their prophets foretold: whilſt the Gentiles knew not God: and the gods they worſhipped were eſteemed by the Chriſtians as well as the Jews to be no gods, but idols and vanities; and one great deſign of their religion was, to detect the falſhood and abſurdity of all idolatrous worſhip, and overthrow it.

It may be alſo more grievous and offenſive to be perſecuted by former friends, and the members of our own family. And to be mild and patient under injuries from them, will ſhow great moderation.

Another branch of moderation toward ſuch as differ from us is, mildneſs and gentleneſs in all debates and arguments for the truth of our religion: which we find recommended in the writings of Chriſt's apoſtles. Says St. Peter: *But ſanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you, with meekneſs and fear,* 1 Ep. iii. 15. That direction ſeems to be addreſſed to Chriſtians in general. St. Paul ſpeaking more eſpecially of thoſe who are in the miniſterial office, ſays: *And the ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth,* 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

Whether it be any juſt ground of offence, that others differ from us or not; yet men are apt too often to take it amiſs, that others differ from them, and yield not to the force of thoſe arguments, which convince and ſatisfy themſelves. It is therefore a branch of mildneſs, and very laudable, to bear patiently with thoſe who differ from us in point of religion, and calmly to propoſe our beſt arguments, and be willing to renew thoſe methods of conviction, which hitherto have been ineffectual.

Moreover, knowledge, or the opinion of it, puffeth up. The bare knowledge of ſome truths, which others are ignorant of, is made the ground of a haughty and inſolent behaviour. The Jewiſh people ſcorned ſubjection to heathen magiſtrates; and there was danger, that Chriſtians would follow their example. Some Chriſtian ſervants were ready to deſpiſe their heathen maſters; which is the reaſon of divers exhortations in the apoſtolical epiſtles. *Put them in mind to be ſubject to principalities and powers, to obey magiſtrates, to be ready to every good work: to ſpeak evil of no man, to be gentle, ſhowing all meekneſs unto all men. For we ourſelves alſo were ſometime fooliſh, diſobedient,* Titus iii. 1—3. *Servants, obey in all things your maſters, according to the fleſh,* Col. iii. 22. *Servants, be obedient unto them which are your maſters, according to the fleſh, with fear and trembling, in ſingleneſs of heart, as unto Chriſt,* Eph. vi. 5.

It

It is alſo a part of gentleneſs to do good to all men in diſtreſs, whether agreeing in ſentiment with us, or not: conſidering them as ſharers with us in the ſame human nature, though they do not partake in the ſame ſpiritual privileges with ourſelves. As St. Paul's directions are: *And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men; eſpecially unto them who are of the houſhold of faith*, Gal. vi. 9, 10.

This is one branch of moderation, equity and mildneſs; to carry it well toward enemies, and thoſe who are of other ſentiments in things of a religious nature, and do good to them if they are in any reſpect indigent and neceſſitous.

There are other branches of moderation and equity relating to thoſe who are of the ſame religion with us: who believe in one God, as we do, and are ſervants and followers of one Lord, even Jeſus Chriſt. *Give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God*, 1 Cor. x. 32.

The equity and moderation to be practiſed by the ſtrong and weak Chriſtians, one toward another, is a point largely and particularly treated by the apoſtle in the fourteenth and fifteenth to the Romans, and in ſome chapters of his epiſtles to the Corinthians. *Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful diſputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth deſpiſe him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth*, Rom. xiv. 1—3. This is mildneſs, this is moderation in matters of ſmall moment.

There is another branch of mildneſs recommended by St. Paul, to be practiſed upon occaſion of ſome falls, or actions plainly contrary to the chriſtian doctrine and profeſſion. Such perſons, if they are not hardened, are to be treated with gentleneſs. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs; conſidering thyſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted*, Gal. vi. 1. *If any man obey not our word by this epiſtle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be aſhamed—Yet count him not as an enemy, but admoniſh him as a brother*, 2 Theſſ. iii. 14, 15.

And the Corinthians, who had offended ſo greatly, the apoſtle directs to be received and comforted upon repent-

ance. *Sufficient to ſuch a man is this puniſhment, which was inflicted of many. So that ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, leſt ſuch an one ſhould be ſwallowed up with overmuch ſorrow,* 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7.

There is a mildneſs to be ſhown to our brethren from whom we receive ſome injuries, or who are defective in ſome regards due to us. *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another: if any man have a quarrel againſt any. Even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo do ye,* Col. iii. 13.

And to the Corinthians St. Paul writes in this manner: *Is it ſo, that there is not a wiſe man among you, no not one that ſhall be able to judge between his brethren? For brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, becauſe ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather ſuffer yourſelves to be defrauded?* 1 Ep. vi. 5—7. Such inſtances as theſe there are of moderation and mildneſs toward one another, or our Chriſtian friends and brethren.

Carrying it well toward each other, notwithſtanding a different ſentiment and practice in matters of leſſer moment:

In caſe of falls, or tranſgreſſions againſt plain precepts of the goſpel, and the juſt rules of all true religion; receiving ſuch upon repentance.

Reproving and admoniſhing thoſe who offend, in ſome inſtances with mildneſs:

Gentleneſs toward thoſe who offend, or are defective in their behaviour toward us:

And ſubmitting to ſome loſs and damage, if it be of no great conſequence; without occaſioning a great deal of diſturbance about ſmall matters.

And that is one thing included in this direction: moderation toward many perſons; and perſons of different characters and relations to us: thoſe who are not of the ſame religion, and on that account are, in ſome reſpect, our enemies, and averſe to us: and to thoſe who are of the ſame religious ſentiments in the main.

2. Another thing included in this direction may be, practiſing moderation upon a great variety of occaſions. Indeed this has been already ſhown under the former particular; for I have mentioned various inſtances of mildneſs, both toward unbelivers and to believers.

But all occaſions for the practiſing of equity can ſcarce be enumerated; however, a man of a mild and equitable principle will

will be ready to ſhow it, when the circumſtances of things require it: he will be ſlow to wrath, backward to judge and cenſure: he will remember the Lord's command; *Judge not, that ye be not judged:* and St. Paul's direction; *Judge nothing before the time:* he will not be over-ready to receive charges againſt any, or credit diſadvantageous reports and ſurmiſes. Equitable perſons have alſo a reſpect to the ſtations and characters of men, agreeably to that direction of St. Paul to Timothy, *Againſt an elder receive not an accuſation but before two or three witneſſes,* 1 Ep. v. 19. This is another thing included in this direction: Let your moderation be known unto all men, ſhow it, and practiſe it upon many occaſions.

3. Show moderation in every circumſtance; not only when you are in adverſity and affliction, but alſo when you are in proſperity and honour: not only when you are few in number, and weak in compariſon of others who differ from you, but when you are in power and are the moſt in number. If in change of circumſtances you are not changed, nor your outward conduct altered, it will appear, that your minds are governed by ſome reaſonable principle of action: but if men who were once, to appearance, meek and quiet under afflictions, become arrogant and impoſing, upon their being exalted, their former ſubmiſſion and peaceableneſs will be imputed to fear and an abject mind; not unto mildneſs of temper, or a ſerious regard to the rule of right.

And as change of circumſtance for the better is very apt to affect men's minds; good men need directions and cautions in ſuch a caſe. The gentiles who received the word of the goſpel from the apoſtles of Chriſt, were doubtleſs at firſt much pleaſed with the kind regard ſhown them, and thankful for the privileges vouchſafed them: but yet, when their numbers increaſed, and their freedom from the law of Moſes was better eſtabliſhed, they ſoon began to ſhow ſome tokens of ſcorn and diſdain that were not becoming. St. Paul perceived it, though himſelf the apoſtle of the gentiles, and the great patron of their liberty; and therefore inſerted that argument in the epiſtle to the Romans: *And if ſome of the branches be broken off, and thou a wild olive wert grafted in among them,—boaſt not againſt the branches; but if thou boaſt, thou beareſt not the root, but the root thee.—Be not high minded, but fear,* Rom. xi. 17, 18, 20.

4. The

4. The moderation or mildneſs of Chriſtians, or any other people, will be conſpicuous and known to all men, when it is a prevailing temper, and is general among them; in men of every relation, and every condition.

When they who teach the principles of religion, ſtrive not to act with a high hand, and advance their authority; but recommend and enforce their doctrine and their admonitions by reaſons and arguments; and renew and repeat their inſtructions for the ſake of thoſe who are not ſo tractable, or ſo acute and ready as others: labour, both in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon; behave not as lords of other men's faith, but helpers of their joy, and their ſervants for Chriſt's ſake, to aſſiſt their proficiency in knowledge and virtue; and as St. Peter's expreſſions are *not as lord's over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock*, 1 Ep. v. 3. and when they who are inſtructed and taught, ſuffer the word of exhortation, conſidering that they who act faithfully in their office of teaching others, *watch over their ſouls, as they that muſt give account*; and are deſirous *that they may do it with joy, and not with grief*, Heb. xiii. 17. for that would not be profitable for any.

And St. Paul directs the Corinthians with regard to Timothy, though young and unexperienced, or not equally experienced with ſome of greater age: *See that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I alſo do: let no man therefore deſpiſe him*, 1 Cor. xvi. 10. It may be a branch of equity to eſteem ſome men *highly in love for their work's ſake*, 1 Theſſ. v. 13. without indulging too nice a taſte, and cenſorious critical remarks upon every performance.

In like manner with regard to ſome private relations: it will tend to render men's moderation and mildneſs conſpicuous in the world, when it is generally practiſed among them: when parents endeavour to bring up their children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, without provoking them to wrath*, Ep. vi. 4. and when children cheerfully acknowledge the juſt authority of parents, and obey them in all things, ſo far as can be done with a good conſcience: and when others, intruſted with the education and care of inſpecting young perſons, break not their tender ſpirits by unreaſonable harſhneſs and ſeverity, but excite and encourage them by reaſon, good words, and kind uſage: and they of younger years ſhow themſelves ſome indication

indication of their being ſenſible a regard and reſpect is due to thoſe who inſtil knowledge into their minds, and appear to be concerned to lay the foundation of their future welfare and proſperity in ſoul and body.

When maſters give unto their ſervants that which is juſt and equal, forbear threatening; and when ſervants anſwer not again, and are faithful and diligent in the ſervice, not only of thoſe maſters who are exceeding good and tender, but even of thoſe likewiſe who at ſome times are froward and ſevere.

When, finally, men of every condition, high and low, thoſe who have fewer advantages of reading and obſervation, as well as others learned, knowing, and acquainted with the world; when even theſe alſo join in approving moderation and equity, and can ſay ſomething in favour of the ſeveral branches of moderation before-mentioned, with regard to men of different ſentiments, or to thoſe who fall and offend, or are injurious in ſome inſtances; as, that there is between all men a parity or equality of nature: that we are all weak and fallible: that Jeſus Chriſt our Lord bid us not to judge, leſt we be judged: that our Lord graciouſly received Peter and the other apoſtles, though in the time of his great temptation they were offended in him: that the Chriſtian religion was at firſt propounded and ſpread in the world, upon the ground of reaſon and evidence, without human power and authority: and that they apprehend the ſetting before men the evidences of its truth, which appear in the New Teſtament, will be the moſt effectual way to advance the true intereſt of religion. That Chriſt ſaid, *his kingdom is not of this world:* and that he bid his diſciples to conſider themſelves as brethren, and not to exalt themſelves one above another: that in the New Teſtament men are directed to try or prove all things, which muſt ſuppoſe a right to judge upon evidence, as things appear to men, after ſerious and impartial examination and conſideration.

Theſe are particulars, by which the moderation of any ſect, or body of men will become conſpicuous, and known to all men: when they ſhow moderation and equity to many perſons, upon various occaſions, in different circumſtances, and when it is a prevailing general virtue among them.

Let me add a few remarks.

1. Chriſtians

1. Chriſtians have the moſt forcible arguments and inducements, and the beſt aſſiſtances of any men, for the practice of moderation, mildneſs and equity. Foraſmuch as they have had experience of the mercies of God, and Chriſt Jeſus, in forgiving them, and ſhowing toward them great mildneſs, tenderneſs and equity: they have alſo been taught to love one another, and all men, ſo as no other men have been taught: and the principles of love will mightily diſpoſe to mildneſs and gentleneſs; for *love ſuffereth long, and is kind; it is not eaſily provoked, is not puffed up; it beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things,* 1 Cor. xiii. moreover, they know and expect the righteous judgment of God, *who will render to every one according to his work.* The Lord is at hand, and will do right to thoſe who are injured: and the virtue of thoſe who ſuffer patiently, and endure according to the will of God, ſhall be fully rewarded. The obſerving the rule immediately preceding this text, will be of uſe here: *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I ſay rejoice.* If men are well pleaſed with themſelves, and are eaſy in their own minds, and have cauſe to rejoice in God, as their defence and portion, few things can happen, that will tranſport them beyond the bounds of moderation and equity.

2. The practice of mildneſs and moderation does not imply an approbation of any thing that is evil, any more than the long-ſuffering and forbearance which God exerciſes toward ſinners, ought to be underſtood to countenance, and be an approbation of their evil ways. But this is a ſtate of trial, not of judgment or retribution: and as the divine long-ſuffering is deſigned to afford men an opportunity, and to lead them to repentance, ſo the mildneſs practiſed by men one toward another, will conduce to the peace of ſociety, the preſent welfare of particular perſons, and will be an excellent means of reclaiming men from errors, both in judgment and practice.

3. We may hence infer, that moderation will be for the honour, intereſt, and advantage of the Chriſtian religion. I ſay, that from this direction of the apoſtle, we may reaſonably conclude, that mildneſs, or moderation, or equity among Chriſtians, will be to the honour of their religion; otherwiſe, certainly the apoſtle had not directed Chriſtians, to *let* their *moderation be known to all men.* Some might poſſibly be apt to think that rigour, harſhneſs, ſeverity,

ſeverity, might be more uſeful than moderation and mildneſs. But ſince, as before obſerved, mildneſs toward men is not an approbation of any thing that is wrong; and men may be differently treated, according to their different conduct; [they who are unruly, are to be warned; and ſtill ſome may be reproved with authority] moderation or mildneſs, in the ſeveral inſtances above-named, will not be hurtful, but advantageous.

If any men, any ſocieties or bodies of men, are remarkable for mildneſs and moderation towards one another, and other men, it will conduce to their honour and intereſt; others will be invited and induced to join themſelves to them, and take upon themſelves the obſervation of the mild rules of virtue taught by them, joined with much meekneſs, moderation, and forbearance toward thoſe unruly, diſobedient, and miſled upon many occaſions.

And indeed, we may be aſſured, that moderation or mildneſs is a great virtue; it being often commanded and enforced under many other words in the writings of the apoſtles, beſides thoſe which have been quoted in the ſeveral parts of this diſcourſe. *For the fruit of the ſpirit is love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, meekneſs,* Gal. v. 22. And St. James ſays, *The wiſdom that is from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy,* James iii. 17.

## SERMON VIII.

### ON KEEPING THE HEART.

PROV. iv. 23.

*Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the iſſues of life.*

THE aphoriſms and maxims, counſels and directions of this book of Proverbs, are oftentimes put down, without any dependence on each other, or particular regard to the order of things: in this chapter there is a connection; and the precepts here delivered, recommend themſelves to our attention

attention and regard, not only by their internal worth, and real uſefulneſs, but alſo by the order in which they are placed, and the full and copious manner in which the argument is treated.

To obſerve only the latter part of the chapter, from ver. 20 to the end. Firſt, there is a very earneſt and affectionate call to men, eſpecially the younger, carefully to attend to, and keep the advices delivered; aſſuring them, that they are things of the greateſt uſe and importance; which earneſtly proceeds from a full perſuaſion of the truth and worth of the things ſaid, an apprehenſion that thoſe to whom they are offered, are too apt to neglect them, or too liable to be miſled after all; and from an ardent deſire of the welfare of thoſe who are addreſſed to. *My ſon, attend to my words, incline thine ear unto my ſayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes: keep them in the midſt of thine heart; for they are life unto thoſe that find them, and health to all their fleſh*, ver. 20—22. As if he ſaid, 'I muſt again once more repeat my requeſt, that 'you will take heed to my advice, and ſeriouſly conſider 'theſe exhortations which proceed from a ſincere affection 'for your welfare. Peruſe them over and over, keep 'them perpetually in mind, and lay them up in your 'memory as a precious treaſure. For they will contribute 'greatly to the happineſs of all who become thoroughly 'acquainted with them: they will be of uſe to men of every 'temper, and in every condition; and prove an admirable 'ſupport under troubles and afflictions.'[a]

Then follows a methodical monition, conſiſting of ſeveral parts; firſt, directing the government of the heart, or the mind, and its powers; then the lips and eyes, and the feet.

Ver. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the iſſues of life.* That is, the counſels I give you are ſuch as theſe: in the firſt place, and above all things, ſet a ſtrict guard upon your thoughts and affections, and all the inward motions of your ſoul; for the good or bad conduct of life depends very much upon this, and conſequently your welfare or miſery, here and hereafter.

Ver. 24. *Put away from thee a froward mouth: and perverſe lips put far from thee.* Avoid ſinful words, and be upon your guard not to tranſgreſs with your lips: for as ſome

[a] See Patrick.

interpreter

interpreters [a] ſuppoſe, here is a twofold admonition; not to ſin with the tongue ourſelves, nor to hearken to the evil ſpeeches of others. 'Set a watch upon thy ears, 'and upon thy mouth; nor ſpeak things contrary to truth, 'righteouſneſs, or religion; not liſtening to thoſe that 'do, but baniſhing ſuch as far as poſſible, from all friend-'ſhip and familiarity.'

Ver. 25. *Let thine eyes look right on: and let thine eye-lids look ſtraight before thee.* That is, as ſome paraphraſe and explain theſe words: [b] 'Direct all thine actions by a good intention 'to a right end, and keep thy mind fixed upon the way 'that leads to it.' Or, as others: [c] 'The eyes alſo are 'dangerous inlets to the heart: therefore watch them well, 'that they do not gaze about, and faſten upon every object 'that invites them: but let them be fixed upon one ſcope, 'as thy thoughts ought to be, and from which let nothing 'divert them.'

Ver. 26. *Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be eſtabliſhed.* Act not without thought and conſideration; but weigh and conſider well before-hand, eſpecially in things of any moment, or that are liable to doubt and ſuſpicion, whether they are agreeable to the rule of right: then thy works and actions will be ſuch as will bear to be canvaſſed and examined: you will be able to reflect upon them with pleaſure afterwards, and they will alſo be approved by others that are wiſe and virtuous.

Ver. 27. *Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil:* hereby many underſtand to be meant: 'Flee extremes: avoid ſuperſtition on the one hand, and neglect of religion on the other:' but it ſeems to me, that the direction may be as well underſtood to contain an admonition to ſteadineſs in religion and virtue: 'And 'do not ſuffer yourſelves to be drawn aſide from the path 'of virtue, or to divert at all upon any conſideration from 'the ſtrait line of duty: let no conſideration whatever, 'neither enticements of friends, or provocations of enemies, 'proſperous or croſs events, move you to depart at all 'from the way of your duty; and moſt ſtudiouſly preſerve 'yourſelves from doing any kind of iniquity.'

So is this context.

[a] Patrick. [b] Pool. [c] Patrick.

Our

Our deſign at preſent is, to conſider the leading direction in this exhortation, *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the iſſues of life.* And I ſhall ſpeak briefly to the ſeveral particulars in the text.

I ſhall conſider,

I. What is meant by the heart.

II. What we are to underſtand by keeping it.

III. The manner in which the heart ought to be kept: *with all diligence.*

IV. The argument and reaſon why we ought ſo to keep the heart: *out of it are the iſſues of life.*

To which I ſhall add:

V. A reflection or two by way of application.

I. We ſhould briefly obſerve what is meant by the heart. But it is needleſs to enlarge here, or to take notice of the ſeveral more particular ſenſes and acceptations of the word in ſcripture: where it may ſometimes denote the underſtanding more eſpecially; as when it is ſaid, *their fooliſh heart was darkened*, Rom. i. 21. or the *memory*; as when the Pſalmiſt ſays, *Thy word have I hid in mine heart*, Pſ. cxix. 11. or the *conſcience*; *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*, 1 John iii. 20. But the more common and general ſenſe of the word is, the *mind*, the *ſoul*; and ſo theſe texts juſt mentioned are alſo underſtood.

I ſuppoſe then that here, as very frequently in the metaphorical ſtyle of ſcripture, the *heart* is put for the *ſoul*, or the *inward man*, the ſoul and its faculties: or, the *mind*, together with all its powers and faculties, and their ſeveral operations; or the thoughts, affections, intentions, and deſigns of man.

II. The ſecond thing to be conſidered is, what we are to underſtand by *keeping the heart.* And this expreſſion is ſuppoſed by many to be metaphorical: keep thy heart, as a temple, ſay ſome, pure and undefiled. Or, keep thy heart, ſay others, as a garriſon: the ſoul being, as it were, beſieged by many enemies. Some alſo carry on the metaphor in the other directions that follow, relating to the mouth, the eyes, the feet; and they ſay, 'As they that 'defend a city, ſet a ſtrong guard at the gates and poſterns; 'ſo do you upon your ears, and mouth, and eyes.' But I apprehend, we are not obliged to attend to ſuch a metaphor here. The word *keeping* ſeems to denote all that can be meant by a due care of the mind, and its actions or thoughts:

thoughts: *keep thy heart*; obſerve it, cultivate and improve it; watch it, and attend to all its motions; guard againſt every evil thought, as well as againſt evil actions: and employ and exerciſe the mind well.

This I take to be the general meaning and deſign of the expreſſion, *keep thy heart*. Let me mention ſome particulars, as contained and implied herein.

1. Keep, or take care of thy heart: that is, that you cultivate and improve it, and that you have right ſentiments of things. It is an obſervation of the ſame wiſe man, whoſe words we are commenting, *That the ſoul be without knowledge, it is not good*, Prov. xix. 2. There is a woe pronounced againſt thoſe *that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs: that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter*, Iſai. v. 20. It is one great and main deſign of the teachings and inſtructions of the prophets and the wiſe men under the Old Teſtament, to give them right ſentiments concerning religion: to help them to know and underſtand what is good and what is evil, and what God moſt approves of, and delights in: that though he had enjoined for wiſe reaſons, upon the people under his ſpecial care at that time, numerous external waſhings, purifications, and various ſacrifices and offerings at the temple; that, nevertheleſs, truth and righteouſneſs in their dealings with one another, and a ſerious awful apprehenſion of the Divine Majeſty, the former of all things, and ſentiments of love and gratitude to him for all his benefits, were the moſt valuable parts and branches, and acts of religion. *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah vi. 8. *For I deſired mercy, and not ſacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings*, Hoſea vi. 6. And there are very frequent and earneſt exhortations to ſeek religious knowledge: there are many ſuch in this book of Proverbs. *Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wiſe; and apply thine heart unto my knowledge*, ch. xxii. 17. *That thy truſt may be in the Lord, I have made known unto thee this day, even unto thee. Have not I written unto thee excellent things in counſel and knowledge? that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth: that thou mighteſt anſwer the words of truth, to them that ſend unto thee?* ver. 19—21. This knowledge is excellent and uſeful: to know the differences of things: what God moſt approves of:

of: to have right apprehenſions of the greatneſs, goodneſs, truth, and faithfulneſs, and purity of God. That he is a God over all gods, the former of all things, the governor of the world, able and willing to reward them that diligently ſeek him: and that bleſſed are all they that ſerve him, and put their truſt in him.

2. Another thing implied in keeping the heart, or in the care of the mind, here recommended, is, to form fixed purpoſes and reſolutions of acting according to the rule of right. The firſt care is, that the mind be well informed: ſecondly, that it be well reſolved. We are to ſee, that we not only know what is good, and refuſe the evil: but we are to chooſe the one, and reſolve to avoid the other. *My ſon, give me thy heart*, Pr. xxiii. 26. And this is the deſign of the exhortation at the beginning of this chapter, to determine men to the choice of religion and her ways. *Get wiſdom, get underſtanding—forſake her not, and ſhe ſhall preſerve thee: love her, and ſhe ſhall keep thee: exalt her, and ſhe ſhall promote thee: ſhe ſhall bring thee to honour, when thou doſt embrace her.* And Pſalm cxix. 30. *I have choſen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God*, ver. 115. There ſhould be a fixed and determined purpoſe of mind, to avoid all known ſin, and perform all known duty, and to reſiſt temptations when they aſſault us. The way of religion ſhould be our willing choice, conſidering its excellence, and the advantages that attend it: and becauſe of the deceitfulneſs of our hearts, and the face and danger of external temptations, our reſolutions ſhould be very explicit and firm. Pſalm cxix. 106. *I have ſworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.* Pſalm xvii. 3. *Thou haſt proved mine heart; thou haſt viſited me in the night; thou haſt tried me, and ſhalt find nothing: I am purpoſed, that my mouth ſhall not tranſgreſs.*

3. In this keeping the heart is implied a direction to govern the affections. As the judgment ſhould be well informed; and the will rightly fixed and determined: ſo alſo the affections ſhould be well ordered and governed.

Particularly, our deſires and averſions, our joy and grief, our hopes and fears, our love and hatred.

(1.) Our deſires and averſions. They ſhould be well regulated. The higheſt eſteem ſhould be placed upon thoſe things that are moſt valuable in themſelves, and moſt important.

Take

Take care that you eſteem and deſire ſpiritual and heavenly things, more than worldly and earthly things, that are but temporal. Saith St. John, *Love not the world: neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world paſſeth away, and the luſt thereof. But he that doth the will of God abideth for ever*, 1 Ep. ii. 15, 16. We ſhould therefore deſire to ſecure a treaſure in heaven and an intereſt in a future happineſs, above all earthly poſſeſſions and advantages.

(2.) Our joy and grief. The good order of theſe affections will follow upon that of the two other, if we are more deſirous of, more ſolicitous for, ſpiritual and heavenly things: if they have our firſt and higheſt eſteem, our joy and ſatisfaction on account of proſperity and ſucceſs in the purſuit of earthly advantages will be moderate: and our grief and concern under afflictions and loſſes, relating to this life, will not be exceſſive, but within due bounds.

(3.) Our hopes and fears ought alſo to be regulated. Our chief dependence ſhould be on God, not on man. Our truſt and hope ſhould be placed in God, not in creatures. He is infinitely more able, and more equitable than men; and therefore in him we ſhould confide, and make it our chief care to pleaſe him, and approve ourſelves to him. In his favour is life, and his loving-kindneſs is better than life. He can beſtow a better, and more durable happineſs than this world affords: and he will not fail them that truſt him according to the directions of his word, and that ſerve him in the way of his commandments.

Our fears likewiſe are to be regulated. We are to fear God more than men. This is of importance to right conduct. If men, who had power and influence, did always encourage virtue, and require nothing but what is fit to be done: if their will and pleaſure were always reaſonable; then we ſhould have no occaſion to fear them, whilſt we do well. But as the ſincere profeſſion of truth is often diſcountenanced by the powers of this world; and the will of God only is always right; there is need we ſhould be upon our guard againſt an undue fear of men. Our Lord therefore cautioned his diſciples againſt the fear of men, whoſe power reached not beyond this life: and rather to fear him who is able to deſtroy

both ſoul and body, and aſſign them to everlaſting pain and miſery.

(4.) We ought alſo to regulate our love and hatred: I mean now chiefly with regard to our fellow-creatures: our approbation and diſlike; our favour or diſpleaſure: that we cheriſh benevolence, inward good-will; and do not admit groundleſs reſentment and anger, or indulge exceſſive or laſting diſpleaſure. As Solomon ſays: *He that is ſlow to anger, is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his ſpirit, than he that taketh a city*, Prov. xvi. 32.

This is another thing implied in keeping the heart; governing the affections: particularly, our deſires and averſions, joy and grief, hopes and fears, love and hatred.

4. Another thing that may be intended in keeping the heart is, planting and cheriſhing in the mind good principles and diſpoſitions, and cleanſing it from all contrary evil diſpoſitions and propenſities. Particularly, it is of importance, that we root out pride, and high conceit of ourſelves; inward contempt and diſdain of other men: and that we cultivate humility of mind; meekneſs of temper: we ſhould likewiſe be concerned to improve in a religious awe and apprehenſion of the Divine Majeſty, and take care to be in the fear of God all the day long, and all the days of our life. For the fear of the Lord is the beginning, the ſource, and principle of wiſdom. We ſhould alſo cheriſh a faith in inviſible things, which will be a great ſecurity of every virtue, and encourage a right conduct.

5. And laſtly, by keeping the heart may be meant and intended, a due care and concern that the mind be well employed.

There muſt be a guard ſet upon the acts, or operations of the mind: and the thoughts ſhould be exerciſed on fit objects. Vain thoughts ſhould not lodge within us: no evil thoughts ſhould be indulged and cheriſhed. The mind ſhould be employed and taken up, not in things uſeleſs and inſignificant; but much about things profitable and important: we ſhould contemplate the works of God; meditate on his word, conſider our ways, reflect upon ourſelves, confirm our reſolutions of virtue, and our abhorrence of evil; form good deſigns, and think and contrive how we may beſt bring them to paſs. We ſhould frequently aſcend in acts of humble, believing, grateful devotions to God.

That

That is the second thing, what it is to *keep the heart*. 1. It implies a taking care, that the mind be furnished with necessary knowledge, and just sentiments of things concerning good and evil. 2. To keep the heart, implies a concern to form fixed purposes and resolutions to act according to the rule of right. 3. It implies the government and regulation of the affections. 4. Implanting and cherishing good dispositions, and rooting out those that are evil and sinful. 5. It implies a care, that the mind be well employed.

III. The next thing observable in the words is, the manner in which the heart ought to be kept: *with all diligence*: literally, according to the Hebrew, *with all keeping*. The connection, which was shown before, helps us to understand distinctly and clearly the design of this expression in this exhortation. This is the first counsel: then follow those before taken notice of, and briefly paraphrased. *Put away from thee a froward mouth: let thine eyes look right on:* and *ponder the path of thy feet:* that is, care ought to be taken of these; that we sin not with our lips, and that our actions are righteous and virtuous. But the first and chief care ought to be about the heart: the mind, and its inward operations: *Keep thy heart with all diligence.*

IV. The fourth particular observable in the words is, the argument and motive, so *to keep the heart:* it is taken from the importance of so doing: *Out of it are the issues of life.* Our good, or our bad conduct, and the consequences of each depend hereupon. As the heart is, so is the man: so will be the words and actions. The streams must partake of the qualities of the fountain. Or, as our blessed Lord says: *A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit: for every tree is known by its fruit.—A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, that which is evil; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, Luke vi. 43—45. And to the like purpose in Matthew xii. 33—35. Again, *Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites: for ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter; but within they are full of extortion and excess*, Matt. xxiii. 25, 26. You aim at a fair outward appearance, by observing those acts of devotion, and that zeal for the temple, that is taking among men; without aiming at virtuous habits, and consequently are defective in acts of justice and goodness. *Thou blind pharisee! cleanse first that*

*which is within the cup, and the platter; that the outſide of them may be clean alſo.* Firſt cleanſe your heart, and cultivate the ſincere upright diſpoſition of mind; and your life will be an uniform pattern of virtue, conſiſting in a devout and fervent worſhip of God, and works of righteouſneſs and goodneſs among men: which will be really worthy and valuable; truly becoming, acceptable and agreeable.

This is the argument, to keep the heart with all diligence: *Out of it are the iſſues of life:* the words and actions depend hereupon. If the heart be quite neglected, the life will be very irregular: if the heart be well kept, cultivated, obſerved, and watched, your life will be excellent and commendable:

Moreover, the different conſequences of good and bad conduct, as already hinted, depend hereupon. You cannot otherwiſe approve yourſelves to God, but muſt be rejected by him, who ſees and knows the heart, as well as the outward actions.

I have now explained the ſeveral parts of the text. I have ſhown what is here meant by the heart. Wherein keeping it conſiſts. The manner in which it ought to be kept. The importance of ſo doing: or the arguments and motives ſo to keep it.

V. I ſhall conclude with two reflections only, in the way of application.

1. We hence perceive, that true religion, even under the ancient diſpenſation, did not conſiſt only in external worſhip, and good actions, but alſo in pious diſpoſitions of the mind. Indeed the laws of Moſes, being many of them civil and political, are very much concerned about words only, and external actions: and many men were too apt to content themſelves with a fair, outward, and viſible appearance in the eye of men, and ſome tolerable regularity of outward actions and behaviour. But it is certain, they were obliged to more than this; and good men obſerved their thoughts as well as their actions. And the wiſe, and thoſe who were favoured with a prophetical gift or commiſſion, faithfully repreſented to men the extent, purity, and perfection of the divine law. Of a good man it is ſaid: *The law of his God is in his heart*, Pſ. xxxvii. 31. And the Pſalmiſt prays, that God would *incline his heart unto his teſtimonies*, and *not to covetouſneſs*, Pſ. cxix. 36. Again: *Let my heart be ſound in thy ſtatutes*, ver. 80. Men were reminded by the prophets, that *the Lord ſearches the heart, and tries the reins, even to give*

*to*

*to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings*, Jer. xvii. 10. And they were called upon to *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace*, Pſ. xxxvii. 37.

2. Let us attend to this counſel of Solomon, and the importance of it. And do we not ſee one great reaſon of the many defects and errors of our conduct? that we do not keep our heart with all diligence. We have too much neglected that which is a principal point: conſidering that God equally knows all things, we ought to be equally concerned about our thoughts, and our outward actions. But there is alſo another reaſon for a ſtrict care of the heart; that ſo much depends upon it. Uniform virtue and eminence therein, will never be attained without it. We ſhall alſo, for want of this care, be very liable to be ſurpriſed into ſin many ways. Is not this the occaſion of many of our failings? that the inward principle of faith in God is weak, and fear of men prevailing. The love of this world is unſubdued: and our affections are not ſet on things above, as they ſhould be, but rather on things of this earth. How can it be expected we ſhould be prepared for temptations, if we do not carefully keep our heart? No wonder,' that we often tranſgreſs with our lips, or that imprudences, failings, and even greater faults, appear in our behaviour, if we do not watch our hearts. It is very likely, that there will be many bad conſequences of this neglect: we ſhall be oftentimes unſatisfied and diſcontented with our condition, poſſibly without any reaſon. We ſhall greatly miſbehave under afflictions; proſperity will be very dangerous: and the offences and provocations we meet with from men, will mightily diſconcert us, and occaſion undue reſentment and diſpleaſure.

If we are ſenſible of a defect this way: let us be, for the future, more frequent in meditation and conſideration: let us be more careful of our inward temper, and the frame of our heart: let us diligently cultivate right ſentiments, holy reſolutions, and good habits of the mind: let us learn the regulation and government of our affections, and how to employ our thoughts upon profitable ſubjects. It is a thing of great importance. Diligence herein will be very advantageous; and negligence very prejudicial and detrimental in the end. *Keep* then *thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the iſſues of life.*

END OF POSTHUMOUS SERMONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

# TWO SCHEMES OF A TRINITY CONSIDERED, AND THE DIVINE UNITY ASSERTED.

## Four Diſcourſes upon PHILIP. ii. 5—11.

Acts ii. 22. *Ye men of Iſrael hear theſe words; Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God, among you, by miracles, and wonders, and ſigns, which God did by him in the midſt of you, as ye yourſelves alſo know.* Chap. v. 31. *Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Iſrael, and forgiveneſs of ſins.* Chap. x. 37, 38. *That word you know, which was publiſhed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptiſm which John preached: how God anointed, &c.*

[FIRST PUBLISHED IN MDCCLXXXIV.]

## THE EDITOR'S ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Editor of the following Diſcourſes accounts it no ſmall happineſs, that, by a late favourable accident, he has it in his power to preſent them to the public. They ſhow themſelves to have been part of a courſe of miniſterial ſervices; and a memorandum, under the author's own hand, makes it probable that they were delivered from the pulpit, to a very reſpectable ſociety of Chriſtians, ſo long ago as the year 1747.

The name of the author, as he himſelf did not place it there, is not given in the title page. An omiſſion, which the judicious reader, it is ſuppoſed, will reckon to be of no great moment. And reſpecting the author himſelf, it may be moſt truly obſerved, that he was always far from affecting, in any degree, the character or influence of a Rabbi, or dogmatical teacher; and could not at any time wiſh his name,—however juſtly endeared to many of his cotemporaries, or ſure to go down with diſtinguiſhed eſteem and honour to lateſt poſterity,—ſhould be accounted of the leaſt weight, in the balance of reaſon, on any argument excepting that of teſtimony. He has now been ſeveral years removed from our world. But, as the controverſy, to which theſe diſcourſes have reſpect, does ſtill ſurvive, and will, probably, be yet of long continuance, it cannot but be deſirable to all good minds that the largeſt portion of his excellent ſpirit may be retained among

among us, communicated, and diffuſed: in order that controverſies of this nature, for the future, may be carried on, as our moſt candid author has expreſſed it, 'without detriment either to truth or piety.'

It may, however, be apprehended, that to the curious and attentive readers, who have been happily led into a previous acquaintance with his other valuable and moſt important works, theſe diſcourſes will ſoon make a pleaſing diſcovery of their author. And all ſuch readers, there is no doubt, will be glad to receive the following declaration concerning them, though anonymous.

They are here given, with a moſt ſtrict care and fidelity, agreeable to the author's own manuſcript, which he had drawn out fair for the preſs, with particular directions deſigned for the printer. And any ſmall additions, which a caſual overſight ſeemed to make requiſite, are diſtinguiſhed by being incloſed in brackets thus: [ ]

Any attempt of the editor, to recommend ſuch diſcourſes as deſerving the attention of the public, could not well be exempted from a charge of officiouſneſs. They are, therefore, cheerfully left to ſpeak for themſelves.

All Chriſtians are agreed that the ſubjects, of which they treat, are very weighty: and eccleſiaſtical hiſtory too ſadly ſhows in what manner the contentions about them have been agitated.

Whatever may be the iſſue of the arguments ſuggeſted,—with reſpect to the meaſure of conviction they ſhall produce in favour of any particular doctrine,—if the temper, with which they are propoſed, ſhould prove ſufficiently attractive to engage a general imitation, and excite a prevailing diligence to maintain and cultivate it, on all ſides, the apparent chief deſign of the author, and moſt fervent wiſhes of the editor, will have their beſt accompliſhment.

MAIDSTONE, AUGUST 1, 1784.

DISCOURSE

# DISCOURSE I.

## PHILIP. ii. 5—11.

*Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himſelf of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of men. And being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs. Wherefore God alſo has highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name. That at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

In theſe verſes we have at large the apoſtle's argument to the meekneſs and condeſcenſion before recommended: taken from the example of Chriſt's humility, and his exaltation, as a reward of it.

Within the compaſs of a few months I have delivered two practical diſcourſes from the fifth verſe of this chapter, explaining the duty of mutual condeſcenſion and forbearance, and enforcing it from the example and the reward of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

But now I am deſirous to explain in a more critical manner the words which have been read to you.

I ſhall be hereby unavoidably led into ſomewhat controverſial: but I hope it will be alſo practical, and not unprofitable; were it only inſtructive to ſome who are not thoroughly acquainted with ſome controverted points, which yet are thought to be of much moment. Indeed if people will decide in points of any kind, it is fit they ſhould know and underſtand what they affirm; eſpecially, if they take upon them to paſs ſentences upon thoſe who differ from them. This needs no proof. Certainly no honeſt and upright man would willingly form a wrong judgment in any caſe; eſpecially in ſuch a caſe as this, where, if he be ignorant, he may paſs ſentence upon himſelf. I fear this is no uncommon thing. One cannot be diſpoſed to inſult any man's ignorance. But when cenſoriouſneſs is joined therewith, and it becomes troubleſome to others, it will be remarked. I think I have met with ſome good people who have ſeverely condemned Arians, and yet were

not

not orthodox themſelves. And if they could have been perſuaded to explain their own notion, it would have appeared that they were in the Arian ſcheme, or very near it. But they were too poſitive, and too well ſatisfied of being in the right, to hear any argument from thoſe who would have debated with them, and led them into the merits of the controverſy.

Diſputes about the perſon of Chriſt, and the doctrine of the Trinity, as is well known, have been exceedingly prejudicial to the Chriſtian cauſe and intereſt: and chiefly ſo, becauſe thoſe diſputes have been managed with too much heat: and contending parties, on both ſides, have not been contented to diſpute and argue, and then leave it to every one to determine conſcientiouſly according to the beſt of his own judgment; but would impoſe their own ſenſe. And if they had the authority, and civil power on their ſide, would require men under heavy pains and loſſes to profeſs, in word or writing, an aſſent to their opinion, whether convinced or not. Whereas ſerious and impartial, free and patient inquiries and debates, might have been inſtructive, and let in light: and different ſentiments have been allowed without detriment either to truth or piety.

I hope we may now have an example of this kind: and that all will hear with patience an argument, which is intended to be propoſed with mildneſs, though with plainneſs, free from all reſerve and diſguiſe.

In order to underſtand this text, and to give free ſcope to every one to judge of its deſign, according to ſeveral apprehenſions concerning the perſon of Chriſt, it will be needful to conſider the ſeveral ſchemes of divines relating to the doctrine of the Trinity. For, as Chriſtians among us have before them, beſide what is ſaid in the ſcriptures, divers determinations upon the doctrine of the Trinity, in catechiſms, articles, and liturgies, they will apply thoſe determinations to this, and other texts of ſcripture.

I have therefore thought that no method will more directly lead to a clear judgment in this point, than to propoſe and conſider the common ſchemes or ways of thinking of the Deity, which obtain among the profeſſed diſciples and followers of Jeſus.

The firſt ſhall be that which is reckoned the commonly received ſcheme, and called orthodox and catholic.

In

In the Aſſembly's catechiſm it is ſaid: 'There are three 'perſons in the godhead, the Father, the Son, and the 'Holy Ghoſt; the ſame in ſubſtance, equal in power and 'glory.'

The firſt article of the Church of England is: 'There is 'but one living and true God, everlaſting, without body, 'parts or paſſions, of infinite power, wiſdom and goodneſs, 'the maker and preſerver of all things both viſible and in-'viſible. And in the unity of this godhead there be three 'perſons, of one ſubſtance, power and eternity, the Father, 'the Son, and the holy Ghoſt.'

Here, certainly, ariſeth a difficulty. How are we to underſtand theſe expreſſions? And how are they underſtood by thoſe who uſe them, and approve of them, and aſſent to them, as right? *One God, three perſons, the ſame in ſubſtance, equal in power and glory: or of one ſubſtance, power and eternity.* Is it hereby meant, that there are three really diſtinct minds, or intelligent agents? So we might be apt to conclude from the uſe of the word *perſon*, and ſaying, that *theſe three are equal.*

Nevertheleſs there are two different ſentiments among thoſe who are called orthodox. Some believe three diſtinct perſons or beings, of the ſame ſubſtance or eſſence in kind: as three men are diſtinct, but are of the ſame kind of ſubſtance. Others do not underſtand the word *perſon* in the common acceptation. They believe only a modal diſtinction. They openly ſay, that in diſcourſing on the myſtery of the Trinity, they do not uſe the word *perſon* in what is now the common meaning of that word. We might be diſpoſed to think that theſe went into the Sabellian ſcheme, which holds one perſon only in the Deity, under three different denominations. But yet they deny it, and diſclaim Sabellianiſm, and ſpeak of it as a very pernicious opinion. They ſay, that though the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, are not three diſtinct beings, or individuals, there is a diſtinction, which may be repreſented by that of three perſons.

Here then are two different opinions among thoſe who paſs for orthodox.

And which is right? that is, which of theſe is the prevailing and generally received opinion? I anſwer the latter; [or the opinion of thoſe] who hold only a modal diſtinction in the Trinity. This appears to me evident from what is called the

Athanaſian

Athanaſian Creed,* which is always allowed by thoſe who bear the denomination of orthodox, to be the ſtandard of the true doctrine of the Trinity. It is to this purpoſe: 'The 'catholic faith is this; that we worſhip one God in Trinity— 'Trinity in Unity: neither confounding the perſons, nor 'dividing the ſubſtance. For there is one perſon of the Fa- 'ther, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghoſt. 'But the godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy 'Ghoſt, is all one, the glory equal, the majeſty coeternal. 'Such as the Father is, ſuch is the Son, and ſuch is the Holy 'Ghoſt.—The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy 'Ghoſt eternal. And yet there are not three eternals, but 'one eternal. As alſo there are not three incomprehenſibles 'nor three uncreated, but one uncreated, and one incompre- 'henſible. So likewiſe the Father is almighty, the Son 'almighty, and the Holy Ghoſt almighty. And yet there 'are not three almighties, but one almighty. So the Father is 'God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghoſt is God. And 'yet there are not three Gods, but one God.'

According to this creed, there are *not three eternals, but one eternal, not three almighties, but one almighty.* So this ſeems to me. However, let every man judge for himſelf. And let every man who thinks himſelf orthodox, examine himſelf by this creed; whether he be ſo, or not. For it is not impoſſible that many well meaning people, of lower rank, may believe a real Trinity of diſtinct intelligent beings. Yea it is likely, that this is indeed the firm belief and perſuaſion of great numbers of the vulgar ſort among Chriſtians. It may be alſo the ſentiment of ſome, who make no ſmall figure in the learned world.

Nevertheleſs, I do not think that to be what is called the commonly received doctrine of the church. This appears to me evident from the forecited creed.

Before we proceed to apply this doctrine to the words of the text, it may be proper to obſerve ſtill more diſtinctly the received doctrine concerning the Son. The ſecond article of the Church of England is thus. 'The Son, which is the

* I ſay called the Athanaſian Creed, for it is now generally allowed by learned men, that it is not the work of the celebrated Athanaſius, biſhop of Alexandria, who flouriſhed in the fourth century, but of ſome other perſon long after his time. Nor is it certainly known by whom it was compoſed. For proof of this I refer to the Benedictine edition of Athanaſius's works, tom. II. p. 715, &c.

'word

'word of the Father, begotten from everlaſting of the Fa-
'ther, the very and eternal God, of one ſubſtance with the
'Father took man's nature in the womb of the bleſſed virgin,
'of her ſubſtance: ſo that two whole and perfect natures,
'that is, the godhead and manhood were joined together in one
'perſon, never to be divided. Whereof is one Chriſt, very God
'and very man; who truly ſuffered, was dead and buried.'

I have taken the words of that article, that I may be ſure to avoid all miſrepreſentation, and that there may be no ſuſpicion of it.

Let us now obſerve the explication of the text, agreeably to this ſcheme; which I ſhall take in the words of a pious annotator.* '*Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt*
'*Jeſus.* As Chriſt denied himſelf for you, ſo ſhould you for
'others. *Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery*
'*to be equal with God:* that is, who being the eſſential image
'of the Father, and enjoying the divine eſſence and nature
'with all its glory, knew that it was no uſurpation in him,
'to account himſelf ſo, and carry himſelf as ſuch. *But made*
'*himſelf of no reputation.* Yet he emptied himſelf of that
'divine glory and majeſty, by hiding it in the vail of his fleſh:
'*and took upon him the form of a ſervant:* that is, the quality
'and condition of a mean perſon, not of ſome great man.
'*And was made in the likeneſs of men:* that is, ſubject to all
'the frailties and infirmities of human nature, ſin only ex-
'cepted. *And being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled him-*
'*ſelf.* By what appeared to all, and by the whole tenour of
'his carriage, he was found to be a true man. *And became*
'*obedient unto death, even unto the death of the croſs.* He
'manifeſted his obedience, as in all other particulars, ſo in
'reſigning up himſelf to death, the death of the croſs, the
'moſt cruel, contemptible, and accurſed death. *Wherefore*
'*God alſo hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which*
'*is above every name.* Wherefore God advanced his human
'nature to the higheſt degree of glory, and has given him
'honour, authority and majeſty above all created excellence.'

Upon this interpretation it is eaſy to remark, that it does not ſeem exactly to anſwer the apoſtle's expreſſions. It ſuppoſes two things to be ſpoken of, firſt the Deity, then the humanity of Jeſus. I ſay, it is ſuppoſed, that the apoſtle firſt ſpeaks of Chriſt's being *of the divine nature and eſſence,* and

* Mr. Samuel Clark's Annotations upon the place.

therein

therein humbling himſelf. And the human nature is exalted. Whereas the apoſtle ſeems to ſpeak all along of one thing or perſon.. *Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus, who made himſelf of no reputation. . . . Wherefore God alſo has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow.* He who had humbled himſelf is exalted. Nor can true Deity either be abaſed or rewarded.

There is therefore no ſmall difficulty in applying the commonly received opinion concerning Chriſt, as God, of the ſame ſubſtance, and equal with the Father, to this text. Or, it is not eaſy to reconcile the doctrine of the apoſtle in this place, and the commonly received opinion concerning the Trinity.

I ſhall now conclude with theſe two remarks.

I. The commonly received doctrine of the Trinity, which is reckoned orthodox, and the doctrine of the Church, is obſcure. Indeed it is generally acknowledged to be very myſterious. And it appears to be ſo from the authentic accounts which have been now given of it. For it is ſaid, that there are *three perſons in the godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt:* and they are ſaid to be *equal in power and glory.* Which expreſſions ſeem to intimate, that there are three diſtinct beings, and minds. But yet, on the other hand it is as plainly ſaid, that there is *but one eternal, and one almighty.*

Theſe expreſſions muſt be allowed to repreſent an obſcure doctrine. Some have ſaid, that it is contradictory.

All I affirm is, that it is obſcure, and difficult to be conceived and underſtood, if it be not abſolutely incomprehenſible.

II. Secondly, I would obſerve, that obſcure doctrines ought not to be made neceſſary to ſalvation. They who conſider the general tenour, and great deſign of the preaching of Chriſt and his apoſtles to all ſorts of men, in order to bring them to repentance and holineſs, and thereby to everlaſting happineſs, by the good will and appointment of God, will be eaſily led to think, that there ſhould not be any doctrines, neceſſary to be believed, which are of ſuch a nature, that the moſt metaphyſical and philoſophical minds can ſcarcely know what they are, or reconcile them to reaſon. Therefore the commonly received doctrine of the Trinity, if it be obſcure, ſhould not be made a neceſſary article of a Chriſtian's faith.

And

And yet this is the introduction to the Athanaſian Creed: 'Whoſoever will be ſaved, before all things it is neceſſary, 'that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith, except every 'one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he ſhall 'periſh everlaſtingly. And the catholic faith is this, that 'we worſhip one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity:' and the reſt. And the more fully to enforce the neceſſity of this doctrine, it is repeated again at the end. 'This is the 'catholic faith. Which except a man believe faithfully, he 'cannot be ſaved.'

This, and other like creeds, are inſerted in almoſt all the eſtabliſhed articles and liturgies in Chriſtendom.

But is not this teaching uncharitableneſs by authority? And, if any join in ſuch offices of religion, whilſt they believe not the creeds, which they recite, or are ſuppoſed to recite; they are made to paſs ſentences of condemnation upon themſelves.

How great, then, is the privilege, to be at liberty to chooſe our religion, and that way of worſhip, which upon a ſerious conſideration, and after careful and impartial examination, we think to be reaſonable, ſcriptural, and edifying!

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## DISCOURSE II.

### PHILIP. ii. 5—11.

*Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus.* And what follows.

In a late diſcourſe on this text, I ſtated and conſidered the commonly received opinion concerning the Trinity, and the perſon of Chriſt in particular.

I now intend to conſider another ſentiment concerning the perſon of Chriſt, and conſequently alſo concerning the Trinity.

Some, then, ſuppoſe the Son to be a ſpirit, or intelligent agent, ſubordinate, and inferior to the Father. They think, that this is what is meant by the Word, ſpoken of by St. John, at the beginning of his goſpel. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God:* or a God, as they would tranſlate: not the ſame with the Father,

Father, or equal to him, or of the ſame nature and eſſence: but ſaid to be God, on account of his great excellence and power, derived to him by the will of the Father. *All things were made by him*, that is, by him under the Father, as his inſtrument, and by his appointment. *And without him was not any thing made that was made.*

To the like purpoſe they underſtand and explain Col. i. 15, 16. *Who is the image of the inviſible God, the firſt born of every creature. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, viſible and inviſible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by him, and for him.*

Which words are thus paraphraſed by * an ingenious and learned commentator, of the ſentiment, which I am now endeavouring to repreſent as fairly as may be. . . . 'Since he is 'the moſt lively viſible image of the Father who is the in-'viſible God, and is the firſt being that was derived from 'him. And that he muſt be the firſt derived from him, 'is from hence evident, that all other beings were derived 'from God the primary and ſupreme cauſe of all, through this 'his Son, by whom, as their immediate Author, all things 'were created, that are in heaven, or that are in earth, viſible 'and inviſible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or 'principalities, or powers. All things were created by him, 'and to be in ſubjection to him. He therefore muſt be before 'all things. And by him all things are preſerved. And 'he is the head of the church, which is his body.'

Heb. i. 1, 2. *God hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom alſo he made the worlds.* In his notes upon theſe laſt words, the ſame learned expoſitor ſays: 'As from other 'places it appears, that Chriſt was employed in making 'the world, ſo this ſeems moſt agreeable to the ſcope of 'the writer of the epiſtle to the Hebrews. His intention 'appears to be, to give the loftieſt and moſt noble account 'of his greatneſs and dignity, abſtractedly from what he 'proceeds to afterwards, the honour conferred upon him 'at his reſurrection. Now ſince he ſo expreſsly mentions 'that which may ſeem a leſs inſtance of his greatneſs, 'that *he upholds all things*; it is not probable, that he would

* Mr. James Peirce.

'omit that which was greater, God's creating the worlds by 'him.'

Of the Word, or Son of God, theſe learned men do alſo generally underſtand Prov. viii. 22—31.

Well, then, the Son being, according to this ſcheme, the firſt derived being, and God having made the world by him: what was the ſtation, what the employment, what the dignity of the Son of God before his incarnation?

The learned annotator before quoted, in his notes upon Philip. ii. 9. ſays: "The ſcriptures ſeem to repreſent this 'to have been the ſtate of things antecedently to our 'Saviour's coming into the world: that God allotted to 'the angels provinces and dominions, one being appointed 'to preſide over one country, and another over another. . . . 'The places, as evidences of this, are all taken out of 'Dan. x. where is related a viſion of an angel ſent to 'Daniel in the third year of Cyrus king of Perſia. . . . Thus 'he ſpeaks, ver. 13. *The prince of the kingdom of Perſia withſtood 'me one and twenty days: but lo, Michael, one,* or the firſt *of 'the chief princes came to help me.* . . . Afterwards, in the two 'laſt verſes of that chapter, the ſame angel ſays: *Now will 'I return to fight with the prince of Perſia. And when I 'am gone forth, lo, the prince of Græcia ſhall come. But I 'will ſhow thee what is noted in the ſcripture of truth. And 'there is none that holdeth with me in theſe things, but Michael 'your prince.* So that, as this learned writer proceeds, 'we have here the prince of Perſia, the prince of 'Græcia, and the prince of the Jews, ſpoken of. And 'what reaſon can we have to queſtion, whether the like 'was not the caſe of the other countries, that they had 'in like manner their reſpective preſidents or princes? 'This leads us farther to conſider the ſtate of our Saviour 'himſelf before his incarnation. . . . As the heathen nations 'were committed to other angels, the Iſraelites were com-'mitted to Chriſt, who was the angel of the covenant, 'or of God's covenanted people.' So that learned writer.

There may be different conceptions concerning Chriſt, among thoſe, who muſt be allowed to be in the main of this opinion. They all ſuppoſe the Word, or Son of God, to be a being diſtinct from God the Father, ſubordinate and inferior to him. But ſome may aſcribe to him higher dignity than others. [And] we have juſt now ſeen, that one and the ſame perſon, who thinks that all

all things were made by the Son, ſuppoſeth him before his incarnation to have had only, or chiefly, the care and government of the Jewiſh people allotted to him: whilſt other angels were appointed preſidents or princes of other nations and countries.

One thing ought to be added here. They who are of this ſentiment do generally ſuppoſe, that this great being, the Word, the Son of God, upon our Saviour's conception and birth, animated the body prepared for him. So that our Saviour had not, properly, a human ſoul. But the Word, the Son of God ſupplied the place of a ſoul.

The Spirit, or Holy Ghoſt, the learned men of this ſentiment, I preſume, take to be a being, or intelligent agent, inferior in power and perfection, not only to God the Father, but likewiſe to the Son of God.

According to theſe therefore the Father is the one ſupreme God over all, abſolutely eternal, underived, unchangeable, independent.

The Son is the firſt derived being from the Father, and under him employed in creating, and alſo preſerving and upholding the world, with, as ſome ſay, an eſpecial allotment of the preſidentſhip over the people of Iſrael.

The Spirit is a third perſon, alſo derived from the Father, and of power and perfection inferior to the Son.

I have endeavoured to give here, as well as elſewhere, a true repreſentation. If I have miſtaken, it is not done willingly and deſignedly. And I ſhall be ready to be better informed.

Let us now apply this ſcheme to the text: or ſee, how it is explained by the favourers of this ſentiment. And I hope to have here again the aſſiſtance of the ſame learned divine and commentator, who has been quoted already ſeveral times.

Ver. 5, 6. '*Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt* '*Jeſus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to* '*be equal with God.* Ye ought to be of ſuch a kind and 'beneficent, of ſuch a humble and condeſcending diſpoſi-'tion, as Chriſt Jeſus himſelf was: who being in the form 'or likeneſs of God, was not eager in retaining that likeneſs 'to God.'

The *form of God* is farther explained in this manner, p. 26. 'He was in the form or likeneſs of God, upon account of 'that authority, dominion, and power, with which he was

'intruſted, and which he exerciſed antecedently to his 'coming into the world.—Our Saviour antecedently to 'his incarnation, having the Jews committed to him of 'God, and being prince of that people, or the King of 'Iſrael, was in the form and likeneſs of God.

'Who being in the form or likeneſs of God, was not 'eager in retaining that likeneſs to God; but on the contrary 'he emptied himſelf of that form of God, taking upon him 'a very different form or likeneſs, even that of a ſervant, 'when he was made in the likeneſs of men.'

And for explaining this laſt particular it is added by the ſame interpreter in his notes: 'If it be here inquired, why 'does St. Paul ſay, *he was in the likeneſs of men?* Was he 'not truly and properly a man? The anſwer is eaſy, that '*men* ſignifies ſuch animated bodies as ours are, inhabited 'each by a rational ſoul. And ſo, as to his body, he was 'in all reſpects a man, juſt as we are, he having 'taken part with us in fleſh and blood, and having a body 'prepared for him. The *likeneſs* therefore belongs not to 'that, but to the other part of man, the το ηγεμονικον, the 'rational ſpirit: wherein he was vaſtly more than man, 'the Word or Logos, that was in the form of God, being 'ſo tranſcendently ſuperior to the moſt noble ſoul that ever 'inhabited any other human fleſh.

'*And being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and 'became obedient to death, even the death of the croſs.* And 'though his becoming man was a great inſtance of humility 'and condeſcenſion, ye he did not ſtop at that: but when 'he was [actually] in the ſame condition and ſtate with men, 'he humbled himſelf yet farther by becoming obedient to 'God unto death, and that too the death of the croſs, which 'was attended with the greateſt reproach as well as tor-'ment.'

Ver. 9, 10, 11. '*Wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him, 'and given him a name, which is above every name, that at the 'name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in heaven, and 'things on earth, and things under the earth: and that every 'tongue ſhould confeſs, that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord to the glory 'of God the Father.* And upon this account God has ad-'vanced him higher than before, and freely beſtowed on 'him an authority that is ſuperior to what he ever granted 'to any other: that by virtue of the authority of Jeſus all ſhould be conſtrained to ſubmit to God: whether they

'are

'are heavenly or earthly [beings], or ſuch as are under the 'earth: and that every tongue ſhould acknowledge that 'Jeſus Chriſt is, by this gift of God, Lord of all, to the 'glory of God the Father.'

This exaltation, or ſuperior exaltation of Chriſt above what he had before, is illuſtrated by the ſame learned expoſitor in his notes after this manner: 'When our Lord 'came into the world, he laid aſide that form of God he 'was in before, and was made for a little time, that is, till 'his reſurrection, lower than the angels, they ſtill continu-'ing their dominion, while he parted with his. At our 'Lord's reſurrection an entire change was made in this ſtate 'of things, and an end was put to this rule of angels: they 'themſelves, together with all nations, were put under one 'head, even Chriſt, whoſe authority and power was then 'ſo highly advanced above what it was before; he being 'intruſted with an univerſal dominion, and all that were 'rulers and governors before being made his ſubjects and 'miniſters.'

I have been the longer in repreſenting this ſcheme, that I might ſhow it to as much advantage as poſſible. And now I ſhall propoſe ſome objections to it.

One obſervation, which I mention in the firſt place, relates to a particular article in this ſcheme.

It is not reaſonable that the Word, the Son of God, the firſt derived being who had been employed under God the Father in making all things, ſhould, ſome time after the world was made, have ſo limited dominion and authority, as to be the preſident and governor of the Jewiſh people only: whilſt other angels had like power and dominion over other people and countries.

What reaſon can be aſſigned, why the being, who under God the Father had been creator of all things, viſible and inviſible, ſhould be put quite, or well nigh, upon a level with his creatures? There is no ground, from reaſon or ſcripture, to believe any voluntary or impoſed humiliation of the Son of God before his incarnation.

I might likewiſe aſk what reaſon can be aſſigned, why any good angels ſhould, after our Lord's reſurrection and aſcenſion, be deprived of any advantages which they before enjoyed? For it may be well ſuppoſed, that if they were acquainted with our Lord's tranſactions here on earth, by the will of the Father, for the good of mankind, they ap-

proved, admired, and applauded them. And ſome of the angels may have been, yea, were employed in attending upon, and miniſtering to Jeſus, whilſt he dwelt on this earth.

However this may be reckoned by ſome to be an exception only to the ſcheme of the learned commentator before cited: I therefore place theſe obſervations here by themſelves.

But for the preſent, ſetting that aſide, all, I think, who are in this ſcheme, that the Word, the Son of God, is a diſtinct being, inferior to God the Father, ſuppoſe, that he was employed under God the Father, in creating the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein: that afterwards he was incarnate, humbled himſelf, ſuffered and died, and was exalted.

Againſt this ſcheme then, as diſtinguiſhed from the foregoing particular (though that has been introduced as a plauſible ſuppoſition) I object as follows.

1. The Lord Jeſus, in the New Teſtament is often ſpoken of as *a man*; which means a being with a reaſonable ſoul and human body. But, if the Word, a tranſcendently great and excellent ſpirit, far ſuperior to human ſouls, animated the body of Jeſus, as a ſoul, then our Lord was not, properly ſpeaking, a man: though this be often ſaid in ſcripture, and ſpoken of as a thing of importance. I do not now alledge any texts by way of proof. There may be occaſion to produce them diſtinctly in another place.

2. It appears to be an impropriety, and incongruity, that any ſpirit, except a human ſoul, ſhould animate a human body. It would, I apprehend, be an incongruity not paralelled in any of the works of God, of which we have any knowledge.

3. Jeſus Chriſt, as we evidently know from his hiſtory in the goſpels, had all the innocent, ſinleſs infirmities of the human nature. He was weary with journeyings, he hungred, and had thirſt, he needed the refreſhment of food, and of reſt, or ſleep: and he endured pain, and at ſome times piercing affliction and grief, and at laſt died.

But this could not have been, ſuppoſing the body of Jeſus to have been animated by ſo tranſcendently powerful and active a ſpirit as the Word, or the Son of God, in this ſcheme is ſuppoſed to be. He could not have been diminiſhed or weakened thereby. Suppoſing ſuch an union of

ſo

ſo great a ſpirit with a human body, it would ſwallow it up. I mean, that ſpirit would not be ſtraitened and confined, or diminiſhed by the body, but would infuſe vigour and activity into the body: ſo that it would be no longer liable to the weakneſſes to which human bodies, actuated only by human ſouls, are incident. How can a ſpirit, creator of all things under God the Father, be ſtraitened and incommoded by ſo ſmall a portion of matter, which was originally created by him? Will the reſidence of ſo great a ſpirit in a human body make no alteration? Shall that body be ſtill as feeble, as liable to wants, and as ſenſible to pain, as an ordinary body, which has only a human ſoul?

4. We do not perceive the Lord Jeſus to inſiſt upon his pre-exiſtent greatneſs and glory, as an argument of obedience to his doctrine. He does not repreſent himſelf to thoſe who were his hearers, as their creator under God. But he ſays, that *the Father had ſent him*, that he acted by commiſſion under God, and that the Father had ſealed him, by the miraculous works which he had enabled him to do, and that he had authority from him to do and teach as he did.

5. If ſo glorious a being as the Word, or Son of God is repreſented to be in this ſcheme, had taken upon himſelf a human body, and ſubmitted to animate and act in it as a ſoul: that condeſcenſion would have been clearly and frequently ſhown, and inſiſted on in the goſpels and epiſtles. It would have been as much enlarged upon as our Lord's reſurrection and aſcenſion: but there are no clear texts aſſerting this: none but what are capable of another ſenſe, and are better interpreted in a different manner.

6. In this way Jeſus Chriſt is no example of imitation to us: for no ſuch thing, as the condeſcenſion juſt repreſented, is required of us. We are not taught to be willing to deſcend into ſome inferior ſpecies of beings, and therein to be debilitated and incommoded, and loſe all our rationality, for a while at leaſt. But what we are taught is, that we ſhould act modeſtly and meekly in the condition aſſigned us, and in which God has made us.

7. If the body of Jeſus had been animated by ſo great a ſpirit as its ſoul; there would have been nothing at all extraordinary in his reſurrection and aſcenſion. And yet how does the apoſtle labour in deſcribing this great inſtance of divine

power? Eph. i. 19, 20. *That ye may know what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty power: which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.* But what is there extraordinary in it, that a being, who under God had made the world, ſhould be raiſed up, and aſcend, and be ſeated in the heavenly places, where he had been long before?

8. Once more: this doctrine of the tranſcendent glory and power of Chriſt before his coming into the world, is inconſiſtent with the repreſentations given throughout ſcripture of his exaltation after his death, as a reward of his humility and obedience upon earth. For the text, agreeably to many others, ſays: *Wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him.* But there is no exaltation, to which any being can be advanced, that would exceed what the Creator was entitled to, as ſuch. Has he not, as Creator, under God, of all things viſible and inviſible, a natural right to dominion and authority over them, and to precedence before and above all others? How then could dominion and authority over all things be the reward of Chriſt's humility and patience, and other virtues here on earth?

What adds weight to this conſideration is, that this doctrine weakens, and even deſtroys the argument ſet before us to humility and meekneſs, which is taken from the exaltation of Jeſus. For according to it, he has no advancement, and indeed could have no advancement, after all he had done here, but what he was entitled to without it.

I muſt not ſtay to ſtate and anſwer objections. But there is one text, ſo likely to occur to the thoughts of many, that it may be beſt to take notice of it. It is in the prayer recorded John xvii. where at ver. 5. is this petition of our Lord. *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory, which I had with thee before the world was.* If any ſhould urge this text, as an objection againſt ſome things juſt ſaid, I would anſwer: the moſt likely meaning of theſe words is to this purpoſe. Our Lord was here approaching to the affecting ſcene of his laſt ſufferings, and the concluſion of his life here on earth, in which he had acted with great zeal and faithfulneſs for the glory of God, and the good of men. And having ſo fulfilled the commiſſion given him, he ſolemnly and humbly addreſſes God, ſaying, *I have glorified thee on earth. I have finiſhed the work, which thou*

*thou gaveſt me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory, which I had with thee before the world was:* that is, which had been always, and from the beginning deſigned for me. So Rev. xiii. 8. *The lamb ſlain*, that is deſigned to be ſlain, *before the foundation of the world.* Eph. i. 4. *According as he has choſen us in him, before the foundation of the world.* Col. iii. 3. *Your life is hid with Chriſt in God.* See alſo Eph. iii. 9. and Matt. xxv. 34. and other like places. So the glory, which was to be the reward of what Jeſus ſhould do on earth, was always with God. It was *with him*, in his purpoſe: *hid with him, before the world was.* To the like effect St. Auguſtin † very largely. And if there is any reward annexed to our Lord's ſervices and ſufferings here on earth, (as certainly there is) very probably that is what is here intended.

Theſe things I have now propoſed to your conſideration. I do not dictate. But let it be conſidered, whether this ſcheme be not attended with difficulties. Many pious and learned men may have taken it up, for avoiding difficulties in the commonly received doctrine. Nevertheleſs this alſo may be found to have difficulties, that muſt weaken the perſuaſion of its truth and probability.

God willing, I intend to repreſent another opinion hereafter. For the preſent I ſhall conclude with the following remarks.

We may hence receive inſtruction. We ſhould not be too much opinionated of ourſelves, becauſe we know more truths than others. Let us rather ſuppoſe that we may be miſtaken: ſenſible, that in many points of ſpeculation there are difficulties, which may be overlooked by us: and that our ſcheme may be liable to objections, which we have not obſerved. Neither all wiſdom, nor all truth is monopolized by any one man, or ſect of men. He who has gained truth fairly, by impartial and laborious examination and inquiry, will be under little temptation to inſult or deſpiſe

† Cum ergo videret illius prædeſtinatæ ſuæ clarificationis veniſſe jam tempus, ut et nunc fieret in redditione, quod fuerat in prædeſtinatione jam factum, oravit, dicens: *Et nunc clarifica me tu Pater apud teipſum claritate, quam habui priuſquam mundus eſſet, apud te:* tanquam diceret, claritatem quam habui apud te, id eſt; illam claritatem, quam habui apud te in prædeſtinatione tua, tempus eſt, ut apud te habeam etiam vivens in dextera tua. In Joan. Evang. cap. XVII. tract. 105, p. 8, tom. III. Bened. p. 2.

others,

others, whom he thinks to be in error or ignorance, if they be but open to conviction. He knows, that things appear in different lights to different perſons, and to the ſame perſon at different times. He has, perhaps, been poſitive in ſome points, which he has afterwards ſeen to be miſtaken opinions; though he was all the while ſincere. He muſt therefore allow the innocence of error in ſome caſes. Let us not be too deſirous, that others ſhould agree with us in opinion. Let us love and honour them, if they are honeſt and virtuous: which many may be, who are not of the ſame ſentiment with us, and ſee not things in the ſame light that we do. If we deſire to experience moderation from others, let us ſhow it ourſelves, as there is occaſion. Let not our faith, or knowledge, or opinion of it, produce arrogance and cenſoriouſneſs. But as St. James directs; if we are wiſe men, and endued with knowledge, let us ſhow out of a good converſation our works with meekneſs of wiſdom, Jam. iii. 13. Or, let us ſhow our wiſdom by a truly pious and virtuous converſation, and by meekneſs of behaviour towards others.

## DISCOURSE III.

### PHILIP. ii. 5—11.

*Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus.* And what follows.

I HAVE propoſed to explain this text largely and diſtinctly. And though this deſign may lead me to be ſomewhat controverſial, and to treat ſome points, which are, and long have been diſputed among Chriſtians; I have hoped that I ſhould have no reaſon to decline freedom and plainneſs of expreſſion. It is very common for men in public, as well as private diſcourſes, to aſſert their own ſentiment, and to refute, or do what lies in their power, to refute the ſchemes and ſentiments of others. Nor is it uncommon for men of low rank and condition, to think themſelves capable judges of what are reckoned the moſt ſublime and myſterious doctrines, and to paſs ſentences, not very favourable, upon thoſe who are of a different opinion

nion from themſelves. There cannot be then, I apprehend, any ſufficient reaſon to condemn an attempt to repreſent in a fair and impartial manner divers ſentiments concerning the Deity, and the perſon of Chriſt, together with the reaſons and arguments by which they are ſupported.

I have already conſidered two ſchemes, concerning the Deity, and a Trinity, and the perſon of Chriſt: one, that which is reckoned the commonly received opinion, or orthodox: the other ſometimes called Arianiſm. The third, to be now conſidered, is ſometimes called the doctrine of the Unitarians or the Nazareans. Theſe believe, that there is one God alone, even the Father, eternal, almighty, poſſeſſed of all perfections without any defects, or limits, unchangeable, the creator of all things viſible and inviſible, the ſupreme Lord and Governor of the world, whoſe providential care upholds all things, who ſpoke to the patriarchs in the early ages of the world, to the people of Iſrael by Moſes, and other prophets, and in theſe latter ages of the world to all mankind by Jeſus Chriſt, and by him will diſtribute equal recompenſes to all according to their behaviour in this world.

For farther illuſtrating this point, it will be proper to ſhow more diſtinctly the opinion of thoſe perſons concerning God the Father, or the Divine Unity, the perſon of Chriſt, and the Holy Spirit.

Firſt, Concerning God the Father, or the Divine Unity; which appears to be the doctrine of the Old and New Teſtament, from the beginning to the end.

Moſes, the Jewiſh law-giver, and their greateſt prophet, before the goſpel diſpenſation, begins his five books with an account of the creation of the world.

The firſt of the ten commandments, delivered with ſo great ſolemnity to the Jewiſh people, ſoon after their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and before they were put into poſſeſſion of Canaan, as a diſtinct and independent nation and people, is, *I am the Lord thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the houſe of bondage. Thou ſhalt have no other Gods before me*, Exod. xx. 1, 2. that is, before my face, in my ſight, to which all things are open, from whom no deviation from this law can be hid, and will be overlooked and unreſented. In the fourth of thoſe ten laws or commandments it is ſaid, *Remember the ſabbath day to keep it holy.... For in ſix days the Lord made heaven and earth, the ſea,*

*ſea, and all that in them is, and reſted the ſeventh day*, ver. 10, 11.

After the rehearſal of thoſe commandments, and other things in the book of Deuteronomy it is ſaid, *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is one Lord*, Deut. vi. 4.

Pſ. lxxxiii. 28. *That men may know, that thou, whoſe name alone is Jehovah, art the moſt high over all the earth.*

Iſ. xl. 28. *Haſt thou not known, haſt thou not heard, that the everlaſting God, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, nor is weary.*

Iſ. xliv. 6. *Thus ſaith the Lord, the king of Iſrael, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hoſts: I am the firſt, and I am the laſt.... And beſide me there is no God.* Ver. 8. *Is there a God beſide me? Yea, there is no God. I know not any.* Ver. 24. *Thus ſaith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb: I am the Lord that maketh all things, that ſtretcheth forth the heavens alone, that ſpreadeth abroad the earth by myſelf.*

Such, then, is the doctrine of the Old Teſtament. There is one God, even Jehovah, eternal, unchangeable, the creator of the heavens and the earth, and all things therein, the Lord, God, and King of Iſrael.

Let us now obſerve the doctrine of the New Teſtament, which, if from heaven, cannot be different, but muſt be harmonious with that of the Old.

Matt. iv. 9, 10. When Satan tempted our Lord, and ſaid, *All theſe things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worſhip me. Jeſus ſaid unto him, get thee hence Satan; for it is written, thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.* See Deut. vi. 13. and x. 20.

Mark xii. 28—34. *And one of the ſcribes came, ... and aſked him, which is the firſt commandment of all? And Jeſus anſwered him: the firſt of all the commandments is, hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy ſtrength. This is the firſt commandment.... And the ſcribe ſaid unto him, well, maſter, thou haſt ſaid the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but he.... And when Jeſus ſaw that he anſwered diſcreetly, he ſaid, thou art not far from the kingdom of God.* See Deut. vi. 4, 5.

Luke xviii. 18, 19. *And a certain ruler aſked him, ſaying, good Maſter, what ſhall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jeſus ſaid*

*ſaid unto him, why calleſt thou me good? There is none good, ſave one, that is God.*

John xvii. 1—3. *Theſe words ſpake Jeſus, and lift up his eyes to heaven, and ſaid, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son alſo may glorify thee. As thou haſt given him power over all fleſh, that he ſhould give eternal life to as many as thou haſt given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent.*

Our Lord therefore, we ſee, prays to God, even the Father, *his Father, and our Father, his God, and our God,* John xx. 17. And gives to him the character of *the only true God.*

It might be here not improperly obſerved farther, that God, even the Father, is he, in whoſe name, and by whoſe authority our Lord profeſſed to act, whoſe will he did, to whom he reſigned himſelf, whoſe glory ultimately, and above all things, he ſought, and not his own.

John v. 30. *I can of my own ſelf do nothing. As I hear I judge. And my judgment is juſt, becauſe I ſeek not my own will, but the will of the Father which ſent me.* Ver. 36. *But I have greater witneſs than that of John. For the works which the Father hath given me to finiſh, the ſame works that I do bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me.* Ver. 43. *I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not.*

John vii. 16. *Jeſus anſwered them, and ſaid, my doctrine is not mine, but his that ſent me.* John xii. 49. *For I have not ſpoken of myſelf. But the Father which ſent me, he gave me commandment, what I ſhould ſay, and what I ſhould ſpeak.*

The apoſtles of Chriſt were unanimous, and after their Lord's reſurrection and aſcenſion to heaven, pray, and preach as he had done.

Acts iii. 12, 13. After the healing of the lame man that ſat at the gate of the temple, the people ran together to Peter and John. *When Peter ſaw it, he anſwered unto the people, ye men of Iſrael, why marvel ye at this? . . . The God of Abraham, and of Iſaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers, hath glorified his Son Jeſus, whom ye delivered up.* It is the God of the patriarchs and prophets, in whoſe name they act, by whom, they ſuppoſed, their miracles were wrought, for confirming the authority and doctrine of Jeſus.

Afterwards, when delivered from a great danger, Acts iv. 23—30. *And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief prieſts and elders had ſaid unto them.*

*them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voices to God, and ſaid, Lord, thou art God who haſt made heaven and earth, and the ſea, and all that is therein.... And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy ſervants, that with all boldneſs they may ſpeak thy word, by ſtretching forth thy hand to heal, and that ſigns and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child,* ſervant, *Jeſus.* And ch. v. 29—31. before the whole Jewiſh council: *Then Peter and the other apoſtles anſwered, and ſaid, we ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our Fathers raiſed up Jeſus, whom ye ſlew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Iſrael and forgiveneſs of ſins.*

Thus they aſcribe the goſpel diſpenſation to the one God, creator of heaven and earth, the God of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, and of the people of Iſrael.

To the ſame God the apoſtles offer up prayers and praiſes in their epiſtles.

Says St. Paul, Eph. iii. 14. *For this cauſe I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt....* And St. Peter, 1 ep. i. 3. *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt....* Eph. v. 20. *Giving thanks always for all things unto God, even the Father, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

In many other places of their epiſtles the apoſtles expreſſly teach, that there is but one God, even the Father.

1 Cor. viii. 4, 5, 6. *We know that an idol is nothing, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be, that are called Gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there be Gods many, and Lords many) yet to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jeſus Chriſt,* [*by whom are all things,*] *and we by him.*

2 Cor. xi. 31. *The God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: or God even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is bleſſed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.*

1 Tim. i. 17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, and inviſible, the only wiſe God, be honour and glory for ever.*

1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. *Which in his time he ſhall ſhew, who is the bleſſed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality.... To whom be honour and power everlaſting.*

Jude v. 25. *To the only wiſe God, our Saviour, be glory and majeſty, dominion and power, now and ever.*

Eph. iv. 5, 6. *There is one Lord, one faith, one baptiſm, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

And

And in this second chapter of the epistle to the Philippians we are assured, that our Lord has been exalted, *that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

From all which it is concluded, that there is one God, even the Father.

In the next place we are to observe, what is the sentiment of these persons concerning our blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, in short, their sentiment is, that he is a man, with a reasonable soul and human body, especially favoured of God.

Of which there are these proofs. He was born of a woman.

We have an account of our Lord's nativity in two evangelists, both agreeing, that he was born of a virgin, and *conceived by the Holy Ghost*, as it is expressed in the apostle's creed, Matt. i. 18—25. *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. Whereas his Mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost, —Joseph, her husband, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, in a dream, saying: Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife. For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son. And thou shalt call his name Jesus. . . . Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him; and took unto him his wife. And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son. And he called his name Jesus.*

St. Luke i. 26—38. *The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin, espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. . . . And the angel said unto her: fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the highest. And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.* Must not this be reckoned full proof, that Jesus was a man, and that it was designed to represent him to us as such? Not made as Adam, but born of a woman, not in the ordinary way of generation, but of a virgin, by the immediate operation and miraculous power of God. See Luke i. 35.

Nor

Nor may it be amiſs to obſerve here, that in the forecited evangeliſts are two pedigrees of Jeſus: one carrying his genealogy up to David, and Abraham, the other as high as to Adam: to ſatisfy us of his humanity, and to ſhow the fulfilment of the divine promiſes concerning the great perſon who was to come, and that Jeſus was *the ſeed of the woman*, who ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head: *the ſeed of Abraham*, in whom all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed, and the *ſon of David*, in whom the everlaſting kingdom, promiſed to that patriarch, ſhould be eſtabliſhed.

Jeſus likewiſe, being a man, experienced many dangers in the time of his infancy. Notwithſtanding which his life was wonderfully preſerved. Being returned ſafe from Egypt; Joſeph and Mary ſettled again in Galilee in their own city Nazareth. And it is obſerved by St. Luke ii. 40. *And † the child grew, and waxed ſtrong in ſpirit, filled with wiſdom, and the grace of God was upon him.* The ſame evangeliſt alſo having given an account of his going with his parents to Jeruſalem at the feaſt of the paſſover, when he was twelve years of age, adds: ch. ii. 51, 52. *That he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was ſubject to them.... And Jeſus increaſed in wiſdom and ſtature, and in favour with God and man.*

It might be obſerved, that when our Lord appeared publicly in the world, and by his words and works ſhowed himſelf to be the Meſſiah, he called himſelf *the ſon of man:* and they who believed in him, reſpectfully addreſſed to him in the character of *the ſon of David.*

Through the whole courſe of his miniſtry we perceive him to have had all the innocent infirmities of human nature. In the end he died, and was raiſed from the dead, in teſtimony to the truth of the important doctrine taught by him, and as a pattern of that reſurrection, of which he aſſured his faithful followers.

St. Peter preaching to the Jews at Jeruſalem, ſoon after our Lord's reſurrection and aſcenſion, ſays, Acts ii. 22. *Ye men of Iſrael, hear theſe words: Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, wonders and ſigns, which God did by him in the midſt of you, as ye yourſelves alſo know—him God hath raiſed up.*

† το δε παιδιον ηυξανε.

St. Paul

St. Paul preaching at Athens ſays, Acts xvii. 31. *God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs by that man, whom he hath ordained.*

Gal. iv. 4. *When the fulneſs of time was come, God ſent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.*

1 Tim. ii. 5. *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Chriſt Jeſus.*

2 Tim. ii. 8. *Remember, that Jeſus Chriſt of the ſeed of David, was raiſed from the dead, according to my goſpel.*

The apoſtle to the Hebrews (a great part of whoſe deſign in that epiſtle is to repreſent the great dignity of Jeſus above Moſes, and as exalted highly after his reſurrection, and aſcenſion to heaven) does as clearly and fully aſſert the human nature of Jeſus, as any writer of the New Teſtament.

The argument in Heb. ii. 14—18. muſt be underſtood to imply true and perfect humanity, of ſoul as well as body. *Foraſmuch then as the children are partakers of fleſh and blood, he alſo himſelf likewiſe took part of the ſame: that through death he might deſtroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their life-time ſubject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels. But he took on him the ſeed of Abraham.* The meaning is, for he is not the deliverer of angels, but of the ſeed of Abraham. *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high prieſt, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the ſins of the people. For in that he himſelf hath been tempted, he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted:* or in ch. iv. 15. *For we have not an high prieſt, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without ſin.* In order to be tempted like as we are, he muſt have been like us, having a reaſonable [human] ſoul and [human] body.

The apoſtle likewiſe in the former part of that ſecond chapter of the epiſtle to the Hebrews goes upon the ſuppoſition of the Lord Jeſus being a man, ver. 5—9. *For unto the angels has he not put in ſubjection the world to come, of which we ſpeak: but one in a certain place,* meaning Pſ. viii. *teſtified, ſaying, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the ſon of man that thou viſiteſt him? Thou madeſt him a little lower than the angels: thou crownedſt him with glory and honour, and didſt ſet him over the works of thy hands. Thou haſt put*

*all things in subjection under his feet.... But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man, crowned with glory and honour for the suffering of death.*

Well then, they of this scheme, from these and other texts conclude * Jesus to be a man, with a reasonable human soul, and human body, born of the virgin Mary, by the especial interposition of God himself. Which leads us to the other thing, that God was with him.

That special favour and privilege is variously expressed. In the discourse of Peter at the house of Cornelius, before referred to. Acts x. 36—38. *That word which God sent unto the children of Israel,... which was published throughout Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism, which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were possessed of the devil. For God was with him.*

John the baptist, near the conclusion of his ministry, bears this testimony to Jesus. *He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God. For God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him,* John iii. 34.

Matt. i. 22, 23. *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,*

* 'Christ is called the son of 'man, not to deny his godhead, 'but to express the verity of his 'human nature, and that he was 'of our stock and lineage. He might 'have been true man, though he had 'not come of Adam, but his hu- 'man nature had been framed out 'of the dust of the ground, as 'Adam's was, or created out of 'nothing. *But he that sanctifieth, 'and they that are sanctified, are of 'one. For which cause he is not 'ashamed to call them brethren,* Heb. 'ii. 11. He would be of the mass 'and stock with us.' Dr. Tho. Manton upon Luke xix. 1. vol. IV. p. 883.

'They are said to be of one. 'This denotes the union that is 'between them. They are of one 'stock and lineage, or one common 'parent of mankind. Hence Luke 'carrieth up the genealogy of Christ 'unto Adam. Luke ii. 38. so that 'he is of our kind and nature.' Manton upon Heb. ii. 11. p. 1083.

Afterwards, 'Christ is our kins- 'man: not only true man, but 'the son of man. True man he 'might have been, if God had 'created him out of nothing, or 'he had brought his substance from 'heaven. But he is the son of man, 'one descended from the loins of 'Adam, as we are. And so does 'redeem us, not only jure proprie- 'tatis, by virtue of his interest in 'us, as our Creator: but jure pro- 'pinquitatis, by virtue of kindred, 'as one of our stock and lineage: 'as the son of man, as well as the 'son of God. For Jesus Christ, 'of all the kindred, was the only 'one that was free, and able to 'pay a ransom for us.' As before, p. 1084.

*A virgin*

*A virgin ſhall conceive, and ſhall bring forth a ſon, and they ſhall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us.*

Col. ii. 9. *For in him dwelleth all the fulneſs of the godhead bodily*, or really.

Which is much the ſame with what is obſerved by the evangeliſt John i. 14. *And the word was made fleſh, and dwelled among us. And we beheld his glory, the glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

And all theſe expreſſions in the New Teſtament are agreeable to the deſcriptions of the Meſſiah in ancient prophecy. So If. xi. 1, 2. *And there ſhall come forth a rod out of the ſtem of Jeſſe, and a branch ſhall grow out of his roots. And the ſpirit of the Lord ſhall reſt upon him: the ſpirit of wiſdom and underſtanding, the ſpirit of counſel and might, the ſpirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.*

Which is the very ſame with what John baptiſt calls *giving the ſpirit without meaſure*, John iii. 34. and the ſame with *the ſpirit's abiding on him, and remaining on him*, ſee John i. 32, 33.

For clearing up this matter, it ſhould be obſerved, that they who are of this opinion do not underſtand by the Son of God an intelligent ſpirit, equal with God the Father, and of the ſame ſubſtance and power, nor an angelical, or ſuperangelical ſpirit, formed before the creation of this material and viſible world. But in their apprehenſion, it is the man Jeſus, who is the Son of God. And the Son of God, by way of eminence and diſtinction, or the well-beloved Son of God, and only begotten Son of God, as they ſuppoſe, are all terms of equivalent import and meaning, denoting the Meſſiah.

When there came a voice from heaven, or from the moſt glorious majeſty, or the preſence of God, ſaying: *This is my beloved ſon, in whom I am well pleaſed. Hear ye him:* they think this to be the ſame, as a ſolemn declaration, that Jeſus was the promiſed Meſſiah, the Saviour of the world, who knew, and was to reveal the will of God to others, in a more perfect manner than any of the prophets had done.

The Son of God, or the only begotten Son of God, is the man moſt dear to God. He is the Chriſt. And the Chriſt, and the Son of God, are the ſame.

When God ſent Moſes back to Egypt, from whence he had fled, he was charged with this commiſſion. Exod. iv.

22, 23. *Thus ſhalt thou ſay unto Pharaoh: thus ſaith the Lord: Iſrael is my ſon, even my firſt-born. And I ſay unto thee: let my ſon go, that he may ſerve me.* The children of Iſrael were God's choſen people, dear to him, and his ſpecial care, above all people of the earth. Iſrael therefore is called his ſon. We ſee a like ſtyle in ſome other texts. Jer. xxxi. 9. *For I am a father unto Iſrael. And Ephraim is my firſt-born.* Hoſ. xi. 1. *When Iſrael was a child, then I loved him, and called my ſon out of Egypt.*

And Chriſtians, who believe in Jeſus, and through him, are brought nigh to God, are God's children and ſons. John i. 12. *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the ſons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* 1 John iii. 1. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God.* Gal. iii. 26. *Ye are all the children of God by faith in Chriſt Jeſus.* But Jeſus *is the Son of God*, by way of eminence. He is *the firſt-born among many brethren*, Rom. viii. 29.

How Jeſus is the Son of God, has been ſhown formerly.* I rehearſe here briefly only. He is the Son of God, as he was born of a virgin, by the immediate and extraordinary interpoſition of the divine power. He is the Son of God, as he had the ſpirit without meaſure, and the Father's fulneſs was poured out upon him; or the Deity dwelled in him. And he was afterwards declared to be the Son of God by his reſurrection from the dead on the third day. He is the firſt-begotten from the dead, who died and roſe again, and dies no more, but lives for ever. And he is exalted to God's right hand, being inveſted with authority and dominion over all fleſh, and conſtituted judge of the world, by whom God will paſs ſentence upon all mankind. In theſe reſpects, as well as others, he has the pre-eminence. See Col. i. 15—19.

It may be here inquired, if Jeſus were a man, with a human ſoul and body, how could he know all things? And how could he work ſo many miracles? The anſwer is to this purpoſe: *God was with him.* And the Father, in him, did the works. The diſciples, as is allowed, during the whole time of our Lord's abode with them here on earth, conceived of him no otherwiſe, than as a man, or the great prophet that was to come into the world, the

* See Pages 385 and 390.

Chriſt,

Chriſt, who had the words of eternal life, or made the fulleſt revelation of the divine mind. They believed him to be a man, and yet they were perſuaded, that *he knew what was in man.* Yea, our Lord himſelf, after he had given ſufficient proofs that he was the promiſed Meſſiah, expected, and judged it reaſonable that every pious and underſtanding Jew ſhould believe him able to perform miraculous works, upon perſons at a diſtance, without his going to them. See John iv. 46—50. And ſome had that faith: though, undoubtedly, they eſteemed him to be only a prophet, or a man highly favoured of God.

And though there are none of the prophets, not Moſes himſelf, upon whom the ſpirit of God did abide, as upon Jeſus the Meſſiah; yet there are divers things in the Old Teſtament, that might aſſiſt pious and attentive Jews, in our Lord's time in forming juſt conceptions concerning the knowledge as well as the power of the Meſſiah.

The prophet Eliſha could tell the king of Iſrael exactly the deſigns and counſels of the king of Syria. See 2 Kings vi. 8—12. and 2 Kings v. 25, 26. When Eliſha aſked Gehazi, *Whence comeſt thou? And he ſaid, thy ſervant went no whither. Eliſha ſaid unto him, went not my ſpirit with thee, when the man turned again with his chariot to meet thee?* He had ſeen and heard all that tranſaction, as if he had been preſent.

It was indeed a wonderful knowledge that was given that prophet. But it may be perceived, that by divine communication he might have known much more.

In like manner, in the perfectly innocent and capacious mind of the bleſſed Jeſus, who had *the ſpirit without meaſure*, it is eaſy to ſuppoſe that there was, and muſt have been an extenſive and intimate knowledge of things diſtant and ſecret.

And ſome of Eliſha's miracles were wrought at a diſtance. He did not ſee Naaman, whoſe leproſy was cured at his word, or by his direction. 2 Kings v. 9—12. Nor was he preſent with the widow when her oil was multiplied. 2 Kings iv. 4—7.

To proceed. By *the Spirit*, or *Holy Ghoſt*, the perſons in this way of thinking do not underſtand a diſtinct intelligent agent, or being of great power and capacity. But with them the Spirit of God is God himſelf, or the power of God, or a gift, or divine influence and manifeſtation.

Pſ. xxxiii. 6. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hoſt of them by the breath of his mouth*, or the ſpirit of his mouth. The word of the Lord and the breath of his mouth are one and the ſame. All things came into being and were diſpoſed of by his will, at his word and command.

In like manner, Job xxvii. 13. *By his ſpirit he has garniſhed the heavens. His hand has formed the crooked ſerpent:* or the winding conſtellation in the heavens, which we call the milky way. The ſpirit or the hand of God formed all thoſe things.

Luke xi. 20. *If I by the finger of God caſt out dæmons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come unto you.* In Matt. xii. 28. *But if I caſt out dæmons by the ſpirit of God, then is the kingdom of God come unto you. So the finger of God, or ſpirit of God, is the power of God, or God himſelf.* As St. Peter ſays Acts, ii. 22. *Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved among you by miracles... which God did by him, in the midſt of you.*

So in other places likewiſe the ſpirit of God is the ſame as God: as the ſpirit of a man is the man himſelf. 1 Cor. ii. 11. *What man knoweth the things of a man, but the ſpirit of man, which is in him? Even ſo the things of God knoweth no man, but the ſpirit of God.* Gal. vi. 18. *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with your ſpirit*, that is, with you: as at the concluſion of ſeveral other epiſtles, particularly 1 Cor. xvi. 23. *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you.*

In the Acts of the apoſtles the ſpirit often denotes a gift, or power. Acts ii. 38. *Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and ye ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt.* την δωρεαν τυ αγιυ πνευματος. Acts viii. 20. Simon of Samaria *thought that the gift of God might be purchaſed with money.* την δωρεαν τυ θευ. Acts x. 45. *on the gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghoſt.* η δωρεα τυ αγιυ πνευματος.

Timothy is directed 1 Tim. iv. 14. *Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy.* Μη αμελει τυ εν σοι χαρισματος... 2 Tim. i. 6. *Stir up the gift of God which is in thee.* αναζωπυρειν το χαρισμα τυ θευ.

When God ſaid to Moſes, Numb. xi. 16, 17. *That he ſhould go and gather unto him ſeventy men of the elders of Iſrael, and*, ſays he; *I will take of the ſpirit that is in thee, and will put it upon them.* No one underſtands thereby, that God intended to take from Moſes a portion of a ſpiritual being reſting upon him: but that he would beſtow upon thoſe elders qualifications of wiſdom and underſtanding, reſembling

reſembling thoſe in Moſes, by which he was ſo eminent and diſtinguiſhed. So Deut. xxxiv. 9. *Joſhua the ſon of Nun was full of the ſpirit of wiſdom. For Moſes had laid his hands upon him.*

Zach. xii. 10. *And I will pour out upon the houſe of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, the ſpirit of grace and ſupplication:* not pour out upon them a great and tranſcendent being or ſpirit: but give them the temper, the qualification, the diſpoſition of grace and ſupplication.

And it is generally ſuppoſed, that the ancient Jewiſh people never had any notion of the diſtinct perſonality of the Spirit, *or the Spirit of God*, or *the Spirit of the Lord*, though ſuch phraſes occur very frequently in the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament. But they underſtood theſe expreſſions after the manner juſt ſhown.

And it is obſervable, that in the New Teſtament, though there are many doxologies, or aſcriptions of glory to God, and to Chriſt, there is not one to the ſpirit. Nor is there at the beginning of the epiſtles any wiſh of peace from the Spirit diſtinctly, but only from God the Father, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

Our Lord ſays Matt. xxviii. 19. *Go ye therefore, and teach* or diſciple *all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt.* Theſe perſons think it not likely, that our Lord ſhould inſert in a baptiſmal form a ſublime myſterious doctrine, not clearly taught any where elſe. The genuine meaning they ſuppoſe to be, that * men ſhould be baptized into the profeſſion of the belief, and an obligation of obedience to the doctrine taught by Chriſt, with authority from God the Father, confirmed by the Holy Ghoſt: by the Holy Ghoſt underſtanding the miracles of our Saviour's own miniſtry, and of his apoſtles, and the ſpiritual gifts beſtowed upon the apoſtles, and other believers, after our Lord's reſurrection, and all the wonderful atteſtations to the truth and divine original of the doctrine taught by Jeſus Chriſt. In a word, men were to be baptized into a

* Dr. S. Clarke's paraphraſe is 'this:—'baptizing them with wa-'ter, *in the name of the Father, and* 'of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt: 'that is, receiving them to a pro-'feſſion of the belief, and an obli-'gation to the practice of that 'religion, which God the Father 'has revealed and taught by the 'Son, and confirmed and eſta-'bliſhed by the Holy Ghoſt.'

profeſſion of the Chriſtian religion, and an obligation to act according to it.

And that this is the meaning of this direction of our Lord, may be inferred from the Acts of the Apoſtles. Where this form, in theſe very words never appears. But men are required to *be baptized in the name of Chriſt*, or are ſaid to *have been baptized into Chriſt:* that is, as before obſerved, they made a profeſſion of faith in Jeſus, or owned their obligation to obey him in being baptized. Acts ii. 38. *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jeſus Chriſt.* Ch. viii. 16. *Only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jeſus.* See ch. viii. 35—38. Rom. vi. 3. *Know ye not, that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his death?* Gal. iii. 27. *For as many of you as have been baptized into Chriſt, have put on Chriſt.*

Of thoſe who are in this ſcheme it is to be obſerved, finally, that they admit not any real Trinity, or Trinity of Divine Perſons, either equal or ſubordinate. But to them there is one God, even the Father, and one Lord, even Jeſus Chriſt: who had, when on earth, the ſpirit without meaſure, and alſo poured out of the ſpirit, or ſpiritual and miraculous gifts in abundance upon his apoſtles, and other his followers, and is exalted to dominion and power over all things, to the glory of God, and for the good of the church.

This is, in brief, that ſcheme which is called Unitarian. I ſhould now apply it to the text before us. But that muſt be deferred to another opportunity. I ſhall now mention only an obſervation or two, partly doctrinal, partly practical.

1. The ſcheme now repreſented, ſeems to be the plaineſt and moſt ſimple ſcheme of all. And it is generally allowed to have been the belief of the Nazarean Chriſtians, or Jewiſh believers.

But whatever may be the ſimplicity of this ſcheme, even they who have ſeemed to receive it, in the main, have corrupted it, and ſuffered themſelves to be entangled in philoſophical ſchemes and ſpeculations, about the pre-exiſtence of the ſoul of Chriſt, and other matters.

Indeed the Chriſtian religion has in it great ſimplicity, both as to doctrines and poſitive inſtitutions. But men have not delighted to retain the ſimplicity of either.

2. Whatever ſpeculative ſcheme of doctrine we receive as true, we are to ſee, that we do not too much rely upon our ſound faith, or right ſentiment, but proceed to, and chiefly charge

charge ourſelves with, a ſuitable practice. James ii. 19. *Thou believeſt, that there is one God. Thou doſt well. The dæmons believe and tremble.* James writes eſpecially to Jewiſh, not Gentile believers. And it is likely that they, as well as other Jews at that time, prided themſelves in their orthodoxy, or right faith, concerning the Deity. The Divine Unity was with them a favourite article. He therefore ſingles out that, and tells them, that they might hold that right faith, and yet be never the better for it. If they ſhould rely upon that faith without good works, that very faith would prove an aggravation of their miſery.

Truth in things of religion is not a matter of indifference. Every virtuous mind muſt be deſirous to know it. But no ſpeculative belief, without practice is ſaving, or will give a man real worth and excellence. The knowledge that puffeth up is vain and inſignificant. To knowledge there ſhould be added humility, gratitude to God, who has afforded us means and opportunities of knowledge: a modeſt ſenſe of our remaining ignorance and imperfection: a diffidence and apprehenſiveneſs, that though we ſee ſome things with great evidence, and are firmly perſuaded of their truth, nevertheleſs many of our judgments of things may be falſe and erroneous.

We ſhould likewiſe be cautious of judging others. Some who have leſs knowledge, may have more virtue. God alone knows the hearts of men, and all their circumſtances: and is therefore the only judge what errors are criminal, and how far men fall ſhort of improving the advantages afforded them, or act up to the light that has been given them.

Let us then inquire with care and impartiality. Let us profeſs the truth ſo far as we are acquainted with it, and candidly recommend it to others, with mildneſs, patience, and long-ſuffering: and in all things act ſincerely according to the light we have: that none of us may fail of that full reward, which God, the beſt of beings offers to us, and invites us to contend for, and accept: and will through Jeſus Chriſt certainly beſtow upon all, who diligently improve the privileges, which they have been favoured with in their ſtate of trial.

DISCOURSE

# DISCOURSE IV.

## PHILIP. ii. 5—9.

*Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus.* And what follows.

I HAVE propoſed to conſider this text diſtinctly. In ſo doing I have repreſented the different opinions of Chriſtians concerning the Deity, and the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt.

The opinion laſt repreſented was that called Unitarian and Nazarean. I am now to apply that doctrine to this text, or interpret this text according to the ſentiments of thoſe, who believe Jeſus to be a man, with a human ſoul, and human body: but *a man with whom God was*, in a moſt peculiar and extraordinary manner.

*Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus, who being in the form of God.*

They who are in the ſcheme, which we are now explaining, ſuppoſe, that here in this world, Jeſus was in the form of God. What the apoſtle intends thereby is the wonderful knowledge which the Lord Jeſus ſhowed, even of things at a diſtance, things paſt, and the thoughts and reaſonings and ſurmiſes of men: of all which we have in the goſpels a moſt beautiful and affecting hiſtory.* When at his word and command, the moſt infirm and diſeaſed perſons were immediately healed: when thoſe who had the palſy, or the dropſy, or were lunatic, were healed of their diſeaſes: when the blind received their ſight, the lame walked, the deaf were made to hear, and the dumb to ſpeak: when he took upon him ſome ſpecial appearance of authority, and to ſuch as had the leproſy, and petitioned for a cure, he ſaid: *I will, Be thou clean.* When he fed and refreſhed ſeveral thouſands at once in deſert places: when he directed Peter to caſt a hook into the ſea, aſſuring of a ſupply for himſelf and him of the tribute money for the temple: when

* Μορφη in noſtris libris non ſignificat internum & occultum aliquid, ſed id quod in oculos incurrit, qualis erat eximia in Chriſto poteſtas ſanandi morbos omnes, ejiciendi dæmonas, excitandi mortuos, mutandi rerum naturas.
Grot. ad Philip. Cap. ii. v. 6.

he

he raiſed the dead, and walked on the ſea, and with a word compoſed the winds and the waves: when he conveyed to his diſciples, upon his ſending them from him, ſpiritual gifts, ſo far as was requiſite at that ſeaſon. And though that was not yet accompliſhed, it was plainly declared, by his fore-runner, that this was he, who ſhould baptize men with the Holy Ghoſt: or beſtow on a ſudden in a plentiful meaſure wiſdom, and underſtanding, and miraculous powers upon his followers in general, according to their ſeveral ſtations.

This may be well meant by *the form of God.* Theſe things explain the apoſtle's expreſſion in the text. And this wonderful power and knowledge ſeem to be what the ſame apoſtle means when he ſays, that Chriſt was rich in 2 Cor. viii. 9. Which place may be reckoned parallel with that, which we are now conſidering. *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: that though he was rich, yet for your ſakes, he became poor, that ye by his poverty might be rich.*

*Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,* that is, did not earneſtly covet divine honour from men, or ſeek to be equal, or like to God: *but emptied himſelf, taking the form of a ſervant, being in the likeneſs of ordinary men.* That is, very probably, the apoſtle's deſign. There begins the account of Chriſt's condeſcending, and ſelf-denying conduct. Whatever* ſcheme men embrace concerning the Deity, and the perſon of Chriſt, I think they muſt allow of this interpretation: either that Jeſus did not make a ſhow of his divinity, but veiled it, and hid it: or that he did not earneſtly ſeek to be, or appear equal or like to God.

By not earneſtly coveting divine honour, or ſeeking to be equal or like to God, St. Paul may refer to and intend many things in the courſe of our Lord's miniſtry, which are recorded in the goſpels. Our Lord did not act as if he was independent. He declared that he came from God, and that the Father had ſent him. He profeſſed to teach, and act, as he had received from the Father. When ſome would have perſuaded him to aſſume kingly power and authority: not doubting but he was able to ſet up a government, to which all might be compelled to ſubmit: he abſolutely declined the propoſal. He firſt defeated the meaſures which they had taken to bring him into their deſign. And afterwards he

* See vol. II. p. 538, 539. and vol. III. p. 166.

ſharply

ſharply reproved that worldly-mindedneſs by which they had been actuated.

For a like reaſon he enjoined ſilence upon ſome, on whom he had wrought great cures.

Mar x. 17, 18. *When he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and aſked him: Good Maſter, what ſhall I do, that I may inherit eternal life? And Jeſus ſaid unto him: Why calleſt thou me good? There is none good but one. That is God.* The outward reſpect ſhown by that perſon being ſo extraordinary, both as to action and expreſſion, he could not accept it, without an intimation of the ſupreme reſpect due to God alone.

John v. 30. *I can of myſelf do nothing. As I hear, I judge. And my judgment is juſt, becauſe I ſeek not my own will, but the will of the Father, which hath ſent me.*

John x. 30—38. Our Lord having in ſome ſtrong expreſſions repreſented the high authority given to him, the *Jews took up ſtones to ſtone him. And ſaid: for a good work we ſtone thee not, but for blaſphemy, and becauſe that thou being a man, makeſt thyſelf God.* Whereupon our Lord modeſtly anſwers, agreeably to what he had before ſaid: that the near relation to God, ſpoken of by him, was claimed on no other account, than the high honour which God had conferred upon him, and which they might diſcern from the works, which they had ſeen him do. *If he called them Gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the ſcripture cannot be broken; ſay ye of him, whom the Father hath ſanctified, and ſent into the world: thou blaſphemeſt, becauſe I ſaid, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works.*

And many other particulars muſt occur to the thoughts of all. Wherein our Lord did not chooſe his own will, nor affect independence, but referred all to God the Father.

*But made himſelf of no reputation.* Literally, according to the original, emptied himſelf. That is, he did not exert the divine power reſiding in him, for ſecuring to himſelf plentiful accommodations, honourable reſpects, and humble, lowly obeiſance: but he lived in mean circumſtances, and was expoſed to the remarks, reproaches, and ill uſage of many.

*And took upon him the form of a ſervant.* But, according to the original, it is more literally *taking the form of a ſervant. He emptied himſelf,* or *made himſelf of no reputation, taking the form of a ſervant.* This farther illuſtrates the foregoing particular.

ticular. Jeſus did not place himſelf in ſervitude to any. But, as he ſays to the diſciples: *Whether is greater? He that ſitteth at meat? or he that ſerveth? But I am among you, as one that ſerveth*, Luke xxii. 17. Inſtead of aſſuming ſtate and grandeur, or a continued appearance of greatneſs, he was like a man of mean condition. He converſed freely with all ſorts of men, and admitted all to free acceſs: and allowed of queſtions and cavils. Himſelf went about doing good, travelling over the cities and villages of the land of Iſrael, teaching the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven: not inviting men by the pomp of numerous attendance, or by gifts, or promiſes of worldly advantages: but receiving uſually needful ſupplies for himſelf and his diſciples from a few grateful followers, who miniſtered to him of their ſubſtance.

In the whole of his miniſtry, he uſually acted as one that ſerves. But there were ſome remarkable inſtances of humility and condeſcenſion, particularly, when he waſhed the diſciples' feet, and gave them the refreſhment, ordinarily received from ſervants only.

Some think, that when our Lord emptied himſelf, or made himſelf of no reputation, he was no longer in the form of God. But it ſeems to me, that he was at the ſame time in the form of God, and in the form of a ſervant. He had the form of God in this world, as he wrought miracles of all kinds, whenever he pleaſed, and likewiſe had all knowledge, of all things. At the ſame time he acted very humbly and meekly, and was deſtitute of external pomp and grandeur.

And I think our Lord's diſcourſe with his diſciples preſently after the forementioned remarkable condeſcenſion, ſhows, that the form of God, and the form of a ſervant were united. John xiii. 12—14. *So then after he had waſhed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was ſet down again, he ſaid unto them: know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me Maſter and Lord. And ſo I am. If I then your Lord and Maſter have waſhed your feet, ye alſo ought to waſh one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye ſhould do as I have done unto you.* He was their Lord and Maſter at the ſame time that he acted in divers reſpects as one that ſerves.

A nobleman, or other perſon of great diſtinction for wiſdom and capacity, with a high commiſſion under his prince, may upon ſome occaſion, and for important reaſons, condeſcend greatly, or empty himſelf, by performing offices more generally done by men of low and mean condition.

Still

Still he has the authority belonging to his commiſſion, and the dignity that is inherent in his character, as a man of honour, veracity and experience.

*And was made in the likeneſs of men*, or, more literally and properly, according to the original, *and being made in the likeneſs of men:* or, being in the likeneſs of men; that is, being like an ordinary man, when he was not ſuch. For he was innocent and perfect, and the fulneſs of the Deity dwelled in him. St. Paul does not intend to intimate that our Saviour was not really a man, but that he appeared like an ordinary man, when he was really more. So Rom. viii. 3. *God ſending his own Son in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh* He was really a man, but had only the likeneſs of ſinful men: for he was innocent and perfect, and was not liable to the ſentence of death, or the common law of mortality, binding other men.

Ver. 8. *And being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs.* And being found in his outward appearance as another ordinary man, he humbled himſelf ſo far, as to yield up himſelf to death. Beſide all the condeſcenſions of his life, it being the will of God, for great ends and purpoſes, that he ſhould do ſo, he yielded up himſelf to death. He made no reſiſtance. He exerted not any of that extraordinary power, or knowledge, with which he was endowed, to defeat the malicious deſigns of his unreaſonable enemies, but quietly reſigned himſelf, in obedience to God, to death, the death of the croſs. He could ſtoop no lower. So far he ſubmitted and acquieſced, as all know from our Lord's hiſtory in the goſpels; where are candidly related at large the reproachful, diſgraceful, aggravating circumſtances of the painful death which Jeſus underwent.

Ver. 9, 10, 11. *Wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him*, On account of that excellent and uſeful ſervice, that cheerful condeſcenſion, and willing obedience, in patiently enduring ſo painful and ignominious a death, for promoting the great ends, deſigned by the divine wiſdom, God has highly exalted him, far beyond whatever any one elſe has obtained.

Chriſt's exaltation began with his reſurrection from the dead on the third day, without ſeeing corruption. After which, he aſcended to heaven, and was ſeated in the divine preſence, next to God the Father.

*And given him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow:* that is, that all intelligent beings,

beings, may ſhow reſpect to Jeſus, *of things in heaven*, angels, *and things on earth*, men, *and things under the earth*, evil ſpirits, or men departed, when they ſhall by him be raiſed up: *and that every tongue ſhould confeſs*: particularly that men of all nations and languages on this earth ſhould acknowledge, *that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord*, and honour and ſerve him *to the glory of God the Father.*

Chriſt's exaltation is *to the glory of God.* God has exalted and appointed him to be Lord, for his own glory. For the exaltation of Jeſus is indeed a great diſplay of the wiſdom, equity, and juſtice of the Divine Being. It ſhows his regard for diſtinguiſhed and eminent virtue. So extraordinary ſervices and ſufferings, and ſuch patience under them, were entitled to ſpecial notice. God has conferred on Jeſus a reward, greater than could have been deviſed by man, and highly becoming his Majeſty to confer upon him, to whom he had given ſo important a commiſſion, for the benefit of the human race, and who had executed it with unparalleled faithfulneſs, zeal, and alacrity, though exceeding painful and difficult.

The glory of Jeſus is in another reſpect to the glory of the Father, inaſmuch as that exaltation is a great confirmation of the truth of his doctrine, and muſt contribute mightily to animate his apoſtles and others in ſpreading his doctrine, notwithſtanding many difficulties: and it would contribute to bring men to faith in Jeſus, as the Chriſt, and to repentance toward God, and every branch of true holineſs, and to eminence therein, and to the practice of meekneſs, reſignation, zeal, courage, and the virtues of every condition, whether proſperous or adverſe.

That is what the apoſtle ſays of Chriſt's exaltation. Which is often ſpoken of in the New Teſtament, and differently deſcribed, but with conſtant harmony upon the whole. I ſhall recite ſome places.

Our Lord himſelf ſaid to his diſciples, before he finally departed from them: *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*, Matt. xxviii. 18. And ſays St. Peter, ſoon after our Lord's aſcenſion, Acts ii. 31. *This Jeſus hath God raiſed up. Whereof we all are witneſſes.* Ver. 36. *Therefore let all the houſe of Iſrael know aſſuredly, that God hath made that ſame Jeſus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Chriſt.* See alſo ch. v. 30—32. And at the houſe of Cornelius at Ceſarea, ch. x. 40—42. *Him God raiſed up the third day.... And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to teſtify, that it*

*is*

*is he, which is ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and the dead.* Compare this with St. Paul's diſcourſe at Athens, Acts xvii. 30, 31. And ſays the ſame apoſtle, Eph. i. 18—22. *That ye may know the exceeding greatneſs of his power which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but alſo in that which is to come. And put all things under his feet, and gave him* [*to be*] *the head over all things to the church.*

Having explained this text according to the laſt mentioned ſcheme, I ſhall now conclude with ſome remarks and obſervations.

1. Chriſtians ought to ſhow moderation, and carefully maintain love and friendſhip with one another, notwithſtanding difference of opinion about divers matters.

They ſhould not be willing to unchriſtianize and anathematize any man, who profeſſes to believe Jeſus to be the Chriſt, and to hold him for the head of the church, and Lord and Maſter of it.

They ſhould not be unwilling to hold communion one with another. If they cannot do that, they ſhould not deny to others the character of integrity: much leſs admit a thought of incommoding them in their worldly intereſts upon account of ſome difference of opinion. For that is doing ſo as they would not be done unto. And by the practice of force and compulſion when they are in power, they encourage others of different ſentiments from them, when in power, to act in like manner. And according to this way of thinking, and acting, oppreſſion and tyranny muſt prevail every where, and chriſtian people muſt be always at variance, devouring one another.

There always has been difference of opinion among men. There were divers ſects of philoſophy, before the riſe of Chriſtianity. Where there is but one opinion, there is abſolute tyranny without liberty: or there is total indifference about the things of religion, without thought and inquiry.

Where Chriſtianity is profeſſed, if there is any freedom, the importance of the doctrine will excite thought and conſideration. Thence will proceed variety of opinion, unleſs men's minds were quite alike: which they are not. Nor have all men the like helps and advantages. For which reaſons

ſons it is not to be expected, that all ſhould ſee things in the ſame light.

Though Chriſtians are divided in their ſentiments about a Trinity, and the perſon of Chriſt, and ſome other points, yet there are many things in which they agree. They all profeſs to receive the ſcriptures as the word of God, and the rule of their faith. And there are divers things, which may be eaſily learned from ſcripture, in which therefore they ought to agree.

We are there taught to think of God, as one. *Thou ſhalt have no other Gods before me*, was proclaimed by God to the Jewiſh people in the moſt ſolemn manner. Indeed all Chriſtians in general agree in this, that there is but one God: however, they may ſeem to each other at times to multiply deities. Certainly the unity of God is a principle, which we ought to maintain whole and uncorrupted in all its ſimplicity.

We are likewiſe to conceive of this one God as eternal, all-perfect, the creator of the heavens and the earth, and the governor of the worlds, which he has made.

We ſhould think of God as great and powerful. Elſe we ſhall not fear before him at all times: nor truſt in him, in the various trials and occurrences of this life, nor ſeek to him, and pray to him as we ought, to approve ourſelves to him: that is, unleſs we believe him able to hear thoſe who ſeek to him, and to reward ſuch as diligently ſerve him.

It is highly expedient, that we trace out by reaſon and ſcripture the evidences of the divine goodneſs and mercy, that we may not ſhun and flee from him as inexorable: that we may not be diſcouraged in doing our utmoſt to pleaſe him, though we cannot attain to an abſolute and ſinleſs perfection.

When Moſes deſired to ſee the *glory of God*, and his requeſt was not rejected, God *made all his goodneſs to paſs before him*, and proclaimed: *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth.* See Exod. xxxiii. and xxxiv.

The inſpired ſcriptures continually repreſent God to us, as great and amiable.

He is *of purer eyes, than to behold iniquity* in any with approbation. Hab. i. 13. Yet he accepts the humble and penitent. And is as ready to forgive and accept thoſe who return from their wanderings, as they who relent, and are pierced with a ſenſe of guilt can wiſh or deſire. Iſ. lvii. 15. *For thus*

*ſaith the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe name is holy*, that is, ſacred, great and auguſt, *I dwell in the high and holy place: with him alſo, who is of a contrite and humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and the heart of the contrite.*

The value and importance of right conceptions concerning theſe perfections of God may be ſeen farther ſhown in Jer. ix. 23, 24.

Theſe are things, in which all men of every rank, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, are more concerned, than in any points of a ſpeculative nature, that are very abſtruſe, and almoſt unintelligible. The plaineſt truths are the moſt important: not the moſt abſtruſe and myſterious, as ſome would perſuade men to think. For religion is the concern of all, and the moſt momentous things ought to be obvious, that none who are not extremely negligent, or wilfully blind, may be unacquainted with them.

And herein is wiſdom: to conſider God as great, good, and excellent, and to act accordingly, ſtanding in awe of his judgments, ſtudious to gain and keep his favour, by a ſincere regard to his holy laws, and doing the things that are well-pleaſing in his ſight.

We are alſo to believe, that Jeſus is the promiſed Meſſiah, the Chriſt, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world: that he acted by a ſpecial commiſſion under God the Father, and that the doctrine taught by him may be relied upon, as containing the true way to life.

Chriſtians muſt believe, that Jeſus had the innocent infirmities of the human nature; that he really had grief, that he really ſuffered and died, and roſe again, and is aſcended up to heaven. Otherwiſe they loſe all the benefit of his example.

We muſt remember, that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. For certainly every thing, concerning the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, was deſigned for the glory of God, and is actually conducive to it. By his life, doctrine, death, exaltation, and arguments taken thence, men have been turned from idols to the living and true God.

Jeſus, in his perſon, and example, in his life, and in his death, and in his exaltation, is unſpeakably amiable. And we ought to give glory and honour to him, who died for us, and roſe again, and is at the right hand of God. And though we have not ſeen him, we cannot but love him. Still it is not to be forgotten, that *Jeſus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.* There

There has been in all times occaſion for ſuch hints as theſe. And thoſe Chriſtians are not to be juſtified, who inſtead of of praying to the Father in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, addreſs almoſt all their prayers and praiſes to Chriſt, without any warrant from the New Teſtament, and contrary to expreſs and repeated inſtructions concerning the object and manner of worſhip.

One of the reaſons, why we ought ever to love and honour the Lord Jeſus, is, that through him we have been brought unto God, and to the knowledge of his glorious perfections, and over-ruling providence. As St. Peter writes, 1 ep. i. 18—21. *Foraſmuch as ye know ... that ye were redeemed by the precious blood of Chriſt, as of a lamb without blemiſh, and without ſpot. Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world; but was manifeſt in theſe laſt times for you: who by him do believe in God that raiſed him from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.*

2. The ſcheme, which has been laſt conſidered, appears to be the plaineſt and moſt ſimple of all. This was taken notice of formerly, and I do not intend to enlarge farther upon it now.

3. According to this ſcheme, the condeſcenſion and meekneſs, and other virtues of the Lord Jeſus are the moſt exemplary, and his exaltation is the moſt encouraging.

For he is truly * of kin to us, and a fit example of faith and patience, and rightly *the captain of our ſalvation:* whoſe conduct in circumſtances like ours, and under like temptations, is inviting and exemplary. Which is agreeable to divers parts

* Heb. ii. 11. *For both he that ſanctifieth, and they who are ſanctified, are all of one. For which cauſe he is not aſhamed to call them brethren. All of one.* Εξ ενος παντες. 'Of one father, that is God.' ſays Grotius. 'Of one original and nature.' Whitby. 'Of one ſtock and nature.' S. Clarke. 'Have all the 'ſame origin.' Beauſobre. Who goes on: 'all are of one, meaning 'of Adam. In order to be high 'prieſt for men, it was neceſſary, 'that Jeſus Chriſt ſhould be man. 'This is what renders him ſenſible 'to the ſufferings of men: that 'which diſpoſes him to love and 'help them, and which put him in 'a condition, whereby he was able 'to offer up himſelf a ſacrifice for 'them. See v. 14, 17, 18. and ch. 'v. 2. x. 5.' 'Of one father Abraham,' ſays Peirce. Who alſo adds in his notes: 'This interpretation is confirmed by ver. 16, '17. For he laid not hold of angels, but of the ſeed of Abraham. 'Wherefore in all things it behoved 'him to be made like unto his brethren: meaning the ſeed of Abraham.' Which makes little difference in the preſent argument. See before, at p. 626. Note.

of

of the apoſtle's argument in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, ch. iv. 14—16. *Let us hold faſt our profeſſion. For we have not an high prieſt, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin. Let us therefore come bóldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* See alſo ch. ii. 10—18.

Our Lord's exaltation is alſo, in this way, moſt encouraging. His condeſcenſion and obedience, in acquieſcing in his low condition on this earth, and in yielding up himſelf to death, are ſet before us as an example to be imitated. And it is added: *Wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him.* This affords reaſon to think, that if we practiſe meekneſs, and other virtues, and are obedient to God, and promote the good of our fellow-creatures; we likewiſe ſhall be highly exalted, and greatly rewarded. But ſuppoſing Jeſus to have been, before his appearance on this earth, under God, the creator and governor of the world; his glorification after death will not ſeem to be ſo much the reward of his faith and obedience here, as the reinſtating him in what he enjoyed, and had a right to before. Our caſe is then ſo different from his, as to have little or no reſemblance. And his glorification, or exaltation, if it may be ſo called, will be little or no excitement to us.

But we ſhould preſerve this quickening motive and conſideration, the glory and reward of Jeſus, in all its force. Which, as it ſtands in this text, and in many other places of the New Teſtament, is the moſt animating thought that can be conceived.

As the apoſtle ſays, Heb. xii. 1, 2. *Let us lay aſide every weight, and the ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us, and let us run with patience the race that is ſet before us: looking unto Jeſus, the captain, and perfect example of faith, who for the joy that was ſet before him endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down on the right hand of God.* And ſays our exalted Lord to the church of the Laodiceans: *To him that overcometh will I grant to ſit with me in my throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father in his throne,* Rev. iii. 21.

And let us particularly remember the moving exhortation in our text. For though, becauſe of the different ſentiments of Chriſtians in ſome points of a ſpeculative nature, this, and ſome former diſcourſes have been, in part, controverſial, the genuine import and deſign of the text is throughout practical; and

and tends to diſpoſe us, as occaſions require, to be ready to promote the good of others, and for that end to ſtrive to out-do each other in meekneſs and condeſcenſion. *If there be any conſolation in Chriſt—fulfil ye my joy—Let nothing be done through ſtrife, or vain glory, but in lowlineſs of mind let each eſteem another better than themſelves. Look not every man on his own things: but every man alſo on the things of others. Let that mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus.* Who, though he had ſuch peculiar diſtinctions on account of his high office and character, did not earneſtly covet divine honour from men, nor affect external greatneſs, pomp and ſplendour, power and authority, eaſe and pleaſure; but emptied himſelf; and acted as a ſervant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs. For which reaſon he has been advanced to extenſive dominion and power, and great honour and glory: in which all others ſhall ſhare hereafter, who now have a temper and conduct reſembling his.

THE END OF THE TENTH VOLUME.