

LECTURES

ON THE

SHORTER CATECHISM

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

ADDRESSED TO YOUTH.

BY

ASHBEL GREEN, D. D.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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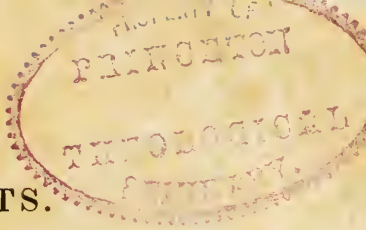
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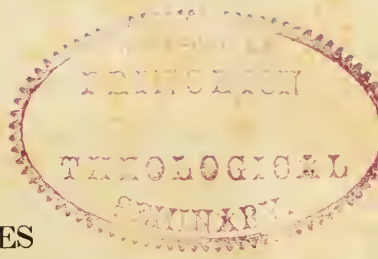
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LECTURES

ON

THE SHORTER CATECHISM.

LECTURE XXXIV.

IN the following Lecture, we are first to consider that "the duty which God requires of man, is obedience to his revealed will."

Hitherto, in our Catechism, our attention has been directed to matters of faith; although I have endeavoured, through the whole, to give a *practical* direction and application to all that has been said.

At an early period of these Lectures, I made it a point to show you the importance of a right creed in religion; and that the maxim so often heard from the lovers of lax principles, "that it is no matter what a man believes, if his life be good," is a compound of absurdity and falsehood. It would certainly not be worth our while to search laboriously after truth, if, when found, it were of no *practical* utility; no better than falsehood itself, as to its influence on action. The fact is, that in the sight of God, as I have heretofore shown you, *principle* is every thing; and principle refers to the understanding as well as to the heart. It is consequently of infinite importance that our faith, as to the essentials of religion, be right; because this is the foundation and vital spring of duty.

It was, therefore, with great propriety, that the authors of our Catechism, in giving a summary of religious truth, stated the essential articles of faith, or the things to be believed, before they gave a detail of duties, or things to be done. But as truth is in order to duty, faith in order to practice, those who formed the Catechism, after having delineated the essential principles of revealed truth, and shown how they are to be embraced and rested upon as the source and fountain of holy action, proceed, with their usual accuracy, to specify the duties which are to be performed.

By *duty*, in the answer before us, we are to understand that which is *due* to God, from his creature man. Not, indeed, that we can ever *so* render to God his due, in our present fallen and depraved state, as that we shall be, in consequence of it, out of debt to our Maker. On the contrary, we shall never perform any duty in a right or acceptable manner, if we expect to make more of it, than an humble expression of gratitude and love. It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, for the violation and neglect of duty; and even for the imperfection of our best performances. To the mediation and intercession of Christ, we must be indebted for the pardon of sin, for acceptance with God, and for our whole future happiness in the heavenly world. But it is the deep sense which the believer has of this very truth—of his infinite obligation for redeeming mercy, which makes him earnestly desirous to obey all God's commandments; that he may hereby express, as I have said, his gratitude to Him whose commandments they are, whose will in all things he esteems to be right, and who, for Christ's sake, both accepts and graciously rewards the obedience which is rendered from a right principle, although attended with many imperfections. Those imperfections, nevertheless, the believer always bewails; he aims at that perfection which in this life he never reaches: he loves the whole law of God, and loves it because it is a perfect law. If he could have a mitigated law, which

some vainly talk of, it would only, on that very account, be the less amiable to him. The law of God was never too strict; had it been so, it would have been unjust, and unworthy of its Author. It was always perfectly holy, just, and good; and of course any mitigation, or change, would abate its excellence, and make it less worthy of the love and estimation of every holy soul. Such a soul must love a perfect law; and while its reliance is wholly on the righteousness of Christ for that obedience which justifies, the law is obeyed out of cordial love to it, as well as from love to Him whose law it is; and of whose mind and will, indeed, it is but the expression, exhibition, and likeness.

The *whole* revealed will of God forms the rule of our duty; and you will observe that all the excellence of our obedience, is derived from its being rendered to a rule which is recognized as the will of God. Without this, what we do can never with propriety be called *obedience*. It may be something that incidentally coincides with the Divine will, but it is a fulfilling of our own will, and not a conformity to that of our Maker. To give it the character of *obedience*, it must be done out of a supreme regard to the authority of God, who requires it. Then it will be in us the *acknowledgment* of his authority—an act infinitely suitable for such dependent creatures as we are; and which the Creator indispensably demands. Let us carefully remember, then, that we never render any acceptable obedience to God, till we conform to his laws from *a regard to his authority*, as the very ground and reason of our obedience.

I shall dismiss the answer before us, with one other remark, which I think of much importance, and for the introduction of which this seems the proper place: It is, that God's *revealed* will, and not his *secret* will, is the rule of our obedience. God's secret will is reserved to himself, as the rule of his own procedure; but his revealed will is made known to us as the rule of our faith and conduct. Observe how explicitly this

is declared in Scripture—"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." Remember this, my young friends—never inquire after the secret will of God. It is a presumptuous and wicked trespass on his prerogative. Never attempt, therefore, to be wise above what is written. Go just as far as God's revealed will will carry you, and there stop. What he has not revealed leave with himself. Take the information, and obey the commands which he has plainly given, and the issue will certainly be happy. But if you seek to explore his inscrutable counsels, or to go further than his word conducts you, be assured of endless doubt and perplexity, and unhappiness.—You will offend your God, and torment yourselves. To give one example: Never seek to know whether you, or any one else, is chosen to eternal life, in any other way than by seeking the favour of God through Jesus Christ. To seek the favour of God through Christ, is your revealed, commanded duty: but who belong to the number of the elect, is hidden from us in the secret will of God. Those who embrace the Saviour may indeed know *by that act*, that they are chosen in him; but to seek to know it in any other way, is a trespass on God's prerogative.

We now proceed to the next answer of our Catechism, which is, "The rule which God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law."

The laws of God are usually distinguished into *natural* and *positive*; a distinction which I have heretofore explained, and shall at present add but little. The law of God *natural*, or *the law of nature*, is—"that necessary, unalterable rule of right and wrong, which is founded in the infinitely holy and just nature of God; and to an obedience to which, men, as reasonable and moral beings, cannot, from their very nature, but be indispensably bound."

By the *positive* laws of God, we mean, "such in-

stitutions as depend only on the sovereign will and pleasure of God; and which he might not have enjoined, and yet his nature have remained the same." Such was the command given to Adam not to eat the forbidden fruit; for we can easily conceive that some other test of obedience might have been given, and which, if it had been given, would have been equally binding. And all the ceremonial precepts, under the ancient Mosaic dispensation, were certainly of this description; for they have long since been actually abrogated by Christ, the lawgiver of the church; although they were as binding on the Jews, till abrogated, as any other of the divine laws.

The dictates of the law of nature were "at first," or originally, written fairly, (so to speak,) by the finger of God, on the heart or mind of man, at his creation. This is certainly what is chiefly intended when it is said, that he was made in "the image of God." He knew his duty fully, and he was perfectly disposed and able to perform it. By the fall, man has become totally averse to that obedience which he owes to God. Yet the fall and original depravity notwithstanding, he still retains a moral nature. He has a natural conscience; he has an innate sense of right and wrong in human conduct; and some general principles of the law of nature are still found in the whole of our race. The apostle to the Romans is explicit in declaring this—"The Gentiles, (says he,) which have not the law, (that is, the revealed moral law,) do by nature the things contained in the law; these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the meanwhile, accusing or else excusing, one another."

There is some difference between the law of nature, and what is called the moral law, as contained in the decalogue. The same duties which are contained in the law of nature, are prescribed also in the written moral law; yet in the moral law there are some things of a positive kind. The law of nature,

for example, teaches that God is to be worshipped; but it required a positive precept, to render binding the setting apart of the seventh day, specially for the performance of that worship. And this I think will explain sufficiently a point which has been a good deal agitated by some theological writers, namely, whether the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, was, in reality, any thing more than a republication of the law of nature. It certainly contained all the great principles of the law of nature, but it also clearly contained something more. Besides, it was not published as a covenant of works, which was the true design of the law of nature when it was given to Adam. The moral law then, as given at Sinai, recognized the principles of the law of nature; but withal made some additions of a positive kind; and gave the whole with a totally different view—not as a covenant of works to believers, but only as a rule of life, by which they are to walk—while they rely on a Mediator for that perfect and meritorious obedience which they can never render.

I have just said that the moral law is to be viewed as the rule of our obedience. I add, that it must also be viewed as the *reason* of our obedience. This, which I have already intimated, I must for a moment press on your attention. Remember then, that we must not only do what is commanded in the law, and avoid what is forbidden; but we must also do good for this very reason, *that God requires it*; and avoid evil *because he forbids it*. Hear his own words—“I am the Lord your God, *therefore*, (i. e. because I am the Lord your God,) ye shall keep my statutes and judgments.”

I now remark, that all the requisitions of the moral law are *immutably* binding on man, unless he have an express dispensation in regard to positive precepts, from the lawgiver, God himself. With respect to the Deity, those precepts which do not flow absolutely and immediately from his nature, may, in certain particular cases, be altered or changed, by his own express appointment; but in no possible case, can

they be altered, changed, or abrogated by man, without this appointment. For a father deliberately to take away the life of an unoffending child, is a most flagrant violation of a moral law, which no man, nor body of men on earth, can ever change or abrogate. Yet in the case of Abraham, when he was commanded to offer up his son Isaac, there was an appearance of abrogating it, on the part of God, the lawgiver. God has an indisputable right to take away the life of any man, in any circumstances. He is doing it daily. He has also a right to make use of any instrument for the purpose, which he may choose: and to make proof of the unreserved obedience of Abraham, he called him to act as his instrument in this instance. Abraham knew this, and he obeyed. He knew, as I have said, that God had a perfect right to take away at his pleasure any human life, and to make use of any instrument he might choose for the purpose. Abraham was also perfectly satisfied that he was called to act *instrumentally* on this occasion; and that however inscrutable to him the whole proceeding might be, and actually was, the attributes of God afforded an unquestionable assurance that the design was just, and wise, and good. Perfectly assured of this, and well knowing that the lawgiver had a right to dispense with his own law, Abraham's consent to take away the life of his only and well beloved son, was so far from being a consent to an act of murder, that it was in the most eminent degree an act of faith, piety, and obedience to God; and it is accordingly, and uniformly, represented as such in holy Scripture. Isaac indeed was not actually sacrificed; but the principles I have explained show that Abraham acted on warrantable grounds, while he expected, as he certainly did expect, to offer up his son, in whom his own hopes and the promises of God had centered.

Let me now remind you that the moral law is a *perfect* rule of life and manners—so perfect that it admits neither of addition nor diminution. “The law of the Lord is perfect;” says the Psalmist. It

was never the design of our Saviour, either to supply any defects of the law, or to correct any mistakes in it. He acted the part of an *interpreter* and *defender* of the moral law, but he did, in no respect, assume the character of a *new lawgiver*. He explained and vindicated it from the corrupt glosses and perversions of the Scribes and Pharisees, but he made no alterations, additions, or abatements. On one occasion, indeed, he said, "a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." But where this is said, the context clearly shows, that our Lord himself considered this commandment as new, in no other sense than as being enforced by a new motive, namely, his own example of unparalleled love to us; for it is immediately added, "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another." Christ himself explicitly declared, "I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it."

As righteousness and life cannot, since the fall, be obtained by our personal obedience to the moral law, it is proper to show, distinctly, what is its legitimate use to mankind at present. It is, my children, of the highest use both to believers and to unbelievers; to those who have savingly embraced the Redeemer, and to those who have not. To believers it is manifestly of the highest use; for although they are not under it as a covenant of works, by which they are to be justified, yet, as I have repeatedly stated, and can scarcely too much inculcate, they are fully under it as a rule of duty; and they account it their happiness and privilege to be so. Nor is this all. It is of the utmost use to excite them to cultivate and express their gratitude to Christ Jesus for fulfilling this law; fulfilling it as a covenant, and in their behalf. Thus they are taught by it their infinite obligations to the Redeemer, and made to cleave to him as their all in all.

The moral law is also of the highest use to those who are yet in their sins. It is of use to discover to them their utter impotence, and inability to obtain justification and salvation by any obedience which

they can render to it; and thus it is a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, that they may be justified by faith. The law requires spotless purity of nature, and perfect, personal and perpetual obedience; and to these not one of the human race can pretend. The law, therefore, *shuts them up* to their absolute need of Christ, who has done for sinners what they could never do for themselves. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

I close the Lecture with entreating you, my dear youth, to meditate closely and seriously on the thought last suggested. You must answer to God for your obedience to his holy and faultless law. You cannot plead your own obedience. However amiable your exterior, still, before the heart-searching and rein trying God you are guilty and polluted sinners. If not blinded by your sins, you will admit that such is the melancholy fact. The law therefore condemns you; and it will eternally condemn you, unless by faith you become interested in that perfect righteousness of the Redeemer, on account of which God can be just, and yet the justifier of the penitent and believing sinner. Hasten your flight then to "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." *Hasten*, I say—for if the arrest of death overtake you unreconciled to God by Jesus Christ, there will remain no more sacrifice for sin—you will be undone for ever. But if vitally united to the Saviour, the law of God, completely satisfied by him, will have no demand on you; and with him you will live and reign for ever, in the mansions of eternal bliss. Amen.

LECTURE XXXV.

AFTER speaking, in the last Lecture, of the nature and design of the moral law, it may be proper to make a few remarks on the ceremonial and judicial law of the Jews; for which no other so proper an occasion will be presented in lecturing on the Catechism. We cannot pretend, however, to enter far, or with any minuteness, into this subject.

The ceremonial law was a system of positive precepts, relating to the external worship of God, in the Old Testament church. These were all given by particular revelation to Moses, and by him delivered to the children of Israel, sanctioned by the authority of Jehovah. During the ancient dispensation, therefore, they were as obligatory on the Israelites, as the moral law itself. Or rather, during that dispensation, they were, in a certain sense, part of the moral law; inasmuch as that law enjoins a perfect obedience, or conformity, to all that God commands; and these ceremonial observances were, for the time being, commanded by Him:

Almost all the ceremonial institutions were of a typical nature. They were designed chiefly to typify Christ, as then to come, and to lead the Israelites to the knowledge of the way of salvation by him. "The passover, the priesthood, the temple, the altar, the sacrifices, the cities of refuge, the ark of the covenant, and the mercy seat, all were emblems of the Saviour, his offices, and the work of salvation which he accomplished. They were, as the apostle declares, "the shadow of good things to come, but the body is of Christ." When, therefore, Christ, who was the substance, actually appeared, all these shadows, or figurative representations of him, needed no longer to be preserved and repeated. The record of them is, indeed, preserved, that we may see how he was predicted and made known to the ancient church;

and that we may also see a beautiful illustration of many parts of his offices, character and work; but the ceremonial observances themselves, having answered their full design, are abolished by the Head of the church, who appointed them.”*

The judicial law of the ancient Israelites was that system of statutes which was given by God, for the temporal government of the Jews. It chiefly respected them as they were a nation distinct from all others—a theocracy, in which Jehovah sustained to them, not only the relation of Creator and Sovereign Lord, but that of a national head, or political chief. Some of these judicial laws, however, did not relate to the Jews as a peculiar people, but had their foundation clearly in the law of nature itself. This is, by no means, of small importance to be observed: because, although the judicial law, given by Moses, is completely abrogated, so far as it respected the peculiar constitution of the Jewish nation, yet, so far as it contains any statute founded in the law of nature, common to all nations, it is still of binding force.

Let us now proceed to consider the next question and answer of the Catechism.

“Q. Wherein is the moral law summarily comprehended?”

“A. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments.”

It is the nature of a summary to reduce a subject to its essence. Such is the nature of the decalogue, or ten commandments. It is surprising to see that all the moral laws can, as to their essence, be brought within the compass of ten short precepts. And we shall presently see, that when our Saviour gave a summary of this summary, (which he did by reducing all the moral laws to their *principle*,) he shortened it still more. These laws, however, when they are dilated, ramified and explained, make the subject of a considerable part of Holy Scripture; and it is of great importance to consider them in all their expansion, and to see, in detail, the duties which they

* McEwen.

enjoin, and the sins which they forbid. Hence the propriety and importance of those questions and answers of our Catechism, which show what is required, and what is forbidden, in each of these short precepts, and the reasons on which some of them are grounded.

The moral law, contained in the ten commandments, was given at Mount Sinai, or Horeb, and was written by the finger of God, in the first instance, on two tables of stone. The record of this transaction is very remarkable. It is said that "the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written." In this particular and repeated declaration, that the tables were written on *both sides*, the intimation is plainly given, that nothing was to be added to the words of the law, nor taken away from them. No room was left for addition, and who should dare to erase what the finger of God had inscribed! In the early ages of the world, the materials used at present for the making of records were not generally employed; yet the writing of these laws on *stone*, was probably intended to denote their perpetuity, and everlasting obligation.

Two tables were employed for writing or inscribing the decalogue, both at the first, and afterwards, when Moses had destroyed the original tables for the idolatry of the people, and prepared others in their place.

On one of these tables our duty to God was inscribed, and on the other our duty to man. The first four precepts, or commands, contain our duty to God, and the six following, our duty to our fellow creatures. Our duty to God is first prescribed, as first in importance; and then our duty to each other, as inseparably connected with it, and flowing from it. We are, let us remember, never to divide what God, in this manner, has joined together. They who would make the whole of religion to consist in the exemplary discharge of social and relative duties, while they render no immediate worship and service to God, ought to know and consider, that they neglect

the first and most important part of duty—their duty to Him who made them. And on the other hand, they who profess and appear to be punctilious in the worship and service of God, and yet are grossly negligent of social and relative duties, ought to be made sensible, that their Maker never will accept professed homage to himself, by those who treat a part of his laws with disregard and contempt. The apostle James is explicit on this topic—“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” That is, as the apostle immediately shows, he rebels against the authority of him by whom the whole law is enacted and sanctioned, and thus virtually sets the whole aside. Remember this, I repeat it, my dear youth. Never suppose that you can lawfully separate what God has intended to be inseparable. Never attempt to divide the duties which you owe to God and man. Never expect to be accepted of him in either, unless you conscientiously endeavour to perform both.

In attending to the ten commandments, it is obvious to remark, that some of the precepts are delivered in an affirmative, and some in a negative form. Between precepts thus delivered, casuists and expositors make this distinction. Affirmative precepts, they remark, lay down what is *always* our duty, but yet what we are not *at all times* to be engaged in the performance of. Thus it is *always* our duty to worship God; but we cannot, *at all times*, be engaged in his immediate worship. On the other hand, precepts delivered in the negative, or prohibitory form, are binding, not only *always* but *at all times*. It is, for example, at all times sinful to be profane, or to utter wilful falsehood.

As the moral law of God is (as was shown in the last lecture) perfectly reasonable, holy, just, and good, it admits of no infraction or violation, even of the slightest kind. As our Larger Catechism states, “It binds every one to full conformity in the whole man, unto the righteousness thereof, and to entire obedience for ever; so as to require the utmost perfection

in every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin."

In considering the nature of this law, we are also to remember that it is *spiritual*, reaching to the thoughts and motions of the heart, as well as to the words and actions of the life. Our Saviour was particular in inculcating this. He taught, that causeless anger was a breach of the sixth commandment, and impure desire a violation of the seventh.

"The law of God (says the Psalmist) is exceeding broad." Hence, where a duty is commanded, we are to consider the contrary sin as forbidden; and where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty as commanded. In like manner when any duty is commanded, all the means of its performance are commanded likewise; and when any sin is forbidden, all occasions of committing it, and all voluntary temptations to it, are also forbidden.

We now proceed to the next Question and Answer.

"Q. What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?"

A. The sum of the Ten Commandments is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbour as ourselves."

Here you perceive, as I have already intimated, that the summary of the moral law contained in the decalogue, is itself epitomized. This is done by reducing the law to its principle, namely, *love*. If we have suitable love to God and man, all that we can need further is, to be informed in regard to the most acceptable ways of expressing it. On the contrary, if we have not this love, we render no acceptable, no real obedience, whatsoever. In regard to God, who searcheth the heart, it must be obvious at once, that any external conformity to his laws which is not *cordially* rendered—which is yielded from the servile principle of fear, or from any motive which leaves the heart really alienated from God and his law—is no obedience at all. In all such cases, the external conformity itself would be withheld, but from some self-

ish regard. This is perfectly known to God, and he would sanction falsehood, which he can never do, if he should accept as done out of regard to him, what is really done only out of regard to self. Love, therefore, is manifestly essential to the *existence* of any thing that can be called obedience to God; there can be none without it. The truth is, our Maker's first demand is on our *hearts*; "My son give me thy heart," is his indispensable requisition: and till we comply with this we can never obey him aright. He requires the obedience, not of slaves, but of affectionate children.

In like manner, even in regard to man, there is no real duty performed without love. Man indeed cannot always discern the motives or springs of action, in his fellow man: and what purports to be done from right motives, he ought so to accept. But let a man know—as he sometimes may know—that another is showing him much *apparent respect*, without the least real regard: and what is his estimate of this apparent respect? Is he pleased with it? No; he regards him who renders it only as a hollow hearted hypocrite, who seeks to serve himself, by appearing to show a respect which he does not feel. This too, in all cases in which it takes place, is perfectly known to the heart-searching and rein-trying God: and, of course, he knows that we never truly perform a duty to our fellow men, till we love them as his law requires.

I have been thus particular in showing that *love* is absolutely essential to all real obedience, because men are extremely apt to satisfy themselves with some fair outward appearances, when they know nothing of real love to God; and it is infinitely important to take away from them this deceitful opiate of their consciences, and to show them that they have never yet rendered one single act of real obedience to God; and because also, it is *love* which is distinctly and precisely meant, in the answer before us, by the *sum* of the ten commandments. He that possesses genuine love to God, possesses a principle which includes in

its bosom all other duties. Hence, said the apostle, "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

Having seen the necessity and importance of the principle, let us now consider the rule or measure of its operation toward both God and man. Toward God, this principle is to operate in such manner and degree that we may truly be said "to love him with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind, and with all the strength." This is called by our Saviour the first and great commandment. And it is so called, because God, the object of it, is the first, and greatest, and most excellent of all beings, who plainly ought to have our supreme love—a love, to which our affection to every creature should be subordinate and subservient. Nay, our love to the creature is to flow from love to God, as its proper spring and fountain. Love to God, therefore, may well be called the first and great commandment. And in loving him, let it be observed, we are to recognize him as *our* God; our rightful Lord and sovereign; our Creator, our Father, our Preserver, our Benefactor, our Redeemer, and our Judge; our God, by every obligation of equity and of gratitude; the source of our being, our enjoyments, and our hopes.

When it is said that we are to love him with all our *heart, soul, mind, and strength*, I do not know that it is practicable or necessary to distinguish the exercises of love, as they separately flow from each of those powers, or principles of our nature, which are here enumerated. Such a distinction, I apprehend, it would be difficult, or perhaps impossible, to make with accuracy. The expression appears to me to have been chosen, as it is admirably adapted, to show that all our faculties, with all their energies, are to be exerted to the utmost in the love of God: that there is no power, or principle of our nature, which this love is not to pervade, animate, and command, at all times, and in a supreme degree. "We are to prize nothing in comparison with him, in our mind and judgment; we are to cleave to nothing in competition with him, in our will; we are to desire nothing in

comparison with him, in our affections; we are to pursue nothing but with relation to his glory, and in subordination to his sacred will."

Our love to our neighbour is measured by the rule, "that we love him as ourselves." Here it is fairly implied and supposed, that there is a lawful love of ourselves; because this is made the measure and pattern, according to which we should love others. A just distinction may be stated between *selfishness* and *self-love*. *Selfishness* is always criminal. It is seeking our own gratification, or emolument, at the expense of the just claims or expectations of others; than which nothing can be more opposite to that law of love to our neighbour, which we are now considering. But *self-love* is that reasonable and just attachment, which a man has to his own rights and happiness; grounded on the equal claims which he possesses as an individual of the species. It is the dictate of nature, is necessary to self-preservation, and is, as we have seen, the standard by which our love to our neighbour is to be measured.

I shall not at present take up your time with discussing a question on which many subtile things might be said; namely, are we bound to love our neighbour *as much* as ourselves? One point is clear—place your neighbour and yourself, or his property and yours, in equal danger, and suppose it impossible that you should persevere both, you are certainly right to take care of yourself and property, before you take care of him and his. The general practical rule is also clear—do to him as you might reasonably desire that, *in similar circumstances*, he should do to you. Consult his happiness and his interest, with the same sincerity and fidelity that you do your own; and as you would wish he should consult yours, in an exchange of situations.

The law of love to our neighbour requires that we forgive our enemies; that we exercise unfeigned benevolence to all men; and that we possess and cherish a sincere complacency and delight, in those who bear the image of our Heavenly Father. The forgiveness

of enemies is a grand peculiarity of the gospel system. It is expressly, repeatedly, and most pointedly enjoined by our Lord, as essential to our obtaining forgiveness from God, or having any claim to be regarded as his disciples. It forms the subject of one of six petitions, in which he has comprehended the subjects of prayer. He who cherishes a vindictive spirit, therefore, cannot be a real Christian. No principle of religion indeed does, or can enjoin us, to believe what is not true; and therefore we are certainly not required to believe that a man has not injured us, when he has actually and evidently done so. But the very notion of *forgiveness* implies injury; and the Christian duty, as laid down in the gospel, may be briefly stated thus. We are never, on any occasion, be the injury or provocation what it may, to cherish or yield to a desire of revenge. If the offending party manifest repentance and seek reconciliation, we are to be cordially reconciled, and to feel toward him, as if the offence had never existed. If he manifests no repentance or regret, but continues to seek to injure us, we may lawfully guard ourselves against him, repel his assaults, and make use of all proper means to obtain suitable redress. Yet we are still not only to forbear vindictive acts, but really to wish him well, to endeavour, if we have opportunity, to melt him into love, by returning good for evil; and we are to pray unfeignedly that he may be brought to repentance, and obtain forgiveness of God. It ought also to be added here, that the genuine temper of the gospel will dispose him who possesses it, to throw the mantle of charity over a multitude of minor faults in his neighbour, so as not only to forgive, but literally to forget them too.

On benevolence, or good will, to all mankind, it is not necessary to dwell long. It consists in regarding as brethren, all who partake of our common nature; in cherishing a sincere desire to relieve all their sufferings, and to promote all their interests, both temporal and spiritual. It seems to me that no one who possesses this essential characteristic of a Christian,

can think of the ignorance, and vice, and misery, which he witnesses around him, or reflect on the awful state of the heathen world, without being ready to contribute of his substance, and to use his best exertions, to remove this moral wretchedness, and to save the subjects of it from the more fearful misery to which they are exposed, in the world to come.

Complacency and delight in the people of God, and because they are his people and bear his image, is at once the duty which we owe to them, and the evidence of our own piety. If we love God, it will certainly follow that we shall love his image or likeness, wherever we behold it; and so, inversely, if we love his image, we certainly love him whose image it is. Hence the apostle John declares—"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." The people of God are all children of the same family, and must and will regard each other as brethren. There is a mournful degree of bigotry even among pious people. Be it our care, my children, to avoid it, as much as we can. Let us be careful to hold the truth, and to hold it fast. But wherever we see the evidence of a true Christian temper and practice, there let us always see a Christian brother, and let us feel toward him as such, and treat him as such, however he may differ from us in name, or in some of the circumstantials and forms of religion.

In making some practical improvement of the doctrine, taught in the answers of the Catechism which have at this time been under consideration, I would particularly advert to what has been said on the *perfection* of obedience which the moral law requires; and on its *extent* and *spirituality*, as reaching to all our thoughts, feelings, and words, as well as to all the actions of our lives. Consider that in every instance in which you have *come short* of a perfect obedience to this law, as well as in every instance in which you have actively and altogether transgressed it, you have been chargeable with sin. Consider, too, that in no one thought, word, or action, has

your obedience been entirely perfect. You will then see, that either by imperfection or actual transgression, guilt has been contracted, in every act of your whole existence. It is of great practical importance to have a clear view of this matter, humbling and awful as it certainly is; because in this way it is, that the law becomes "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." When we see, as if truly enlightened we shall see, that we are, throughout and altogether, polluted and vile, "that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; that from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores." O! then it is, that we see and feel that we must have a Saviour; an almighty and all sufficient Saviour; a Saviour whose merits are infinite; a Saviour to take our law place, and answer completely to the violated law of God, for all our innumerable transgressions, and our unutterable guilt. Then, with a listening ear, will be heard the precious offer of the gospel, presenting the Lord Jesus Christ to us, as exactly such a Saviour as our ruined and helpless condition demands; and inviting, yea commanding us, to come unto him, that he may be made of God unto us all that we need, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." And when, under the blessed influence of the Holy Spirit, the soul is sweetly and entirely drawn to Christ, and with great delight commits itself entirely to him, to be to it, and do for it, all that it needs, then ensues peace of conscience. It is seen that all the demands of God's violated law, are completely answered in behalf of the soul, by its dear and adored Redeemer; and that, for his sake, God is well pleased to be reconciled to the penitent and believing sinner. Yea, that the Divine glory will be made to shine most illustriously and to all eternity, in this very way, by acts of pardoning mercy, extended even to the chief of sinners. And the believing soul will invariably find, that this view of the plan of salvation will have a more sanctifying influence, will more incline it to hate and avoid all sin, and inspire it with a

stronger desire and a firmer purpose to obey all the commands of God, than can be derived from all legal terrors, or from any other source. Here then, precious youth, is the gospel plan of salvation, and the gospel mystery of sanctification. Here is the use of the moral law of God, and the method in which every believer, while he loves and honours and endeavours in all things to obey the law, as he always must, will still see, that he can neither have peace of conscience nor any confidence toward God, but as he pleads and trusts the finished, the perfect righteousness, of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way then, renouncing every other, seek salvation, and seek it till in Christ you find it, to your present satisfaction and your eternal well being. Amen.

LECTURE XXXVI.

WHEN God from Mount Sinai, delivered the moral law, as comprehended in the Decalogue, he introduced it, as we are informed, Exodus xx. 2, with these solemn and emphatic words—"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." These words our Catechism, with great propriety, denominates—"the Preface of the Ten Commandments." A preface is "something spoken introductory to the main design,"* and is intended to prepare the hearer, or reader, to receive what follows, with better understanding, and with more attention and regard, than might otherwise take place. And it will appear that the words with which the Decalogue was introduced, are admirably calculated to produce these effects, when we consider, as our Catechism affirms, that "the Preface to the Ten Commandments teacheth us, that because God is the Lord, and our God and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments."

There seems to be no reasonable ground whatever, for the notion which some have entertained, that the words we consider were intended to be a preface to the first commandment only, and not to the rest. Some special reference or application to the first, they may have; but they direct our attention to considerations, which powerfully enforce every other precept which follows. Even the duties which we owe to each other, derive their highest sanction from the relation in which we stand to God, and from the requirements of his holy law.

The Divine *condescension* in this matter, ought not to escape our notice. The great Lord of heaven and earth does not rest his requisitions on *authority*

* Johnson's Dictionary.

merely. He assigns the reasons why we should yield to his commands; the motives, in view of which we should, at once, feel obliged and be persuaded, to a cordial obedience; and thus he seeks to draw and urge us to our duty, by all the considerations that should influence rational beings—by all that can operate on the principles of gratitude and love, as well as on our sense of justice and propriety. In a word, he acts in this, not as an arbitrary sovereign, but as a tender and affectionate father.

The preface of the ten commandments teaches us, 1. That *God is the Lord*. I have heretofore had occasion to observe, that the Hebrew word *Jehovah* is almost uniformly, by our translators, rendered *Lord*. It is so rendered in the present instance. Our Maker assigns it as the first and formal reason why we should keep all his commandments, that he is *Jehovah*; that is, as this name imports, “the eternal, immutable, and almighty God, having his being in and of himself, and giving being to all his words and works.”* As he is then the source of all existence, and of all power, wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth, he must be seen and acknowledged, by every rational creature, to have a *right* to command. There can be no such thing as rightful and reasonable authority, if it does not belong to the Being whose power is almighty; and who possesses every other attribute, which can give full assurance that the power possessed will be wisely, and equitably, and kindly exercised. The consideration, therefore, of the very nature and attributes of God, shows in the clearest manner, that we ought to love and obey him with all our hearts, and with the utmost promptitude and cheerfulness. This is, and always has been, the indispensable duty of every individual of the human race. Hence the preface to the Decalogue, as well as each of the commands which it contains, is directed to *individuals*, and not to communities. “I am *thy* God. *Thou* shalt have no other gods before me.” It is a *personal concern* of every child of Adam, without

* Larger Catechism.

any exception, and without any excuse or delay, to yield unreserved obedience to God, in all that He commands.

2. The second reason or consideration which is assigned, why we should keep all the commands of Jehovah is, that he is *our God*. "I am the Lord *thy God*."

The ancient Israelites, to whom the words "I am the Lord thy God," were first addressed, were the descendants of Abraham, with whom and his seed, Jehovah had entered into a solemn covenant, and given them the rite of circumcision, as the sign and seal of that covenant. At this very time, they bore the evidence of the covenant in their flesh. They had moreover, the special presence of Jehovah among them, and the overwhelming manifestation of his power and majesty before their eyes, in the burning mount; and had actually consented to enter, renewedly and formally, into covenant with Him, who now uttered his voice from amidst the awful exhibitions of Sinai. To them, therefore, the words "I am thy God," were addressed with a peculiar emphasis. Jehovah was the covenant God of them and their fathers; he had been faithful to his covenant; he had been astonishingly compassionate and condescending to themselves, and they had, anew and voluntarily, consented to be his peculiar and obedient people. To have the Almighty Sovereign of the universe thus pledged to them, provided they should prove faithful to their part of the covenant, ensured to them privileges, advantages, and blessings, innumerable and of inconceivable value. By all these considerations and motives, then, he sought to secure their observance of the precepts he was about to deliver—an observance which was to be the test of their fidelity in keeping the covenant, into which they were going to enter. It was not expected, indeed, that they would so observe the moral law as to be the ground of their justification before God, as a matter of merit; but it was required, that they should exhibit such a cordial obedience to the whole of this law, as to show their supreme love to its Author, and thus prove that they

were interested in that efficacious atonement for sin by the promised Messiah, which was so strikingly prefigured in their sacrifices, and indeed in all their institutions. Such was the pregnant import of the words "I am thy God," to those to whom they were originally delivered.

But these words, my dear youth, are as really addressed to us, as they were to the Israelites at Sinai. The moral law, then promulged, was intended to be as binding under the gospel, as under the Mosaic dispensation. It was sanctioned both by the words and by the example of the Saviour. It was, indeed, to restore its honours by his obedience, and to endure its awful penalty in behalf of his people, that he came into our world. This law is therefore of everlasting and unchangeable obligation; and although, as you have frequently heard in these lectures, believers in Christ are not under it as a covenant of works, since, in that view of it, all its demands were answered by their Surety and in their behalf; yet their observance of it as a rule of life, is the test of their discipleship, and the evidence of their union with him as their covenant head. Hence the words, "I am your God," apply with as much force to professing Christians as to the ancient Israelites. Nay, since we have more light and richer blessings than were vouchsafed to them, our obligations are even more numerous, tender, and touching than theirs. Remember, I beseech you, my young friends, that you have been brought under the most solemn obligations to consider the God of Israel as *your* God. You have recognized these obligations, in every act of religious worship in which you have professed to join: for whom do you worship, but Him whom you avow to be *your* God? and those of you who have been dedicated to God in holy baptism, have been formally and solemnly placed under the bonds of this covenant. You have been consecrated to Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. You are bound to be his, by every awful and endearing tie. He is emphatically *your* God, and you are bound to be his people—bound to be for him and not

for another. Nor can you, without guilt and folly that has no parallel, regard these obligations as a burden. They are, on the contrary, connected with privileges and blessings, beyond the power of language to describe. If you do not violate your obligations to be the Lord's, if you truly comply with the terms of the gospel covenant, a faithful and covenant-keeping God will, on his part, grant you all the blessings of that covenant. He will, so to speak, give you Himself. He will be to you all that the infinite Jehovah can be, to creatures of your limited capacity. As a pious writer expresses it, "He will make over all his glorious attributes and excellences to be yours; his infinity to be the extent of your inheritance; his eternity to be the date of your happiness; his unchangeableness to be the rock of your rest; his wisdom to direct you; his power to protect you; his holiness to sanctify you; his justice to acquit you; his goodness to reward you, in the way of grace, not of debt, and his truth to secure to you the accomplishment of all his promises."* Who can express or conceive all the obligations, by which we are bound to regard Jehovah as *our* God, and as such to keep all his commandments!

3. God is *our Redeemer*. "I have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The claims which Jehovah, the God of Israel, had on the gratitude, confidence, and obedience of his ancient chosen people, in consideration of his freeing them from their grievous bondage in Egypt, were no doubt of the strongest kind. Their oppression and sufferings had been extreme; and the interposition of their Omnipotent deliverer was marked by miracle, at every step. Not only had he completely emancipated them from the most cruel and abject slavery, when they were utterly unable to do any thing for their own relief, but he had destroyed their proud oppressor and all his armed host, and had given their spoil to them—his liberated and joyful people. That this people should willingly and unre-

* Fisher.

servedly obey all the commands of a Deliverer of such unbounded wisdom, power and goodness, and to whom they were under such peculiar obligations, was what common sense and common gratitude would instantly enforce and urge, in the most decisive manner. It therefore needed only to be mentioned, yet it was peculiarly proper that it should be mentioned, when a code of moral laws was about to be enacted by this Almighty Benefactor, for the obedience of the people who owed him so many obligations.

This deliverance from Egyptian bondage, however, was typical of a far greater deliverance—the deliverance of the people of God from the slavery of sin and Satan, by the Lord Jesus Christ, their divine Redeemer. How much of this *spiritual deliverance* was apprehended by the ancient Hebrews, we cannot precisely tell. The substance of it must have been perceived, by those who had spiritual discernment. That Christ was typified by the Passover instituted in Egypt, and that the Rock which supplied them with water in the wilderness was emblematical of Christ, and indeed that nearly the whole of their institutions were symbolical of his character and work, we learn from the unerring oracles of God. Zacharias also appears to allude to the Egyptian, as well as to other deliverances, which his people had experienced, when, in anticipation of the birth of the Messiah, then near at hand, he said, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited and redeemed his people;” and he goes on to recognize in that event the fulfilment of all the prophecies, and the oath of God to Abraham, “that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.” There is therefore no force put on the words, when the authors of our Catechism consider them as pointing to the redemption of Christ, and as teaching us to consider God as our Redeemer from a thralldom, infinitely worse in its nature and consequences, than that which the Hebrews suffered, in the land of Egypt.

Recollect that it was God our Redeemer—that it was “Immanuel, God with us,”—who, from the top of Sinai, delivered the ten commandments, as a moral law, for the guidance of all men in the performance of their various duties—recollect that it was he who loved his people with a love that was stronger than death; that it was he who gave his life for theirs; that it was he who raised them from being heirs of hell to be the heirs of heaven—recollect that he it was, who gave us all these precepts; and that he gave them, not less with a view to our own best interest, than as a test of our obedience and attachment to himself—recollect all this, and then say, whether the conclusion of our Catechism be not well and strongly made, that “because the Lord is our God and Redeemer, THEREFORE we are bound to keep all his commandments.”

I am particularly solicitous, my young friends, now that we are entering on the consideration of the moral law of God, that you should take that view of it which has just been given; and that you should keep it in mind, through the whole of the ensuing lectures on the precepts of the decalogue. If you will consider God, in the character of your Redeemer, as delivering these commandments, they will come with the most powerful appeals to your hearts and consciences, and you will, at the same time, view an obedience to them in its true light—not as something that will merit heaven, but only as the proof and evidence of real, cordial love to the holy law of God, and of your discipleship, as the sincere followers of him who has redeemed you. Do you not perceive that the very notion and name of a Redeemer, implies that you were captives to sin and Satan? And if so, and you had nothing to pay, and must owe your deliverance entirely to him, ought he not to have the glory of the whole? Suppose your obedience, henceforth to the end of life, could be perfect, would that cancel your former debt? Would you not still owe ten thousand talents to the law and justice of God, for your past transgressions? But this supposition is never realized. No mere man, since the fall, ever did, or

ever will, obey the law of God perfectly, in this life; and therefore will need constant pardon for the imperfection of his present obedience, as well as for his previously aggravated and accumulated guilt. You perceive, then, that you must be indebted to the boundless grace of God in the Redeemer, for the *whole* of your salvation. Yet this ought not to diminish, but greatly to increase, your sense of obligation to obey his commandments? The inherent excellence, and indispensable obligation of the moral law of God, contained in the ten commandments, is no where so clearly and strikingly seen, as in the whole process of that redemption which Christ hath wrought out, for all who believe in him. If it had not been a good, reasonable, equitable, and holy law in itself, he would surely never have consented to be made under it, to obey it perfectly, and to bear its penalty to the utmost. But if the law is good and excellent in itself, all who love goodness and excellence must love this law; and if they love it, they will try to the utmost to obey it; for it is a gross absurdity to pretend to love a law, which we habitually allow ourselves to disregard and violate. The very nature of a law implies the demand of obedience; and if we love the demand of obedience, we shall assuredly render obedience. This obedience, moreover, in the present instance, is the appointed expression of our gratitude and love to Christ. This is his own test—"If ye love me, keep my commandments." Thus you see that if you are right-minded, you will strive to walk by the moral law as a rule of life, both because you love it for its own excellence, and because this is to be the proof of your gratitude and love to your Saviour. This is what is called evangelical obedience, and *new* obedience—an obedience rendered from the new principle of love—not from the slavish principle of fear, nor the mercenary principle of purchasing or meriting heaven. May the Spirit of all grace incline us all to such an obedience, to all the commandments of God our Redeemer; and to his name shall be all the praise, both now and evermore—Amen.

LECTURE XXXVII.

“THE first commandment is—Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

The first commandment requireth us to know, and acknowledge God, to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly.”

It may be observed, that all the commandments are delivered in the form of prohibitions, except the fourth and fifth, which would scarcely allow of a negative expression. The reason of this no doubt is, that prohibitions admit of no exceptions; they oblige, as I have heretofore shown, *always* and *at all times*. It is in this form, moreover, that a summary, which the decalogue was intended to be, can most intelligibly and completely be given.

Prohibitions, I have also remarked, especially when the subjects of them are highly important, always imply an obligation to perform certain duties, which are their opposites; and in like manner, positive precepts always imply the forbidding of those things which would be a neglect or violation of the duties required. But in addition to these implications, the preface of the ten commandments, which we have already considered, strongly indicates the positive duties of supreme love and gratitude to our Creator and Redeemer, and that to worship and obey him in all that he requires in his revealed will, is, in the highest degree, obligatory on all his rational and moral creatures—Hence the propriety of considering, as the framers of our catechism have done, what is required, and what is forbidden, in each commandment. In the first commandment, moreover, a special consideration of the highest importance is included; and to the four commandments which immediately follow the first, reasons are subjoined by the supreme Law

Giver; all of which have justly received the special notice of the authors of this excellent summary of Christian duty.

In duties themselves there is an *order*, which it is of much importance to observe. There is scarcely a greater or more mischievous error, than one which has found advocates, even among some who profess a regard to revealed truth; namely, that the principal service which God requires of us, and which of course we need to be much concerned about, is the performance of *social duties*—the duties of justice and benevolence to our fellow men. Now, that social duties constitute an indispensable part of all true religion, we both admit and inculcate. But we maintain that the duties *first in rank and importance*, are those which we owe immediately to God, our Creator and Redeemer; that he is infinitely the greatest and best of all beings, and that if reverence, love, service and worship, be due to Him at all, our obligations to these must, of necessity, be higher and more sacred than any other. We also insist, and we appeal to all experience and observation to confirm the position, that our social duties themselves, not only derive their highest sanction from the command and authority of God, but are never so carefully and extensively performed, as by those who preserve on their minds a constant sense of the presence of the Deity, and of their responsibility to him—which is to be effected only by a holy intercourse, maintained with Him, in the acts of his immediate worship. These observations, although in substance made in a former part of these lectures, are introduced at this time, because they receive the most powerful confirmation, by the order in which the precepts of the moral law have been delivered to us by God himself. The first four commands of the decalogue, you will observe, relate to the duty which we owe directly to Him; thus laying the most solid foundation for the six which follow, in relation to the duties which we owe to each other. We may even proceed a step further, and

remark that the first command forms, as it were, a basis for all the rest.* this command teaches us the exclusive and absolute supremacy of Jehovah, as our God and Redeemer, and the righteous claim which he has to our highest love and unreserved obedience; and these lie at the foundation of the whole law; so that without a cordial reception of these truths, we shall never render a careful or an acceptable obedience to any subsequent precept.

Let us now proceed to consider in detail, the requisitions of the first commandment, as specified in our Catechism. These may be considered under three particulars, the first of which is,

“To know and acknowledge God to be the only true God.”

Belief in the existence and perfections of God, is the foundation of all religion. Some notion of a Supreme Being, as heretofore more particularly shown,† is either a dictate of nature, or has been a matter of such universal tradition, that it has been found among the most savage and barbarous people. The possibility, and even the facility, of discovering the existence of God by the light of nature, seems to be distinctly asserted by the apostle, when he says, (Rom. i. 20,) “The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power

* Ridgley’s remark on the location of the first commandment is exceedingly pertinent and just. He says—“It is fitly placed before all the other commandments, because it is, from the nature of the thing, necessary to our performing the duties which are required in them. The object of worship must first be known, before we can apply ourselves, in a right manner, to perform any duty prescribed, whether respecting God or man.”

† In order to preserve the connexion of those principles and facts that must always be conjoined in reasoning, the author has thought it right to repeat, with a little variation in the language, some things which are stated and enlarged upon, in some of the first lectures of his course. It was thought better to do this, than to be constantly making references, which, if made, many would not regard, and thus would lose the force of the reasoning. Let this be considered as an apology, made once for all, for the repetitions which may hereafter appear.

and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." But this notwithstanding, a knowledge of "the true God," as the apostle in the same place distinctly shows, was nearly banished from the earth. The most learned and polished nations, in the ancient world, were so far from preserving this knowledge, that they multiplied their false gods to an unparalleled degree. The polytheism of the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Carthaginians, Greeks and Romans, was more gross and multifarious than that of any other people. It was to preserve in the earth the knowledge and worship of the true God, that Abraham was called away from his idolatrous kindred, and that the nation that descended from him was made a peculiar people—the depositaries of the oracles and institutions of Jehovah. The first precept of the moral law, which we now consider, was intended SPECIALLY to guard against the sin of forsaking the true God, for the worship of idols; and yet, with every guard that could be placed around them, they were incessantly lapsing into idolatry, till they were effectually cured of this propensity by their seventy years captivity in Babylon.

That Jehovah is the "only God," or God alone, is the great fundamental truth of revelation. The unity of God is indeed a part of what is called natural religion; because reason teaches the infinity of the Supreme Being, and one supreme and independent Being does not admit of any more. The multiplication of deities, however, where the light of revelation has not prevented it, has been universal. In India, at the present day, they reckon many thousand objects of worship, among the native heathen.

Nor is a belief in the *unity* of the Godhead always accompanied with a just apprehension of the Divine character; or, in other words, a knowledge of the true God. Not only have the Mohammedans, who make the unity of God an essential article of their creed, very erroneous and unworthy conceptions of his nature and attributes, but the same is true of Deists, who live under the full light of divine reve-

lation. Nay, unsanctified men in general, have no adequate perceptions of the true God. They do not contemplate him in his "whole round of attributes complete." They do not, especially, view him as perfect in his moral purity, and as inflexibly just—a holy, sin hating, and sin punishing God. Hence they often vainly think that they love him, and that he also regards them with approbation. The Psalmist, speaking of the wicked, says, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them (that is, thy sins,) in order before thee." My dear youth, you ought to be sensible, that false and inadequate ideas of God are a principal cause why unrenewed men are at ease in their sins. If they suitably apprehended him to be what he is, "a consuming fire" to the wicked, they could not be at peace with themselves, without being reconciled to him and making him their friend.

We have a declaration of some of the chief attributes of the true God, made by himself, and made, it should be remembered, at the time he inscribed the precepts we are considering on two tables of stone, with his own finger. It is said (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7,) "And the Lord passed by before him (Moses) and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." It appears to have been the design of Jehovah, in these memorable words, to proclaim his *moral attributes* only; the occasion particularly requiring this, when his covenant people, after their shameful fall into idolatry, were again to be received into his favour. A summary expression of all the attributes of the true God, so far as made known to us in his works and in his word, is given in an answer to the question in our Catechism, "What is God?" The answer, you recollect, is—"God is a spirit, infinite,

eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." To what was said in the lectures in which this comprehensive answer was discussed, I must refer you, for a more enlarged and particular view of the character of the true God.

We must not, however, pass from the particular now under consideration, without remarking—and it is with deep concern that I make the remark—that if the one true God has revealed himself to us, as we most firmly believe he has, as existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, then those who reject this truth, do not know and cannot worship the true God; the being they worship is not the Jehovah revealed in the Holy Scriptures. They do not come to the Father in the only way of access, through the mediation of the Son, and by the sought and sacred influences of the Holy Spirit. "I am the way and the truth and the life," said the Saviour, "no man cometh unto the Father but by me.—He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent him." Through him, (Jesus Christ) saith the apostle, "we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father."

Nor must the point we here consider be left without reminding you distinctly, that the knowledge and acknowledgment of the only true God must be *practical*, as well as *speculative*, if we would derive from it the saving benefit which it was intended to convey. It is possible to "hold the truth in unrighteousness." A speculative knowledge of God, however correct, if it consist in barren inefficient notions, or be only carelessly or formally made, will not save or profit our souls: it will only serve, if persisted in, to aggravate our condemnation. The knowledge and acknowledgment of God, in order to be beneficial and saving, must be *practical*. We must have such a lively apprehension of his relation to us, as is accompanied with an habitual conformity to his will in heart and life; and we must own, avouch, and confess him, as the only true God, in our secret and so-

cial worship of him, and if opportunity be afforded, by an open profession of our attachment and devotion to him, before the world—"With the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

The second particular mentioned in the answer before us, as a requirement of the first commandment, is, the acknowledging of the only true God *as our God*. This has, in a degree, been unavoidably anticipated. Yet a most important consideration remains to be noticed here; which is, that the Lord Jehovah can never be *our God*, in the sense of this answer, and we know and acknowledge him as such, except as he is manifested to us, and as we are reconciled to him, in and through Christ Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. The covenant of works was made with man at his creation; and while he retained his primitive rectitude and holiness, man could, without a Mediator, look to Jehovah as *his* God, in the same manner as the holy angels still do—could see in his Creator a God in covenant, all whose attributes were engaged to insure his happiness. But when the covenant of works was violated on the part of man, Jehovah was no longer *his* God, in any sense implying friendship! The parties respectively were completely at variance. Man had become a rebel, and Jehovah was to him "a consuming fire." Hence, in the very announcement of a plan for the reconciliation of the sinful rebel to his rightful and holy Sovereign, a Mediator was promised—promised as a part of the plan itself—"The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." From that period to the end of time, not an individual of the human race has been, or ever can be, in friendship with Jehovah, but through the intervention of the appointed Mediator, Christ Jesus the righteous. It is only "in Christ," that "God is reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." In order to reconciliation, therefore, man must feel and confess himself a sinner, lost and undone, and justly exposed to the curse of the law which he has broken, and to the wrath of God, of whose law that curse is

the penalty. In seeking the unmerited friendship of his Maker, he must cordially approve of the method of reconciliation through a Mediator. Into the hands of this Mediator, as having borne the curse, and satisfied all the demands of the violated law in his room and stead, he must unreservedly commit his soul; sincerely desirous that Christ Jesus may "be made of God unto him wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." The method of reconciliation appointed by God being thus fully complied with, the believing and penitent sinner may now, with holy confidence and humble assurance, look to God as *his* God; a God truly in covenant with his soul, and engaged to confer on him, in time and in eternity, all the blessings of the covenant—of that *new* covenant which is sealed with the blood of Jesus, the accepted testator and surety. In this way—the only way in which it can ever be done—may you and I, beloved youth, be brought to prefer an humble claim to the Lord Jehovah as *our* God. We shall then be prepared "to worship and glorify him accordingly." This is the third and last thing contained in the answer before us.

A very general and summary statement of what is implied in this clause of the answer, is all that can here be given; for to worship and glorify God *according* to his true character, as the only true God and our God, implies, or comprehends almost every Christian duty. Let it then suffice, in this place, to say,

1. That we must frequently and most reverently meditate on his being and his glorious attributes, viewing him as the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of the universe, and as possessing, in an infinite degree, all conceivable excellence and perfection, both natural and moral. We must think much of his being constantly present with us, knowing us more perfectly than we know ourselves, searching the secrets of our hearts, and marking in the book of his remembrance, every thought, word, and action of our whole lives. He must be much in our thoughts when

we rise up, and when we lie down; so that we may be able to say with the Psalmist, "My meditation of him shall be sweet, I will rejoice in the Lord: I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." We ought particularly to meditate much on the infallible truth of God—"His word is truth." Every promise he has made, and every threatening he has uttered, he will assuredly accomplish. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

2. We must possess and cherish a supreme love to God. We must give him the undivided throne of our hearts. With a holy awe of his greatness and glorious majesty, we must mingle the sentiments of filial affection towards him, as the best of fathers. Hence we must trust in him, even when clouds and darkness are round about him, and submit to all the dispensations of his providence towards us or others, as right, and wise, and good. We must contemplate him much as our chief good, and satisfying portion. We must regard "his favour as life, and his loving kindness as better than life." We must so delight ourselves in God, as to know what it is to say from the heart, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

3. We must often look to him as our covenant God in Christ; and frequently renew and call to mind our covenant relation to him. Here especially it is, that we must recognize Jehovah as emphatically *our* God—viewing him as a sin pardoning God, who blotteth out all our transgressions freely, in the atoning blood of Christ; as adopting us as his children, and making us co-heirs with his own Son our Saviour; and as engaged to work in our hearts by his Holy Spirit every Christian grace, and to keep us by his almighty power "through faith unto salvation." It is also, in the glorious plan of redemption by Christ, that the child of God sees the brightest displays of the divine power, wisdom, condescension, goodness, grace, and love

—sees, in a word, all the attributes of the blessed God meeting, harmonizing, and shining in the most resplendent manner. This, therefore will be the favourite and delightful theme of his meditations.

4. In all the ways or methods appointed by himself, we must “worship him in spirit and in truth,” and find our highest pleasure in communion with him—in prayer and praise—ejaculatory, secret, social, and public; in all the services of the sanctuary or house of God, there joining with his people in public adorations, supplications, thanksgivings, and devotional songs; listening to the messages of his grace from his word preached; and taking the seals of his covenant, in the sacraments of the New Testament. It is by the service of God in his house, that we do, in an especial manner avouch, before the world, the Lord Jehovah to be *our* God.

5. We must glorify God by a sincere and impartial regard and obedience to all his commandments, whether they relate immediately to him, to our neighbour, or to ourselves; by unreservedly consecrating ourselves, with all that he has given to us, to his service and glory; by manifesting a holy zeal for his name, cause, and honour, whatever opposition or suffering we may meet with in so doing; by unfeigned grief and sorrow of heart when he is offended or dishonoured by ourselves or others; by walking humbly before him, under a deep and daily sense of our sins, infirmities, and short comings in duty; by doing all in our power to extend the knowledge of him, in the gospel of his Son, to the heathen, and to all who are destitute of that knowledge, so that others may be brought to love, honour, and obey him, till the earth be filled with his declarative glory. In fine, in all that we do, we should regard the glory of God as our highest aim and object. The apostolic injunction to this effect is explicit; “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Thus you perceive, my young friends, that this command of God is “exceeding broad,” as well as

spiritual in its nature and demands. The right performance of the duties which it requires, will call for the exercise of much grace. Seek it, therefore, earnestly of God. "He giveth his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Let not the difficulty of keeping this, or any of the commands of God, be pleaded as an excuse for sloth or neglect. Mourn over your short comings, and flee to the blood of cleansing for all your transgressions and imperfections. But make no abatement in your aims or efforts; for through Christ strengthening us, we can do all that he requires. Amen.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

WE are now to consider what is forbidden in the first commandment. “The first commandment (says our Catechism) forbiddeth the denying, or not worshipping and glorifying the true God, as God, and our God, and the giving that worship and glory to any other which is due to him alone.”

It will readily be perceived by all who carefully attend to this answer, that it consists of two parts: First; it affirms that this commandment forbids a denial of the being, or a refusal of the suitable worship, of the true God. Secondly; that it also forbids the giving of that worship and glory to any being, or object, which is due to the true God alone. The subject matter of these prohibitions may be expressed in two words, ATHEISM and IDOLATRY. Let us briefly consider each of these; keeping in mind that our principal object here is, to show in what these sins consist, or the various kinds or instances of them. The guilt incurred by the commission of these sins, will be more particularly considered in discussing the next answer.

I. The first commandment forbids ATHEISM. This term is derived from two Greek words ($\alpha \theta ε ο ς$), the meaning of which is, *without God*, that is, without the true God. An atheist, therefore, is one who denies, or refuses to acknowledge and worship, the true God. This description will embrace a considerable variety of character, which we shall endeavour briefly to exhibit and illustrate.

Atheists are commonly and justly, divided into two great classes—*speculative* and *practical*. Speculative atheists are of various kinds—

1. Those who explicitly and understandingly deny an INTELLIGENT *first cause of all things*; and pro-

fess to believe that the material universe, as we now behold it, is eternal; or that matter is eternal, and assumed its present form by chance, or by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, or by something which they call *fate*; or else that it is self created; and that all sentient beings, as they now exist, have either existed eternally, or are self created, or that they came into being by certain operations or combinations of matter, which they suppose is endued with something which they call *a plastic nature*. These are the opinions which are denominated *pure atheism*. And they are so ineffably absurd and difficult to believe, and the indications of consummate wisdom, design and contrivance, are so strikingly visible in all that we behold, and the impression on the human mind of some great and intelligent first cause, is so early and general, and powerful, that many have very seriously questioned, whether there ever was a speculative atheist, of the kind or character which we here consider. It has been supposed that the avowal of the monstrous notions we have mentioned, has proceeded from affectation of singularity at first, and has afterwards been persisted in from pride and obstinacy, while there has been no real conviction of the understanding at all—no deliberate and settled belief, of what is so abhorrent to all reason and common sense. It has indeed been long my opinion, that atheists, of the kind we now have in view, ought to be regarded as men *partially insane*—not, by any means, innocently so, but who have become so by a wicked and voluntary perversion of their intellectual powers, and by being, in the just judgment of God, “given over to strong delusions to believe a lie.” In many instances, they have shown that reason and conscience have occasionally burst upon them, in spite of themselves, and made them tremble under the apprehension of a God, and of a judgment to come. Yet I am not prepared to say that there have not been other instances of perfect atheistic hardness and insensibility, which nothing could move. There certainly have been martyrs to speculative atheism. A man by the name of Vanini,

was burned to death for atheism, at Toulouse in France, in 1629; and to the last moment he obstinately adhered to the profession of his unbelief—several other instances of a similar kind might be mentioned. The world, I think, had never before witnessed such an open and general avowal of speculative atheism, as was seen in France, during the late revolution in that country: and it may deserve a passing notice, that a favourite dogma of some infidel writers, namely, that atheism is more tolerant than Christianity, received a most practical and awful refutation, at the time when this avowal of atheism took place. No tolerance was allowed, either to religious or political opinions, when they differed from those of the party who held a temporary sway. Never did human blood, not shed in battle, flow so freely; never was human life held so cheap. The friends of religion were first proscribed and murdered in crowds, and without distinction or mercy. Then each ruling faction, while it held the ascendant, sent its rivals to the fatal guillotine, till all who remained in life became at length horror smitten, by perceiving the situation into which their atheistical and sanguinary system had brought them. Surely this was permitted by a righteous God, to show that when men deny *his* existence, their *own* will speedily become a curse—to themselves and to all around them.

2. There is a species of atheism which, from its most distinguished advocate Spinoza, a learned Jew of the 17th century, resident in Amsterdam, has been called *Spinozism*. Those who embrace this system have been called Pantheists, because they profess to believe that the Universe is God, or that every thing in existence is a part of God. This however was in fact, with some unimportant modifications, the system of many of the ancient philosophers. Probably, also, it was the real system of Confucius, the celebrated sage of China; and it is at this day the avowed system of the Soofees, the philosophers of Persia.

3. There is much of what is called *interpretative*

atheism; that is, either an utter ignorance of the true God, or sentiments which imply a denial of some of his essential attributes and plain manifestations. The apostle Paul, referring to the state of the Ephesians, while they were ignorant of the gospel and in a state of idolatry, says, they were (*αθεοι εν τω κοσμου*) *atheists in the world*. Thus the voice of inspiration declares idolatry and ignorance of the true God, to be *virtually* atheism; and this description will comprehend all the pagans, both of ancient and modern times. It will also comprehend all those who live under the light of the gospel—and the number is lamentably great—who are really as destitute of all just ideas of God as the heathen themselves. Further: Since it is impossible to have any just conceptions of the Divine Being, without believing that he governs the world, those who deny his providence are justly chargeable with atheism; and those who do not conceive of him as just and holy, as well as good and merciful, must take part in the same charge; and they who use blasphemous language, and make blasphemous charges against, or appeals to God, are deeply implicated. Dr. Clark, moreover, in his “Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion,” maintains that the sentiments of our modern deists and sceptics, must of necessity, if pushed to their proper consequences, terminate in downright atheism; and Bishop Butler has shown, most conclusively, in his “Analogy,” that the chief objections which are urged by infidels against the gospel, stand in all their force against the course of nature; that is, against the works and order of God in creation and providence. Thus it appears that the class of *interpretative* or *virtual* atheists, is exceedingly large and comprehensive.

But the class of *practical* atheists is still much larger. It comprehends all those “who live without God in the world,” be the profession of their belief what it may. The apostle Paul speaks of those “who profess that they know God, but in works they deny him:” and the Psalmist declares, “the fool hath said

in his heart* no God;" that is, I wish there were none.

Let me for a moment point your attention to several descriptions of character, chargeable with practical atheism, according to the answer of the Catechism now under consideration.

1. Those are to be considered as refusing by their practice to *acknowledge* God, who do not seek direction and assistance from him in the important concerns of life; who form connexions of the most lasting kind, and enter on enterprises and undertakings which are to have a decisive influence on the whole of their earthly existence, and perhaps on their eternal well being also, without ever asking counsel of God, seeking to know their duty from his word, observing the indications of his providence, acknowledging his hand in what befalls them, or looking to him for success, or a happy issue, as that which he alone can grant. In all these interesting concerns and circumstances, "God is not in all their thoughts."

2. Those are plainly guilty of not *worshipping* God, who live in the habitual neglect of all, or any of those exercises of prayer—ejaculatory, secret, social and public—which were particularly specified in my last lecture. O that men would reflect on the practical atheism of "restraining prayer" before God!

3. Men are chargeable with the guilt of practically refusing to *glorify* God, when they pursue their own honour, pleasure and happiness, in any way forbidden by God; when they perform actions, either civil or religious, from a regard merely to their own reputation or aggrandizement, without any reference to the glory of God, or regard to his laws; when they ascribe the glory of what they possess or do, or the station and power to which they are elevated, to their own wisdom, sagacity, or prowess, and not to the providence and blessing of God; when they are

* The words *there is* are added by our translators. It is plainly a wish, or a feeling, and not a deliberate opinion, which the inspired writer charges on the fool.

grieved for what disgraces themselves, without any, or little concern, for the dishonour done to God; and when they prefer the profits and honours of this world, to the favour and enjoyment of God, as their chief or highest good. In all this, there is undoubtedly a degree, and in many instances a high degree, of practical atheism. The punishments inflicted on Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, are memorable instances of the displeasure of God, manifested against the sins here described.

4. We may be said not to worship the true God, "as God, and our God," when we draw nigh unto him with the mouth and honour him with our lips, while our hearts are far from him; and when we fail in our Christian profession, and in our addresses to his throne, to recognize, in the exercise of faith, our covenant relation to him, and his to us.

In all these ways, my dear youth, the guilt of practical atheism may be incurred: and I must not dismiss the subject without remarking that a measure of this sin is too often found cleaving to the people of God themselves. Being sanctified but in part, the atheism of their natural state, like other evil principles and propensities, sometimes finds an unhappy, although it be but a temporary indulgence. Holy Job appears to have been justly reprov'd by Elihu, for charging God with injustice, Job xxxiii. 10, 11; and a more rash and wicked speech can scarcely be imagined, than that of the prophet Jonah, when he said, in reply to his Maker, "I do well to be angry, even unto death."

As for those blasphemous thoughts or imaginations, of which some of the most pious men who have ever lived have most grievously complained, and which are often thrown into the mind, not only without its voluntary choice, but to its utter and instant abhorrence and amazement, they are indeed a great affliction, but while not indulged or approved, they are without guilt in the suffering party. Temptation, while resisted, is not sin. "The Holy One of God," our Saviour himself, was tempted to the awful blas-

phemy of worshipping Satan; and what he endured in his agony, when the "powers of darkness" were let loose upon him, must have been distressing beyond all our conceptions. He was "tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin." He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and to him should be the special appeal and address of his afflicted people, under the temptations here contemplated.

II. Idolatry, as well as Atheism, is prohibited in the first commandment, according to that part of the answer before us, which says, that this precept "forbids the giving that worship and glory to any other which is due to God alone." We have already, indeed, shown that idolatry is *interpretative* atheism, by the decision of the apostle Paul, who affirms that the Ephesians, the noted and zealous worshippers of the heathen goddess Diana, "were atheists in the world," till their conversion to Christianity.

We may give a definition of idolatry in the very words of divine inspiration—It is, "to worship and serve the creature more [or rather*] than the Creator." It is of two kinds, *gross* or *palpable*, and *mental* or *secret*.

I. Gross or palpable idolatry is the rendering of *open* and *avowed* worship, or religious homage, to some creature. This was, and is, the great and leading sin of the heathen world. It began very early. Some writers of character are of the opinion that it existed before the flood; and that this is intimated in the passage (Gen. vi. 2.) which speaks of the sons of God contracting marriages with the daughters of men. However this might be, we learn from the distinct statement of Holy Scripture, that shortly after the general deluge, idolatry was so prevalent that the family of Abraham were worshippers of idols in Chaldea, till he was called to remove out of that country. The great design of God in the calling of Abraham doubtless was, to preserve in the world the

* *Rather*, is in this place the marginal and correct translation of the original word *παρὰ*.

knowledge of the true God. Yet his posterity manifested a proneness to idolatry that seems astonishing. Their making and worshipping a golden calf, in imitation of the Egyptians, even when the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai were before their eyes, was a memorable instance of this propensity: And although it does not appear that they ever had idols of their own invention, yet when settled in the land of Canaan, they, first or last, adopted almost all the idols of the neighbouring countries. It was, as already remarked, their captivity in Babylon, that eventually cured them of this propensity.

In every other nation of antiquity, except the Hebrew, the grossest idolatry was practised, and that continually. It was so far from being prevented or diminished by human learning or philosophy, that it is a notorious fact, that the nations most distinguished for science and the arts, were also the most remarkable for their abominable and multifarious polytheism. The Greeks had about thirty thousand gods.—Jupiter was reckoned the chief, and then followed a rabble of gods and goddesses, each presiding over, or particularly attached to, some nation, some season of the year, some of the elements, or some art or occupation. These imaginary deities were represented as having husbands and wives, as possessing opposite interests, as often engaged in jealousies, altercations and quarrels, and as indulging in some of the worst and basest vices, ever seen among mankind.

It appears that the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars, were the first objects of idolatrous worship; then demons or Genii, who were considered as inferior deities; then the departed spirits of kings, heroes, lawgivers, philosophers and public benefactors; and eventually, almost every object of the animate and inanimate creation—rivers, groves, beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, and vices of the most loathsome kind. Indeed the rites of pagan idolatry, both in ancient and modern times, have always been connected with the most revolting impurity, and the most appalling cruelty. Human sacrifices, especially on oc-

casions of great emergency, have often been, and in some places still are, offered to the pretended deities of the heathen. You can never exceed in your gratitude to God, my dear youth, that he has given you existence at a time, and in a land, in which the light of divine revelation has so completely banished this gross idolatry, that it seems wonderful to us that it ever could have existed: and truly I know of nothing that exhibits human nature in a light more degrading, and demonstrates the blinding and besotting nature of sin more forcibly, than that rational beings should offer religious worship to some of the most detestable objects that can be conceived of; and with many rites which decency will not permit us so much as to name. Read attentively the whole passage, in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, from which I have quoted a definition of idolatry; and you will find the cause of it assigned by the pen of inspiration, and a summary description given of its shocking character and prevalence.

Before we leave the topic of gross and palpable idolatry, it is with pain that I feel myself constrained to say, that a species of it exists in the Romish and Greek churches. It is true, indeed, that many of the objects worshipped are entirely different from those of the heathen; although the religious regard shown to relics, crucifixes, the pretended wood of the cross, and places deemed sacred, are much like some of the pagan superstitions. Neither is it clear that many of those who have been canonized and worshipped as saints, were worthy of the appellation, to say nothing of the religious homage they have received. But although the angels, the mother of our blessed Lord, the holy apostles, and many later saints, are highly worthy of our love and veneration, none of them are proper objects of any kind or degree of religious worship; and could they address those who offer it, they would doubtless reject it with abhorrence. You will recollect, that when the apostle John "fell down to worship, before the feet of the angel," that showed him the things of which we have an account in

the last chapter of the book of Revelations, the angel said, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God." In like manner, when religious homage was offered to Paul and Barnabas at Iconium (Acts xiv. 8—18,) they "rent their clothes," in token of their utter abhorrence of what was intended; and in their address to the people, they expressly place all such acts on the same footing with "those vanities," those offerings to heathen deities, which this idolatrous people were accustomed to make.

I am perfectly aware of the difference which the Papists make, between what they denominate *doulia* and *latria*—that it is the former only, (*doulia*,) that they offer to angels, to the mother of our Lord, and to other saints; implying no more than a grateful veneration of their virtues, and petitions to them to be intercessors with God and Christ, in behalf of the petitioners; and that the latter (*latria*) is the worship which they offer immediately to God and Christ, as alone able to forgive sin, and to confer all the benefits of redemption. For this distinction I cannot admit that there is any sufficient warrant or reason; but taking it exactly as they make it, I remark, that by addressing prayers to angels and saints, at all times, and in many places of the world at the same time, they plainly invest them with the divine attributes of *omnipresence* and *omniscience*; which is idolatry in the strictest sense of the word. It is attributing to creatures, what belongs to God alone. Considering, moreover, that these prayers, addressed to saints and angels, are unspeakably more numerous than those offered to Jehovah, they bring those who offer them strictly within the apostle's definition of idolatry, "they worship and serve the *creature* MORE than the *Creator*,"—more in frequency, and really more as a matter of importance.

The sin of worshipping God by images, will come to be considered at length, in attending to the prohibitions of the second commandment. But as it is a

breach of the first, to give divine honour to any thing that is not God, and as it is notorious that such honour is attributed, in the Romish church, to the images and pictures of saints and angels, and to the impious paintings, in which attempts have been made to represent the persons of the adorable Trinity, it is clear that there is a violation of both these commandments at once, in the instances to which I have referred.

2. *Mental or secret idolatry*, is practised without hesitation or remorse, by multitudes who would receive with horror or contempt, a proposal to fall down and worship stocks and stones. This mental or secret idolatry, consists in giving to any creature object that place in our *hearts* or *affections*, which of right belongs to God alone. Him we are required to love supremely—with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; and when we refuse to do this, but love and serve something else more than God, we are, in his sight, as really chargeable with the sin of idolatry, as if we had made and worshipped a graven image. The apostle Paul expressly declares that “covetousness is idolatry,” and of course every other affection or passion which is exercised with equal strength on a created object, must possess the same character. To attempt, therefore, to specify in detail all the ways in which the sin of mental or secret idolatry may be committed, would be nothing less than to endeavour to enumerate all the preferences of creatures to the Creator, which may take place in the minds of different individuals, in all that diversity of disposition, character and pursuit, which is found in the human family. The impracticability of this is obvious: and yet, as general representations make but little impression, and the subject before us is highly important and practical, I shall very briefly point your attention to several examples of idolatry, of the kind indicated by this part of our subject.

(1.) Avarice, as we have seen, has been declared to be idolatry, by the voice of inspiration. “The mammon of unrighteousness,” is the god that thousands, even in a Christian land, constantly and de-

votedly worship. Its devotees often sacrifice to it every sentiment, both of piety and humanity. To accumulate wealth, justice is disregarded, the poor and the helpless are treated with cruelty, and in some cases, not only their families, but their own persons, are subjected to pinching want and privation, by the wretched penuriousness of those whose god is gain. But in cases innumerable, where no such extreme is reached, nay, among those who have a standing, and are even office bearers in the church of Christ, there is an attachment to wealth, a value set upon it, and a manner of spending it, which is truly idolatrous. It is not consecrated to God, but hoarded, and loved, and used, not to promote the divine glory, the cause of Christ, and the good of mankind, but to serve merely the selfish purposes of its owner, or of his immediate family or dependants—to cherish luxury or worldly-mindedness, and to subserve personal aggrandizement and vain distinctions.

(2.) The love of fame is the idol of others. It is so especially of men of science and learning, of statesmen, legislators, philosophers, orators, poets, historians, and writers of all descriptions, and perhaps of no class of men so much, as of those who belong to the military profession. They often make no scruple to avow that fame, or character, and high reputation, in the various pursuits to which they have addicted themselves, is their idol—the supreme object of their regard, to which they determine that every thing else shall be subordinate, and to which, if it be necessary, they are ready to sacrifice life itself.

3. The love of pleasure—sensual pleasure—is the idol of others. They are “lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God.” This, my young friends, is the kind of idolatry by which persons at your period of life are most apt to be seduced into sin. Young persons are especially prone to forget God, neglect and contemn his worship, and violate his laws, through the solicitations of “the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life.” For what are esteemed youthful pleasures, or that which is denominated,

although most preposterously, *a life of pleasure*, thousands in the morning of their days, renounce all allegiance to the God who made them, and give themselves up, in one form or another, to licentious indulgence. Through every gradation of vicious propensity, from an attachment to routes and dances, nocturnal parties and days of dissipation, to the grosser abominations of the theatre, the brothel, the gambling house, and the resort of the glutton and the drunkard, the idolaters of unhallowed pleasure are found. As you value the salvation of your souls then, O be deaf to the syren song of sinful pleasure!—for in the end “it stingeth like a serpent and biteth like an adder.”

(4.) The opinion of the world is often idolized. It is not possible to specify all the methods, or ways, in which men are influenced by a desire to “receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only.” It is an idolatry of human opinion that leads multitudes, even of those who pay some regard to religion, into an unlawful conformity to the world, in its customs, fashions, maxims and opinions. They want resolution to take the word of God simply, as the standard of opinion and action—to come out from the world and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. 2 Cor. vi. 17. Other multitudes there are, who really are guided by scarcely any thing else in the sentiments they adopt, and the whole course of life and conduct they pursue, than a regard to their worldly reputation. What will injure their estimation in society they desire to avoid, and what will promote that estimation, they are most of all anxious to achieve. Human opinion, and not the law of God, is their rule, or standard, by which they judge and act—the idol that they worship.

(5.) Kindred, relatives, or friends, are often idolized. “He (said the Saviour) that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” In the early periods of the Christian church, and in some other periods since, no alternative has remained, but either to renounce Christ, or to renounce the

friendship of the dearest earthly connexions, and even submit to be formally and for ever excluded from their presence and favour. Cases like this sometimes still occur, and whenever they do, he is an idolater who prefers a creature, however dear, to the Creator. But in instances innumerable, where no entire renunciation of the beloved object is required; nay, where a well regulated affection is an absolute duty, this idolatry is often practised—between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, and friends who are bound to each other, not by nature's ties, but by those of affection only. How often has the death of one, in some of these relations, made a survivor feel, and sometimes expressly say, that he has *lost an idol*. Nor can I forbear to point your attention in particular, my young friends, to that flattering and impassioned language which you will sometimes hear, and perhaps find used by popular writers, in the addresses made by the one sex to the other, in which *idolatry and adoration* is explicitly avowed. Language of this kind is the more detestable, because it is commonly as hypocritical as it is impious. Let religious principle unite with a sense of propriety and the principles of good taste, to cherish in your minds an utter abhorrence of addressing others, or being addressed yourselves, in a manner so manifestly unsuited to those, who, however lovely, should still remember that they are but creatures of a day, who are soon to return to the dust from which they were taken.

Thus have I pointed out, in a few particulars, some of the most usual forms, or instances, of secret or mental idolatry. But you must be careful to remember, that the particulars mentioned are no more than *examples*, which should lead you to consider the subject for yourselves, and to watch your own hearts, that no creature objects usurp in them, the place that of right belongs to God. The objects and pursuits may be innumerable, but the sin is the same. Remember also, that it is a sin which reigns unsubdued in every unrenewed mind. The very essence of human de-

pravity, consists in a heart *alienated from God*, and given wholly to other objects. This awful bias of our corrupt nature must be changed, and God be enthroned in the heart, before we can ever serve him acceptably. But even in the people of God themselves, there is a constant proneness to idolatry; against which they have need to watch and pray without ceasing.

Let us now, very briefly, consider the next answer in the Catechism, which is, that “these words, BEFORE ME, in the first commandment, teach us, that God, who seeth all things, taketh notice of, and is much displeased with the sin, of having any other God.”

Omnipresence and omniscience are essential attributes of the Deity, and are necessarily connected with each other. As God is present in every place—most *intimately* present—so that “in Him we live, and move, and have our being,” and could not subsist for a moment, if he should withdraw his support, it follows of course, “that he seeth all things.” There is not an action of our lives, or a word of our lips, or a thought of our hearts, “but lo! he knoweth it altogether;” it is more perfectly known to him than it is to ourselves. Now, as he is thus the present and immediate witness of every thing we either do or think, so we must believe that in an especial manner, “he taketh notice of” what is directly derogatory to himself. But “the sin of having any other God,” is directly derogatory to himself. It is a denial of his worthiness to be the supreme object of our affections; it is robbing him of what is his due, and giving it to one of his creatures as a rival; and it is this high affront and insult offered, if I may so express it, to his very face. It is always considered as marking the last stage of impudent profligacy, even among men, when one of inferior station and bad character, will do wickedly in the very presence and under the known observation of a superior of elevated rank, and of distinguished virtue and goodness. And if the wickedness consists in a direct affront or insult to the observing superior, it

demonstrates the extinction of shame and of all moral sensibility, in the abandoned transgressor. Now all this, and unspeakably worse than this, is the affront offered to the Lord Jehovah, by the sins of atheism and idolatry. I say unspeakably worse, because the reverence due from man to God, is not to be compared with that which is due from any one man to another. Hence we find, that throughout the Holy Scriptures, the sin of idolatry (as being directly levelled, and that in the most provoking manner, against the claims and authority of the Most High God) is represented as of the most aggravated kind, and as being visited with the sorest judgments, even in this life; and if not repented of and forsaken, as subjecting the transgressor to the most fearful condemnation, in the life that is to come. The remainders of this sin which cleave to the people of God themselves, by grieving his Holy Spirit to withdraw his enlivening and consoling influence, are the real cause of much, perhaps of most, of the doubt, and fear, and spiritual darkness and dejection, which they experience; and of many of the sore chastisements of an external kind, which a faithful and covenant keeping God inflicts upon them, that he may teach them the vanity of the creatures they have idolized, and thus recall them to himself.

The result of the whole is, that as "God who seeth all things, taketh notice of and is much displeased with the sin of having any other God," we should make it the subject of constant and earnest prayer, that we may be enabled to "set the Lord always before us;" and that, considering him as the heart searching and rein trying God, who is jealous for his honour, we may be deterred from every act of idolatry, may be disposed to give up every unhallowed attachment to created things, and may be enabled fully to obey the injunction of the disciple whom Jesus loved, when speaking by the Holy Ghost he said—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

LECTURE XXXIX.

THE subject of the present Lecture is the second commandment, which is—"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor worship them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

This precept of the Decalogue, although found in the Vulgate translation of the Holy Scriptures, which the church of Rome holds to be of higher authority than the Hebrew original itself, is, notwithstanding, excluded by the rulers of that church from all their popular books of devotion; and to make the number of the commandments ten, the last is divided into two parts. What more palpable evidence could there be, of a consciousness that a part of their worship is in direct hostility with the moral law of God, than this fraud of withholding a part of that law, as laid down in their own version of the Bible, from the view of the people, many of whom never know even of its existence. No wonder that the Pope should be hostile to Bible societies, and to the unrestrained possession and perusal of the Sacred Scriptures.

The *difference* between the first and the second precept of the revealed moral code, ought to be distinctly noted. You will observe then, that the first commandment relates to the *object* of worship, and the second to the *mode* or *manner* of that worship; the first forbids the worship of any other than the true God, the second forbids the worshipping even of the true God by the use of images, or any other visible

symbols; the first impliedly requires all *right* worship of Jehovah, the second prohibits all that is even *circumstantially wrong* in his worship. Thus careful has our Creator been, to preserve the purity of the homage which is due to him from his creatures, by giving two commandments, and these forming the first and fundamental part of his moral system, the one relative to the *nature*, the other to the *expression*, of the worship and service which he requires: and this has been done with perfect propriety, because genuine reverence, love and obedience, to the Sovereign of the universe, are the first of all moral duties, and the proper foundation of every other; and because there is, in corrupt human nature, a strong and awful propensity to refuse what is due to God, and to pollute and degrade his worship by human inventions.

Having thus shown the difference between the first and the second commandment, let us now a little more particularly consider, according to the statement of our Catechism—I. What the second commandment requires; II. What it forbids; III. The reasons by which its observance is justified and enforced.

I. "The second commandment requireth the receiving, observing and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word."

That we may have a clear understanding of the requisitions here specified, we must first place distinctly in view, "the religious worship and ordinances which God has appointed in his word," since these are the objects to which the requirements mentioned in the answer relate. "Religious worship," says an excellent expositor of our Catechism,* "is that homage and respect we owe to a gracious God, as a God of infinite perfection; whereby we profess subjection to, and confidence in him, as our God in Christ, for the supply of all our wants; and ascribe the praise and glory that is due to him, as our chief good and only happiness." "O come," says the holy Psalmist, "let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before

* Fisher.

the Lord our Maker; for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.”

“The ordinances which God has appointed in his word,” and through several of which religious worship is to be offered to him, are accurately stated in our Larger Catechism to be—“prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ; the reading, preaching and hearing of the word; the administration and receiving of the sacraments; church government and discipline; the ministry and maintenance thereof; religious fasting; swearing by the name of God; and vowing to him.” The nature of these ordinances I shall have occasion particularly to explain, if spared to lecture on a subsequent part of the Catechism. In the mean time, their general nature has been made known to you by education and reading, sufficiently to enable you to understand what I shall say, in showing that they are to be “received, observed, and kept pure and entire.”

1. The worship and ordinances which God hath appointed in his word are to be *received*; that is, we are to take them simply on the authority of God, as he has delivered them to us in the oracles of truth, without cavilling or objecting to any of them, on account of our not seeing in what manner they are fitted to do us good. There has always been a strong disposition to this cavilling spirit, ever since the transgression of our first mother, when she yielded to the suggestion of Satan, that she would not be injured, but benefitted, by violating the ordinance of God, in eating the fruit of the interdicted tree in the Garden of Eden. Naaman, the Syrian, you may remember, was, in like manner, for a time, a caviller of the same description. When directed to go and wash in the river Jordan, for the cure of his leprosy, (instead of receiving that cure, in a way which his proud mind had led him to conceive would be the most suitable,) he, at first, indignantly refused to comply with the prescription. “Are not,” said he in anger—“are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel; may I not wash in them and

be clean?" In the use, doubtless, of habitual bathing, he did not see how washing, in whatever manner applied, was to remove the leprosy; and if it might possibly produce that effect, he thought the streams of his own country were, for that purpose, far preferable to the waters of the Jordan. He, however, received no healing, till he yielded to the kind solicitations of attendants, wiser than himself, and strictly complied with the divine prescription, as announced by the prophet of Jehovah; and then, immediately, his cure was complete. Now, my young friends, there are those in our days, and within our own observation, who make objections to the ordinances and appointments of God, in the very spirit of transgressing Eve and angry Naaman. What use, say they, can there be in *prayer*, since God knows and is willing to supply all our wants? What advantage can there be in *baptizing infants with water*, and in *eating bread and drinking wine*, in remembrance of Christ? Cannot you devote your children to God, and remember Christ, as well without these external rites as with them? What possible benefit can be derived from *fasting*? Can abstinence from food be pleasing to the God who gave it, or a refusal temperately to gratify the bodily appetites, be helpful to the soul? Thus, my dear youth, I might go through the whole of the ordinances of God which have been enumerated, and state objections that may be made, and have been made, to every one of them. But the specimen I have given you must suffice. And now hear and remember my reply. To the objections that have just been mentioned, and to all of a similar kind, satisfactory answers may be made, and have often been actually made, in a detail of reason and argument. But is it not enough—I ask you, to put the inquiry candidly and closely to your own minds—is it not enough, and should it not always be esteemed enough to satisfy any rational creature, to know that his Creator, infinitely wise and good, has made an appointment, or instituted an ordinance, for the benefit of his obedient offspring?

What though the shortsighted creature cannot see *in what manner* he is to receive benefit from the appointment of his Maker? ought he not to be perfectly satisfied that there is a good reason for it, and that benefit will result from regarding it, since it comes from the wisest and best, the most powerful and faithful of all beings? Nay, is it unreasonable to suppose that our heavenly Father may leave some things which he requires, without a full explanation, at least for a time, on purpose to see if we have faith enough to trust him *barely on his word*? Did he not adopt this method of procedure with Abraham, and honour him as the father of the faithful, for his implicit obedience? Did not our Saviour say to Peter, in reference to one appointment, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter?" And when Peter absolutely refused compliance, did not our Lord say to him—"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me?" You cannot fail, if you reflect, to answer these interrogatories so as fully and freely to admit, that when God speaks, it is infinitely reasonable for us immediately to obey, whether we do, or do not, see the grounds or reasons of his command. We may be assured that the best of reasons exist for all that he requires, although for the present we do not perceive them. I do not indeed dissuade you from endeavouring to understand, as far as you can, the nature and design of all the appointments and ordinances of God. You ought to do this: and you ought, by all means, to examine well whether institutions which claim to be divine ordinances, appear to be such by the unerring word of God; but as soon as this is apparent, on a careful and candid examination—as soon as you see a "thus saith the Lord," for an appointment, then you have the best of all possible reasons, *in the known character of God*, for an immediate compliance. With prompt and unreserved obedience, therefore, *receive every ordinance*, which appears from the revealed will of God to have him for its author.

2. We are not only to receive the ordinances of

God, but to *observe* them. It is one thing to acknowledge or admit an institution to be of Divine appointment, and another *practically* to treat it as such. How many are there, for example, who admit that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of our blessed Saviour, instituted in the most affecting circumstances, and for the most important purposes, and intended for perpetual observance in his church, and yet, year after year passes away, without their coming to this sacrament, or feeling much uneasiness on account of their neglect. Far be it from me, my young friends, to urge you to a rash or unprepared approach to the table of the Lord. But would to God that both you, and all who receive the messages of the gospel, might be made to feel most sensibly that the command, "Do this in remembrance of me," is binding upon you; and that you are chargeable with a guilty neglect, so long as a *cordial obedience* to this command is not rendered. But I specify this neglect at present, only because it is a common one, and therefore well adapted to illustrate the general subject. Recollect the enumeration of the ordinances of religious worship, given in the first part of this lecture, and remember that you are bound to *observe* them all. That every one of them was given by their Divine author to be *used*; that no one of them can be set aside or neglected, without a practical and criminal disregard to a divine institution; in a word, that the conscientious observance of them all, at the times and seasons proper for them severally, is a duty solemnly binding on all who bear the Christian name.

3. The ordinances of God's worship are to be kept *pure*. All merely human additions to the institutions of the Most High, are a usurpation of his prerogative; they are a reflection on his wisdom and goodness, as if what he has done or commanded could be improved, or have some deficiencies supplied by man's sagacity. To this there has been a wonderful proneness in every age of the church. A very large part of all the corruptions of the worship of God that have ever debased and dishonoured it, has proceeded from

this cause. To this origin may be traced all the will worship of the Romish church, and all "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," and all that admixture of human inventions with divine appointments, which still exist in churches less corrupt than that of Rome. God's work is perfect, and all that we presumptuously add to it is an *impurity* which he abhors.

4. The worship and ordinances of the Lord are to be kept *entire*. As we are to add nothing to them, so we are to subtract nothing from them. *Entireness* in the observance of divine ordinances is obligatory both on churches and individuals; and yet it is too often violated by both. Discipline, for example, is an ordinance which God has appointed in the order of his house, and for the benefit of all who belong to the household of faith: and when the church neglects discipline, (and she does often neglect it, even in the grossest manner,) she most criminally disregards one of the ordinances of her Lord and head. She does not keep those ordinances *entire*. In like manner, when an individual Christian permits one duty to displace another, or gives such an attention to certain duties as almost wholly to neglect others, he does not keep the ordinances of his God *entire*. It is a high commendation which the word of inspiration bestows on Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, when it tells us that "they were both righteous before God, walking in ALL the ordinances and commandments of the Lord *blameless*." This it is which at once adorns and promotes religion—silences its enemies, encourages its friends, and fills with the sweetest consolations of Divine grace, those who exhibit this lovely example of *entireness*, in their observance of all God's ordinances.

We now proceed to consider more particularly,

II. What the second commandment forbids. "The second commandment," says our Catechism, "forbideth the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in his word." It may be proper at entering on the consideration of the prohibitions in

this commandment, to remark, that they relate exclusively to the making and use of images for religious purposes. "It is lawful," says Fisher in his Catechism, "to have images or pictures of mere creatures, provided they be only for ornament; or the design be merely *historical*; to transmit the memory of persons and their actions to posterity." The tabernacle of Jehovah made by his order in the wilderness, and especially the temple erected for his worship and with his approbation by Solomon, called into exercise, very extensively, many of those which are now denominated "the fine arts." You perceive then, that the statuary, the painter, the engraver, the worker in metals, or any other artist, who employs his skill on sensible and created objects, or even on objects of fancy—if fancy do not intrude on the prerogatives of God, or cause his worship to be desecrated by the productions of his art—is not to be considered as violating this commandment in any respect or degree. The command relates only to images, made for, and employed in the worship of God.

We have already, in explaining the import of the first commandment, considered at some length the sin of idolatry; and I had occasion then to remark, that if worship be paid to an image of any kind, there is, in every such act, a violation of the first precept of the decalogue, as well as of the second. Now if images be used at all in religious service, all experience shows that they will be worshipped. Admit that the avowed and real purpose be, to make use of the visible representations merely to impress the mind more powerfully with a sense of the invisible God, still there is such a disposition in mankind to overlook and forget what is invisible, and to regard that only which is addressed to the outward senses, that idolatry is the certain result; and hence we may see at once, the propriety and importance of this second command.

We find the pretence that the worship of the true God may be assisted by the use of images, pointedly disallowed in several express declarations and repre-

sentations of holy Scripture. Thus, to mention but one, the molten calf which Aaron made at Horeb, was avowedly intended to aid in the worship of the true God; for we are told, Exodus xxxii. 5—"When Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it, and said, "To-morrow is a feast to the LORD"—in the original, "to JEHOVAH." Yet this was considered and treated as directly contrary to the divine order, and they who professed to worship Jehovah before the golden calf, are expressly charged with worshipping the image itself—"They have made them a golden calf, and have worshipped IT."

Some of the ancient heathen had sagacity enough to perceive the danger there was, that the use of images, even in the worship of their false gods, might produce a forgetfulness of the gods themselves. History assures us that Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, and the institutor of the religious rites and ceremonies of the ancient Romans, taught them not to worship the gods by the use of images, and that accordingly no graven or painted statue was permitted to appear in their temples, till more than a century and a half after the time of Numa. How surprising does it seem, that Christian Rome should abound in an impious folly, which heathen Rome, in its origin, had wisdom enough to prohibit and avoid? It is not true, as the Romanists tell us, that they do not worship the images or pictures, of which they make so profuse a use in their churches, and indeed in the whole of their religious ritual. We have seen the natural tendency of this practice to introduce idolatry, and we have seen *the practice itself* charged as idolatry on the Israelites, by Jehovah himself. But all this apart, it is too palpable to admit of a plausible denial, that by the great mass of the Romish communion the images and pictures which they constantly use *are actually worshipped*, and that little or no pains are taken to prevent it, by their religious teachers. Nay, we do not go too far when we assert, that a reverence (truly and strictly idolatrous) for visible symbols, is encouraged and even inculcated, by the

highest authorities in the church of Rome. What is more notorious than that, in the very streets of a city, all are required to bow to, and actually worship **THE HOST**, that is, a consecrated wafer, which is carried round for the purpose. Even strangers and Protestants are, in many places, compelled to do homage to this abominable idolatry.

But suppose that the reasonableness and importance of the precept before us were not, as we have seen that it is, plain and obvious, still, as heretofore shown, God may justly, and for an important purpose, require us to yield a ready and prompt obedience to any plain command given by himself, although we may not be able at once to perceive its utility. Now there is not a plainer or more explicit command in the whole revealed will of God, than this which forbids the use of images in his worship. There is even a particularity in it, which is scarcely equalled in any other article of the decalogue. Not resting in a general inhibition of "graven images," the holy oracle goes on to specify, that it must be regarded as extending "to any likeness of any thing that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." Then, as to the worship of idolatrous objects, it specifies—"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." It is truly painful to remark, that it would seem as if this command of the Most High had been scrutinized, for the very purpose of going contrary to its provisions, and this by a large portion of those who bear the Christian name. Of "things in heaven," I know of none of which they have not attempted to make likenesses—of the ever blessed God himself, of the holy angels, of the mother of our glorious Redeemer, of the saints, or imaginary saints, innumerable. Of "things on earth," likenesses of the cross are exhibited in the very structure of their places of worship, and in as many conspicuous parts of them and approaches to them, as the structures will permit. These likenesses are also fabricated in miniature, as if to rival the silver shrines that were made by the

craftsmen at Ephesus for the heathen goddess Diana; and they are vended and worn as sacred ornaments,* both by men and women, as amulets or charms against evil spirits, and as mementoes and aids of devotion. A church without pictures, or statues, is considered as incomplete, and hardly fit to be used as a place of worship. But indeed it is wholly impracticable to give a detail of the various likenesses of things in heaven and things on the earth, which men bearing the Christian name, have formed, in pointed violation of the command we consider. Equally palpable too is the contravention of that part of the precept that forbids "bowing down" to these images, for the purpose of religious service. Men, as already remarked, are required to bow down before them; and to refuse or neglect this act of homage, is viewed as an impiety approaching to sacrilege; and on the other hand, acts of devotion before these images, are considered as peculiarly meritorious and acceptable. In short, if you suppose a person ignorant of what is passing in the world, and to have learned simply from the first and second commands of the decalogue what is the acceptable worship of God, both as to matter and form, and then to have shown him the worship of the Greek and Roman churches,—would he not say, these people have certainly either never known what is contained in the revealed will of God, or if they have, they must have determined to act, in many of their religious observances, in direct contrariety to the divine precepts?

But according to the answer of our Catechism now under consideration, not only is the use of graven images and sensible symbols of every kind prohibited in the service of God, but we are forbidden to worship him "in any other way not appointed in his word." I will shortly notice a few of these *other* forbidden ways; and I solicit a particular attention to what I shall offer on this part of the answer before us,

* "On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore."—POPE.

because I believe that you whom I address are in far less danger of transgressing the divine precept, by the formal use of *images*, or visible symbols, than of violating it in some of the methods, or instances, now to be specified.

1. We are forbidden by the manifest scope of the second commandment to form, even in our minds, any fanciful representation of the great and invisible Jehovah. The human fancy is exceedingly prone to create forms or phantasms of its own; and it certainly requires some care and effort, to restrain it in religious worship, from framing some image or picture of the unseen Deity; to abstract the mind from every sensible or imaginary object; to set God alone before it, and to fill it with deep awe and solemn reverence for that pure, glorious, spiritual, and infinite being, to whom all our prayers and praises, in order to be acceptable, must be addressed. The duty here stated is clearly implied, or rather explicitly enjoined, by our Saviour, where he says (John iv. 24,) "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Many, my dear youth, very many, it is to be feared, transgress the second commandment, in the way to which this particular points your attention.

2. What is called in the Holy Scripture "will worship," is forbidden by the spirit of the second commandment. By will worship, we are to understand every thing in religion which, not being prescribed in the revealed will of God, has no higher or better origin than the will, invention, or device of man. The sinfulness of this will worship consists in its carrying with it an arrogant implication, that the Creator's requisitions, made known in his written word, are imperfect and defective, and need to be amended or supplied by the creature's wisdom, contrivance, or prescription. Thus in some churches called Christian, the sacraments of the New Testament—Baptism and the Lord's Supper—are not administered agreeably to the divine institution, by simply washing with water in the name of the sacred Three, and by giving

and receiving common bread and wine as the memorials of the death and sacrifice of Christ, but with several vain appendages, which are entirely the unauthorized devices and additions of men. Under this head, also, must be ranked a multitude of superstitions, and profane rites and practices; such as endeavouring to unveil future events, by applying to fortune tellers, or prognosticators; using unlawful means to prevent or cure diseases, or to obtain an object of any kind, though lawful and desirable in itself; "simony and sacrilege; all neglect, contempt, hindering and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed."*

Certain false appearances of religion, likewise, belong to the class of errors and evils that fall under this particular. When the minds of men become greatly excited by religious considerations, without being suitably enlightened and guarded, they are exceedingly prone to prescribe, both for themselves and others, some extraordinary religious services, or peculiar austerities, or a devotion of their time and property to what they consider sacred uses, which are not required, nor in the least degree countenanced, in the Scriptures of truth. From this root, the whole system of Monkery and Celibacy, with all their attendant follies, impositions, and unnumbered mischiefs of various kinds, have sprung up and been nourished; and to the very same origin may be traced the unhappy and reproachful extravagances, which have been witnessed in some revivals, or supposed revivals of religion, in our own country. A blind, heated, rash, and misguided zeal, has, in various ways, done incalculable injury to the cause of genuine vital piety. We should see to it therefore that we have a plain scriptural warrant for every religious act, duty, or service, that we either attempt ourselves, or enjoin on others. Without this, whatever show there may be of unusual sanctity, or holy ardour, the issue will always be unhappy. The sin of will worship is com-

* Larger Catechism.

mitted, and the consequences will, in the end, be unfavourable to pure and undefiled religion.

3. Those who altogether neglect public worship, or at any time unnecessarily absent themselves from it, or who disregard any of the ordinances or duties which God has appointed or commanded; and those also who pretend that they can serve him more advantageously in some other way, devised and adopted by themselves, must be considered as grossly violating the command before us. "This precept is also transgressed by not attending on the ordinances of God with that holy, humble, and becoming frame of spirit, that the solemnity of the duties themselves, or the authority of God enjoining, or the advantages which we may expect to receive by them, call for. When we do not seriously think what we are going about, before we engage in holy duties, or watch over our own hearts and affections, or else worship God in a careless and indifferent manner; in which case we may be said 'to draw nigh to him with our lips, while our hearts are far from him.'"^{*}

Let us now consider "*the reasons annexed to the second commandment,*" which, according to our Catechism, are—"God's sovereignty over us, his propriety in us, and the zeal he hath to his own worship." This is to be considered as the exposition of the words in the sacred text—"For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." Formal reasons, it may be observed, are annexed only to this, and the three following precepts of the decalogue. Of the three reasons conjoined with the commandment under consideration, *God's sovereignty over us*, is the first—This sovereignty is expressed in the sacred oracle by the words "I the Lord." The very term *JEHOVAH*, here translated *LORD*, denotes self-existence; and implies that

* Ridgley.

the great and glorious Being to whom it refers is omnipotent or Almighty, and the fountain or source from which all other beings derive their existence. This supremacy, the underived "I AM" here brings into view, as a reason why the command he delivers, relative to the exclusion of images in his worship, should receive the most careful and exact obedience. And surely this is reason enough. *Power*, among creatures, may indeed exist, without wisdom to direct it, or benevolence and goodness to influence its exercise. But we know it does not *so* exist, and I think it is inconceivable that it should *thus* exist, in the Supreme Being. It seems, therefore, to be taken for granted in the sacred Scriptures, that every intelligent being who has any knowledge of the true God, will know and understand that his almighty power will, and for ever must be, righteously exercised. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Hence appeals are made to this power, to silence all rebellion in the creature, and all questioning of any of his commands, ways, or doings. "It is somewhat remarkable," says an excellent writer, "that in the book of Job, composed on purpose to resolve some difficulties in providence, when God is brought in as speaking himself out of the whirlwind, he makes use of no other argument than his tremendous majesty and irresistible power!"* This then is the first reason annexed to the second commandment, that God "is sovereign Lord over us, and has a right to make what laws he pleases, about his own worship; and that we, as God's subjects, are bound to observe these laws, and to worship him no other way!"†

The second reason annexed to this command is, God's "propriety in us." Speaking, as it were, personally, to each individual of his chosen people, he says of himself, I am "thy God." Even among men, no right of exclusive property is considered more indisputable and valid, than that which we have

* Witherspoon.

† Willison.

to the productions of our own ingenuity and workmanship. But all mankind are "God's workmanship." They are, in a degree infinitely beyond what men can affirm of their sagacity and labour, the creatures, the products, of his power and skill. Yet the Lord Jehovah has claims on us, as his peculiar property and possession, still stronger than those which he derives from creation. When by sin and rebellion, man had risen up against his Maker, alienated himself from his rightful owner and sovereign, and made himself over, as it were, to the enemy of both God and man, and deserved, as the just recompense of his enormous guilt, to be banished for ever from all good; God not only spared him, but provided redemption for him. Yes, my dear youth, and the price of redemption from our slavery to sin and Satan, and the incurred penalty of eternal death, was high indeed; too high for any created being to provide and pay. For "we were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Surely, when all this is considered, God's "propriety in us," his exclusive right to us and all that we have and are, must be seen to furnish the strongest reason conceivable, for our conforming to that method of worshipping and serving him which he may choose to prescribe, and for our rejecting with abhorrence, every mode which he has forbidden.

The third and last reason by which obedience to the second commandment is enforced is, "the zeal which God hath for his own worship." "I the Lord thy God, am a *jealous God*, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Whenever the Deity, in condescension to human weakness, is pleased to speak to us "after the manner of men," we must be careful not to conceive of him as possessing any of the imperfections or passions of our nature. Thus, when it is said that he is "a jealous God," we are not to con-

ceive of jealousy in him, as fully corresponding to that feeling, as it exists in the human mind. All that is meant is, that the Deity has a holy sensibility in regard to every thing which relates to his worship: which may be illustrated to us by the sensitiveness and vigilance which we witness in one of our kind, under the influence of jealousy, in regard to purity and delicacy of conduct in one who is most beloved, and in whose affections no rival can be tolerated. Idolatry is often in Scripture represented as spiritual adultery; and those who indulge in it, or even lean toward it, as resembling those who are basely regardless of the marriage covenant.

As to God's visiting the iniquities of parents upon their children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, you must be careful to observe that the children thus visited, as well as their parents, are distinctly said to be those that *hate* God. He never inflicts spiritual judgments on pious children, for the sins of their wicked parents or progenitors; although temporal calamities, such as disease, poverty and grief, are not unfrequently entailed on children by the vices of their parents. Yet even these calamities, if the children be pious, are always overruled for their eternal benefit. Now, it should be observed, that no *hater of God* ever is, or indeed can be, punished in this life, more severely than his own proper iniquities deserve; and if God, for wise and holy purposes, determines to punish wicked parents in this life, *less* than their sins deserve, (reserving their full and more awful retribution for a future state,) and inflicts *greater* temporal sufferings on their offspring than they would otherwise endure, yet *unspeakably less*, after all, than their own proper iniquities deserve, is there any injustice in this? There is not the shadow of it. On the contrary, there is not only equity, but wisdom, and goodness too, in the dispensation. A solemn warning is held forth, both to parents and children, which may have, and is intended to have, a salutary influence, in preventing entirely the threatened evils. It is also worthy of special notice, how,

in the midst of these fearful comminations, still "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." The threatened judgments extend only to the *third and fourth generations* of those who hate God; but mercy is promised to *thousands, both of generations and individuals*, of them that love the Lord and keep his commandments. Thus you see, dear youth, that your heavenly Father has set before you, all that is awful on the one hand, and all that is alluring on the other, to engage you most carefully to regard what he has required of you in this, and in all his other commandments. Meditate seriously, I beseech you, both on the penalties and the promises, here and elsewhere exhibited in God's holy word; and may his grace incline you to shun the evil, and choose the good, to the glory of his name and your own eternal welfare and happiness. Amen.

LECTURE XL.

THE third commandment, which we are now to consider, is thus expressed:

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.”

This commandment, according to our Catechism, “requireth the holy and reverent use of God’s names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works.”

There is in the decalogue a beautiful order, not I believe generally observed, in the statement of the duties which we owe to God. In the first commandment, the only proper object of religious worship is clearly set before us; in the second, the only acceptable mode or method of worship is distinctly prescribed; and in the third, the right temper of mind for the performance of God’s worship, is specified and required. In view of this close connexion of duties enjoined by these precepts, I remark, that it is not easy, nor indeed practicable, to treat of them separately; and yet distinctly and fully.—they unavoidably include or involve each other. Accordingly, in the three or four lectures which precede the present, a great part of what is required in the third commandment has been anticipated. Another part we had occasion to consider in the very beginning of our course, in speaking of the Being, attributes, word and works of God—subjects to which the first twelve answers of our Catechism chiefly and directly relate. The ordinances of divine institution, I further remark, will hereafter demand our particular attention, both as to their nature, and the reverent manner in which they ought to be observed. In speaking, therefore, of what is required in this commandment, I shall con-

fine myself to a brief notice of two or three particulars; and

1. The names and titles of God may need some further explanation. In assigning names to men, the design, you know, is to discriminate one individual from another; and among the ancient nations, names were not entirely arbitrary as with us, but were often intended to be indicative of the character of the individuals to whom they were applied. Agreeably to this usage, the Supreme Being, in condescending to make himself known to men, has assumed names that discriminate him from all other beings, and which most impressively indicate his infinitely glorious nature or character. Thus we are told that when Moses first received a command to return from the land of Midian to Egypt, for the deliverance of his people, he "said unto God, Behold when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, 'The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.'" And then, after recognizing his covenant relation to their fathers, he adds—"This is my name for ever, and this my memorial to all generations." Dr. Scott remarks on this passage, that "I AM THAT I AM; or, I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE, signifies, *I am He that exists*, and implies self-existence, independence, unchangeableness, incomprehensibility, eternity, and consummate perfection. JEHOVAH (a name of similar signification) thus distinguished himself from the idols of the nations, which are nothing in the world; and from all creatures, which have only a derived, dependent, mutable existence in him, and from him." In the 34th chapter of Exodus, we have a remarkable passage, in which God is said to proclaim his name; and this name is said to consist of the appellations of LORD, or JEHOVAH, and GOD, with an enumeration of his moral attributes—"The LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness

and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." The relations which the three persons of the one adorable Godhead sustain to each other, are, you are aware, made known to us by the terms, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST.

The titles of God, as well as his names, are mentioned in the answer we consider. The difference between these, according to Fisher, is this—"His names set forth what he is in himself, his titles what he is unto others." These titles, moreover, are, by the same writer, distinguished into those which belong to the Deity "as the God of nature, and those which are ascribed to him as the God of grace." As the God of nature, his titles are such as these—"The Creator of the ends of the earth; the Preserver of man; King of nations, and Lord of Hosts." The titles ascribed to him as the God of grace, are the following, among others—"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob; the Holy one of Israel; King of Saints; the Father of Mercies; the Hearer of Prayer; the God of Peace; the God of Hope; the God of Salvation." The most common and ordinary title ascribed to God in the New Testament, is the infinitely amiable and encouraging one, *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. We find also, in the prayer dictated by our blessed Redeemer to his disciples, that he teaches them to address the Majesty of heaven and earth as "Our Father in heaven;" and the apostle Paul gives it as the language of the spirit of adoption, that those who possess it address God, crying "Abba Father." What, my dear youth, can be more condescending and tender than this? What a more constraining motive, to come with holy freedom and delight to a prayer hearing God?

2. Oaths, vows, and lots, are mentioned in our Larger Catechism as included in the requisitions of this commandment. What is unlawful, we are to consider in speaking of things forbidden in the precept before us. At present we confine ourselves to things

required, and among them we place religious oaths, or those which are taken with religious solemnity.

“An oath is an appeal to God, the searcher of hearts, for the truth of what we say, and always expresses or supposes an imprecation of his judgment upon us, if we prevaricate. An oath, therefore, implies a belief in God and his providence, and indeed is an act of worship, and so accounted in Scripture, as in that expression, *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God—and shalt swear by his name.* Its use in human affairs is very great, when managed with judgment.”* In the passage just quoted, there is an inspired precept, enjoining a solemn oath; we have also examples in the sacred Scripture of the Deity swearing by himself; and in the New Testament, as well as in the Old, the lawfulness of oaths is distinctly recognized, where it is said, “an oath for confirmation is the end of all strife;” so that it cannot be fairly asserted that solemn swearing was a part of the Jewish ceremonial, abolished by the advent of the Saviour. Those who deny the lawfulness, under the gospel dispensation, of religious oaths, taken with a view to ascertain and establish truth, ground their principal objections on two passages of Scripture, of which the second is nearly a transcript of the first. Consult them for yourselves, in Matt. v. 33—37; and James v. 12. But nothing is more evident than that the Saviour (whom his apostle appears to quote) when he says, “Swear not at all,” &c. speaks of profane swearing, in common conversation. This is manifest from the passage itself, in which a number of profane colloquial oaths, known to have been frequent among the Jews at that time, are distinctly specified; and in which the term “communication,” (*λογος*) *conversation* or *speech*, is expressly mentioned. Now to apply what is spoken of one subject, to another of totally a different kind and character, is a gross violation of all the laws of propriety and just construction of language; and if adopted, not only might the Scriptures,

* Witherspoon.

but every other kind of writing, be entirely perverted, and be made to say something directly opposite to their true intention and design. We are not forbidden then, but in duty required, to take an oath, accompanied with religious solemnities, when called to it by the civil magistrate, or by an officer duly authorized, in ecclesiastical courts. "The oath has been adopted by all nations in their administration of justice, in order to discover truth. The most common and universal application of it has been to add greater solemnity to the testimony of witnesses. It is also sometimes made use of with the parties themselves, for conviction or purgation. The laws of every country point out the cases in which oaths are required or admitted in public judgment. It is however lawful, and in common practice, for private persons, voluntarily, on solemn occasions, to confirm what they say by an oath. Persons entering on public offices are also often obliged to make oath, that they will faithfully execute their trust. Oaths are commonly divided into two kinds, *assertory* and *promissory*—those called *purgatory* fall under the first of these divisions."* I cannot here forbear to mention, that in Britain and the United States, there has been a multiplication of oaths, demanded by the laws of these countries, which the best moralists consider as of a most unhappy tendency. The frequency of an act is always apt to diminish its solemnity, and an oath, from its very nature, ought not to be required, except on important occasions. Innumerable perjuries, it is believed, have been the consequence of the multiplication of oaths, especially of those exacted in the collection of the revenue of the country. The hasty and irreverent manner in which oaths are too often administered, is always calculated to produce the same evil.

It appears from Scripture that there have been various forms made use of in the administration of an oath. Jacob and Laban, at parting, ate together on a heap of stones, and erected a pillar as a memorial of

* Witherspoon.

perpetual peace and friendship, and then swore by the God of Abraham and Nahor, and the fear of Isaac, that they would not injure each other. Abraham, in exacting an oath of his servant, in regard to taking a wife for his son Isaac, made the servant swear, by putting his hand under his master's thigh. It would seem, therefore, that the *form* of administering an oath is not essential, and may be varied. Yet, as the highest examples recorded in the sacred volume to prove the lawfulness of taking a solemn oath, do at the same time show in what form and manner the parties swore, we surely shall act wisely and safely, in following their example. "I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth," was the language used by Abraham to the king of Sodom, in stating in what manner he had sworn, not to receive any part of the spoil which was taken from the kings they had vanquished. In like manner, the angel whom John saw in vision, standing on the sea and upon the earth, "lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, that there should be time no longer." Nay, the ever blessed God himself, is said to have sworn in this manner. He is represented (Deut. xxxii. 40) as saying—"I lift up my hand to heaven, and say I live for ever." This indeed appears to have been the usual form of taking an oath in ancient times. The custom of swearing on the Bible, and of afterwards kissing it, is certainly an imitation of the heathen practice of kissing their idols, and came to us through the Romish church. It is not required by law in this country, and my advice to you is never to comply with it; but in taking an oath to adhere strictly to the Scriptural example of doing it, by solemnly lifting up the hand.

A formal religious vow is "a solemn promise, made to God, in which we bind ourselves to do, or to forbear, somewhat, for the promoting of his glory."* Hence the sacraments of the New Testament partake of the nature of vows, inasmuch as they are seals of

* Buck's Theological Dictionary.

covenant engagements, or promises made to God. In prayer, also, such promises and engagements are frequently made, and on this account prayers are sometimes called vows. But a *formal* vow is a separate and distinct act, in relation to some specific object. Such vows were common under the Mosaic dispensation, and particular rules were given in relation to their being made and fulfilled. Num. xxx. et alib. There is no particular command, in regard to these special vows, in the New Testament; and it certainly is not the genius of the Christian dispensation to encourage their frequent, much less their hasty or rash formation. It appears, indeed, that the apostle Paul was once under the obligation of a special vow, and that he joined with four other individuals, who belonged to the Christian church at Jerusalem, in the observance of the Mosaic ritual, relative to persons in their circumstances. All these men, however, were Jews, who in the first age of the Christian church, were allowed to retain certain observances of the preceding economy, not inconsistent with gospel principles. Paul, it appears, was persuaded by his brethren to join in these observances, and hence it is probable that his first intention was not to have done it. Some of the best commentators think that his compliance on this occasion was wrong; and the issue was certainly disastrous. On the whole, the gospel, without encouraging a frequent resort to special vows, does not forbid them, and the great apostle of the Gentiles, in one instance, did make a special vow. There may be cases, therefore, in which they are not sinful, but expedient. Yet the cases are not numerous, and no person ought to make such a vow but on serious, mature, and prayerful deliberation. The object of the vow ought to be clearly lawful, and when made, the obligation to performance should be regarded as most sacred, unless some providential dispensation renders it utterly impracticable, or clearly inexpedient. Those who in sickness, or in other imminent peril, make vows and promises to devote their lives to God, if he shall spare them, are certainly and sa-

credly bound to the performance of what they thus engage. In the Romish church, however, the three vows which are made to constitute an individual what they denominate *a religious*—the vows of *poverty, celibacy, and obedience*—are without the shadow of authority from the sacred Scripture. They are indeed characteristics of the “man of sin,” and are not binding on any one, after he is enlightened to see the truth, and becomes convinced that these vows ought never to have been made.

Of lots, I cannot speak at length, although volumes have been written on their nature and use. My own opinions, on this subject, coincide very much with those expressed by Ridgley in his “Body of Divinity;” and as what he says is very summarily expressed, I shall give it to you in his own words. “When lots were an ordinance, by which God in an extraordinary manner determined things that were before unknown, (they being an instituted means of appealing to him for that end, as in the case of *Achan*, and others,) then lots were not to be used in a common way, for that would have been a profaning a sacred institution. But since this extraordinary ordinance is now ceased, it does not seem unlawful, so as to be an instance of profaneness, to make use of lots in civil matters; provided we do not consider them as an ordinance which God has appointed, in which we think we have ground to expect his immediate interposure, and to depend upon it as though it were a divine oracle. In this view it would be unlawful, at present, to use lots in any respect whatsoever.”

As to those that are denominated *games of chance*, such as cards, dice, and all lotteries for money, I hold them to be unlawful; and I exhort you to renounce and avoid them altogether. If there were no other objection to these games, than the infatuating influence which all experience shows they have on the mind, and the portion of precious time which is wasted by all who become addicted to them, this would of itself be a sufficient reason, why a prudent and conscientious person should have no concern with them.

But there are other and weighty considerations, why you should altogether abstain from them. They are not only of bad report with all serious Christians, but to gain money, or to lose it, in the use of these games, appears to be morally wrong. The successful gamester sometimes obtains property to a large amount, in a few hours, without either labour or skill; and this amount is lost with equal rapidity by others, to their great inconvenience, and sometimes to their utter ruin. The atrocious crimes of theft, highway robbery, and even suicide itself, have often been the bitter fruits of gambling. Surely, every person who is not lost to all moral sensibility, must desire and resolve to have nothing to do with practices which may lead to such fearful consequences. Games of chance are found, in experience, to be more enticing and pernicious than games of skill; and the reason probably is, that the former may be indulged in, with little mental talent or exertion; whereas the latter require an exercise of mind and ingenuity, which gamblers dislike, and of which the most of them are incapable. Another reason may be, the speed with which, in games of chance, a decision is made, in regard to the stake at issue. But games of skill, when money is played for, as it sometimes is, are to be condemned equally with games of hazard; and indeed a fondness for them, simply as a matter of amusement, often leads to such a mis-spending of time, as a truly conscientious person will by no means consider innocent.

3. The name of God, and all his titles, attributes, and ordinances, are to be used with holy reverence; and this feeling or sentiment is to be preserved and cherished, even in contemplating his works of creation and providence. Deep and habitual reverence for every thing connected with the honour and glory of God, is a discriminating mark of a truly devout and pious mind. On such a mind, there ever is and must be, such a strong impression, at once of the transcendent majesty, and the infinite excellence and amiableness of the Lord Jehovah, that every thing by which he manifests himself will be regarded with

a mixture of awe and love. These are, as it were, the signatures which mark the feelings and exercises of all good beings, whether angels or men. See a remarkable instance of this, in the sixth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah. How strikingly, also, were these sentiments exemplified by Abraham, in the whole of his plea for guilty Sodom—increasing in intensity as he proceeded in his intercession—"Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes. Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once." What a contrast between the spirit and the language here exhibited, and the style and manner of address we too often hear in prayer! But profound reverence for the Supreme Being is not peculiar to uninspired men. It characterizes, as you have heard, all good men; and may, indeed, be considered as a kind of measure, to ascertain the degree of their goodness. The eminently enlightened and pious Robert Boyle, is reported to have been in the habit of always making a pause, both before and after he pronounced the awful name of God.

Cultivate, my young friends, this deep reverential regard for all that is sacred. Never use the name of God with levity, and rarely in common conversation. Never mention his titles or attributes but with solemnity. Never read his holy word, nor even open the sacred volume, in a hasty and careless manner. Never attend on his ordinances but with recollected thought, and a truly devout spirit. Oh there is much profaneness—shocking profaneness—in the professed worship of God, in the very service in which we profess to honour him.

Nor should the works of God be contemplated, without seeing in them the wisdom, power, and goodness of their great Author. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."

The 19th Psalm, from which these words are taken, presents us with an inimitable meditation on both the works and the word of God, and of the manner in which the devout mind of the Psalmist passed from the one to the other, and concluded both with solemn reflection and earnest prayer. The 104th Psalm is a composition of unrivalled sublimity on the works of God, both in creation and providence. To “look through nature up to nature’s God,” should be the frequent exercise, not only of the philosopher, but of every ordinary Christian. Yet it is an exercise too much neglected by Christians in general. Doubtless the great work of redemption transcends in glory, every other display of the Divine attributes. Yet all the works of God should lead us to admire, love, and praise him; they every where strike our senses, and he who, in surveying them, habitually cherishes a devout train of thought, such as that of which the pious Mr. Hervey has given us some excellent specimens, will have in himself a source of the purest and most sublime pleasure, and will also be constantly making advances in the divine life. In such a life may we all advance, till it shall be perfected in the immediate vision and full fruition of God our Saviour. Amen.

LECTURE XLI.

IN the present lecture I am to show, agreeably to the statement of the Catechism, that “the third commandment forbiddeth all profaning or abusing of any thing whereby God maketh himself known.”

We have already seen that God makes himself known by his names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works; and a brief notice has been taken of the reverent manner in which all these are to be treated or used. Without, therefore, referring to them in order, I shall specify a variety of ways in which, either singly or conjointly, they may be abused or profaned.

1. *Blasphemy* is a species of profaneness of the most heinous and awful kind. It properly consists in *speaking directly against God*. This is the sin of devils, and of those lost and hopeless spirits of our race, who are shut up in the prison of despair. But, alas! although blasphemy is the language of hell, it is sometimes heard on earth. It is indeed so contrary to reason, as well as to every sentiment of religion, that some have thought it ought always to be considered and treated as a species of insanity. Under the Mosaic dispensation, it was punished with death, and the same penalty has been awarded to it, by the laws of several Christian nations. And still, in most countries, it exposes the blasphemer to some civil punishment, but not to death—its full retribution being left to that Infinite Being, whom it madly presumes to insult. But every approach to this tremendous crime ought to be feared, more than any form of temporal death. Therefore regard with horror all language, and even the indulgence and approbation of all thoughts,* of an atheistical kind, or that directly or

* For the manner in which *involuntary* blasphemous thoughts or imaginations are to be regarded, see Lecture xxxi.

impliedly go to execrate, reproach, revile, or disparage the Majesty of heaven and earth, or any of his attributes, words, or dispensations.

2. *Perjury*, or the violation of a solemn oath or vow, is another example of highly aggravated profaneness. What, indeed, can be more dreadful, than for a moral and accountable being to imprecate the divine judgments on himself? which is done by every person who takes a false oath? We accordingly find such persons classed, by the apostle, (1 Tim. i. 10,) with the perpetrators of crimes of the deepest die and the greatest infamy. It is the tendency of perjury, also, to break asunder the bonds of society, which oaths are intended to secure and strengthen; so that, in every view, the guilt which perjury involves is of the most atrocious character. This crime is committed when persons assert, on oath, what they know to be false; or promise or engage what they have no serious intention to perform; or what they know, or have reason to believe, it will be impossible for them to perform; or when they solemnly pledge themselves (as Herod did to the daughter of Herodias) to do that which is in itself unlawful. An unlawful oath is indeed not binding, and ought by no means to be kept; yet the criminality of having taken such an oath will not be entirely done away, by a refusal to fulfil it. Oaths ought to be taken with great seriousness and deliberation; but the imperfections of memory and knowledge are always supposed, and, therefore, errors arising simply from these causes, do not involve guilt. In official oaths likewise, a *faithful endeavour* to discharge duty is all that is required; and of course the common infirmities of our nature do not violate the obligation incurred. Whatever renders the fulfilment of an oath utterly impracticable, if it do not proceed from the fault of him who has taken the oath, leaves him without guilt in the non-performance. But there are some things, especially in matters of property, to which men ought not to have pledged themselves, which they are nevertheless bound to perform, after the pledge has been given. A good man, as characterized by

the Psalmist, "swaereth to his own hurt, and changeth not."

No allowance is, or ever ought to be made, in the taking of an oath, for any mental reservation, or any equivocal meaning of language. The oath is binding in the plain and full sense of the words that are used, and as they are understood by the administrator of the oath, at the time it is administered. Nor will it avail to plead that the oath was taken by compulsion. We ought rather to resist unto blood, than to take an oath to do that which is morally wrong; and if performance can follow a compulsory oath without moral guilt, it ought to follow, whatever expense or inconvenience it may cost. We must consider ourselves as having chosen this, rather than the consequences of refusing the compulsory oath.

3. *Sinful cursing*, or the invoking of the vengeance of God, or other fearful evils, either on ourselves or others, is a most heinous breach of the third commandment. "They who curse themselves, do in effect pray that God would hasten their everlasting destruction; as though their damnation slumbered, or as if it were a thing to be wished for—and to curse others is to put up a profane wicked prayer to God, which is the highest affront to him; as though the vials of his wrath were to be emptied on men when they pleased, to satisfy their passionate revenge against them. This also includes in it a vile instance of uncharitableness towards those whom we are commanded to love as ourselves: and how contrary is it to that golden rule laid down by our Saviour, 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.'"*

4. *Swearing profanely in common conversation*, is a transgression of the divine precept now under consideration, which perhaps more frequently occurs than any other. The shocking language of this kind which is sometimes heard from those who allow themselves in its use, especially when they are under the

* Ridgley.

influence of their angry passions, as they often are, is scarcely, if at all, less than downright blasphemy. But many who never go to this extreme, and who even condemn and reprove those that do, scruple not to swear by the name of God, on the most ordinary occasions, and with the greatest frequency. Others, who seldom proceed as far as this, still do not hesitate to use the name of their Maker in colloquial discourse, without concern, and even with the greatest levity. Others again, swear by heathen deities, and by creatures of various kinds—by heaven, by their soul, their life, their conscience, their faith, or their troth. Some make use of minced oaths, or single terms of profane import, and seem to think that they thus avoid the sin prohibited in the command before us. But, my young friends, not one of these practices is without sin before God; although we readily admit that some of them involve a far greater and more awful amount of guilt than others. Every one of them, however, is in manifest violation of the explicit command of our Saviour: “I say unto you, SWEAR NOT AT ALL; neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king: Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black: But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for WHATSOEVER IS MORE THAN THESE, cometh of evil.”

Profane swearing, like most other vices, seldom fails to proceed from bad to worse. He who begins with minced oaths, has reason to fear that he may go on to blasphemy or perjury. There is indeed little doubt, that the lamentable prevalence of perjury is, in a great measure, to be attributed to the loss of reverence for a solemn oath, occasioned by the multitude of profane oaths which the guilty parties have been accustomed to use, and the criminality of which they have never considered.

Those who indulge in profane language, in their common conversation, often deny, or at least attempt to palliate its criminality, by affirming that they intend no evil. It is, however, undeniable, that the

use of this language always proceeds from the want of reverence for God and sacred things; since the invariable effect produced on the mind of a profane man, who believes that death is near and that judgment will follow, is to make him forbear his profaneness. Now, reverence for God lies at the very foundation of all religion; and it also affords the most weighty sanction to all moral obligation. Profaneness, therefore, strikes at the very vitals of the duty which we owe both to God and man, and consequently is a sin of the most heinous kind. Its guilt, moreover, is aggravated by the consideration that it is attended by neither profit nor pleasure; for there is no pretence more groundless than that which is sometimes heard, that it serves to produce a conviction that he who uses it is much in earnest. He, indeed, who always swears when he is in earnest, will not be believed to be in earnest when he does not swear. But let it be known that he *never* swears, and he may indicate his earnestness, far more effectually without an oath than with it. On the whole, profane language is not only a grievous sin against God, but shocking to every pious ear; it lessens the dignity and influence of all who use it, and renders their company less welcome than it would otherwise be to all good men; it is an evil, to which there is probably less temptation than to almost any other; and therefore every consideration, both of duty and interest, should induce all who have indulged in it, to "break off their sin by repentance" without delay; and all who have hitherto avoided it, to shun every form of expression, that has the most distant alliance to this inexcusable and odious vice.

5. "God maketh himself known" in his ordinances, his word, and his works both of creation and providence; and the "profaning or abusing" of these, is a real violation of the third commandment, and should be considered as being forbidden by it, as truly and strictly, as any one of the profane acts already specified. I know not of a more shocking violation of this precept, than one which has sometimes taken

place even in a Christian community, the making of a ludicrous exhibition of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Nor is the use of this ordinance merely for secular purposes, or in any careless, light, irreverent, or even formal manner, other than an instance of awful profaneness. Laughing, whispering, and all behaviour indicative of disrespect or disregard to the public or social worship of God, by those who are attending on its performance, is, in like manner, dreadfully profane. Yea, the indulgence of wandering thoughts in prayer or praise, whether social or secret, must be considered as partaking of the sin forbidden in this commandment. Neither must I omit to mention, that every false professor of religion, especially if he knows himself to be such, leads a life of habitual profaneness; and that he who dishonours his profession by acts palpably inconsistent with it, is, in every one of these acts, chargeable with the sin we are now considering.

Our Larger Catechism justly states that the Word of God is profaned and abused, "By misinterpreting, misapplying, or perverting any part of it, to profane jests, curious and unprofitable questions, vain jangling, or the maintaining of false doctrines; abusing it, or any thing contained under the name of God, to charms, or any way opposing God's truth, grace, and ways." I cannot forbear to remark to you, my dear youth, that there is much of this profaning of the word of God, in some poetical and other writings; and in the conversation of some men from whom we might expect better things, by making allusions to facts or texts of sacred Scripture, to illustrate ordinary and sometimes very trival subjects. The political speakers and writers of our country, seem to me to be peculiarly chargeable with this sin; and they not unfrequently manifest their ignorance, as well as their guilt, by affecting to be acquainted with the purport of a text or a fact, of which they discover that they know nothing, but some popular mistake or misapplication. Those who are fond of seizing every occasion that offers to show their wit, as they suppose,

by some ludicrous application of a passage of Holy Writ, would do well to remember a remark of Dr. Johnson, in his life of Pope, of whom he says, "That he was not scrupulously pious in some parts of his life is known, by many idle and indecent applications of sentences taken from the Scriptures; a mode of merriment which a good man dreads for its profaneness, and a witty man disdains for its easiness and vulgarity."

The works of God may be, and often are so abused, by employing them to pamper lust and sensual appetite, and to minister to unlawful pleasures, as to involve the sin of profaneness. The glutton and the drunkard, and those who in any way abuse their own bodies by their vices; those who make sport by tormenting irrational animals, or who treat them cruelly in making use of their labour; and those especially who sell, and purchase, and enslave their fellow men, dishonour and insult their Creator, by their ill treatment of his creatures. Those also who murmur and repine against any of the dispensations of God's providence, whether personal or in relation to communities, and however afflictive or inscrutable they may be, do implicitly and profanely find fault with their Maker. How often, in so common a thing as *the state of the weather*, do you hear some persons speak of it, in a manner plainly indicative of a murmuring discontent? This is profane. It is finding fault with the order of God's providence, which is always just and right. Under any disappointment or affliction indeed, we are not forbidden, but rather required, to recognize and be sensible of a suffering state; but we are, in all cases, to do it with humble submission to the appointment of Him who does all things well; and never, in language, thought or feeling, to arraign any of his dispensations or allotments.

Let us now consider "the reason annexed to the third commandment," which is, "That however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment."

The statement which you have heard in the former part of this lecture, shows clearly that very many of the violations of this commandment cannot be punished by men, because men cannot know them. They are known only by the guilty party, and by the all-seeing God. Other violations there are, which, although known to men, cannot easily, nor perhaps properly, be subjected to human penalties. And many there certainly are, which might be punished, and for the punishment of which human laws have been enacted, which nevertheless, through the delinquency of magistrates, and the influence of corrupt public sentiment, go altogether unpunished. There is no vice, I think, that is so generally tolerated, and so little punished, as that of profaneness; partly, as I have just remarked, from its very nature, and partly because so many are either grossly guilty of it themselves, or too little sensible of its guilt in others, and of the offence which it offers to that great and good Being, against whom it is directly pointed. In foresight of these facts and circumstances, the great and all-wise Legislator has sanctioned this section of his moral code, by declaring that he will, in an especial manner, take into his own hands the infliction of the proper penalty, even "his righteous judgment," on all its transgressors; and has pledged his veracity and his omnipotence that "they shall not escape." Verily, this is the most fearful of all sanctions or comminations: and yet its equity is manifest, since the sin which is threatened is committed immediately against God, and receives its whole punishment from him alone. In itself, also, it is a very aggravated sin, especially when committed by those who enjoy the light of Divine revelation, by which the glorious Majesty, as well as the infinite goodness and mercy of God are clearly exhibited. This idea appears to be intimated in the precept, by the words, "the name of the Lord (in the original, Jehovah) thy God;" implying that those who were addressed, were not in a state of ignorance, like the heathen, but were acquainted with the essential glory and excellence of

the Supreme Being, as revealed to them in the very name Jehovah; implying also, that Jehovah had manifested himself to them, as in a special sense *their* God, their covenant God, laying them under the strongest obligations to a holy and reverent use of his name.

You need not be informed, my young friends, that we who live under the light of the gospel, by being better acquainted than the ancient Israelites were, with the grace and mercy of God in Christ, are under even stronger and more tender obligations than they were, to yield him our profoundest reverence and warmest love. The sin, therefore, of treating him with disrespect, and with a sort of defiance, by taking his name in vain, must, among us, be peculiarly aggravated. "Thine *enemies* take thy name in vain," says the Psalmist. All profaneness manifests enmity to the blessed God, of whose holy law it is a flagrant transgression: and as sure as there is a judgment seat before which his enemies shall appear, so sure it is that *then* this sin, of which they now think so little, and which often escapes even without censure from men, shall receive a special notice and a tremendous punishment. Not only, therefore, avoid all profaneness yourselves, but pity and pray for those who are guilty of it. "Cast not your pearls before swine," by hasty, and indiscriminate, or unseasonable rebuke; yet, consider it as a sacred Christian duty, to endeavour to seek and seize a favourable opportunity, to admonish those whom you know to be profane, of their guilt and danger. A word seasonably, seriously, and tenderly addressed to them on this subject, may, under the divine blessing, awaken reflections which may terminate in true repentance: and "let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

LECTURE XLII.

IN the present lecture we enter on the consideration of the fourth commandment, which is, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy: Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: In it thou shalt not do any work; thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." This fourth commandment, our Catechism teaches us, "requireth the keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word, expressly one whole day in seven to be a holy Sabbath to himself." In attending to this answer of our Catechism, let us first consider, That by the appointment of God, a certain part or portion of our time, is to be regarded as holy; that is, set apart for the special worship and service of God. This proposition is stated, not so much for the purpose of proof, as of illustration. Its truth, we believe, is established at once, by the precept we consider. Nor does the reasonableness of this precept require much argument. He who gave us our existence, and on whom we constantly and entirely depend, both for its continuance and for all its enjoyments, has manifestly a sovereign right to claim a portion of it—a part of our time—to be exclusively devoted to his special service. Now any thing which is thus exclusively devoted to the service of Jehovah, is denominated *holy*; this being one of the primitive and peculiar meanings of that word. Thus the temple of the ancient Israelites, its apartments, utensils, and sacrifices; nay, the city of Jerusalem, and the

whole land of Palestine, were denominated *holy*; not because there was in these material substances any change of their original nature, but because they were peculiarly consecrated to the service of Jehovah, and to be regarded as in a special sense his property. In like manner, in speaking of *holy time*, we do not mean that there is any thing in such time inherently different from other time, any more than that the gold of which the vessels of the ancient sanctuary were made was inherently different from other gold. These vessels, as has been said, were called holy, because they were to be used only in the sacred service of the Most High; and therefore to use them for any other purpose was highly profane: and so holy time, inasmuch as it is to be employed, or exclusively spent, in the service of God, is profaned by spending it in any other way.

In an early part of these lectures, I had occasion to explain the difference between laws, which are technically denominated *moral natural*, and those which are *moral positive*; and on that occasion I remarked, that all the precepts of the decalogue, are moral in their very nature; except that part of the command now under consideration, which relates to the particular portion of time which we are to regard as holy; and I intimated that even in this there might be a natural fitness, with which we are not acquainted. In opposition to this, however, there have been writers of eminence, who have maintained that the whole of the fourth commandment was moral positive only; and ought to be regarded as no more than a part of those temporary institutions which were binding on the Jews, till the establishment of the gospel dispensation; but which, when this dispensation was fully introduced, were all abolished, and are now no longer obligatory. These writers admit without reserve, that there is a *natural fitness* in the worship of God, and that men are under a moral obligation to worship him; but they deny that Christians are bound to regard any specific part of time, as peculiarly holy. In other words, they maintain that the

fourth precept of the decalogue, was abrogated along with the rest of the Jewish ritual, of which they consider it as a part.

These opinions, my dear youth, I must say, appear to me of very dangerous tendency, and to militate pointedly, both with reason and Scripture. Nothing is better known, as a matter of experience, than that a duty which we think we may perform at any time, is apt to be performed at no time: or if not entirely omitted, is likely to be but occasionally and often very slightly attended to. Those who purpose faithfully to discharge a stated duty, always, if they act wisely, fix its performance to certain *set seasons*. They find that this is the only safeguard against frequent and criminal neglect. Does it then seem reasonable to believe, that he who knows what is in man—who knows that the best of men are sanctified but in part, and are apt to be too much engrossed with worldly objects—has left the matter of his worship, the most important matter of our existence, without setting apart any particular time, in which it shall be specially regarded? To suppose this, appears to me highly derogatory to the wisdom of God, and therefore in the last degree improbable. Beside, it is admitted, that a rule was once given to the Jews on this subject, and I know of nothing in their circumstances, which rendered it more necessary to them than it is to us. It should, moreover, be recollected, that men are bound to worship God in their social capacity, and this indeed is admitted by our opponents in the point before us. But without set seasons for the purpose, *social* worship can hardly take place—it cannot be regularly and generally attended on. *Set times* for its celebration, must be specified and observed; and if not appointed by God, they must be of human appointment. But we cannot believe, that so important a concern as this, is left merely to human discretion. It relates to a point in which the honour of God is concerned, respecting which we know that he always exercises a holy jealousy. We are not, indeed, to confine the worship and ser-

vice of our Creator to stated seasons. Our whole lives ought to be considered as, in a certain view, devoted to him; and we should never pass a day without the worship of God. But constituted and circumstanced as we confessedly are, we constantly need to have the undue influence of sensible objects on our minds broken, and our attention to be called and fixed for some length of time, on spiritual and holy objects; and for this purpose, set seasons of entire abstraction from the world, are of essential importance.

Let us now consider this subject in the light of Holy Scripture: and here I remark that it would appear strange indeed, that in the midst of a code of moral laws, intended to be of perpetual obligation, we should find one, and but one, of a merely ceremonial and temporary nature; and this without the smallest intimation that it was of a character different from the rest. There was, moreover, a marked difference between the manner in which the ten commandments were given, and that which was adopted in instituting the temporary ritual of the Hebrews. The ten commandments were uttered by an audible voice of Jehovah from Mount Sinai; and were also engraved by the finger of God on two tables of stone, which were to be laid up in the ark, and preserved with it in the most holy place. Not a single ceremonial institution, unless the fourth commandment is one, was given in this manner—a manner clearly intended to denote that those laws possessed a dignity and perpetuity of character, which did not belong to the ceremonial rites. These rites were indeed given by divine inspiration to Moses, and till the advent of the Saviour, were doubtless as binding on the Jews, as the precepts of the Decalogue. But the different manner in which they were promulged and preserved, seems clearly to intimate the Divine appointment, that the latter should be temporary, and the former perpetual.

Again. A part of this commandment relates to Gentiles as well as to Jews; which was not the

case with any institution merely ceremonial. "Thy stranger that is within thy gates," cannot intend proselytes, whether servants of the Israelites, or others; for these were never accounted as strangers. Gentiles, who came occasionally into the land of Judea, are here undoubtedly referred to. But such persons were not required to observe any part of the ceremonial law; yet they are in this command expressly enjoined to observe the Sabbath, and those with whom they sojourned, were required to exact this observance from them.

From these considerations, and some others of a similar nature, which I do not think necessary to specify, we conclude, that the fourth commandment ought, beyond a question, to be regarded as a part of the moral law—equally obligatory, and as perpetual in its nature and design, as any other precept of the decalogue.

We are aware that those who represent the Jewish Sabbath as a ceremonial institution, endeavour to support their hypothesis by what the apostle says, Coloss. ii. 16, 17. "Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a 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." But when we consider that the writer of these words was in the practice of observing a particular day of the week, for special religious exercises, as is apparent from his epistles, as well as from the Acts of the Apostles, we cannot believe that he meant to condemn this practice. He would, by so doing, have condemned himself. By *the Sabbath days*, which are *a shadow of things to come*, he plainly means the Jewish festivals, in which holy convocations were held; and which are often in the Old Testament denominated *Sabbaths*. Indeed, it seems evident at once, by the *enumeration* in this passage of rites confessedly ceremonial, that the apostle is speaking exclusively of them. And accordingly this prohibition is directed to *Sabbath days*, in the plural number, and not to the weekly Sabbath, which would have

been mentioned in the singular, if that had been his object.

On the whole, my young friends, the evidence that the command we are considering is moral in its very nature, and of perpetual obligation, appears to be clear and conclusive; and if so, it establishes as an unchanging law of God, the setting apart of one whole day in seven, as a holy Sabbath to himself; or in other words, that immediately after the lapse of six days of secular time, one day is always to be kept holy, by appropriating it exclusively to the service and worship of God. Which particular day of the seven ought to be thus regarded, under the Christian dispensation, is made the subject of a subsequent answer of our Catechism.

In the mean time, as the answer before us speaks of "such set times," in the plural number, as "God hath appointed in his word," let us consider what we are to understand by this part of the answer. It is plain that the authors of our Catechism meant to intimate, that as the command was first delivered to the Jews, *they* were bound, while their ancient dispensation continued, to pay a sacred regard to the *numerous specified seasons*, which in the Mosaic ritual, were appropriated to the immediate worship of Jehovah. They doubtless also intended to intimate, that all the times on which the day of sacred rest should return, however numerous those times might be, were always to be kept holy to God. It was likewise, we believe, their intention to suggest by this expression, that *no other set seasons* than those which God hath appointed in *his* word, ought to be appointed by men. But here we must take distinctly into view, the difference between *set times* and *occasional seasons*, for the special worship and service of our Maker. It is plain from the New Testament, that there are occasions on which it is the duty of Christians to observe, occasionally, special seasons for fasting and prayer, and other seasons of the same kind, for thanksgiving to God. Individuals, families, churches, and nations, may and ought,

when the providence of God manifestly calls to the duty of fasting and prayer, or to that of special thanksgiving for mercies received, to set apart seasons for these purposes severally, and to observe them devoutly. But none of these ought to be *set seasons*; because none such are appointed by Christ, the sole lawgiver of his church; and because set seasons, of this description, may interfere with the plain indications of divine providence, at the time of their occurrence—may call men to rejoice, when they ought to mourn, and to fast and lament, when they ought to rejoice and give thanks. Nor is the observance of these occasional seasons for special devotion obligatory on others, than those by whom they are set apart. One individual Christian, or one community, may, at a certain time, find them proper, when with another they may, at that time, be highly improper. In this, these occasional seasons differ from the Sabbath, which is at all times obligatory on all Christians, after the lapse of six secular days. In a word, the only *set* time which God has required to be kept holy, is the Sabbath; and to appoint other set times, is an impeachment of the Divine wisdom, as implying a defect in his prescriptions; and it is also to contravene the indications of his holy providence, by calling men to act differently at certain times, from what that providence intimates to be their present duty.

It follows from what has just been stated, that those churches that appoint fasts and festivals, to be observed regularly, or at *set times*, need, in this particular, to be reformed. In the Roman Catholic church, the number of saints' days, and of seasons of religious solemnity and observance, is so great as to entrench, very materially, on the time which ought to be devoted to secular employments. It should never be forgotten, that the command we consider as really and explicitly requires that six days should be spent in labour—that all our work of a worldly kind may be industriously and faithfully done—as that on the seventh we should do no work, but devote the

whole time to the immediate service of God. But the corrupt Romish church completely contravenes this whole order. It first takes away a part of the secular time which God has appointed for labour, and desecrates his holy day, by freely allowing a large part of it to be spent in sports and amusements, or in worldly occupations, as every individual may choose. It is notorious, that wherever other days than the Sabbath are religiously observed, there that holy day is less strictly observed than its nature demands—less strictly than it is generally observed by those who regard it as the only *set* time which God has commanded to be kept holy. It is also notorious, that holy days, as they are called, are times at which every species of vice and disorder is more flagrantly and more generally indulged in, than at any other time; so that these days are really and highly injurious to civil society, as well as an encroachment on the prerogative of God.

There is some difference of opinion among Christians, as to the part of the day at which holy time may most properly commence. This, however, is but a circumstance. The essence of the command is, that a seventh part of our time—or one whole day in seven—should be exclusively devoted to the extraordinary service of God. Still, it is a matter of some importance, that every circumstance, in regard to this important subject, should be ordered in the manner most accordant with reason and revelation. RIDGELEY, has, I think, made a fair statement of this matter; and what I shall offer will be taken, with some abridgment and change of order, from what he says in his system. In answer to the argument that we ought to begin the Sabbath as the Jews did, in the evening, he observes, “that the beginning of sacred days is to be at the same time with that of civil; and this was governed by the custom of nations. The Jews’ civil day began at evening; and therefore it was ordained that from evening to evening, should be the measure of their sacred days. Our days have another beginning and ending, which difference is only cir-

cumstantial." In regard to scriptural light and authority, he remarks—"We have some direction as to this matter, from the intimation given us, that Christ rose from the dead *on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, while it was yet dark.* Therefore the Lord's day begins in the morning, before sun-rising; or, according to our usual way of reckoning, we may conclude it begins immediately after midnight, and continues till midnight following; which is our common method of computing time; beginning it with the morning and ending it with the evening. Again, if the Sabbath begins in the evening, religious worship ought to be performed some time, at least, in the evening; and then, soon after it is begun, it will be interrupted by the succeeding night, and then it must be revived again the succeeding day: And as to the end of the Sabbath, it seems not so agreeable, that when we have been engaged in the worship of God through the day, we should spend the evening in secular employments; which cannot be judged unlawful, if the Sabbath be then at an end. Therefore it is much more expedient, that the whole work of the day should be continued as long as our worldly employments are on other days; and our beginning and ending of religious duties, should, in some measure, be agreeable thereunto. Another scripture brought to prove this argument is in John xx. 10. "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 said, peace be unto you." It is called the evening of *the same day*; so that the worship which was performed that day was continued in the evening thereof: This is not called the evening of the next day, but of the same day in which Christ rose from the dead; which was the first Christian Sabbath."

Although, therefore, I would guard you against being contentious on this subject, I cannot but think the considerations here stated, in favour of beginning and ending the day of sacred rest as we begin and

end other days, are clearly decisive. I will, however, close the lecture with observing, that as far as practicable, it will be well for you, my young friends, to adopt what I know has been the practice of some devout Christians; that is, to spend the evening of Saturday, as much as you conveniently can, in retirement from the world. The children of dissipation often spend it in parties of mirth and levity, or at theatres, or other places of carnal amusement; and they often add to their other sins, by an actual trespass on holy time. Take for yourselves an exactly opposite course. Whenever you can, so order your affairs that your worldly occupations on the evening preceding the Lord's day, may be of such a retired and peaceful kind, as to admit of serious meditation; avoid promiscuous company altogether; let your associations at this time, be with the pious, and your conversation be on religious topics; or better still, if you can spend a part at least of the evening, in religious reading and devout meditation. I am well aware that many are so circumstanced that a stated compliance with this advice will not be practicable; and I offer it, not as pointing out a prescribed duty, but as a matter of Christian prudence, with those who are favoured in providence to have their time in some good degree at their voluntary disposal. Even our ordinary devotions, on secular days, will not usually be performed to the greatest advantage, unless they are preceded by a short space of recollected and serious thought. And it is highly desirable, with a view to the most profitable spending of holy time, to prepare for it, by getting our minds into a devout frame. It is delightful indeed to the practical Christian, when the evening which precedes the Lord's day is so spent, that his very dreams become devout; and that he awakes in the morning on which his Saviour rose from the dead with the aspirations of his mind going forth to him, as he is now seated on his throne in the heavens, and with the whole soul attuned to the employments of the sacred hours of this blessed day.

LECTURE XLIII.

IN our last lecture I endeavoured to show that the fourth commandment of the decalogue is *moral*, in the highest and strictest sense of the word; and that it is, of course, of perpetual obligation—requiring us to keep holy to God all such set seasons as he hath appointed in his word, and especially to consecrate to his exclusive service one whole day in seven. Which day of the week ought to be thus consecrated to God, we are now to consider. On this point the statement of our Catechism is, that—“From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath.”

There are some, my young friends, who explicitly deny the truth of the first part of this statement; that is, they deny that the obligation to observe the seventh day of the week as a sabbath, was coeval with the completion of the work of creation, or from the beginning of the world. They insist that it had no other or earlier origin, than the time when the command before us was delivered to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. But this opinion, although adopted and defended by some men of eminence in the church, appears to me to be in direct opposition to the sacred record, (Gen. ii. 2, 3,) where it is said, “And on the seventh day, God ended his work which he had made; and he rested the seventh day from all his work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” Those who deny the primeval institution of the Sabbath say, that the blessing here pronounced on the seventh day, and

its sanctification as a day of holy rest, was *proleptical*; that is, God *then* ordained that at some future time—and according to these interpreters, that time was then more than two thousand years distant—the seventh day should be kept holy, and that a blessing should then attend its observance. I must say, that this appears to me one of the harshest and most forced interpretations of a plain passage of Scripture, that I have ever seen. The reason assigned for God's blessing the Sabbath day is, that on it he rested from all his work, and the text distinctly implies that *at that time* he blessed and sanctified it. His resting from his work, and his blessing and sanctifying the day of rest, are represented as cotemporaneous. The language in which both facts are announced relates to one and the same period. Yet those from whom we differ in this matter, construe the language in relation to the fact *literally*, in the present time, and the language relative to the benediction and sanctification of the day *figuratively*, as referring to future time—future by the space of two thousand five hundred years. This, my dear youth, is taking such a liberty with the language of sacred Scripture as I deem altogether unwarrantable: and I feel it to be my duty to warn you, not to listen to any such interpretation of any part of the oracles of God, let it come from whomsoever it may. Its direct tendency is to discredit divine revelation, by exhibiting it as a doubtful and uncertain guide. Beside, in the present instance, if resting from his work on the seventh day was the reason that God sanctified and blessed it—and this is affirmed in the fourth commandment, as well as in the passage I have quoted—this reason was as powerful for the religious observance of the day, before the time of Moses, as after it. God had a church in the world, as really then as afterwards; and without some specified time for his worship, it would soon have fallen into general, and at last into total neglect; for the whole experience of the world establishes the position, that religious worship, whether private or public, will not long be continued, unless set seasons be appoint-

ed for its performance. Nor is it at all reasonable to suppose, that through the long period of the patriarchal dispensation, the people of God were denied the inestimable privilege of that sabbatical institution, which his church has ever since enjoyed.

The only reason assigned by those who adopt the strange opinion to which I have adverted is, that the Scripture is wholly silent, in regard to the observance of the Sabbath, from the time of the creation till the Exodus from Egypt. Suppose the fact to be exactly as this objection states, and we may still maintain that it is wholly without weight. We do not read of any observance of the Sabbath, during the whole time of the Hebrew judges—a space of about four hundred and fifty years; and yet our opponents themselves do not question, that it was observed through the whole of that period. The truth is, the history of the church, in the early ages of the world, is so brief and summary, that its silence in regard to a particular fact, is no conclusive evidence that such a fact did not take place. It is not even a strong presumption against the existence of any fact, which is rendered probable by other evidence.

But brief and comprehensive as are the records of the Pentateuch, we do by no means admit that it contains no intimations, or evidence, that a sabbath was observed, even from the days of our first parents. We read, Gen. iv. 3, 4, that “in process of time,” Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord. The phrase “process of time,” when literally rendered from the Hebrew is, “at the end of days;” and this is the marginal reading in our common translation. Now “the end of days,” here mentioned, appears to refer to some period by which time was then measured; and it is highly probable, as many judicious critics have observed, that it refers to the end of the week, or the day on which the week terminated, which was the seventh—reckoning weeks from the day on which God rested from his work.

Again. In Gen. viii. 6—12, we have a remarkable account of the sending forth of a raven, and a dove,

by Noah, to ascertain whether the waters of the flood had so subsided as to permit his leaving the ark. Three experiments were made, and it appears that there was an interval of seven days between each. On this the judicious Scott remarks—“The repeated mention of seven days, seems an intimation of the observance of the Sabbath in the ark; after the ordinances of which the dove was sent out.”

Further—There is positive evidence that a sabbath was observed by the Hebrews before their arrival at Mount Sinai, and the giving of the decalogue, of which the fourth commandment is a part. When the Israelites were in the wilderness of Sin, which was some time before they entered the wilderness of Sinai, we find that the sabbath was observed. There is a particular account of this, with an especial reference to the gathering and preservation of the Manna, in the sixteenth chapter of the book of Exodus, which you may read at your leisure. Scott’s commentary on this transaction is as follows. “It is remarkable that three miracles were wrought every week in honour of the sabbath, even *before the promulgation of the Mosaic law*. Double the quantity (of Manna) fell the day before; none fell on the sabbath day; nor did that stink which they kept for that day. This confirms the supposition that the institution of the sabbath was from the beginning.” If it be alleged, as it has been by some, that the sabbath was first instituted at this very time; that is, while the Israelites were in the wilderness of Sin, we reply that the allegation is made, not only without evidence, but in opposition to all the evidence which exists in the case. There is no intimation whatever of a new institution or ordinance then appointed and introduced; but on the contrary, the language of Moses most naturally imports, that he reminded them of a divine appointment, of which they had before been apprized. In Egypt they had no doubt been compelled by their tyrannical prince, and his rigorous task-masters, to violate the sabbath, and perhaps had so long neglected its appropriate duties, as to be in a great measure

ignorant of them. They had doubtless been accustomed to perform servile labour on this sacred day, and needed to be particularly instructed and guarded on this point. This was done by the divine dispensation in regard to the Manna, and at the same time Moses took occasion to teach them, that the whole day was to be spent in the immediate service of God.

Once more. "The division of time into weeks, or periods of seven days, which obtained so early and almost universally, is a strong indication that *one* day in seven was always distinguished in a particular manner. *WEEK*, and *seven days*, are in Scripture language synonymous terms. This septenary division of time has been, from the earliest ages, uniformly observed over all the eastern world. The Israelites, Assyrians, Egyptians, Indians, Arabians, and Persians, have always made use of a week, consisting of seven days. Many vain attempts have been made to account for this uniformity; but a practice so general and prevalent could never have taken place, had not the septenary division of the time been instituted from the beginning, and handed down by tradition. It has been supposed by some, that the heathens borrowed the notion of the *sacredness* of the seventh day from the Jews. But this opinion will not readily be admitted, when it is considered that the Jews were held in the greatest contempt by the surrounding nations, who derided them no less for their sabbaths than for their circumcision. All sorts of writers ridiculed them on this account."*

On the whole, therefore, there is satisfactory evidence, that the law of the sabbath was, with other moral laws, revealed to our first parents at their creation in innocence; that it was observed by them even in Paradise, as well as after their fall; that the patriarchal church regarded it, and partook of its inestimable benefits; that it was inserted, with a clear specification of its requirements and prohibitions, in the moral code which was delivered to the Israelites at

* Encyclopædia—article *Sabbath*.

Sinai; and to show its high rank in the scale of moral obligation, as well as for its better preservation, it was, with three other precepts of a similar character, inscribed by the finger of God on the first table of moral duties: And if this be so, it puts to rest the question in regard to its being a part of the Jewish ritual. Being in its origin no part of that ritual, but an institution appointed by the Creator from the beginning of the world, and of an inherently moral kind, its observance is obligatory at all times, and among all people.

The answer of the Catechism under consideration also states, that "from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly sabbath." There have been those, however, who have maintained with much ingenuity, learning and plausibility, that the first day of the week was the day of sacred rest originally appointed by God; that this appointment continued till the time of the Mosaic dispensation; and that the seventh day of the week was then appointed to be observed as the sabbath by the Israelites, for two powerful reasons, in addition to that which was given at the beginning—first, that their sacred day might be different from that of the idolatrous heathens, who had learned by tradition that the first day of the week was to be set apart for religious worship, and who observed it for the worship of the sun, and the other heavenly luminaries—and secondly, in commemoration of the deliverance from the Egyptian bondage, which is particularly mentioned by Moses in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy, as a special reason why the Hebrews should remember the sabbath and keep it holy. It would follow from this hypothesis, that the day which Christians now regard as the sabbath, is that which was originally appointed by God; and that the Jewish sabbath was a part of their ritual, and a departure from the primitive order, which was restored when the work of our redemption was completed by the resurrection of Christ. The learned and distinguished Selden is the principal

advocate of this system; but as he was a member of the Assembly of divines that framed our Catechism, he either did not lay his reasonings and opinions on this topic before that Assembly, or if he did, the answer before us shows that they were not adopted.

The question, you will observe, relates merely to a *circumstance*, in no wise affecting the great doctrine that a seventh part of our time is to be regularly and exclusively devoted to religious duties. This was required of the patriarchs and the Jews, and this is what is still obligatory on Christians. Dr. Doddridge has well observed, that as morning, noon and night, vary in different parts of our globe, this of necessity makes a variation in the reckoning of time, as to the beginning and ending of a day; and that of course the sabbath does not begin in one place till some hours after it has begun in another. Yet it is one whole day in seven, in regular succession, which all the inhabitants of the earth, according to their own reckoning of days, are required to keep holy. In this consists the essence of the duty; and it has been justly remarked, that the benediction of the fourth commandment is not pronounced on the *seventh day* from the creation, but on the *sabbath day*, wheresoever, and whensoever, it is properly observed. The opinion which has led to these remarks was adopted by the learned Dr. Kennicot. I shall lay before you his short statement, to which you will yield or withhold your assent, as you may think proper.*

The concluding part of the answer before us states, that ever since the resurrection of Christ till the end of the world, the first day of the week is to be observed as the Christian sabbath. This position is denied by a sect of Christians denominated *Sabbatarians*, on the ground that there is no explicit command in the New Testament for the observance of the sabbath on the first day of the week; and therefore that the seventh day, or the Jewish sabbath, is still to be held sacred. But we believe that no principle is more

* See note at the end of the Lecture.

obviously reasonable and just, than that which is recognized in our Confession of Faith, that what is "deduced from Scripture by good and necessary consequence," is of the same validity as that which is "expressly set down in Scripture." The Bible would have been far too large a book for popular use—it would have extended to many volumes instead of one—if every duty, with all its circumstances, had been made the subject of an explicit command. Beside, it was manifestly the design of God in the revelation of his will, to afford scope for the exercise of the human faculties, and even to require their diligent and candid exercise, in order to the discovery of the real mind of his Holy Spirit, in various parts of the sacred Scriptures. Now we assuredly believe, that we can deduce from the New Testament, by good and necessary consequence, that it is the appointment of God our Saviour, that the first day of the week is to be observed, from the resurrection of Christ to the end of the world, as the Christian sabbath. To be convinced of this, consider—

1. There is evidence that our Saviour himself met repeatedly with his disciples, when they were assembled together on the first day of the week, and pronounced a blessing on them in their collective capacity. We read, John xx. 19, "that the same day (on which our Saviour rose from the dead) 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 of them, and said, peace be unto you." And in the 26th verse of the same chapter, we find, that "after eight days (that is including the day on which this occurrence took place, which was the usual method of reckoning time among the Jews) again his disciples were within; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said, peace be unto you." Although in both these instances, it is said that the doors of the place where the disciples were assembled were shut, and the fear of the Jews is assigned as the cause, yet this does not appear to be the reason of their meeting

together, since they could much more easily have concealed themselves by keeping separate than by coming together. The doors, it is plain, were shut, after they came together, to conceal the place of their meeting. The meeting itself appears to have been for religious worship, and to commemorate the resurrection of their Lord: and he sanctioned this procedure, by appearing among them in person, and pronouncing a benediction on them in two instances, and these, the first in which they adopted this practice.

2. It was on the first day of the week, when the primitive disciples "were all with one accord in one place," and probably employed in acts of religious worship, that they received that great and special gift, the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost; by which they were not only enabled to speak at once various languages, which they had never learned, but fully to understand the spiritual nature of the Redeemer's kingdom, and thus to be qualified to publish the gospel in its purity throughout the world; and by which, also, three thousand converts were made in one day, as an earnest of what might afterwards be expected. We are expressly told that this wonderful event happened on the day of Pentecost, a day which received its name because it occurred fifty days after the second day of the Jewish Passover, or rather of the feast of unleavened bread. From this time, they were to reckon seven weeks, or forty-nine days, to the commencement of the Pentecost. This would bring them to a Saturday evening, preceding the Lord's day morning, so that on this morning—the morning of the fiftieth day—the day of Pentecost, in the accurate language of the sacred historian, "was fully come." On this morning, we accordingly find the Holy Spirit was miraculously poured out, producing all the astonishing effects, of which we have an account in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Now, the gift of the Holy Ghost, after the gift of the Saviour himself, is the greatest ever bestowed on our sinful and ruined race: and when we consider that this most remarkable and miraculous instance, or

exhibition of the gift, was made on the weekly return of the day of our Saviour's resurrection from the dead; and that when made, it is highly probable the disciples were in the actual observance of that day, as a season sacred to their risen Lord, it seems strongly to indicate that this, in perpetuity, was to be the Christian sabbath; and that in the religious observance of this day Christians might ordinarily expect that the special influences of the Holy Spirit would be peculiarly imparted—would be more commonly experienced than on other days—to give a saving effect to the institutions and ministration of the gospel. Nor ought it to pass without notice, that the history of the church and our own observation demonstrate, that the fact has corresponded with such an indication. The Christian Sabbath has ever been the harvest season, in which, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, souls have been gathered to the Saviour, and the people of God have been refreshed and animated in their Christian course.

3. We have unequivocal evidence that the apostle Paul observed the first day of the week for religious worship, and directed the churches which he had planted to do the same. It is said, Acts xx. 7, that “upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight.” You will find by consulting the preceding verse, that at Troas, where this occurrence took place, the whole time of the apostle's stay with the church there, on this visit, was seven days. Now, as it is particularly mentioned that he was “to depart on the morrow,” he must have arrived among them in the beginning of the preceding week; and to me it seems highly probable that, although he was in great haste to reach Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost, he consented to remain with them over the sabbath, that he might have an opportunity to preach to a greater number than could be assembled on any other day, and at the same time administer to them the sacrament of the Lord's sup-

per. At any rate, it is clear from the text, that it was a *usage* in this church, to come together on the first day of the week, to celebrate the Eucharist, and for other religious services.

Again. In 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2, we find this record—“As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” It is evident from this passage, that on the first day of the week, in a large number of the churches gathered from among the Gentiles by the apostle Paul, a religious duty was, by his order, to be statedly performed—the duty of making a charitable provision for the poor saints in Judea, then suffering both by famine and persecution. The distance was great between the churches of Galatia, in the north-eastern part of Asia Minor, and the church of Corinth, in Peninsular Greece; and here is a duty which was to be regularly performed, by apostolic command, on the first day of the week, in all these Christian churches, and probably in many others, if not in all that had been planted by this apostle. The specific duty was a contribution for the poor; but the reason why it was to be done statedly on the first day of the week, is well explained by Dr. Doddridge, in the following paraphrase of the passage—“When you hold your Christian assemblies *on the first day of the week*, in commemoration of the resurrection of our Lord, which has made that day sacred amongst us, *let every one of you lay something by, in proportion to the degree in which, by the divine blessing he hath been prospered* in his affairs; and let him bring it with him to the place of your public worship; then *treasuring it up* in the common stock, *that* so it may be ready in one sum, and *there be no necessity of making any particular collections when I come.*” The original words, which in our common version are rendered “let every one lay by him in store,” Doddridge, you perceive, translates “treasuring it up,” and in a note he says—“We render it, ‘let every one of you lay by

him in store.' But the following words show, that it was to be put into a common stock. The argument drawn from hence for the religious observation of the first day of the week, in these primitive churches of Corinth and Galatia, is too obvious to need any further illustration, and yet too important to be passed by in entire silence." Now, as the epistle to the Corinthians is directed, not only to them, but to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ," it may fairly be considered as intimating, that the first day of the week is to be regarded as the Christian Sabbath, among all people, and "till the end of the world."

4. In Rev. i. 10, we find the apostle John using these words, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Does any one, I ask, entertain a doubt which day of the week the beloved apostle meant by *the Lord's day*? It is manifest that there was *then* in the Church a day, which was so well known and discriminated by calling it *the Lord's day*, that no other explanation was needed to point it out. In fact, it appears that the Christians *then*, knew as well as we do *now*, what day a writer or speaker intended, when he mentioned *the Lord's day*; and it is equally palpable that they, as well as we, could mean by this designation no other than the first day of the week. It doubtless was called *the Lord's day*, because on this day he rose triumphantly from the tomb, completed on this day the work of our redemption—a work more arduous in itself, and more important to us, than the work of creation—and because, for these reasons, he claimed that this day should be regarded as *his property*, and should be observed thenceforth as "the Sabbath of the Lord," in all succeeding generations. If then the example of the whole apostolic church, originating, we cannot doubt, in a command from the Redeemer himself—either in the forty days which he spent with his apostles after his resurrection, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," or in a communication made to them miraculously by his Holy Spirit—for without

such authority we cannot suppose they would have established an observance for the whole church—if, I say, the example of the entire apostolic church, thus originating, and fortified by such reasons as I have now, in several particulars, laid before you, is to be an authoritative guide to us, as it indubitably ought to be, then is the first day of the week to be observed, till the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath.

NOTE—To which there is a reference at page 119. “There is great reason to believe, that the Sabbath of the Israelites was altered with their year at their coming forth from Egypt, and a short attention to this point may not here be improper. The case then seems to be this. At the finishing of the creation, God sanctified the seventh day. ‘This seventh day being the first day of Adam’s life, was consecrated by way of first fruits to God, and therefore Adam may reasonably be supposed to have began his computation of the days of the week with the first whole day of his existence. Thus the Sabbath became the first day of the week. But when mankind fell from the worship of the true God, they first substituted the *Sun* in his place; and preserving the same weekly day of worship, but devoting it to the Sun, the Sabbath was thence called Sunday. Thus the Sabbath of the Patriarchs continued to be the Sunday of the idolaters, till the coming up of the Israelites out of Egypt, and then, as God altered the beginning of their year, so he also changed the day of their worship, from Sunday to Saturday. The first reason of which might be, that as Sunday was the day of worship among the idolaters, the Israelites would be more likely to join with them, if they rested on the same day, than if they were to work on that day, and serve their God upon another. But a second reason certainly was—in order to perpetuate the memory of their deliverance on that day from Egyptian slavery. For Moses, when he applies the fourth commandment to the particular case of his own people, (Deut. v. 15,) does not enforce it (as in Exod. xx. 11,) by the consideration of God’s resting on the seventh day, which was the Sabbath of the Patriarchs; but binds it upon them by saying—“Remember that thou wast a servant in Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God hath commanded THEE to keep THIS SABBATH DAY.”—*Kennicott’s Dissertation on Cain and Abel*, p. 184.

LECTURE XLIV.

THE sanctification of the Sabbath is to be the subject of the ensuing lecture. On this important topic our Catechism instructs us, that "The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy." And beside this positive statement of the manner in which the Sabbath ought to be observed, we are taught, negatively, that "The fourth commandment forbiddeth the omission or careless performance of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations."

As we can devote but a single Lecture to the duties and prohibitions of the command before us, we shall take them in connexion; and even when thus taken, I shall be obliged to make the discussion concise and summary. With a view to this, I will endeavour—

I. To state the duties which precede, and are preparatory to, a right observance of the Sabbath.

II. The positive duties, and explicit prohibitions, which must be carefully regarded on the Sabbath, by those who would obey the command to keep it holy.

III. To specify those "works of necessity and mercy," which may lawfully be performed on the day of sacred rest.

A few short remarks, not properly falling under these heads, may be added, in closing the Lecture.

I am persuaded, my young friends, that the Sabbath is profaned by many, through a disregard to the duties which ought to precede, and be preparatory to its observance. "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work," is as really an injunction of the fourth command, as is that which requires the keeping holy of the seventh day: and a disregard of this part of the precept leads, in many instances, to a violation of the other part. In consequence of idleness, inactivity, and a careless neglect of worldly affairs, during secular time, men too often find themselves tempted to attend to some pressing worldly avocation, which would never have occurred, if it had not been occasioned by the want of forecast, diligence, and exertion, on the days proper for servile labour. Did men plan their business with due reference to the Sabbath, and prepare for it assiduously, by doing ALL their labour on six days of the week, we should not so often see the seventh improperly spent. We should not hear so many pleas of *a necessary attention* to some urgent secular concern, nor would worldly thoughts and cares so often intrude on the minds of those who feel the obligation of hallowing the Lord's day. It is criminal neglect in preparing for the Sabbath, which occasions much of this lamentable evil. How often, for example, might a trading vessel, without loss or inconvenience, avoid leaving her port on the Sabbath, if the owner, or master, were as careful as he ought to be, not to trespass on holy time.

Some commentators I know there are, who maintain that the part of the fourth commandment which says "six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work," was intended merely to express an *allowance*, and not to deliver an *injunction*. This, it appears to me, is entirely without warrant, and in opposition to the plain import of the words. The form of expression which requires us to "do all our work" on six secular days, is precisely the same as that which directs us to rest on the seventh, except that in the former case it is positive, and in the latter ne-

gative. The language is *imperative*, and equally so in both instances; and the one injunction seems to be intended as the exact opposite of the other. We ought, therefore, to consider this part of the precept as expressly enjoining diligence in our worldly business, in its proper season; as laying this duty upon us by Divine authority, as really and truly as the duty of keeping holy the Sabbath day: and among other reasons for diligence, an important one is that which has already been stated—that we may be well prepared for the holy rest of the Sabbath, by having all our secular affairs so ordered, that there may then be as little occasion, and as little temptation as possible, to act, or think, in reference to any worldly concern.

It is, indeed, not only to be admitted, but carefully kept in mind, that the worship of God in secret, and in the family, is a sacred duty to be performed, ordinarily, on every day; that special seasons for thanksgiving, and for fasting and prayer, ought likewise, as heretofore shown, to be occasionally taken from our secular time; and on the other hand, that there are some occasions, on which servile labour may and ought to be done, on the Sabbath. But all this is perfectly consistent with the construction I have given to that part of the precept now under consideration. The requisition to rest and keep holy the Sabbath, is, you will observe, laid down without any qualification, yet it confessedly admits of some exceptions. Then, surely, the requisition to “do all our work” on the six days which precede the Sabbath, may, in the same manner, admit of the exceptions which have been mentioned. The truth is, that every precept of the Decalogue was intended to be as summary as possible, and to receive the necessary explanations and qualifications from other parts of the revealed will of God. When, therefore, it is said, “six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work,” the meaning plainly is—thou shalt not fail to do *ALL* the work which is *proper and practicable*, to be done on those days. Thus doing, therefore, we shall obey

that law of our Creator which requires us to be “diligent in business;” and at the same time, we shall remove a temptation and hindrance to the keeping holy of the Sabbath: and if, in addition to this, we devote, as I have heretofore recommended, the evening which precedes the morning of the Lord’s day, to serious meditation and devout exercises, we shall make a preparation for the right observance of that sacred day, which we may reasonably hope will be attended by the Divine blessing—enabling us to spend our holy time in a manner truly pleasant and profitable to ourselves, and most pleasing and acceptable to “the Lord of the Sabbath.”

II. Let us now consider the positive duties, and explicit prohibitions, which must be carefully regarded on the Sabbath, by those who would obey the command to keep it holy. Here let us take the clauses of the Catechism in order.

1. “The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day.” *Holy rest* is a cessation from worldly cares and occupations, for the sole purpose of employing all our faculties in sacred exercises. If, when we cease from servile labour, we should be engaged in no spiritual exercises, you plainly perceive it would not be a *holy* rest that we should enjoy, but one that is merely animal or worldly. Hence our Catechism teaches us, that this commandment forbids “the profaning the day by idleness”—justly inculcating the idea, that idleness on the Sabbath is a real profanation of holy time.

We do not deny, my young friends, but explicitly maintain and inculcate that, in requiring us to suspend servile labour for a seventh part of our time, it was *among* the benevolent purposes of our Creator, to consult the bodily health and comfort both of man and beast: and experience shows that animal nature requires this, and that those who keep closely to the revealed rule, will, in the end, gain much, and lose nothing by the observance. Both they and their cattle will, in the course even of a year, effect more than will be done by those who labour on the Sabbath, and

thereby diminish their health and strength, and even shorten their lives. He who made man and beast, knew what was the portion of animal rest that was most conducive to the well being of both; and if, without revelation, physiologists and physicians could ever have ascertained this point, which is very questionable, it would have required much time and observation for the purpose. It was therefore a most cruel, as well as impious attempt; that was made by the French philosophers and legislators, a few years since, to establish their *decades*, in place of the Sabbath—allowing less time for bodily rest than God has appointed: and they, in our own country, who, at the present time, employ the Sabbath in servile labour, are chargeable with a practical approbation and imitation of the atheistic project which was adopted in France, and which, in words, many of them loudly condemn. Nay, they go further than the French did, for they provide for no cessation whatever, from those bodily exertions which wear out the animal frame. God has unquestionably determined what is the most proper period for relaxation from servile labour, and secular care; and it is both foolish and wicked to attempt to improve on his appointment—to take more or less, than he has ordained.

But I return from this digression, to remind you again, that *rest* is not *idleness*. In our waking hours the mind, at least, never is or can be idle. And even a weary body, when in health, is most relieved by moderate action, and not by torpid stillness. The proper duties of the Sabbath, therefore, which are performed in the domestic abode, and in going to and attending on public worship, are, in every view, most admirably calculated to benefit both our bodies and our souls. In the case of those whose occupations *occasionally* call them to lose a portion of their sleep, or to weary themselves beyond their strength, more bodily rest on the Sabbath may be proper, than in the case of others. There is, however, much sin committed—very much—by those who, without any special necessity, sleep longer on the morning of the

Sabbath, than on any other day of the week; and by many more, who saunter away, in a kind of listless apathy, many, if not the whole, of those precious hours which should be diligently occupied in preparing for the eternal Sabbath of heaven.

2. The next clause of the first answer before us affirms, that on the Sabbath we are to abstain "even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days;" and the second answer more particularly specifies, that the commandment forbids, not only idleness, but "the doing of that which is in itself sinful, with all unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments and recreations." Much of what might properly be introduced here, has been unavoidably anticipated; but without repetition, much might be added. As, however, I must be brief, let me first request you particularly to notice, that the doing of that which is in itself sinful, is *more* sinful, if done on the Sabbath, than if it had been done on any other day of the week. The reason is most obvious—two commands of God are violated by one wicked act. Never let it be forgotten, therefore, that he who commits a known sin on the Sabbath, is responsible to God for the inherent guilt of that sin, aggravated awfully by the violation of his holy day.

As to those worldly employments, or works, which are lawful on other days, but unlawful on the Sabbath, it is neither practicable nor necessary to attempt to specify them minutely. They comprehend every kind, and every act, of the common business of life, not provided for in those acts of necessity and mercy, which we are afterward to consider. Few, indeed, there are, who extend the rule as far, and observe it as strictly, as they ought. The greater part, even of professing Christians, allow themselves in some things, which it would be hard for them to show, that either necessity or mercy demands. But I cannot pass from this part of the subject, without calling you to deplore with me, the open and awful profanation of the Lord's day, which is even enjoined by the laws of our coun-

try, in requiring the transportation of the national mail, and the opening of the Post-offices on this holy day, and thus setting the law of the land in direct opposition to the law of God. Let us pray that he who hath the hearts of all men in his hands, may dispose our legislators and rulers to remove this dreadful evil, so reproachful to us as a people, and so directly calculated to bring down the judgments of Almighty God on our country.

But not only servile labour, but recreations which are lawful on other days, are to be forborne on the Sabbath. In popish countries generally, a large part of holy time is openly and avowedly devoted to recreations, many of which are not lawful—if the law of God be the rule—at any time whatever. Theatres, dances, bull-baitings, gambling, and indeed public spectacles, sports, and amusements, of all descriptions, are not only tolerated, but legalized and countenanced, by the highest authorities, both in church and state. Do such practices consist with remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy? Is it not next to an absurdity to ask the question? Surely those who do these things can be Christians only *in name*. Indeed and in truth, they are the disciples of Antichrist. But, alas! in Protestant, as well as in Popish countries, our own not excepted, the Sabbath is shamefully and openly profaned, by the *tolerance*, at least, of recreations, which, if lawful on other days, are utterly inconsistent with keeping holy the Sabbath. The running of steam-boats and stages, unnecessary travelling, and all parties of pleasure, dining parties, tea parties, and visiting of all kinds, except visiting the sick and the poor—all the noisy and boisterous sports and plays, in which the children and youth of our towns and cities so freely indulge; these, and things like these, many of which cannot be specified, are the unlawful practices to which I refer. Against taking any part, in any of these recreations, my dear youth, I caution you solemnly. However general and fashionable they may be, they certainly are a dreadful profanation of the Lord's day. Think for yourselves,

and you will be convinced, that they do and must dissipate all serious thought. Go from the most solemn and affecting exercises of the house of God, and indulge in any of these recreations, and you will find that every good impression will commonly vanish in an hour. I really know of nothing that can be properly called *recreations*, that are proper for the Sabbath, beyond taking a walk in some retired place, either solitarily for devout meditation, or with a Christian friend, for religious conversation. The appropriate exercises of the Sabbath are so many, and with those especially who are favoured with a number of pious books, may be so diversified, that if there be only the right temper of mind, the Sabbath will never become tedious, for the want of variety in its duties. Those who think it must be *a weariness*, if the forbidden recreations I have mentioned be altogether excluded, can never be satisfied, unless the very spirit of the command be given up; and they will of course think it a great extreme, when I add—

3. That many words and thoughts, which are not only lawful, but proper and necessary on other days, are unlawful on the Sabbath. These words and thoughts are such as relate to those worldly employments and recreations, which I have already shown to be prohibited. It is in this particular, that the real practical Christian finds his chief difficulty, in keeping holy the Sabbath day. It is commonly not difficult for him—it even, in most cases, requires no self-denial—to forbear servile labour and vain recreations. But suitably to “keep the door of his lips,” and to prevent “vain thoughts from lodging within him,” on the Lord’s day, often gives him serious trouble, and demands from him much vigilance. Here it is that he has frequent occasion to say with the apostle, “when I would do good, evil is present with me.” Yet, whatever be the obstacles, he will steadily aim at obedience, and will truly mourn over his defects. In order to avoid improper conversation, as well as for other reasons, I am deliberately of opinion, that we ought to spend as much of our time as practica-

ble on the Sabbath, and when not occupied in social worship, entirely by ourselves. When company is promiscuous, it is extremely difficult entirely to avoid improper conversation; and even when the company consists only of pious people, or of the family circle, we too often insensibly slide into discourse, or at least speak occasionally on subjects, which, on reflection, we must condemn as improper. Solitude is also most favourable to the exclusion of improper thoughts. Thoughts are unavoidably suggested to our minds, though they may not be cherished, by what we see and hear. We can best command them when we are alone, and can best indulge and pursue meditations that are serious and edifying. To prevent the intrusion of such as are improper or unprofitable, I know of nothing better, than to fix on some topic, or text of Scripture, on the evening preceding the Sabbath, for the subject of meditation, as soon as we shall awake in the morning, and to fill up the day with a diligent and close attention to its proper duties, private as well as public. This leads us to consider,

4. That our whole time, on the Sabbath, is to be spent in "the public and private exercise of God's worship," with no other exceptions, than those which we are afterwards to notice.

"God's worship," you will observe, includes in it, not only acts of prayer and praise, in which it immediately and more especially consists, but also every thing calculated to dispose us to those acts, and enable us to perform them with enlightened and holy ardour; and indeed, whatever has a tendency to promote the honour and glory of God.

The exercises suitable for the Sabbath are so many, that I can do little more than name them, and furnish you with some hints, on which you must enlarge for yourselves.

1. *Meditation*.—This is a duty too little practised, or thought of, by Christians generally. The Psalmist says—"My meditation of thee shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord." Meditation, intermingled

with devout ejaculations and aspirations of soul, is exemplified in many of the Psalms, and should form a part of a Christian's exercises on every Lord's day. The subjects of meditation are the works, the government, and the providence of God, his providence in relation to our own lot in life particularly, and more than all, the glorious plan of redemption, as a whole, and in its various parts and aspects.

2. *Self-examination.*—This is a duty which no Christian should neglect on the Lord's day. He should, if I may so speak, settle his spiritual account with himself, on the regular return of this day. He should examine, generally, whether he is in a gracious state, consider whether he is gaining or losing in religion; and should particularly go over the past week, to mark his defects, to observe the temper he has been in, the example he has set, to repent of what was wrong, and to form good resolutions for the future.

3. *Secret prayer and praise.*—Although no real Christian can neglect secret prayer, habitually, on any day of the week, yet he should perform this duty more frequently, particularly, and extensively, on the Sabbath, than he ordinarily can on other days, unless they be days specially set apart for the purpose of prayer. It is in secret prayer and praise, that the soul of the believer holds converse and communion with God; and what so proper as this, on the day which he claims as his own: and when this converse and communion is very sensible, no exercise so fully antedates heaven, the sabbatical "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

4. *Reading the Holy Scriptures, and other books of devotion.*—This, although it should be, to some extent, and as circumstances favour, an employment of a portion of our time on other days, yet it demands a special attention on the Sabbath. As far as practicable, method should be adopted in this, as in every other important concern. Let me advise you, my young friends, to confine yourselves principally, if not wholly to reading, studying, and meditating, on

the word of God, in the former part of his day; to read some sound, doctrinal and practical writer, in the latter part; and to leave sacred poetry (except psalms and hymns,) with religious periodicals, to the evening. By pursuing this course, you will avoid the danger, which seems to be real and imminent at the present time, that the numerous publications of a periodical kind, will exclude almost every other sort of religious reading. Should this unhappily be realized, the rising generation, whatever zeal they may possess, will be greatly deficient in that sound doctrinal knowledge, which is the only sure basis of consistent, stable and exemplary piety.

5. *Family devotion and catechetical instruction.* Family devotion, you are aware, consists of prayer and praise, connected with the reading of the Holy Scriptures. These exercises should, ordinarily, be somewhat more extended on the Sabbath than on secular days; and the reading of some pious commentator, such as Henry, Burkitt, or Scott, on a portion of the divine word, will also be profitable. By catechetical instruction, I mean especially a due attention to the Shorter Catechism of our church, which every member of the family should be able accurately to repeat without book, and which the younger members should recite, and hear a portion of it explained by the head of the family. It will be well, if they can add the scripture proofs, and better still, if they can add to both the Larger Catechism. These were once common attainments, in pious families of our church; and I am persuaded that whatever has taken their place, is not for the better, but the worse. But in catechetical instruction, I also include a questioning of the children of the family, on a previously prescribed portion of the Bible; requiring an account of what other books they have read; and examining them, as to what they can remember of the discourses they may have heard in public. It is this family instruction, which must, in most cases, be principally communicated and acquired on the Lord's day, and which more than any thing—I had almost said, more than every thing be-

side—contributes to raise up a generation of well informed and steadfast Christians. It was this which long distinguished the best reformed churches, and for it, I am persuaded, no adequate substitute ever has been, or will be found.

Public worship.—This is an important and essential part of the exercises of the Sabbath, to all who can avail themselves of it. Alas! that there are so many parts of our country, in which the privileges of the sanctuary cannot be enjoyed. But great is the criminality of those who neglect these privileges, when placed within their power. The command to such is explicit, “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is;” and the pretence too often made, that the Sabbath may as well be employed without going to the sanctuary, as by attending there, is utterly vain and inexcusable. Nothing but the want of health and opportunity, can justify the omission. In religion, the blessing of God is every thing, and he will not confer it on those who disobey his command. Nor is it a formal attendance, but one truly devout, that God requires. We should, in ordinary circumstances, always make special prayer for a blessing to ourselves and others from the services of the sanctuary, immediately before going to them, if this be practicable; and for a blessing on what we have heard, immediately on our return to our retirements. But although I thus inculcate the duty of public worship, I cannot forbear to say, that I think there are some Christians, who greatly err, in endeavouring to spend almost the whole of the Sabbath in public. Much of it should be spent in private, in those exercises which I have already specified. Two attendances on public worship are, as a habit, as many as will be profitable, to those who seek to employ their holy time in the most advantageous manner.

Religious conversation is the last exercise, that I shall mention as proper for the Lord’s day. This should take place when Christian friends are together on this day, and whenever we go to, or return from,

the house of God in company, unless we pass the time in silence. Conversation on news, or politics, or other secular subjects, though mournfully common, is a real profanation of the day, in any part of it, and peculiarly so, immediately before, or after, the services of the sanctuary. By this evil practice, all serious thought and good impressions are often prevented; or banished or effaced, after they have been received. The conversation of Christian families, while taking their meals together, ought also to be on religious subjects. Often a profitable topic may be furnished by the sermons they have heard—not however if they be subjected to severe criticism, but when so treated as to impress the sacred truths which have been heard in public.

III. I will now, in a few words, specify those “works of necessity and mercy,” which may lawfully be performed on the day of sacred rest.

By works of necessity, you will be careful to observe, we mean *only* those which could not be foreseen and provided against before the Sabbath; or those which, without the most serious injury, cannot be delayed till the Sabbath is past. Some of the most common of these are, flying from, and defending ourselves against an enemy; the extinguishing of fire, that has broken out and is destroying property; working a ship at sea; doing what is necessary for the burial of the dead, when delay would endanger the life or health of the living; stopping the progress of an inundation, or securing property which it threatens to destroy. Such are some of the works of necessity, and there may be others of a similar character. It is, however, of importance to observe, that we have no right to provide against risks which can happen only in the ordinary course of providence; and which it is very possible may never occur at all. In Exod. xxxiv. 21, we have this injunction, “Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh thou shalt rest: in earing time, and in harvest thou shalt rest.” Here is an explicit command, to forbear servile labour in seed time and harvest, as well as at other

times: because men might be tempted to think that they might consider such labour, at these times, as a work of necessity. But it is not. All the risk there is of unfavourable weather, is in the ordinary course of Providence: the evil feared may never happen, and the apprehension of it, is not a sufficient reason for violating the rest of the Sabbath. The same may be said of sending a vessel to sea, for fear of a hindrance by the delay of a single day. Observation, I am persuaded, will prove, that all descriptions of men, who strictly observe the divine precept in regard to the Sabbath, will, in the long run, consult their temporal interest, as well as their Christian duty. Defensive war is lawful, but it does not warrant all kinds of military operations on the day of sacred rest. My observation convinces me fully, that the frowns of the God of armies have often, and remarkably, been manifested toward those chieftains and their troops, who have voluntarily chosen to bring on a decisive battle on the Sabbath of the Lord. We ought always to keep in mind, that we shall not be free from guilt if, by neglect or choice, we *make* the necessity which we plead. This is often done, in small matters, as well as in those of magnitude. It is clearly proper to satisfy our hunger, and to make a decent appearance in the house of God, on the Sabbath. But much servile labour is often employed for these purposes on that holy day, which foresight and diligence might entirely prevent. The necessary food for a family may be so far prepared, and all that pertains to dress, and to personal decency and comfort, may be so ordered, that very little shall remain to demand labour, or occupy time or thought, on the Lord's day.

Acts of mercy are such as are performed in visiting and relieving the sick and the poor; preparing food for a temperate repast for ourselves; feeding and taking care of cattle, and relieving them when their lives are endangered; making collections for the poor, and for the propagation of the gospel; and doing all that could not previously be done, to render ourselves comfortable in our habitations, so that we

may attend to sacred duties with satisfaction and full effect. These are the principal acts of mercy; but it is scarcely practicable, either in this particular or in that which immediately precedes it, to make the specification complete. Nor is it necessary. A truly conscientious person will be a law to himself, in regard to these things. He will, in cases novel and extraordinary, judge by analogy; and will always be more solicitous to have a conscience entirely void of offence, by keeping within the questionable limit, than to subject himself to doubt and apprehension by going beyond it.

I am now to close this protracted lecture, by making a few short remarks, which could not be so properly introduced in the previous discussion.

1. It is deserving of notice, that the fourth commandment begins in a manner different from all the rest. It is introduced with the emphatic word **REMEMBER**. For this there was doubtless a special reason, and I know not how it can be better stated, than in the words of our Larger Catechism. That Catechism says:

“The word *remember* is set in the beginning of the fourth commandment, partly because of the great benefit of remembering it, we being thereby helped in our preparation to keep it; and, in keeping it, better to keep all the rest of the commandments, and to continue a thankful remembrance of the two great benefits of creation and redemption, which contain a short abridgment of religion; and partly because we are ready to forget it, for that there is less light of nature for it, and yet it restraineth our natural liberty in things at other times lawful; that it cometh but once in seven days, and many worldly businesses come between, and too often take off our minds from thinking of it, either to prepare for it, or to sanctify it; and that Satan with his instruments much labour to blot out the glory, and even the memory of it, to bring in all irreligion and impiety.”

Every clause of this pregnant answer, deserves to be distinctly meditated on, and kept in mind.

2. It is further worthy of remark, that this precept is directed to those who have the charge of others—to parents, and to superiors generally. The reason of this also, shall be given from the Larger Catechism.

“The charge of keeping the Sabbath is more specially directed to governors of families and other superiors, because they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but to see that it be observed by all those that are under their charge; and because they are prone oftentimes to hinder them, by employments of their own.”

I will just add to this, that magistrates, who are set to execute the laws, and are sworn to do so with fidelity, have a dreadful responsibility, when they suffer the enactments of the state against Sabbath profanation, to be grossly and flagrantly violated in their very presence, and permit the whole to pass without notice. What then shall be said, if they themselves are among the chief transgressors, and thus not only sin themselves, but encourage others by their impious example!

3. Finally—We are taught to expect that those who truly obey this precept, have reason to hope for peculiar spiritual communications on the Sabbath; and for the blessing of God on the whole of their labours through the ensuing week. “I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day,” is the declaration of the apostle John, in describing at what time, and in what circumstances, he received his revelations; and we have heretofore had occasion to remark, that the blessings of Pentecost were conferred on the Sabbath; and that in every age, the people of God have found this day the season of their sweetest communion with their God and Saviour; as well as that on which the blessings of redemption are most commonly and largely extended to perishing sinners. These surely are considerations, which should induce those who regard the salvation of the soul as the most important of all concerns, and the light of God’s countenance as the supreme happiness of life, to keep holy the Sabbath day, with all

the vigilance and strictness that has been recommended.

Worldly prosperity too, which always ultimately depends on the blessing of God and the favourable order of his providence, is, we have every reason to believe, connected with hallowing the day of God, both by nations and by individuals. We need seek no further for the ultimate cause of the many calamities which afflict nations denominated Christian, than their notorious profanation of the Sabbath of the Lord; and in these calamities our own nation has to expect a large share, if it shall follow, as there is too much reason to fear it will, the bad example which so generally prevails in European Christendom.

In relation to individuals, I will only state the solemn declaration of Sir Matthew Hale, one of the most distinguished chief justices that England has ever produced. It is to this effect—that his worldly concerns were prosperous or otherwise, throughout the week, just in proportion to his right observance of the previous Sabbath: And he declares that he says this, not lightly, but as the result of long and careful observation. Let infidels and profligates sneer at this, as they will; but do you, my young friends, regard it as the testimony of a man distinguished equally for strength of mind, for deep and various learning, and for eminent evangelical piety. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.”

LECTURE XLV.

IN the present lecture we are to consider the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, which are—"God's allowing us six days of the week for our own employment, his challenging a special propriety in the seventh, his own example, and his blessing the Sabbath day."

So much that in strictness belongs to this answer of the Catechism has been unavoidably anticipated, that little remains to be added to what has been heretofore said.

We have already remarked, that the precept before us is introduced in a singular manner by the word *Remember*: and you will now notice, that it is enforced by *more reasons* than are attached to any other command of the Decalogue. From this it is evident that God foresaw, what has always been witnessed, that mankind, corrupted and debased by sin, would be prone either entirely to forget the day of holy rest, or to disregard the duties which belong to it; and that, at the same time, he intended to teach us, by the special guards placed around this precept, that its due observance is highly important, and that the sin of transgressing it is entirely inexcusable.

Of the four reasons annexed to the commandment, the first is, that God has "allowed us six days of the week for our own employment." This, we have already had occasion to observe, is as large an apportionment of time for uninterrupted servile labour, as comports with the vigorous and healthful state either of man or beast. Time, like every thing else we enjoy, is the gift of God; and when, in making this gift, he has bestowed as liberal a portion for our employment in worldly concerns, as is consistent with our own comfort and happiness, even in the present life,

we surely have reason, not only to be satisfied, but thankful also, to the bountiful giver of all good. Had he claimed a larger portion for his immediate worship, we should have had no cause to complain; but when he has taken no more than is most in accordance with our own advantage, his claim to this is manifestly supported and sanctioned, not merely by authority, but likewise by every principle of reason, and every sentiment of gratitude. How unworthily of a rational, moral, and accountable being, does that man act, who refuses to yield a seventh part of his time to the God who gave him the whole; and from whose bounty and beneficence he derives every present enjoyment, and every future hope!

The second reason for the observance of the day of sacred rest is, that God challenges it as exclusively his own—or, in the language of our Catechism, “as having a special propriety in it.” Here the authority of the Supreme Lawgiver is introduced. Our Creator sustains to us, his reasonable creatures, the twofold character of a Parent and a Sovereign; and in both these characters he often addresses us in his holy word. In the command before us, after meting out to us, for our own use, six secular days, he says, “But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.” Here is a clear statement of a reservation—an appropriation of time to himself, on which no human being who hears this command can trespass, without gross presumption and high criminality. If you live, my dear youth, to have families of your own, and any of those of whom you have the charge shall ask your consent to employ the Sabbath improperly, tell them that what they ask is not yours to give, nor theirs to take. Tell them that it is God’s time that they ask, and that he has appropriated it to a use which no mortal has a right to change, or to alienate. Oh that men would remember, that the unnecessary employment of their time in worldly employments and recreations, is a species of *sacrilege*. It is impiously seizing on property which the Sovereign of the universe has set apart for his own

sacred use. So that, with the most emphatic propriety, the language of the Most High, by the prophet Malachi, may be addressed to all Sabbath breakers—"Will a man rob God! yet ye have robbed me!"

The third reason for keeping holy the Sabbath day is, the example of God himself. "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, *and rested the seventh day.*"—"God was six days in making the world; whereas, had he pleased, he could have created all things with the same beauty and perfection in which they are at present, in an instant: but he performed this work by degrees, that he might teach us that what our hand finds to do, we should do it in the proper season allotted for it; and as he ceased from his work on the seventh day, he requires that we should rest from ours, in conformity to his own example."*

How often, my young friends, have you heard the remark, that example teaches more powerfully than precept. Now, if there is something in the example of eminently wise and holy men, which induces us to imitate them without hesitation, on the presumption that a rule of conduct which they have adopted must be right and important, how much more powerfully ought this principle to operate, when the infinitely wise and holy God sets an example before us, expressly for our imitation. We know at once and assuredly, that whatever he has done is, in the highest degree, both right and important. Yet in the case now in view, we are able to see, and we have seen, the reasonableness and propriety of the Divine order; and when to this we add, that in a holy resting on the Sabbath, God calls us to act as he has acted before us—calls us to be imitators of him as dear children—what a powerful appeal does it make to our sense of duty, to filial feeling, and to a holy aspiring to act, in our humble measure, like the greatest and best of all beings? In his sermon on the mount, our Saviour pressed on his disciples, as a powerful mo-

* Ridgley.

tive, the imitation of their heavenly Father—the proving themselves to be his children, by acts of goodness similar to his own.

The fourth and last reason annexed to this commandment is, “God’s blessing the Sabbath day.” “The Lord,” says the precept, “blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” We have seen, in a former lecture, in what manner God has hallowed the Sabbath; that is, has set the seventh day apart from a common to a sacred use. “To bless a day,” says Ridgley, “is to give it to us as a particular blessing and privilege. Accordingly we ought to reckon the Sabbath as a great instance of God’s care and compassion to men; and a very great privilege, which ought to be highly esteemed by them.” Think, my young friends, of the Father of mercies as an infinitely powerful and munificent Benefactor, who has the richest favours to confer—blessings to grant of inestimable value to the children of men; blessings, the recipients of which will be made happy for time and eternity; and the want of which, must render those who want them for ever and inconceivably miserable and wretched. Think of this Almighty Benefactor, not indeed as *limiting* himself to any specified times in the bestowing of his invaluable favours, but yet as having appointed every seventh day of human existence as a *special season*, in which his choicest blessings are most commonly and most abundantly showered down, on those who sacredly devote that day to seeking them, for themselves and others. Think thus, and then estimate, if you can, the advantage of the Sabbath to those who rightly regard it, and the loss and the guilt of those who slight and profane it. The one party go, as it were, to meet their God on his own appointment, to receive his blessings; the other party disregard and despise his appointment; and practically declare that they regard his richest gifts as not worth the asking for, and their possession as not worth the having. They prefer the creature to the Creator, sensual indulgence to spiritual delights, time to eternity, and earth to hea-

ven. Yes, verily, and abiding by this impious preference, they will be doomed to take the choice which their folly and wickedness have made. In speechless confusion, they will see themselves hopelessly and eternally denied the heavenly felicities which they refused to seek and accept; and to share in the endless wailings of those who have rejected the counsels of a merciful God against their own souls.

In closing the discussion on this commandment, I would remark that I have only followed the example of its divine Author, in treating the subject of it more particularly than I have treated, or shall treat, any other precept of the inspired moral code. In my most deliberate judgment, I am convinced that the religious observance of the Lord's day is essentially connected with vital piety. *No Sabbath, no religion*, is a maxim which you may safely apply, both to individuals and to communities. Show me a family, a neighbourhood, a village, a region of country, or a nation, in which there is no Sabbath, and you show me one in which, if there be a few individuals who possess genuine piety, their number shall be found too small to save any of these associations from being justly esteemed, in their collective capacity, as destitute of religion. And as to the truly pious individuals among them, you shall invariably find them observers of the Sabbath, although, like Lot in Sodom, "having their righteous souls vexed from day to day, with seeing and hearing the unlawful deeds" of those among whom they dwell. I am well aware that there are denominations of Christians who deny altogether the moral obligation of the fourth commandment; nor am I prepared, although I think them in grievous error, to reject them indiscriminately from my charity. The maxim I have stated does not require this. Attentive observation has convinced me, and I think will convince any one, that the truly pious part of these denominations do, in fact, observe a Sabbath; they always have set seasons consecrated to devotion; and if, as is commonly the case, they live in a community in which a weekly Sabbath is

generally held sacred, they rejoice in its return, and engage in its holy duties with delight.

The very truth is, a life of communion with God cannot be maintained without frequent exercises of devotion, considerably prolonged. And all who lead such a life do, and will, avail themselves of every season that is favourable, for the practice and cultivation of that in which they find their highest enjoyment. If, therefore, my young friends, you intend to lead a life of practical godliness, whatever may be the practice or pretence of others, be it your care, to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

LECTURE XLVI.

WE are now to enter on the consideration of the duties enjoined in the second table of the Decalogue—the duties that we owe to our neighbour and to ourselves. And it may be proper here to remark, once for all, that no precept of the second table can ever oblige us to set aside one of the first. Our duty to our Creator is superior to every other; so that, strictly speaking, nothing is, or can be a duty, which is dishonourable to him, or which interferes with the service or obedience that he requires. If, therefore, earthly parents, or magistrates, or other superiors, or laws, or usages of what kind soever, shall at any time urge you, my dear youth, to disobey or dishonour your heavenly Father, the Sovereign of the universe, your reply must be, “We must obey God rather than man.” Make your refusal as meekly and discreetly, and in every way as inoffensively as you can; but make it—make it firmly, and in the strength of God, maintain it even unto death. This is the principle on which confessors have always hazarded their lives, and martyrs have laid them down.

The first precept in the second table of the moral law, or the fifth of the Decalogue, with its requirements and prohibitions, as stated in our Catechism, are as follows—“Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

“The fifth commandment requireth the preserving the honour and performing the duties, belonging to every one in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals:” and it “forbiddeth the neglecting of, or doing any thing against the honour and duty, which belongeth to every one in their several places and relations.”

I have placed the injunctions and prohibitions of this commandment together, and shall consider them connectedly, as being most favourable to the avoidance of repetition, and to a clear and full view of the duties to be explained and enforced.

We have in the precept before us a striking example of the specification of a single relative duty—that which children owe to their parents—as indicative of every other of the same class. That the precept ought to be thus considered is apparent; since all relative duties are made obligatory in the revealed will of God, and this table of the moral law was intended to epitomise them all, and the fifth commandment alone enjoins one of the most important of these duties, in *a positive form*; the others only specifying and forbidding the various violations of this general law.

The answers of the Catechism now under consideration, distribute “the places and relations” of men in society into three classes—“superiors, inferiors, and equals.” All who are included in these classes have, we are taught, a claim to “honour,” which is to be “preserved;” and to duties, the performance of which is obligatory on them all. These duties are mutual, or correlative; and as such we shall consider them, as they appertain to each of the classes that have been mentioned; and,

I. The honour to be preserved, and the mutual or correlative duties to be performed, by SUPERIORS AND INFERIORS, refer to the places and relations of *husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, ministers and people, rulers and ruled, old and young, and the possessors of superior and inferior gifts and graces*. In all these relations there is a subordination of rank or character, which is clearly recognized in the scriptures of truth. The duties of each might occupy a whole lecture, but I must treat of them in a much more brief and summary manner; paying some regard, however, in the extent of the discussion, to the nature and importance of each subject, as it comes under consideration.

1. *Of Husbands and Wives.*—This relation is constituted by marriage, in regard to which the standards of our church teach, that “marriage is not a sacrament, nor peculiar to the church of Christ; that it is to be between one man and one woman; neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time; that it was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the church with a holy seed, and for the preventing of uncleanness; that it is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment to give their consent, yet that it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord; and therefore that such as are godly, ought not to be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are notoriously wicked in their lives, or that maintain damnable heresies; that marriage ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity forbidden in the word of God; and that such incestuous marriages can never be made lawful by any law of man, or consent of parties, so as that those persons may live together as man and wife; that the man may not marry any of his wife’s kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own, nor the woman of her husband’s kindred nearer in blood than of her own; that fornication committed after contract, and before marriage, and adultery committed after marriage, give just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve the contract, and after the divorce to marry another, as if the offending party were dead; that nothing but adultery, or such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient for dissolving the bond of marriage; that it is proper that every commonwealth, for the good of society, make laws to regulate marriage, which all citizens are bound to obey; that it is fit that marriage be solemnized by a lawful minister, and that special instruction be given to the parties, and suitable prayer be made, when they enter into this relation; that if the parties be under age, or live with their

parents, the consent of the parents, or of others under whose care they are, ought to be previously obtained; that parents ought neither to compel their children to marry contrary to their inclination, nor deny their consent, without just and important reasons; that ministers must be properly certified, with respect to the parties applying to them, that no just objections lie against their marriage; that it must always be performed before a competent number of witnesses; that it ought not to be celebrated on a day of public humiliation, and that it is not advisable that it be on the Lord's day."*

I have quoted thus largely from the standards of the Presbyterian church on the subject of marriage, because the subject is highly important in itself, is not treated of elsewhere in the Catechism, and especially because the duties of husbands and wives—the point immediately under discussion—are, to a considerable extent, indicated by the very nature and design of the marriage covenant. Let me now call your attention to the following passage of sacred Scripture—“Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies; he that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the church. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. Let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her

* See Confession of Faith, chap. xxiv. and Directory for Worship, chap. xi. A few words have been changed or added, to give uniformity and propriety to the statement; but the sense is not altered, and so little of the language, that it may be fairly considered as a quotation.

husband.” Who can fail to perceive the wisdom of these divine injunctions, and to confess that when they are duly regarded the conjugal relation must be productive of peculiar happiness? The wife is made subject to her husband, but it is only that kind of subjection which the church is under to Christ, or that which the members of the body yield to the head. The husband is to love his wife as a part of himself, and as Christ loved the church. He is to be as far from indulging hatred toward her, as he is from hating his own flesh. His superiority, while it demands reverence on her part, imposes on him an obligation and responsibility of kindness, and of every endearing attention. If the parties mutually perform their duties, the situation of both, so far from being irksome, may well give rise to the question, which is the happier—or whose is the preferable allotment? With right feelings, neither will so much as wish for a change. They will feel that they were made for each other, and that each is in the place and relation which the God of wisdom and benevolence has appointed.

The passage of Scripture recited, teaches that every other relation of life, when it interferes with that which subsists between husband and wife, is to be relinquished. If they are faithful to each other, nothing but death is to separate them. “The fundamental and essential part of the contract is fidelity and chastity. This must immediately appear to be essential to the purpose of the union. Some writers say, that this is especially binding on the woman, in order to ascertain the offspring; but every body must see the absurdity of any distinction; because the contract would neither be equal, nor likely to be steadily observed, if it were not mutual. Besides, as a late author has well observed, if chastity be a female virtue, how can man be unchaste without infringing upon it.”* Nothing strikes so directly at the very vitals, not only of domestic happiness, but of society at large, or marks so distinctly a corrupt state of so

* Witherspoon.

ciety itself, as general licentiousness in the marriage state. Every lover of human happiness, therefore, should brand the first appearance of this licentiousness with tokens of the greatest abhorrence; and every married man and woman should regard the first rising thought of it in themselves, as a heinous sin before the heart searching God, and as a real violation of the marriage covenant—to be repented of with the deepest humiliation, and avoided with the utmost care.

The other duties of husbands and wives, beside those which have been mentioned, are—bearing with each other's infirmities and weaknesses, to which human nature, in its present state, is always subject; encouraging and sustaining each other under the various ills of life; comforting and sedulously endeavouring to relieve each other in sickness; providing, by honesty, industry, and economy, for their own support, and that of their family; making their interest and their property the same; instructing and governing, by mutual concert and care, the children that God may have given them, and all others of whom they have the charge; and praying for, and aiding each other, in the performance of all other religious duties, endeavouring, in all respects, to live together as heirs of the grace of life.

Nothing is of more importance in the marriage relation, than for both parties to watch against the very beginnings of discord, and when it unhappily occurs, to prevent its progress by self-command and suitable concession. Many rules of prudence have been given, in relation to this point, and they are worth remembrance and regard; but the best rule of all is, to recollect habitually the marriage covenant itself, and the all seeing eye of God, and under the influence of these recollections, to endeavour to preserve a conscience void of offence. If any alienation has unhappily commenced, that party acts the most like a Christian, who first makes an advance, and even a sacrifice, if it be necessary, for the restoration of perfect harmony. Sometimes a peculiarity, and even a perversity of temper, or conduct, when it is not gross, or in extreme,

may be so met by prudence and Christian kindness in the other party, as still to preserve no inconsiderable degree of happiness, in this nearest and tenderest of all relations. When one party becomes flagrantly vicious, or habitually ill tempered, then certainly ensues one of the severest trials of human life: and yet it is a trial which not a few of the best of our fallen race have been called to endure. Much patience, much prayer, much address, and many plans and endeavours to produce reformation, will, in every such case, be called for, from the innocent, suffering party. If these are ineffectual, and the vices indulged do not warrant a divorce, nothing remains but to cultivate submission to the permissive will of God, and to seek every lawful alleviation of distress, till the death of the offender, or of the offended—a sad alternative—shall bring relief.

In closing this part of my subject, suffer me, my young friends, to offer you a few words of friendly counsel, on the subject of marriage. On what is due to parents and guardians, I shall add nothing to what is said in the quotation from the standards of our church, till I come to speak particularly of the duties of parents and children. Be assured, that much of your happiness depends on the management of your affections, in relation to one with whom you contemplate a union for life. These affections ought never to be permitted to become fixed and strong, till you are satisfied that they have not been placed on an unworthy object, or that a worthy one will meet and reciprocate them. This advice is not impracticable. Our affections, when incipient, are certainly under our control. That they are not so, or at least not easily restrained, nor disappointed without the keenest pain, when they have become settled and ardent, is the very reason of the advice that I now offer: Numerous are the instances in which disappointed affection has left a wound as lasting as life; or been the cause that the heart could never be so given to another individual, as to render marriage desirable. Therefore, while your hearts are in your own keeping, think whether

a party toward whom you find them tending is worthy of them. Then think whether there is a prospect of a return of affection; or whether there be not some insurmountable obstacles to the lawfulness, or the practicability of a union. Be as far resolved in these points as you can be, before you suffer an attachment to become too strong to be renounced—fully resolved, I admit you cannot easily be, from the nature of the case. Therefore I add, be much in prayer, that God may direct you, assist you to govern your own minds, and, by the order of his providence, make the path of duty plain. There is no event of life which calls for more solemn deliberation, and for more earnest prayer for heavenly wisdom and guidance, than that of marriage; since with no other event are the destinies of this life, and even of the life to come, so often and so closely connected. Yet how frequently is this relation formed without any serious thought, or one petition offered to God for his direction and blessing—formed under the blind impulse of ungoverned and heedless passion. What wonder, then, that it is so frequently productive of disappointment and misery, instead of that happiness which it was intended, and in itself, is so admirably calculated to promote. The wonder is, that unhappy matches are not a hundred fold more numerous than they actually are.

It seems scarcely necessary to caution youth against forming this connexion from mere mercenary motives, or without real affection for the objects of their choice. They who do this, deserve the misery which they are sure to experience. It is commonly more needful to warn the young against contracting marriage, before they have any reasonable prospect of supporting a family; and to put them on their guard against being smitten with some showy qualities, unaccompanied by solid merit and lasting excellence. I am a friend to early marriages, in all cases where the parties have the means of a comfortable livelihood, or may rationally hope to obtain it, from occupations and industry for which they are prepared, and which lie fairly before them. But the folly is

great, and the misery often lasting, when young persons bind themselves to each other in marriage, and bring a family around them, without either the means or the prospect of obtaining the very necessaries of life. In such a procedure, surely there is no manifestation of genuine affection, but much of real wickedness and cruelty. Nor can I pass without pointed censure, a practice often witnessed in this country, of young persons pledging themselves to each other for a future marriage, while they have yet a profession or a trade to acquire, and when changes may take place that may render the contract difficult, and sometimes improper to be fulfilled. The voluntary violation of a marriage engagement, where attachment and fidelity remain on one side, is among the basest and most criminal actions of which a human being can be guilty. The death which it sometimes occasions, is a real murder, aggravated by the circumstance that it is of a lingering kind. How carefully should every conscientious youth guard, against even a temptation to so great a sin? But leaving this out of view, an engagement of marriage, while a person is making preparation for a professional pursuit, often and usually interferes with that preparation, in so serious a manner as to render it inexpedient and imprudent, in a very high degree.

In the choice of a companion for life, the qualities which will *wear well*, are worthy of far more regard, although they too seldom receive it, than those which strike and dazzle, with little beside to recommend them. Good sense, good nature, good morals, good education, good behaviour, firmness of mind, active habits, an affectionate and benevolent disposition, genuine piety, and a healthful constitution, these are the prime requisites. These will last when beauty has faded, and fashionable manners and accomplishments, none of which do I disparage, have lost their charms, or their scope for display.

Attentively ponder, my dear children, the advice which age and experience thus offer you, in relation to a subject in which your dearest interests are in-

volved. Above all seek counsel of God. "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths."

The consideration of the duties of parents and children must be deferred till the next lecture.

LECTURE XLVII.

2. *Of Parents and Children.* The duties of parents to their children commence as soon as children are born. They are to be viewed as the gift of God; and the first duty is to dedicate, or give them back again, to the great Author of their being. This should be done in prayer, and many a fervent aspiration of the heart, even before they are formally set apart as the Lord's property, in the sacrament of baptism, which has been mercifully ordained for this purpose.

The first years of children are, or ought to be, chiefly spent in the presence and under the care of their mothers. The mother who trusts her tender offspring entirely or chiefly to the charge of a servant, or hireling, unless compelled by absolute necessity, acts a most unnatural and inhuman part; and has no cause to wonder or complain, if the most serious and lasting evils are the consequence of her unfaithfulness to her sacred trust. On the other hand, the happiest effects may reasonably be expected, for they have often and indeed usually been realized, when a prudent and pious mother has devoted herself to her children, and has suffered no desire of personal ease or gratification, to withdraw her from the care and governance, and instruction of her precious charge. Nor can I forbear to mention, that fathers as well as mothers, will best perform their duty, by spending more time in the company, instruction, and superintendence of their children, than is commonly seen,

even in those who are not usually considered as deficient in this duty. There is no possible substitute, or equivalent, for parental affection, example, instruction and influence. Instances there may be, and a few there are, where a parent's part has been happily performed, by others than natural parents; but this is no real exception to the general truth—parental influence has still been employed. It would surely be considered as a waste of words, to spend many, in showing that parents ought to love their children; and yet there is a real defect of a proper manifestation of affection for their offspring, in those parents who almost wholly avoid the company of their children, in their early years.

At a very early age, children should be imbued with the principles of piety; be taught, in language carefully brought down to their capacity, to know their Creator and Redeemer; to address their heavenly Father in prayer and praise; to be reminded of his constant presence and all-seeing eye; to seek his favour and fear his displeasure; to love their Saviour, to love him with filial and supreme affection; and to understand, as fast as their opening faculties will permit, the duty which they owe to God, and to all their fellow creatures. As they advance in years, their duty, both to God and man, should be still more fully explained and inculcated, till eventually they are thoroughly indoctrinated in the Christian system.

I cannot pretend to delineate at large, the most proper course of general instruction for children; it must of necessity be more or less limited and modified, by the circumstances and capacities of parents. Yet I will cursorily mention a few particulars of importance, which are of general concern. The first is, that it should be a distinct object of attention with all parents, to endeavour to correct and improve the *hearts* of their children—their temper, dispositions, and desires—as much as to cultivate their understandings, or intellectual powers. Another important point is, to accustom them early to a reverence for every thing sacred—for the name, the word, and the

worship of God; and to let them see that their practical regard to the divine commandments, will insure to them the greatest share in their parents' affections. The opposite of this is also of great moment; that is, to teach children practically, that sins immediately against God are the greatest of all, and those of consequence which will be most distinctly and emphatically marked by parental displeasure. Another point of importance is, to instruct, as much as possible, by examples, by setting before them instances, or narratives, of the happy effects of piety and virtue, and the ruinous consequences of disobedience, vice and wickedness. Again. It is very important, both in giving reproof and in endeavouring to impress important truths and principles, to watch for and improve, the most favourable opportunities or seasons for doing it. In one kind of humour, or conjuncture of circumstances, a lesson of instruction may deeply and lastingly affect the mind of a child, which at other times would pass by him like the idle wind. Once more. Children should never be deceived. No advantage, but the most lasting injury, results from every species of deception, used with children. After being once or twice cheated, they believe nothing that is told them, and suspect where there is no ground for suspicion. On the contrary, if they are never deceived, they never disbelieve or distrust; and also learn to avoid all falsehood for themselves. Let parents, when necessary, use their authority, but never speak falsely to a child; although it may sometimes be proper to use concealment. Finally, great care should be taken that all the good effects of parental instruction be not counteracted and lost, by the bad advice or suggestions of those with whom children associate. Unprincipled servants, or vicious companions, may undo in an hour, what has required months to teach and inculcate. To this I must not omit to add, that in putting children to a place of education, or to learn a trade or profession, the moral and religious principles and character of teachers and masters, ought to be especially regarded. If the principles of infidelity are

cherished, or even disregarded, in a seminary of learning, the pupils of that seminary will generally be infidels: and I have hardly known an instance, in which a youth, placed under the care of an infidel lawyer, a physician, or a mechanic of whatever kind, who did not imbibe the sentiments of his teacher or master. Let all Christian parents pay a sacred regard to these considerations.

The personal example which parents set before their children is of the utmost moment. It is an old and just maxim, that example teaches more than precept. This is peculiarly true in regard to the example of parents, to whom children are accustomed to look up with reverence and affection, as patterns of all that is right and praiseworthy: and if the practice of parents is at war, or in any degree inconsistent, with their precepts, the latter will stand for little or nothing. It is from what parents *do*, a hundred fold more than from what they *say*, that their children receive a practical influence. They always interpret the *meaning* of their parents' *words* by their parents' *actions*: and if they are even told to do otherwise, they commonly think the command is insincere or unreasonable, and disregard it altogether. In every thing therefore, in all that relates to religion, to morals, to family order, to temper, to good manners, and to activity and industry, let parents remember, that their example is likely to make the most powerful and lasting impression on their children. Under the recollection of the solemn responsibility which this circumstance imposes, let parents be careful of all that they say or do, in the presence of their offspring.

The right government of their children, is among the most important duties of parents. This ought to commence at a much earlier period than is commonly thought to be proper. Children know well the import of looks, tones, and actions, long before they understand the meaning of words. At the age of nine months, and even earlier, a child will apprehend, from looks and gestures, what the parent approves and disapproves; and as soon as he is capable

of this, his government should commence, and should be enforced by suitable expressions of displeasure on the one hand, and of approval on the other. Nor is any mistake greater, than that which consists in thinking that this is a hard or cruel system. If rightly managed, it is the kindest system of all. It will often, and even usually, render unnecessary any severe correction, for years after the child is acquainted with the meaning of verbal commands and prohibitions; and will, withal, prevent many an hour of great suffering, from fretfulness and ill humour. On the other hand, if a child is not taught obedience till he is two or three years of age, he will have endured much misery, from wayward fancies and tempers that could not be gratified, and must then commonly suffer some severe chastisement, to bring him under subjection, or else be left to take his own course for the remainder of life. But the parent who yields to the latter part of this alternative, sins grievously, both against God and against his child. It is a part of infidel philosophy, standing in direct opposition to the doctrine of the Bible, that children can generally be governed entirely by reason and persuasion, without correction and control. We readily grant that reason and persuasion are to be fully and assiduously used, as soon as they can be understood; and that the more efficient they can be rendered, so as to prevent the necessity of coercion by other means, the better. But we insist, that government ought to commence long before they can be used at all, and that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, all experience shows, that reason and persuasion alone are not sufficient to restrain the indulgence of the evil feelings, dispositions, propensities, and passions of children. If a child, after he understands language, can be properly governed by appeals to his reason and sense of duty, far be it from us to say, that he should ever feel the rod; and we think that where such instances occur in fact, they are most likely to be found among children who have been subjected to the early discipline, which has already been recommended. But the fact is, that all

such instances are only exceptions to a very general rule. Hence the Divine declarations and injunctions, delivered by the wisest of men—"He that spareth his rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying. Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him. Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. The rod and reproof giveth wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." Here are the instructions and precepts of unerring wisdom, which are not to be set aside by the false reasonings, or reluctant inclinations, of fallible and corrupted human nature. Yet in complying with these inspired prescriptions, we not only admit, but earnestly inculcate, the importance of uniting with firmness and perseverance, the greatest degree of tenderness and prudence. The utmost care is to be taken to impress the child with the conviction that the parent has no pleasure, but very sensible pain, in the infliction of chastisement. Many foibles and follies are to be met, with verbal remark and remonstrance only, and some should even be past without notice. The child is not to be perpetually teased and worried with fault-finding. He should know what he is to expect, and great indulgence, and kindness, and allowance for youthful feelings, should constantly be manifested. Tokens of approbation and expressions of endearment, should be discreetly, but not lavishly bestowed, on well doing. Sometimes, when chastisement has been merited and is fully expected, the child should be surprised with an act of free forgiveness, accompanied with an appeal of the tenderest kind, to all the generous feelings of his nature, and his sense of filial duty. Stripes should never be inflicted, while a particle of anger is felt by the parent. It is a vain pretence which some parents set up, that they cannot correct unless they are angry. If they were

duly sensible of the important truth, that in correcting their children they should always expect, and be willing to feel, as much pain as they inflict, they would not find it impracticable to do their duty. Blows inflicted in anger gratify a passion, and no gratification, but great self-denial, ought ever to be felt in this business. When the rod is to be used, it should generally be preceded by the tenderest remonstrance; and if tears accompany the remonstrance, on the parent's part, as well as on that of the child, so much the better. If to all this be added a short and affecting prayer, that the correction to be given may be sanctified to the child—a practice which I know has been adopted by some Christian parents—there will be no danger that filial affection will be destroyed by the use of the rod. Nay, it will be greatly increased, although for the moment resentment may be felt. It will create a deep reverence for the parent, highly favourable to the strongest and most lasting affection; for it does not belong to human nature to continue to love that which we despise—a truth which careless and vicious parents would do well to consider and regard.

The object to be aimed at, in the government of children in their early years, is to bring them to an unqualified submission, and as far as possible a cheerful obedience, to the will of the parent; nor should correction, in any particular instance, be discontinued till this is effected; nor the system be relaxed which is calculated to produce submission as a habit, till the habit is thoroughly formed and fixed. And so far will this be from rendering a child base-spirited, as some have foolishly supposed, that it will imbue him with some of the most useful principles and feelings, that he can possess in after life.

Having mentioned that children should sometimes be surprised by acts of forgiveness, I feel constrained to add, that in doing it, regard should be had to the nature of the offence to be forgiven. I would say, for example, that if a child had, by a very criminal inattention, caused his parent the loss of property, or

the incurring of a personal mishap or injury, I would, in certain circumstances, freely forgive him, after a suitable remonstrance; while lying, gross profaneness, deliberate fraud, and direct or palpable disobedience, I would seldom, if ever, pass without severe chastisement.

There can be nothing like proper discipline in a family, where a child can appeal, or fly for refuge, from one parent to the other. There ought to be the most perfect concert between fathers and mothers, in regard to their children, in reference to this subject; and so far from interfering, when correction is to be administered, they ought invariably to sustain and support each other. Children should be carefully impressed with the idea, that disobedience to either parent is equally criminal. It has been justly remarked, that to show that equal honour and regard is due from children to their mother, as to their father, and to prevent any difference of esteem, reverence and obedience, there is one text of Scripture, in which the mother is mentioned before the father, Lev. xix. 3. "Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father."

In our last lecture, it was stated from the constitution of our church, "that parents ought neither to compel their children to marry contrary to their inclination, nor deny their consent without just and important reasons." Little needs to be added to this excellent general rule. The mercenary or *convenient* matches, as they are sometimes called, which some parents plan for their children, and insist on carrying into effect, are both cruel and wicked. Cruel because they are calculated to destroy for life the happiness of their offspring, and wicked because they urge to nothing better than a legal prostitution, and very often lead to that also which is confessedly illegal and adulterous. On the other hand, it must be admitted that there may be a disposition in children to contract a marriage, to which parents ought never to yield their consent; and which, during the nonage of a child, should be absolutely prohibited. But

every case of this kind should be one that is clearly and strongly marked. Much should be conceded to deep affection already contracted; and active opposition may sometimes be forborne, where positive assent is perseveringly denied. Yet perseveringly to refuse forgiveness and reconciliation, to a child who has in this matter erred, however grievously, is always contrary to Christian duty.

It is the duty of parents to make a suitable provision for their offspring. To this they are in most cases sufficiently disposed. Parental drunkards, gamblers, spendthrifts, and idlers, who beggar their families, to gratify their own vicious appetites, or criminal propensities, are human monsters, more unnatural than even the brute beasts. Parents who have to earn a living for themselves and their families, should certainly feel an obligation to be industrious, frugal, and economical, that those who depend upon them may live comfortably for the present, and that they may provide for their own old age or sickness, and at death leave something to their descendants. The apostle not only declares, that "if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," but he also states it as a duty, that parents should "lay up for their children." This disposition, however, it should be remarked, is much more frequently seen to be excessive than defective. Those parents do not leave the best inheritance to their children, who give nothing, or very little, to charitable designs, but parsimoniously treasure up every thing for those who are to come after them; and who, in such cases, are often observed to scatter and waste the hoards of avarice, much faster than their progenitors gathered them. Those who possess an abundance, whether as the fruit of their own industry and prudence, or as an inheritance from their relatives or friends, have certainly a right to make a liberal provision for their families. But they often mistake in estimating what such a provision is; and still oftener forget, that in all they possess they are but the holders of God's bounty,

and ought to regard themselves as his stewards. If parents would fully sustain their Christian character and profession, they should leave no more to their children than that very amount which, on the best observation they can make, they conscientiously believe is most likely to render their successors, at once the most happy in themselves, and the most useful to the community; all beyond this, whether it be more or less, they should bestow, or bequeath, to benevolent or pious designs or institutions.

Finally—It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, till the season for prayer is closed, either by their own death, or that of their offspring. There is much reason to fear and to believe, that the children of truly pious persons often remain in an unconverted state, because parental prayer for their renovation has not been offered, with that frequency and fervency which would have insured a favourable answer. “It is impossible that the child of so many prayers and tears should perish,” said Basil to the weeping Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, while he was yet a Manichean, and an abandoned profligate. No day of life should pass, in which fathers and mothers, not only unitedly in the family, but separately in secret, should bring their dear offspring before the throne of grace, and with all the earnestness and importunity of a spirit breaking with desire to obtain the object sought, pray that the saving grace of God may be imparted to each of them respectively. Seasons should likewise be set apart to pray with their children, without the presence of any other individuals; and seasons also of fasting and prayer, should be observed by parents, sometimes conjointly, and sometimes separately, to plead with their covenant-keeping God, that those whom they have devoted to him in covenant, may be “delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Who can doubt of the happy result of such a procedure as this? Would it not lay a just foundation for the hope of parents, that a direct answer, in God’s good time, would be granted to

their prayers; a hope that He with whom is the residue of the Spirit, would assuredly impart his transforming influence to their dear offspring? Would it not also have a natural influence to make them careful and conscientious, in the discharge of every particular duty which they owe to their children? Beyond a question, these consequences would as certainly follow, as that any cause will produce its appropriate effect.

We now come to consider the duties which children owe to their parents—duties which are plainly founded in the law of nature, since, under God, children derive their very being from their parents; which is the source of love and attachment, even in the inferior animals. Hence the apostle says of obedience to parents, “this is right;” that is, manifestly equitable and reasonable; and he elsewhere affirms, that it is well pleasing in the sight of God.

Filial duty is not less obligatory than *parental*. “To the disgrace of human nature it is often observed, that parental affection is much stronger than filial duty. We must, indeed, acknowledge the wisdom of Providence, in making the instinctive impulse stronger in parents towards their children, than in children toward their parents; because the first is more necessary than the other to the public good; yet when we consider both as improved into a virtuous disposition, by reason and a sense of duty, there seems to be every whit as much baseness in filial ingratitude, as in want of natural affection.”*

As the duties of children to their parents are correlative, or correspondent to those which their parents owe to them, the former class may at once be ascertained, by a careful attention to the latter. Thus it is plain, that if it be the duty of parents to love their children, to instruct them, to correct and govern them, to set before them a good example, to provide and to pray for them; then it must evidently be the correspondent duty of children, to make a return of affec-

* Witherspoon.

tion to their parents, cheerfully to receive instruction, readily to submit to correction and government, to imitate the good examples which they witness, to be careful not to waste the property of their parents, to join in their prayers, and to pray earnestly for themselves. Without following the exact order of this general statement, and not to leave so important a part of our subject without some enlargement, I will give you a brief view of the duty of children to their parents, under a number of particulars.

1. Although children are to obey God rather than man, as heretofore shown, and therefore must not violate any plain law or duty enjoined by divine authority, even if such violation is required by a parent, yet this will not destroy the obligation to obey the same parent, in every thing which is lawful. Nay, in every such case, the conscientious child should be peculiarly careful, to show that his love to his parent has not been destroyed or diminished, and that in every lawful thing, his obedience shall be most prompt, exact, and dutiful. Hence I observe—

2. It is a sacred duty of children, not unnecessarily to grieve and distress their parents; but, on the contrary, to do all in their power to give them satisfaction and pleasure. Nothing, more than this, marks a truly generous, amiable, and genuine filial spirit. The child who is careless of the pain, anxiety, loss, or inconvenience, which he may cause to a parent, is chargeable with great guilt and base ingratitude. In what language, then, shall we speak of the son, or daughter, whose vicious or infamous conduct covers a family with shame, and breaks a father's or a mother's heart!

3. As the opposite of what has just been said, it is the duty of children to cherish a warm affection, and a high esteem, respect, and reverence for their parents; to regard their infirmities and weaknesses with the greatest tenderness, and to do all that they lawfully may, to cast a veil over even their faults and vices. The account we have of the conduct of the sons and grandson of Noah, when he had been over-

taken by drunkenness, was doubtless "written for our learning." Read attentively, my young friends, the whole of the sacred record, in Gen. ix. 20—27, and remember that the blessing and cursing there mentioned, were certainly by divine dictation. If they had been merely the effusions of parental feeling, there had never been such a remarkable fulfilment, as there certainly has been, of what was uttered by Noah on that occasion. Nothing, I cannot forbear to observe, in the whole book of God, is marked with more fearful denunciations, than gross indignities offered by children to their parents. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." And "disobedience to parents" is ranked by the apostle Paul, (Rom. i. 30,) among the most shocking and detestable vices, which depraved man has ever exhibited, even in the heathen world. When parents are notoriously and habitually vicious, the part which pious or prudent children are called to act, is truly difficult. Silence in regard to their vices, as far as practicable, and much and earnest prayer for their reformation and conversion, are the duties then to be performed. On the other hand, when children are blessed with worthy parents, their characters are to be promptly and earnestly defended by their offspring, against every slander and unjust reproach.

4. There are many external tokens of respect and of affectionate regard, which it is the duty of children to show to their parents. "Thus Solomon, though his character as a king rendered him superior to all his subjects, yet he expressed a great deal of honour by outward gestures to his mother, when she went to speak in behalf of Adonijah. 'Tis said that the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand."* Nothing is more lovely than to observe the sedulous

* Ridgley.

and kind attentions, which dutiful children are sometimes seen to show to their parents—in watching all their wants, waiting upon them whenever they can afford any aid, and showing by a thousand nameless little services, that it is among their greatest gratifications, to add something to their parents' comfort and convenience. A watchful and unremitting endeavour to relieve and mitigate the sufferings of a sick parent, is among the obvious duties of children: and, in a word, they are on all occasions bound to render to their parents every act of service that is lawful in itself, and within their power to perform.

5. Patient submission to just correction, in their early years, and to just reproof at a more advanced age, is an important duty which children owe to their parents. An obstinately “stubborn and rebellious son” was commanded to be judicially put to death, under the Mosaic dispensation, Deut. xvi. 18—21. This, doubtless, was intended to be peculiar to that dispensation; but it serves to show, that the offence is, in the eye of God, of a very aggravated kind. It may be difficult to convince children, at the time they receive even the most necessary chastisement, that it is solely intended for their good; yet, in after life, if they are not lost to all reason, they seldom fail to be thankful to their parents that it was administered; and this ought to induce them to take the reproof which they may receive in riper age, with thankfulness also, and improve it for their further amendment and benefit.

6. If reproof, seasonably given, ought to be well received by children, they surely ought to listen to advice, and to obey it carefully and cheerfully. There is scarcely a more unpromising indication in a child, than a disregard to parental advice. Often, very often, it is followed by the most serious mischiefs, and the most bitter regrets—frequently as unavailing as they are bitter. On the contrary, the child to whom the advice of a kind and judicious parent is an inviolable rule of duty and action is—I had nearly said *always*—sure of prosperity and happiness.

7. "Children are to express their duty to their parents, by a thankful acknowledgment of past favours; and accordingly ought to relieve them, if they are able, when their indigent circumstances call for it; and endeavour to be a staff, comfort, and support to them in their old age."* This is a duty taught in the sacred Scriptures, both in the Old Testament and the New; and it is one which it will always be gratifying for every dutiful child to perform.

8. It is the duty of children, in all ordinary circumstances, to consult, and endeavour to please their parents, when they are about to make a marriage engagement. In every view that can be taken of the subject, this appears to be a reasonable duty. It is due to the deference that should be shown to parents; it is important to the child, as a matter of prudence; and it is right that when a new family connexion is to be formed, the heads of that family should be consulted, and, if practicable, gratified. Still, it must be admitted that parents may be sometimes so blinded by prejudice, or so utterly unreasonable in their demands and expectations, or so incapable by dotage, or natural defect of judgment, to form a just opinion, that children, when of age to act for themselves, will not be bound to follow, or even to ask their advice. Their lasting happiness is certainly not to be sacrificed to parental prejudice, caprice, or folly. Children must, in such cases, ask counsel of God, of their judicious friends, and of their own consciences and hearts, and act as duty, thus ascertained, shall appear to direct.

My dear youth—In stating the duties of parents and children, which I have now finished, I have been insensibly led into far more detail than I had anticipated. But the subject is worthy of detail, and of all your attention; for to family instruction, family religion, and family government, we must be more indebted than to all other causes, for whatever is excellent, either in the church or in the state. When

* Ridgley.

parental and filial duties are disregarded, and in consequence of this, the families of a community become generally corrupt, society is poisoned in its very fountain, and every stream it sends forth will unavoidably partake of the deadly contamination.

LECTURE XLVIII.

3. *Masters and servants.* In this part of my lecture it seems to be an imperious duty, notwithstanding the extreme delicacy of the subject, to take some notice of the existence of slavery in our land, a calamity of no ordinary kind. That it had its origin from the impositions of the mother country, in our colonial state, is unquestionable. It has been partially or totally abolished, in the Northern and Eastern States of the American Union, and in Ohio it is prohibited by the constitution of the state. Its extinction was also under serious consideration in the States of Maryland, Virginia and Kentucky, till certain men, styled abolitionist, conceived, and propagated their misadvised and monstrous opinions, and reviled and denounced all slaveholders as tyrants, destitute alike of humanity and Christian principle. This roused, as it was well calculated to do, the active indignation of the inhabitants of the slaveholding states, and put an end to all ideas of emancipation, which they had begun to cherish. They affirm, and with apparent truth, that the system of the abolitionists, if carried into effect, would not only seriously jeopardise the lives of themselves and their families, but produce an incalculable injury to the slaves themselves. They, moreover, claim to understand their own circumstances far better than any strangers can possibly know them; and insist with earnestness, that all measures, touching the slavery which exists among them, shall be

left exclusively to themselves; and in this they are borne out, by the total silence of the federal constitution on the subject. In these circumstances, forbearance, on the part of the opposers of slavery, seems to be not only the duty of worldly prudence, but of the spirit of the gospel; which plainly discourages admonition, when it can have no other tendency than to increase irritation, and augment the resentment of those to whom the admonition is addressed.*

In the mean time, there is an Association, the American Colonization Society, which is generally favoured in the slaveholding States, as well as in the other parts of our national union. Let all the friends of humanity and religion, therefore, in every section of our land, rally in support of this noble institution, and of the enterprise which it superintends. Its great object is, to transport to the land of their fathers, the slaves who shall be voluntarily manumitted by their owners, and who cannot remain in a state of freedom in the places in which they have been bondmen. The Society, also, affords its patronage to those free people of colour, in every part of our country, who are willing to emigrate, and settle in Africa. It thus appears to be an agency for the relief of the United States, in the matter of slavery, as efficient as our existing circumstances will permit: and if this society were as liberally patronized as its nature and claims demand, not only would domestic relief be afforded, but the horrible commerce in slaves, on the coasts of Africa, would receive its most effectual check; and a bright prospect would speedily open, of diffusing the light and blessings of the gospel of Christ, throughout that darkest and most desolate and dreary portion of the whole earth.

I must not forbear to say that the prohibition to slaves of instruction in the great doctrines of Chris-

* Wherever public safety will permit it, individuals who own slaves ought, in my judgment, to free them, as soon as it can be done without injury to the slaves themselves. On this principle, the author of the lecture has given their freedom to two very valuable slaves, who came into his possession by marriage.

tianity, on the knowledge of which the salvation of their souls depends, is a sin, at which the mind of every Christian must shudder. On the contrary, the utmost care and pains ought to be employed, to instruct them in the principles, and to afford them the supports of true religion; that the anticipations of future and eternal happiness, may sustain and comfort them under the privations and sufferings of this transitory life. It is cheering to know, that in some portions of the slaveholding states, care is taken to imbue the minds of the coloured population with the doctrines and consolation of the gospel.

From the prevalence of slavery in our country, and the circumstance that slaveholders usually denominate their slaves *servants*, the very term has come to be considered as opprobrious, by the free citizens of our land. In the country from which we derived our origin and our language, not only apprentices, but free persons of all descriptions, whether male or female, who perform service for hire, and take their directions from a superior, are called *servants* without the least offence. But as with us the appellation, when applied to freemen, is considered as degrading and offensive; it ought on that account to be generally avoided. I have retained both it and its correlative term *masters*, merely for the sake of brevity, in describing a class of persons, sustaining a relation which involves mutual duties.

Those who receive and have the charge of apprentices, whether the business to be learned be mechanical or liberal, will scarcely need to be told, that it is a primary duty to use their best endeavours, to render those who are put under their care as perfect as possible, in the branch of business or knowledge, which they are expected to learn. Any omission or defect in this particular, is a violation of contract, and may be attended by lasting injury to the learner, in future life. It is the bounden duty of all masters to restrain their apprentices, as far as may be, from all immoralities—from Sabbath breaking, profaneness, uncleanness, insolence to and abuse of others, and

absence from their presence at unseasonable hours. If corporal chastisement is inflicted, as sometimes it may and ought to be, it should, as in the case of children, be administered without anger or passion, and never beyond the bounds of equity and moderation. Careful religious instruction, and the benefit of a good example, is a sacred duty due to all apprentices, from those to whom they render service and obedience. In a word, masters stand to apprentices very much in the relation of parents to children. They are, in most cases, to furnish them with suitable food, clothing, and lodging: and except in the article, of providing for them *permanent* support, and an *inheritance*, the more a master regards his apprentices as his children, the better will he perform his duty to them. He will exhibit an amiable example of Christian temper and character, and be most likely to do lasting good, to those who have been entrusted to his care.

The duty to be performed to *redemptioners*,* by those who have purchased their services for a specified time, is so entirely similar to that which is due from masters to apprentices, that nothing seems necessary to be added to the statement just made.

Towards hirelings, the duty of their employers is to exact of them no more service than was fairly stipulated for, in the previous agreement; to pay them their wages punctually; to treat them with kindness and suitable respect; to give them, as opportunity offers, good advice; and to endeavour, as far as practicable, to promote their spiritual interest.

The correlative duties of all those, of whatever description, who are in the service of others, is to be faithful and conscientious in their labour, as well in the absence as in the presence of those whom they serve; to be as careful of the property and interest of their employer as if it were their own; to treat

* It is well known that emigrants from foreign countries to the United States, often pay for their passage, by being bound to service for a limited period. Persons of this character, have with us received the general appellation of *redemptioners*—an appropriate term, but one peculiar to our country.

them with all due respect and obedience; to regard their friendly counsel and be thankful for it; to obey cheerfully all their lawful commands or directions; to endeavour to please them in all things not inconsistent with the commands of God; and to endeavour to profit by the religious instruction that may be imparted, and the good example that may be set before them. The Scripture is full and explicit on the mutual duties of masters and servants, and I close this particular with recommending that you consult your Bibles carefully, on the following passages of the New Testament—Eph. vi. 5—9; Col. iii. 22—25; Tit. ii. 9, 10; 1 Pet. ii. 18, 20.

4. *Of Ministers and People.*—The detail and explanation of the duties of ministers of the gospel have filled volumes; and if any of you, my young friends, shall hereafter find it to be your duty to seek, as I hope you may, the sacred office, and at length shall become invested with it, the duties of that office will form an important part of your reading and study. The present statement must be very general and summary. It is a primary and sacred duty which every minister of the gospel owes to God, to his people, and to himself, to cultivate personal piety, and to endeavour constantly to “grow in grace,” that he may not only “save himself,” but be prepared to speak to others experimentally, earnestly, and (under the divine blessing) with effect. In order to the full and faithful discharge of the duties of his sacred vocation, he must diligently and constantly study the Holy Scriptures—they must be the principal subject of study; and he must regard the acquisition of every kind of knowledge that will be auxiliary to theology, as desirable and deserving of attention; and he must make all his acquisitions really subservient to the cause, to which he is a devoted, consecrated man—the cause of God, and the salvation of immortal souls. He must be much in prayer for direction and assistance in the performance of his various duties, and for the success of his labours. He must often carry the people of his charge on his heart

to the throne of grace, in earnest supplications for their salvation, and travail in birth till Christ is formed in them. He must pray specially for many *individuals*, whose characters, or circumstances, or requests, call him to this important exercise. He must preach the word of life in season and out of season, plainly and faithfully, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear; not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God. By family visitations and personal addresses, he must carry the messages of salvation from house to house. He must pay a special attention to the sick and the afflicted, and to those who are awakened to a concern for their eternal interests, carefully endeavouring to guard them against resting on a false foundation, and to guide them safely to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. In private, as well as in public, he must "reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine." He must be a peace maker. He must recommend and adorn religion, by a holy and exemplary walk and conversation. He must rule well his own house, and endeavour to make his family exemplary. He must use hospitality, and as far as he has the means, be an example of liberality, in relieving the poor, and in patronising all pious and benevolent designs and enterprises. He must study the purity and peace of the church, by endeavouring to withstand error, to exercise discipline, and to heal dissensions. He must consider himself as set for the defence of the gospel, and be willing, so far as he is able, to defend it from the press, as well as from the pulpit. He must be punctual in attending the judicatures of the church, and when there, attend diligently and carefully to all business to be transacted; and in every concern, he must act under a deep sense of his responsibility to his Master.

The duty which people owe to their minister in return, is to pray for him in their closets, in their families, and in their social prayer meetings—not merely with a formal mention, but with great sincerity and earnestness. "Brethren, pray for us," is the exhor-

tation and command of an inspired apostle; and true and important is the trite adage, "a praying people will make a preaching minister." The people who are blessed with faithful pastors ought to see in them an ascension gift of Christ, and "to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." At the same time, they are to beware of idolizing and flattering them; and of supposing that their talents and labours, whatever they may be, will either convince and convert sinners, or edify believers, without the special influence of the Holy Spirit accompanying them—Paul may plant and Apollos water, "but neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." Besides praying for him, as has been recommended, the best expressions which a people can make of their esteem and affection for their minister, is to attend diligently, candidly, and heedfully on his preaching; to receive his private and seasonable admonitions with meekness and thankfulness; to defend both his character and doctrines against unjust impeachments, slanders, misrepresentations, and reproaches; to make a competent and comfortable provision for his worldly support; and to be kind and attentive to his family as well as to himself.

5. *Rulers and Ruled.*—In the term *rulers* we include both *legislators* and *magistrates*; or those who *enact* and those who *execute* the laws.

In our happy country the people choose their own legislators. This is an inestimable privilege, and yet, like every other blessing, it is capable of abuse. It opens a door for ambitious demagogues to use a thousand unlawful arts to deceive the people, and to raise themselves to places of power and trust. All these arts every conscientious candidate for public trust will avoid and despise. He will view the business of legislation as one that involves a high degree of responsibility, for which certain qualifications are necessary, and which he ought in some good degree to possess, or else to decline the trust altogether. He should seriously consider whether he is qualified to

be a legislator; and if he judge that he is, he should still do nothing to create an improper bias in his own favour. He should, avoiding all disguise, frankly, explicitly, and fully, avow his opinions and sentiments. Then, if he is elected, he may act, as he ever ought to act, on the conviction of his own mind, without the fear of offending his constituents. In every instance he should appear, fearlessly and decidedly, in favour of every law, or every measure, which he verily believes will be for the good of the whole community, for which he is appointed to legislate. Let the popular current set as it may, his only inquiry should be, what does the public good really require—*that*, he will say, I must pursue, or I cannot keep a conscience void of offence; and *that*, therefore, I will pursue, whether I retain my place and popularity, or lose them both.

Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and all experience shows that the Christian church has invariably suffered, when the state has interfered in its concerns; even when not only the professed, but the real intention has been, to show favour to the church. The concerns of the house or kingdom of our Lord, are to be managed solely by laws and officers of his appointment, without any interference from the world. With this, however, it is perfectly consistent to say, that it is daring impiety for any legislature, where the light of revelation is enjoyed, to make any law in violation of the law of God, or which shall legalize any practice inconsistent with that law. To legalize such violation or practice, is not to leave the church to herself; it is to persecute her, and to set the nation in opposition to her divine Head and lawgiver. It is, in a word, a national sin, exposing the whole community to the judgments of the God of the whole earth; for which there can be no possible compensation or equivalent. I shall not disguise from you, my young friends, that I am thus explicit on this point, because I am solemnly convinced, that our nation, as such, is at this moment chargeable with awful guilt, and brought into awful danger, by having set the

law of the land in direct opposition to the law of God, as expressed in the fourth precept of the decalogue. Officers of the state are required, in the management of the national mail, to perform services which they cannot render without a manifest dereliction of Christian duty, and a flagrant violation of the command to which I have referred.

The duty of a legislator, then, consists in seeing that he is qualified for the trust which he sustains; in using all his influence to have such laws enacted, and no other than such, as, in his best judgment, will most promote the public good; and in taking care, to the extent of his whole influence, that the laws of the state shall in no respect militate with the laws of God. His responsibility both to God and man is great; and of this, a deep and lively impression ought constantly to abide on his mind.

Speaking of the office of the *civil magistrate*, the apostolic declaration is, "He is the minister of God to thee for good; but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil." It is evident from this, that the civil magistracy is a divine ordinance; and if so, not only ought the people over whom magistrates are placed to render due obedience and honour to them, but magistrates, on their part, should deeply feel their responsibility to the God whose ministers they are. In the fear of God, and in view of the account which they are to render to him, ought all the duties of their office to be performed. This will lead them to a strict regard to the divine laws and institutions, and thus to recommend the observance of them to others. In such a country as ours, where happily the church and state are entirely disconnected, all the direct influence which magistrates have, in the promotion of religion, is by their example. But this is a very powerful influence, and the magistrate who refuses it to religion, sins both against his God and his country. What then shall we say of those magistrates, whose entire example goes to promote vice and immorality;

or who openly avow infidelity, and treat every divine ordinance with marked indignity and contempt? We must say plainly, that they are the scourge and curse of that community, whose most important interests have been confided to their guardianship, and which they are sacredly bound to consult. Magistrates are under the obligation of a solemn oath, to discharge their official duties to the best of their knowledge and understanding. If they would not violate this oath, they must strictly execute and enforce every law that is made for the suppression, or prevention, of vice and immorality.

Summarily, then, the duty of magistrates consists in giving to the public the full influence of a good and pious example; in the full and faithful execution of the laws; in administering justice between man and man purely and impartially; and we must add, as a matter of no small importance, not only their shunning to enkindle and cherish strife, but the constant use of all proper endeavours to prevent quarrels and litigation, and to promote the peace and good order of society.

In this free country the *ruled* choose, either *mediately* or *directly*, all their *rulers*. Legislators are chosen *directly* by the people, and hence are properly called *representatives*. In making this choice, it is the obvious duty of the people to consider carefully and conscientiously, whether those to whom they give their suffrages are the fittest and best men for law makers, that it is practicable for them to elect. Neglecting this, they fail in their duty, and are really chargeable both with the folly and the guilt of the unqualified or disqualified men, whom they made their *representatives*. People are exceedingly apt to censure the conduct of public men, when as much blame at least belongs to themselves, as to those whom they have put into power. They are so careless, or so partial, or become so attached to a party, that they entrust their dearest interests to those who mismanage or sacrifice them. Of this mismanagement or sacrifice have they, then, any more right to

complain, than the individual has, who finds himself a bankrupt, in consequence of employing an agent whom he might have known to be altogether incompetent or fraudulent—a dunce or a knave? He who is to exercise the elective franchise, ought most seriously to consider, whether the man for whom he proposes to vote is really an honest man or a rogue, an ignorant man or one well informed, a vicious or a virtuous man, a firm and independent man, or one who may be awed or wheedled to do wrong; and finally, whether he be a friend to religion and good morals, or an enemy to both. In regard to this last qualification, the artful and unprincipled politicians of our country have endeavoured to persuade the community, that the moral character and Christian principles of a candidate for legislative trust, ought never to be regarded or considered; and by the aid of party spirit, they have been successful to a most lamentable extent. But surely Christians have as good a right as infidels or profligates, to be pleased with the entire principles, spirit, and character of the men of their choice. They certainly ought not to choose a man *merely* because he is a Christian. But among men who are qualified, by knowledge and genuine patriotism, to be the makers of laws, they may surely find, if not a practical Christian, at least a man who has a sincere reverence for religion. Our country is not yet in such a wretched state, that enlightened and patriotic men are not to be found, except among sceptics, profane swearers, popularity hunters, cheats, and profligates. The truth is, Christians suffer party spirit to blind and mislead them; and till they will so far renounce this as to refuse their suffrages to every flagrantly vicious and immoral man, and every known and malignant enemy to religion, they themselves are chargeable with much of the awful guilt, incurred by a nation whose laws come in conflict with the laws of God, and expose it to his frowns and judgments.

The duty which the *ruled*, that is, in our country,

all *citizens*, owe to the magistrates who are placed over them, is—

1. To pray for them. “I exhort, therefore, (says the apostle Paul,) that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” This, it is to be feared, is a duty too much neglected; and it deserves the very serious consideration of Christians in our country, whether, if they had prayed more, and more earnestly, for their lawgivers and magistrates, they would not have had fewer subjects for regret and lamentation, in reference to certain laws, and usages, and transactions, and neglects of official duty, which exist in the state of which they are members. The exhortation of the apostle which I have quoted, was directed immediately to Timothy, and through him, doubtless, to all ministers of the gospel, in every age of the church. In every public service of the sanctuary, especially on the Lord’s day, there certainly ought to be at least one prayer, in which the blessing of Almighty God on our country, and on all its rulers and magistrates, should be distinctly and fervently implored; so that the minister of the gospel who omits this, may justly be considered as neglecting an important part of his duty. On days also of public fasting and prayer, this subject of petition to Him who ruleth over all, and “from whom all blessings flow,” ought to be particularly regarded. But the duty does not end here. It ought to have a frequent mention, both in family and secret prayer; and this not merely as matter of form, but as an object of great interest and desire.

2. It is our duty to treat magistrates with due honour, obedience, and respect. This is distinctly enjoined in the New Testament; although the primitive Christians lived under the government of heathen magistrates, by whom they were often most cruelly and unjustly treated. How imperious is this duty,

then, in a Christian community, and in a country where magistrates derive all their authority, ultimately, from the people themselves? When it is found necessary to disapprove of public men, and public transactions, it ought to be done without reviling. The reviling and slandering of public men, is, I really think, among the crying sins of this country. We ought cautiously to avoid it for ourselves, and to frown on the persons and publications chargeable with this evil—an evil at once offensive to God and injurious to our national character. Respect to their office, and, as far as practicable, to their persons, as well as prompt obedience to all their lawful commands, is due from every citizen, to every magistrate of our free and happy country.

3. A ready and cheerful obedience to every law of the state, not inconsistent with the law of God, is a duty we owe to magistrates. To them we owe it, that we may not give them hindrance, nor unnecessary trouble, in the execution of the law. Hence the injunction to be subject, “not only for wrath,” that is, for fear of the magistrate’s wrath, “but also for conscience sake.” Every conscientious person will, from a regard to duty and to God, be more afraid of doing any thing unlawful, than of any penalty that the law or the magistrate can inflict—he will be a law unto himself.

4. The cheerful payment of tribute or taxes, is a duty which we owe to the law and the magistracy under which we live. This also is specially enjoined in the New Testament. “Render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.” How, then, shall we adequately estimate the enormous guilt of those who not only defraud the public revenue, whenever they can do it secretly, but who, to effect their nefarious purposes, hesitate not to perjure themselves, and to tempt others to do it, by custom house oaths, falsely taken. The degree of guilt incurred from this cause, in commercial nations especially, it is truly fearful to contemplate; and he who

should devise an effectual plan to prevent, or to diminish it, would deserve to be esteemed among the best benefactors of his country. But it is not enough that we avoid the sin of cheating the public revenue; we ought to pay an equitable part of the taxes imposed by lawful authority, without murmuring or controversy—readily and cheerfully—with as much willingness as we pay any private debt, for property conveyed or services rendered. We have all the deepest interest in the public welfare, which cannot be promoted or sustained without adequate funds; to which, therefore, we should make our contributions promptly and without reluctance.

5. It not unfrequently happens that magistrates, or public officers, need to be aided or facilitated in the discharge of their duty, in executing the laws; and in every case of this kind, it is the duty of every good citizen to render the requisite assistance, to the utmost of his power. To withhold co-operation is highly censurable; but to conceal the guilty, or obstruct the officers of justice, is to become a party with the offender, and “a partaker of other men’s sins.”

Having spoken, and, as I think, justly, against the infidelity of legislators and magistrates, it may be the more proper, my young friends, in concluding this subject, to caution you against mistaking or misapplying what I have said. This I shall do in the words of our Confession of Faith—“Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrate’s just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him.”

LECTURE XLIX.

6. *Old and Young.* It is the duty of the aged to counsel the young; tenderly to admonish and faithfully to warn them; and to set before them a good and edifying example. There is much in human life which books can but imperfectly teach, and which can be fully understood only by experience. The benefit of this experimental knowledge, those who are advanced in life ought, as they have opportunity, and so far as it is practicable, to afford to those who have, as yet, but little experience of their own. It is one of the most amiable traits of character in a man who has lived long, seen much, and observed accurately, that he takes pleasure in communicating to youth, in a kind and winning manner, the counsel, admonition, and warning, which his knowledge of human life and the human heart enables him to give; and which may preserve those who are addressed from a thousand follies and vices, into which they might otherwise fall. What a treasure of invaluable maxims for the conduct of life, and of warnings against the sins and snares to which youth and inexperience are exposed, has been left us in the book of Proverbs. If I might prevail with you, my young friends, to read that book throughout once every year, for ten years to come, should you continue so long in life, and to read always with great care, self-examination and application, and with prayer to God for his blessing—I should render you a service, the value of which would be beyond all estimate. To this therefore, I earnestly exhort you, that I may perform, in part, the very duty which I am now showing to be incumbent on the aged toward the young.

“The hoary head, says Solomon, is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.”

There is in the example of an aged Christian, who has long and eminently exhibited the influence of gospel principles, a dignity and authority, which can scarcely fail to be felt by all with whom he has intercourse, and especially by the young. It affords a living and palpable proof of the excellence of genuine Christianity, which recommends and enforces it, more powerfully than can be done by all the eloquence of language. Such an example, therefore, every aged Christian should desire and endeavour to exhibit. Avoiding all levity, and all moroseness, and all haughtiness, and every thing unbecoming the elevated standing which he is honoured to occupy in the great family of Christ, he should cultivate a serious cheerfulness, great meekness, patience under infirmities, tenderness of feeling, habitual kindness and condescension to all, and especially to the young, that he may gain their affections, as well as command their respect, and thus be able to seize with advantage, every opportunity to advise and counsel them for their good; and above all, to engage them, in the morning of life, to choose and "seek that good part which shall not be taken away from them."

The duties of the young to the old are, to respect and honour them, to hearken to their advice and admonitions, to be thankful even for their seasonable reproofs, and to endeavour to profit by the instruction they communicate, and the example they exhibit.

When old age is seen, as alas! it is sometimes seen, in connexion with vice, profaneness, or profligacy, it certainly is not entitled to respect and honour from any one. Yet even in this case, the young should treat the veteran sinner in a manner somewhat different from that which they may properly use towards a vicious individual of their own age. There should be a reserve, at least in addressing him personally, and a recognized deference due to his years, which towards an equal of a similar character, it would not be necessary to observe. But when age is not degraded by vice, and especially when it is distinguished by virtue and piety, the injunction of holy

writ should be felt in all its force. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man." There is not a more unamiable, or a more unpromising feature of character, in a young person of either sex, than to treat virtuous old age with disrespect, or even with disregard. Show me a youth who has such a confidence in himself, or herself, as to disregard the opinions of one of reputation for wisdom and discretion, and who has seen many years, and I will show you a candidate for misfortune and misery, and probably for ruin. Show me a youth who can treat respectable age with levity and ridicule, or even with marked neglect, and I will show you one of either a weak head, or a hard heart, or probably of both united. A sensible and virtuous youth will esteem it a high privilege, to have access to the counsels of years and experience. He will listen to the opinions and maxims which the sage delivers, and treasure them in his memory, for the conduct of his own life. He will reverence and venerate every hoary head that is found in the way of righteousness, he will give preference on all occasions to those who possess this character. They will receive from him all those attentions and kindnesses which indicate unaffected veneration; and while he marks their virtuous example for imitation, he will also find in it a powerful excitement and encouragement to his own well doing—in view of the honour and usefulness which it brings to its possessor in this world, and the cheering prospect which it opens for him, in the eternity which is to follow.

7. The mutual duties of *the possessors of superior and inferior gifts and graces*, will require but a very summary statement, as they have unavoidably been anticipated, in the illustration of the foregoing particulars. "The duties of those who have a larger measure of gifts and graces conferred upon them, towards such as have a lesser share of the same, are—to be exemplary in humility and self-denial, as having nothing but what they have received; to be communicative of what the Lord has freely given them;

and to improve their talents for the benefit of themselves and others: and the duties of such as are weaker in gifts and graces, towards those that are stronger, are—to be followers of them, in so far as they are followers of Christ; to be willing to learn from their experiences; and to ‘covet earnestly the best gifts.’”*

On *the mutual duties of EQUALS*, I shall enter into no formal discussion—not because those duties are unimportant, but because they are so obvious that a particular specification of them seems to me unnecessary. They are intimated in the very term *equals*; and they will readily occur to yourselves, if you will only remember and meditate on the two following short texts of Holy Scripture—“Be kindly affectioned one to another, in honour preferring one another.” And, “Consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works.” Our Larger Catechism teaches us, that the sins of equals are—“the undervaluing of the worth, envying the gifts, grieving at the advancement or prosperity one of another, and usurping pre-eminence over one another.”

Let us now consider the reason annexed to the fifth commandment—which is, “A promise of long life and prosperity, (as far as it shall serve for God’s glory and their own good) to all such as keep this commandment.”

In the decalogue itself, the promise before us is thus expressed—“That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” There is doubtless here a reference to a special blessing, which the ancient chosen people of God, while they were faithful to their covenant engagements, were to receive in the land of Canaan. But although there might be something special in the command, when made to the ancient Israelites, as in the whole of the Mosaic dispensation there was a greater reference to temporal rewards, and punishments too, than there is under the gospel, yet we find the apostle Paul en-

* Fisher.

forcing this command on Christians, by the very promise now under consideration—"Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honour thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." This is called the first commandment with promise, because it is the first and indeed the only command, of the second table, which has an explicit promise annexed to it. And the promise, it is to be observed, refers, as the words of the apostle clearly show, to temporal good—to worldly prosperity. Not but that spiritual and eternal benefits will also accrue to those who obey this command, as well as the others, from evangelical motives; but because God has seen fit to promise to an obedience to this, more than to any other, a reward on this side the grave. "Godliness," in all its extent, is, we know, "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." But probably a special temporal reward is stipulated in this commandment, "to show the great regard God has to the lawful authority of parents, and to engage children to behave dutifully toward them."

It would be easy to show, by citing a number of passages of Scripture, that the genuine spirit of the promise we consider is expressed in our Catechism, when it is said, that it is "a promise of long life and prosperity, as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good," to the parties concerned. Such, indeed must of necessity be the tenor of the promise, for otherwise it would lose its nature, and become a threatening. A long life, without prosperity—a long life of pinching poverty, of constant misery, of unceasing disappointment, of uninterrupted pain or sickness, or of disgrace and infamy—would be one of the greatest temporal calamities that a mortal could experience. It is only a long life, with so much that is *desirable* running through it as to denominate it *prosperous*, that can with any propriety be considered as a blessing. So likewise the limitation of the pro-

mised prosperity to the *measure* that shall “serve for God’s glory and their own good,” of the parties concerned, must manifestly be intended in the assurance given. God never did, and never will, promise any thing inconsistent with his glory, or not subservient to it; and no good man will ever wish that he should. With every such man, the very thought of receiving any thing dishonourable to God, would prevent his deriving from it any enjoyment: and in like manner it would be most irrational for him to wish for any thing, that would not be for his own real and ultimate good. He will even pray to be disappointed in the desire and pursuit of every object, the possession of which the all-wise God may see would be injurious to him—injurious to his highest, his eternal happiness, if his desire should be gratified, and his mistaken pursuit be successful. Neither will he wish to be exempted from that measure of affliction, of what kind soever it may be, which will, under the support and blessing of his heavenly Father, “work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Nay, even in regard to the continuance of life itself, who does not see, that it may be, and often is, a great mercy to be taken away from “the evil to come;” and that the allotment of the dutiful and pious child is most enviable, who is called, by an early death, to spend a portion of his existence in the joys of heaven, rather than be left to pass it amidst the unavoidable conflicts and temptations of this unsatisfying and sinful world.

Under the necessary limitations, or conditions, which have now been explained, the promise in the precept will most assuredly be fulfilled. The ordering of every man’s lot in life is by the sovereign and all disposing will and providence of God; and having promised this blessing, he will take effectual care that it shall be realized. There is moreover, a natural and beautiful connexion, which we ought to notice, between the performance of the duty enjoined in this command, and the enjoyment of the stipulated bene-

fit. The duty prescribed is obedience to parents, the benefit promised is long life and prosperity. Now, consider the consequences of obedience and disobedience to parents, which often follow in fact, and as you may have observed them for yourselves—consequences that have a direct influence on long life and prosperity. How often has disobedience to the commands, or to the counsel and advice of parents, been productive of disastrous accidents or occurrences, which have either occasioned sudden death, or after a period of extreme suffering, have greatly shortened life? How frequently by a course of vice, have diseases been contracted, or the constitution been broken down, and an early grave been found, by those who would have escaped all those calamities, if they had only been obedient to parental commands and admonitions? So also, in regard to worldly wealth and prosperity, how many fortunes have been squandered away, or otherwise lost, and how many individuals have become, or remained poor, through life—perhaps been reduced to absolute want or beggary—by disregarding the requisitions, and directions, and entreaties, of parents? while others, with no higher advantages, have remained in affluence, or rising to it, by carefully adopting that system for the management of their affairs, or pursuing that course of industry and economy, which parental affection and authority recommended and enjoined. Thus you perceive, that while the promise is sure, and special providential interpositions are doubtless sometimes employed in its accomplishment, yet its ordinary fulfilment requires nothing more than the operation of those well-known causes and effects, which God has been pleased to establish in the moral as well as in the natural world.

You have been much longer detained, my young friends, than I at first intended, with the explanation and inculcation of the duties enjoined in this fifth commandment. But I do not regret the scope I have taken. The precept has a special relation to youth, and therefore in addressing you it demanded a full

consideration. But in truth, as heretofore hinted its spirit reaches to all relative duties—On the faithful discharge of these the happiness and prosperity of the social state of man, in all its forms and modifications, essentially depend; and without a conscientious regard to these duties, there can be no true religion, and no rational expectation of the happiness of heaven. Let what you have heard, therefore, sink deep into your hearts, and let your lives demonstrate that you are candidates for the temporal blessings promised to those who keep this commandment, and the rational expectants of the higher felicities of a future and eternal state.

LECTURE L.

THE subject of the ensuing lecture is the sixth commandment, which is—"Thou shalt not kill." According to our Catechism, "The sixth commandment requireth, all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life and the life of others:" And it "forbiddeth the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbour unjustly, and whatsoever tendeth thereunto."

The love of life is the strongest of all our natural instincts; and the wisdom and benevolence of our Creator in making it so, is obvious; since on the preservation of our life all the purposes of our existence in this world depend. Dear, however, as life is to every human being, we are not to use for its preservation any other than "lawful endeavours;" and must be ready to resign it, rather than violate our duty, to him who gave it. The cases are not a few, in which duty must be preferred to life. Of such a preference, the whole host of Christian martyrs have exhibited noble examples. Our Saviour has told us in the most emphatic language, that if we do not love him more than "our own life," we cannot be his disciples.

In our larger Catechism we have a most excellent and accurate specification of the lawful means, or endeavours, to be employed—and remember, my dear youth, that we are not merely *permitted*, but *bound in duty*, to employ them—for the preservation and prolongation of our lives. "The duties required in the sixth commandment, says the Catechism, are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavours, to preserve the life of ourselves and others, by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defence thereof against violence; patient bearing of the hand of God; quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit, and

sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labour, and recreations; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness, peaceable, mild, and courteous speeches and behaviour; forbearing, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil; comforting and succouring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent." I recommend to you, my young friends, to meditate attentively on every particular—I had almost said on every word—that is contained in this quotation. The duties specified are plain as well as important—It is *consideration*, and not *explanation*, that they require. I add a few remarks on that article which teaches as a duty, "a just defence of our lives against violence." "If there be only a design, or conspiracy against our lives, but no immediate attempt made to take them away, we are to defend ourselves by endeavouring to put him that designed the execrable fact, out of a capacity of hurting us, by having recourse to the protection of the law; whereby he may be restrained from doing it, or we secured; this was the method that Paul took when the Jews had bound themselves with an oath to slay him; he informed the chief captain of this conspiracy, and had recourse to the law for his safety. If there be a present attempt made against our lives, we should rather choose to disarm or fly from the enemy, than take away his life; but if this cannot be done, so that we must either lose our own lives, or take away his, we do not incur the least guilt, or break this commandment, if we take away his life to preserve our own; especially if we were not first in the quarrel, nor gave occasion to it by any injurious or unlawful practices."* Defensive war is justifiable, on the very same ground as personal defence—It is, so to speak, nothing more than the *personal defence* of a community, instead of an individual. All proper and practicable means to avoid it, are first to be carefully and conscientiously used; but if these prove utterly inef-

* Ridgley.

fectual, there is no dictate of moral sentiment, nor precept of inspiration, that forbids a nation or community to defend itself by arms, against the lawless violence of an invader. It is not credible, it seems to me, if, as some maintain, the spirit of the gospel absolutely prohibits war in all cases, that there should not only be no explicit prohibition of it in the New Testament, but that the forerunner of Christ should have actually prescribed rules for a military life (Luke iii. 14;) and that a military officer should have been commended by the Saviour himself, as having greater faith than he had found in any other individual in Israel; (Matth. viii. 10;) should have received a special favour in the miraculous healing of his dying daughter, and not a single intimation have been given him that his professional pursuits were unlawful or censurable. Similar remarks are applicable to the pious centurion Cornelius. We certainly ought to look forward with joy to the time, and pray for its speedy arrival, "*when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*" But this is no way inconsistent with maintaining the lawfulness of defensive war. *Offensive* war is certainly inconsistent with the sixth commandment. Let this entirely cease, and the other will cease of course—Where there is no attack, there can be no defence.

We are to use the same care, and the same means, to preserve the lives of others as our own. And I see not how they, who insist on the unlawfulness of taking away life in any case whatever, could free themselves from the charge of blood-guiltiness, if they would suffer a blood-thirsty wretch to murder, not only themselves, but a whole family, rather than prevent it, when it was practicable, by taking the life of the assassin, and when it could not be prevented in any other way. Can he be free from the guilt of blood, who *permits* a murderer to destroy the innocent?

When *lawful means* for the preservation of life are mentioned, it is implied that there are means which

are *unlawful*. In no possible circumstances, as already intimated, are we permitted to yield our consent to violate any of the known commands of God, in order to preserve our lives. We are to obey him, and leave it with him to dispose of us. Some have maintained and taught, that it is lawful to tell a deliberate falsehood, in order to save life, and even to preserve property; as in the case of a robber, who threatens death if his demands are refused. But this is contrary to Scripture, which makes no provision, either by doctrine or commendable example, for such a case. It is by no means certain, either that the deadly threat will be fulfilled, if compliance is refused, or that compliance itself will prevent the fulfilment. It is best to adhere to truth, so far as we speak at all—for we are not obliged to tell the whole truth—and to leave the event with God. To die with a lie upon his tongue, must be an awful termination of life, to any one who believes in a future state of retribution.

The life of the soul is still more important than the life of the body; and this commandment doubtless implies, that both in regard to ourselves and others, all lawful means are to be used to preserve from final destruction, this better part of our nature. It is to this that the latter part of the quotation which I have recommended to your serious meditation, particularly refers.

In considering what the precept before us *forbids*, the “taking away of our own life,” first demands attention. This, in all imaginable cases, is an awful violation of the commandment. “It is directly opposed to the natural principle of self-preservation implanted in us; it argues the highest impatience, and rooted discontent, with our lot in the present world: it is an impious invasion of the prerogative of God, as the sole author and disposer of life; and a most daring and presumptuous rushing upon death, and an awful eternity.”* All the examples of self-murder given in Scripture, are of men notoriously im-

* Fisher.

pious and abandoned; such as Saul, Ahitophel, and Judas. We have not a single example of a good man, who was permitted to lay violent hands on himself. The case of Samson is not a real exception. He did not seek his own death, but as it was connected with the destruction of a multitude of the bitter enemies of his country and his God—an act of heroic self-devotedness, which has always commanded the admiration of men, and for which Samson had the approbation, and even the miraculous assistance of Jehovah. You should carefully remember, my dear youth, what is intimated in the quotation from the Larger Catechism, that the spirit of this command extends to all those passions and practices which *tend* to the destruction or the shortening of human life. All these are a species of suicide; and indeed they often lead to the overt act; such as the immoderate indulgence of any passion, as love, hatred, fear, anxiety, yielding to discontent, dejection, and impatience; prodigality in expense; excess in meat, or drink, or their opposites of extreme abstinence and fasting; refusing to take the nourishment necessary to preserve the health of the body, or the medicines necessary to restore health, in cases of sickness or disease. Intemperance and gambling lead almost directly to self destruction.

As we are in no case to take away our own lives, so we are never to take away the life of our neighbour *unlawfully*. If we occasion the death of our neighbour without design or malice, we contract no guilt. Cases of this kind not unfrequently occur, by what are called *unavoidable accidents*; and sometimes a man's dearest friend becomes the destroyer of his life. If, however, there has been carelessness, or inattention, in the act which occasions the death of a fellow creature, the author of that act, though certainly not a murderer, is not wholly free from guilt: and indeed where no guilt is incurred, a good man will always regard it as a deeply afflictive occurrence in Providence, when he is permitted to be the cause of his neighbour's death. The various

kinds of homicide are, by the laws of all well regulated societies, accurately defined, and the degree of criminality attached to such as involve guilt, is carefully discriminated.

The taking away the life of a human being, with deliberation and design, or with what is usually called "malice aforethought," constitutes what in our language is called *murder*, and involves guilt of the most aggravated kind. When the punishment of murder was prescribed to Noah and his sons, the reason assigned for it was, that "in the image of God made he man;" on which Scott very justly remarks in his commentary, that "though the moral image of God in which man was at first created be defaced, yet the natural image remains: and it is the most daring act of rebellion against God, to assault his visible image on earth, and destroy the life which he communicated; and it is observable that the reason given for the punishment of the murderer with death, is taken from the affront which he offers to God, not from the injury which he does to man." We live at a period, my young friends, in which much is said and done to correct the sanguinary character of our penal code of laws. In this I do most sincerely rejoice; being of the mind that but few, if any crimes, beside murder and that which plainly involves its guilt, ought to be punished with death. But to exempt deliberate murder from this penalty, would unquestionably be an awful extreme on the other hand. It is idle and palpably false, to represent, as some do, that the declaration, "whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed," is nothing more than a part of the ceremonial law of the Jews. This was the law given to Noah immediately after the deluge, more than eight hundred years before the institutions of Moses existed. Those institutions did no more than recognize the validity of this law, which was manifestly intended to be binding on the whole human race, to the end of time. Hence I agree entirely with the excellent commentator already quoted, in his remarks on the Divine declaration

which has just been repeated. He says—"From this energetic declaration it certainly follows, that wilful murder ought invariably, in all communities, to be punished with death; whatever form it assumes, or however it may, by specious but delusive pretences, be extenuated; and that God will himself require it of those who suffer the murderer to escape; so that the punishment of murder will, in some way, be inflicted on them as accessaries to the crime." We may, therefore, well tremble for our country, if wilful murder is by law exempted from the punishment of death. Our land will be defiled by blood. Indeed such defilement it has, in some measure, already contracted, by not punishing with death the fashionable murders which are committed in duels. These are often murders of the most deliberate and aggravated kind; and I am not aware that in a single instance they have, in our country, been visited with the penalty which the laws both of God and man denounce upon the perpetrators. We see then, that there are cases in which it is *lawful* to take away the life of a fellow creature; nay, in which it is contrary to the law of God to forbear to do so. Magistrates are appointed for this purpose, in all well ordered communities; and they have a high responsibility for the faithful execution of the sacred trust confided to them. And in cases where murderers of every description escape punishment from the hands of men, they are often given up of God to the horrors of a guilty conscience—sometimes to such a degree as to confess their crime, and even to seek the punishment which for a time they had avoided. In other instances, the most marked interpositions of Providence have been witnessed, to detect murderers and bring them to justice. It has even passed into a vulgar proverb, that "murder will out."

But as in regard to ourselves, so also in regard to our neighbour, this command may be violated in the sight of God, where there is no overt act. He who *desires* to take away the life of his neighbour, and is prevented only by fear, or the want of a favourable

opportunity, is as really a murderer in the sight of God, as if he had perpetrated the guilty deed. Nor is any one free from the charge of violating this command, who indulges in any of the malignant passions; such as implacable hatred, desire of revenge, corroding envy, and causeless or excessive anger. When anger is justifiable—as we must admit that it sometimes is, since on one occasion we read that our Saviour was angry, and the apostle Paul says, “be angry and sin not”—it will not transport a man beyond himself, but be tempered by reason and self-command, be of short duration, and never be followed by a hatred of the offender, but by compassion, and a desire to reclaim him by acts of kindness—“to heap coals of fire upon his head.”

Not only in our tempers and our passions, but in our speech and actions, we may indulge in that which often *tends* to actual murder, and sometimes produces it; although such a consequence may not even be thought of at the time. Bitter and provoking words, threatening, reviling, deriding and sarcastic speeches, or writing; striking, wounding, quarrelling, cheating, imposition, cruelty, and every kind of oppression—all these, and many things of a similar character, not easily specified, have been seen in fact to issue in the shedding of blood; and are therefore to be avoided, by those who would keep free from the guilt of transgressing this command.

But I cannot close the present lecture, without distinctly and solemnly reminding you, that all who either by their example or their words, seduce others into sin, are chargeable with endeavouring to murder their souls; to subject them to all the horrors of the second death—a thousand fold more dreadful than the death of the body; and of course that they break the sixth commandment in the most fearful manner. Dread, therefore, my young friends, dread exceedingly, the guilt of leading others into sin; and for yourselves, avoid every seducer, as you would avoid the pestilence. Fortify your minds against all corrupt principles, and all evil examples. Look to God to

guide and protect you. Flee to the Saviour, and endeavour to lead others to him; for till your "life is hid with Christ in God," you can never be secure against the danger of final perdition.

LECTURE LI.

IN the present lecture we are to consider the import of the seventh commandment, which is—"Thou shalt not commit adultery." It "requireth the preservation of our own and our neighbour's chastity, in heart, speech, and behaviour." And "it forbiddeth all unchaste thoughts, words and actions." Here, as in our last lecture, we shall not separate, but consider connectedly, the duty enjoined and the sin prohibited.

A writer of eminence has said: "*Chastity* is either abstinence or continence; abstinence in virgins or widows; continence of married persons; chaste marriages are honourable and pleasing to God."* Fisher defines chastity to be, "an abhorrence of all uncleanness, whether in the body, or in the mind and affections." Let us consider it under the three particulars, which are specified in both the answers of our Catechism now before us.

1. "Chastity in heart" is required; and "all unchaste thoughts are forbidden." The injunction of the wisest of men, applicable to all subjects, is especially applicable to this—"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." And I think it worthy of remark, that our Saviour, in declaring what it is which produces moral defilement, refers more largely to the subject before us than to any other, and traces all the sins which he mentions to the heart: "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, lasciviousness, an

* Taylor.

evil eye." The heart, in both these passages, was manifestly intended to include, not only the whole system of the affections and passions, but also the thoughts, fancy and imagination; for these are the avenues to the heart, to the will and the affections. We are indeed so constituted, that thoughts may be made to arise in our minds, by causes over which we have no control; and hence, from the mere occurrence of thoughts which rush or intrude upon us unsolicited, or which are excited by external objects that we could not avoid, we certainly have no moral responsibility. "Thoughts are only criminal, when they are first chosen, and then voluntarily continued."

"Evil into the mind of God or man
May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
No spot or stain behind."—MILTON.*

But if we do not use all suitable care and caution, to avoid those objects which will excite impure thoughts or imaginations, we are not free from guilt; and hence, in its proper place, I propose to warn you against some of the excitements here contemplated. At present, I wish to impress you with the importance of ejecting, resolutely and as speedily as possible, every unchaste thought which, from whatever cause, may gain admission to your minds. Here, believe me, my young friends, will be found your only complete safeguard against certain guilt, and probable infamy. The maxim, "*obsta principiis*,"—withstand the beginnings of evil—is, in reference to no vice, more emphatically applicable than to this: And remember that its beginning is in the *thoughts*, the *fancy*, the *imagination*. If you do not preserve these pure, you break the command on which I am addressing you. In the sight of the heart searching God you become guilty of uncleanness. Nor, if you cherish impure thoughts in your mind, and dwell on impure images in your fancy and imagination, can you have any security that your feelings and passions will not eventually become so excited and inflamed,

* Johnson's Rambler, No. 8.

that deeds of infamy shall ensue, and blast your peace and your reputation for ever. Therefore, regard chastity of mind, of thought, of fancy, of imagination, as a sacred duty; and as the only citadel of your safety from every extreme of profligate impurity.

2. The command before us requires "chastity of speech," and forbids "all unchaste words." If the duty which has already been explained be performed; that which is here enjoined will follow of course; for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." We certainly are in little danger of uttering, on any subject, words expressive of thoughts and feelings which in our hearts we abhor. Still, it is proper to show what is required and forbidden in the duty before us, so far as speech and words are concerned. It is proper, that you may see what you should disapprove and discountenance in others, and what you should avoid for yourselves—avoid, as what may be done, and too often is done, through inattention, ignorance, or a defect of delicacy.

There is perhaps in every language, and certainly in our own, what I know not how to express more properly, than by calling it *a vocabulary of obscenity*; a number of words that are not admitted into dictionaries, and which are never uttered by any person of decency, and never heard but from the most vulgar and polluted lips. But as by such lips they are often spoken in the hearing, or presented in legible characters to the view, of children and youth, they ought to be taught by their parents and friends most deeply to detest, and most carefully to avoid for themselves; and to consider all who use them as also detestable, and as such to be shunned, as utterly unworthy of their acquaintance and company. This I considered as a matter of too much importance to be passed without a distinct notice.

But there may be a violation of the duty we consider in the language used, when not a single term is employed which is in itself objectionable. A disregard of the command we now consider, may be even advocated or palliated, in a *discourse* in which not

an obscene word is used. This, if I am well informed, has recently been done in this very city. Impure ideas too, may be conveyed by words and expressions not in themselves necessarily offensive, but which still have a known and offensive double meaning; or which, by the circumstances in which they are uttered, must and will have, and too often are intended to have, an application most offensive to every modest mind. This offence also is often heightened, by the impossibility which exists that those whose feelings are wounded should make known that such is the fact, without aggravating the evil which they would avoid. Those who are capable of the mean and detestable practice here alluded to, ought never to be admitted a second time into the presence of the individual, or company, that they have once insulted, at least till known reformation shall have given assurance that the insult will not be repeated. It is not going too far to say, that we ought to be on our guard, that we may not, through mere inattention, or real ignorance, use terms or expressions which, in certain companies and circumstances, will give pain in the matter of delicacy.

When duty calls us to speak—as at this moment I am called to speak, on a topic which is in its very nature delicate, we should use a manner and language reserved and guarded—in every degree consistent with the faithful discharge of the duty incumbent. Physicians, and other professional individuals, are often called to this duty; and if they understand and practise what their profession requires, they will find language which ought not to be offensive, to those whom they are obliged to address. There is indeed a sickly and fastidious delicacy, which cannot always be gratified, and which indeed may be indicative, not of the greatest mental purity, but of the very reverse.

On the whole, my young friends, it should be with you a matter both of good taste and of Christian duty, never to utter an expression or a word, which will wound the ear of genuine chastity or real delicacy. Remember the apostolic injunction: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but

that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

3. The commandment before us requires chastity of *behaviour* in ourselves, and toward our neighbour; and forbids all unchaste actions whatsoever. In our Larger Catechism there is a specification of the duties enjoined, and of the sins prohibited by this precept, several of which we have already considered, as falling under the preceding particulars. The remainder is as follows. “The duties required in the seventh commandment are—watchfulness over the eyes and all the senses; temperance; keeping of chaste company; modesty in apparel; marriage by those who have not the gift of continency; conjugal love and cohabitation; diligent labour in our callings; shunning all occasions of uncleanness, and resisting temptations thereunto.” And “the sins forbidden, beside the neglect of the duties required are, adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts; wanton looks, impudent or light behaviour, immodest apparel; prohibiting lawful and dispensing with lawful marriages; allowing, tolerating, keeping of stews and resorting to them; entangling vows of single life, undue delay of marriage; having more wives or husbands than one at the same time; unjust divorce or desertion; idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, unchaste company; lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancing, stage plays, and all other provocations to, or acts of uncleanness, either in ourselves or others.” All that our time will allow, and all indeed that propriety will permit, in regard to this enumeration of duties and sins, is to recommend that it be attentively read and carefully considered by you all—in connexion with the texts of Scripture which, in the Catechism quoted, you will find referred to at the bottom of the page.

It must not be forgotten that we are required to do all that we can, to preserve the chastity of others, as well as of ourselves; and it is a manifest aggravation of many of the transgressions of the seventh commandment, that they necessarily involve the guilt of two individuals, each of whom is not only chargeable with

personal sin, but with being a partaker in the sin of another. Parents, and all guardians and teachers of youth, have a solemn duty incumbent on them, in endeavouring to imbue the minds of all who are committed to their charge, with the deepest abhorrence of the sin of uncleanness; in being careful not to expose them to temptation while they are minors, and in warning them tenderly and faithfully against the dangers to which they will be exposed, when they come to act for themselves. As to those who deliberately endeavour to seduce others into the sins forbidden in this commandment, I am at a loss for language to express the detestation in which their character and practices ought to be held. In many cases, I hesitate not to say, that their guilt is that of *murderers* of the worst description. They often literally occasion the death both of the body and of the soul—after a protracted period of the torment of both, in the present state of existence. A seducer ought to be shunned by every decent person, as a monster who has done dishonour to his species: And the first attempt, or perceptible approach to seduction, ought to be regarded and treated with as much resentment, as if life itself had been assailed. If the first approach be not resisted, and the seducing wretch be not driven for ever from the presence of the party insulted, guilt immediately ensues to that party, and the foulest stains of character and the most lasting anguish of mind, will probably follow. Instant flight is courage here. It is the course which the sacred oracles enjoin. “Flee youthful lusts.”

It has been well observed by Ridgely, in concluding what he has said in his systems on this commandment, that the remedies against the sins and vices which the precept forbids, are—“the exercising a constant watchfulness against all temptations thereunto; avoiding all conversation with those men or books which tend to corrupt the mind, and fill it with levity, under a pretence of improving it: But more especially, a retaining a constant sense of God’s all-seeing eye, his infinite purity and vindictive justice,

which will induce us to say, as Joseph did in the like case, 'How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God.'” I shall close this lecture, with an extract from a discourse which I delivered some years since, to a number of liberally educated youth, on the character of a man of false honour, as exemplified in the Herod who beheaded John the Baptist. It is as follows:—

“Against the indulgence of lewd propensities, as well as of intemperance, I am called by our text and subject to warn you distinctly. If Herod had been chaste, there is no probability that he would ever have murdered John. It was his adulterous connexion with Herodias, which originated the faithful reproof of the Baptist, so offensive to himself, and to the harlot whom he called his wife. It was her blood-thirsty malignity, aided by that art and subtlety which licentious women usually possess, that ensnared him effectually, and impelled him to the deed which has blasted him with eternal infamy. But Herod is by no means a solitary instance of these effects of libidinous indulgence. History, both sacred and profane, and even your own observation, may furnish you with many examples, of at least similar effects, proceeding from the same cause. Perhaps, indeed, there is no one vice which, in its extreme, more debases and pollutes the mind, more brutalizes the whole man, leads him to more shameless, detestable and atrocious acts, and which oftener gives him a diseased body, as well as a degraded soul, than the very vice which we now contemplate. Nor is there any vice to which a man is more in danger of becoming enslaved, if he indulges in it at all. Yet this is a vice, my young friends, to which persons at your age are especially exposed, and against which they need to be peculiarly guarded. Difficult therefore as the subject is of being properly and profitably discussed in public, I could not forbear to state to you what you have heard. For the rest, and for the best description that was ever given of the arts and the dan-

gers of a lascivious woman, I refer you to the seventh chapter of the book of Proverbs; and I earnestly exhort you to read it seriously, and to ponder it deeply, in your closets. In the mean time, I shall repeat in your hearing the solemn and impressive admonition with which that chapter closes: "Hearken unto me now, therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth: Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths: For she hath cast down many wounded; yea many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

LECTURE LII.

WE are now to consider the eighth commandment, which is—"Thou shalt not steal." The requirements and prohibitions of this commandment may best be treated separately: "It requireth the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others."

Here we are to consider, I. What we are to do, to promote our own wealth and outward estate, and, II. The wealth and outward estate of others.

I. In promoting our own wealth and outward estate, it is of importance to consider, first of all, that it is a duty to do so. This, too often, is not sufficiently considered. There are a few, indeed, who are born to such an ample inheritance, that they ought not to endeavour to increase their property, unless it be with an express and fixed purpose to devote the whole increase to charitable and pious uses. The great duty of those who inherit independent fortunes is, to husband and employ them for the purposes of benevolence; of which I am to speak hereafter. But the answer before us implies, that it is a duty incumbent on *all*, to take a suitable care for their outward provision; and of the greater part to endeavour to increase their worldly property. And this corresponds with an explicit precept of inspiration. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." It is indeed true, that the excess of a worldly spirit is more common than the want of a suitable care. Yet the latter is really a sin, as well as the former; and it is one of which youth especially ought to be admonished. To be inactive, or careless, with respect to our future worldly circumstances, is not a matter that is merely optional, and which therefore we may regard or neglect, as inclination dictates; much less is it a matter

of indifference to spend wantonly, what ought to be saved to ensure and increase our future comfort and usefulness in life. There is an important religious duty to be regarded in this concern, which all who would keep a conscience void of offence must remember and perform. We are bound "to glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are his;" and "whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God." Now, that this duty may be duly regarded and performed, it is important—

1. That we choose properly our general course, profession, or calling in life. "No man liveth to himself." In shaping our course through life, we have doubtless a right to consult, reasonably, our own happiness and inclination. But those who make self-gratification, or personal ease, indulgence and pleasure, the sole or chief object of regard, in planning for the future, or in spending their time as it passes, err egregiously, both as to their happiness and their duty. To "do good and to communicate," is one of our sweetest enjoyments, as well as one of our most sacred obligations; and he who lives only for himself, loses the one and violates the other. He loses all the delight—one of the highest, as well as purest, that man can ever know—which springs from indulging and cherishing the social and benevolent affections. The man who looks not beyond himself, soon finds himself an isolated wretch; his mind preys upon itself; his soul stagnates for want of employment; or is corroded by avarice; or he grows brutalized by his sensuality, and generally becomes as contemptible as he is wretched; and worst of all, he prepares for himself an awful account to his Maker, for a wasted existence, and an abuse of the bounties of providence.

I know not how many of you, my young friends, may have expectations, or possessions, which may exempt you from the necessity of planning and labouring for a subsistence, for yourselves or for a family. But whatever may be the wealth that you inherit, or may ever acquire, let me warn you never to be either idle or selfish. If you become so, be as-

sured you will be miserable, both in this world and the world to come. Plan for yourselves some lawful employment, that will keep your minds and bodies constantly occupied—occupied, not that you may add to hoarded wealth, but that you may relieve the necessitous, and promote extensively plans and enterprises of benevolence, virtue, and piety. We live in a day in which such plans and enterprises are numerous, and their call for patronage is reasonable, loud, and imperious. Select such as you verily believe are best calculated to promote the glory of God, and the good of your fellow men; and not only give liberally of your wealth to their support, but give your talents, your time and your influence, to direct and render them effective. Thus you will provide most effectually for your present personal happiness; and if what you do be done from real love to God and man, you will lay up for yourselves “treasures in heaven—an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

But many of those whom I address have yet a profession or calling to select, in the prosecution of which they are to endeavour to procure and further their wealth and outward estate, so as to provide for their comfort and usefulness in future life. In choosing a profession, trade, or calling, youth ought to pay a suitable regard to the wishes and advice of their parents or guardians; and parents and guardians should show a like regard to the inclinations and choice of youth; and both should carefully and impartially consider the fitness, or qualifications of the party concerned, for the vocation, or business, which is in contemplation for him. Earnest prayer to God for direction should be used on this occasion; because the whole complexion of the individual's future condition in the world, and perhaps his destiny for eternity, may depend on the determination made. That business should be usually chosen which has the fewest temptations attending it, which will not be incumbered with unlawful or unnecessary oaths; or

which, on any account, cannot be successfully prosecuted without much danger of injuring others, or committing sin in its prosecution. While children are under age, parents should not permit them, whatever may be their wishes, to engage in any business or pursuit that is either clearly unlawful in itself, or peculiarly hazardous to their morals or their health.

2. Industry—habitual industry—is a duty incumbent on all, in the lawful procuring of worldly property. This has already been intimated; but it deserves a distinct notice and inculcation. Diligence in business is expressly enjoined by the apostle Paul, as a Christian duty; and he lays it down as a law of Christian morals, that “if any would not work, neither should he eat;” and adds—“Now, them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.” The influence of industry on success in any business, is greater than every thing beside. He who exerts himself only occasionally, or as the homely but expressive phrase is, by fits and starts, seldom acquires much, however vigorous may be his efforts while they last; but he who labours steadily and perseveringly, with an activity always roused, but never overtaken, seldom fails to accumulate property—it may be by slow advances at first, yet often to a very large amount in the end. Look around you and see who are the men of wealth. In almost every instance they are those who began the world with little—often with nothing but their hands and their industry. The same way to wealth is equally open to all. No other country on earth affords such a wide, varied, and fruitful field for industrious enterprise, as our own. No individual, whom God favours with health and the use of his faculties, and who has none to provide for but himself, need with us be long subject to real want; and nearly all, with the ordinary blessing of Providence, may rise at length, if not to affluence, yet to a state of worldly competence and comfort—especially if to industry they add—

3. Frugality and economy. Without these, indeed, the gains of industry may be, and sometimes actually are, scattered almost as soon as acquired. Those who are poor will never rise to wealth, and those of small property will not be likely to increase it, without frugality in expenditure—forbearing to purchase what they, for the present, ought not to possess; and even abstaining from those articles of food, drink, and clothing, which are the most costly, and therefore seldom necessary to health, or to real respectability and enjoyment. I once lived near a family, the heads of which were among the most active and laborious individuals I have ever known, and in the prosecution of a mechanical business, received not a little ready money: but they and their children lived more luxuriously than even their wealthy neighbours; the best of the market was always on their table. When asked why they pursued this course, the reply was made by another question, “Who ought to live well, but they that work hard for it?” It is scarcely necessary to add, that this family, that thus always lived well, always likewise lived poor; that is, they accumulated nothing, and the education of the children was grossly neglected.

The increase of property unquestionably depends more on saving and economy, or prudent management, than on rapid gains. “How happens it, said one neighbour to another, that you are rich and I am poor, when we began the world alike, and I have laboured as faithfully as you.” The answer was—“You have earned as much money as I; but here is the difference, you have spent your earnings, and I have saved mine.” Think not, my young friends, that I am recommending a niggardly, parsimonious, or avaricious spirit and system of conduct. Far from it. All I aim at is to impress you with the importance of that prudence and self-denial, by which you may not only provide for a time of sickness, and for your old age, and for leaving something to your descendants, but that you may also be able to be charitable and liberal. “Be frugal, that you may be

generous, for no man can give out of an empty purse.”*

4. We ought constantly to implore the direction of God in the management of our worldly affairs, and his blessing on the labour of our hands—“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.” With the excellent commentary and practical observations of Scott, on the verse of sacred Scripture last recited, I will close what I have to offer on this part of our subject—“In a chapter peculiarly recommending industry, the wise man, or rather the Spirit of God by him, has given a most important admonition on this verse. ‘The heathens were prone to imagine all things requisite to happiness to be placed in themselves. But the Scripture every where inculcates, that it is God who giveth wisdom to the wise, and victory to the valiant, and riches to the diligent, and good success to the prudent and patient.’† In fact, a large majority of nominal Christians, especially the active, sagacious, and managing in worldly business, are heathens, at least practically, in this respect. Perhaps they acquire their wealth by using many sinister methods; and with it they ensure vanity and vexation. But when riches are given by the blessing of God upon the honest industry of one who depends on him, and uses them to his glory; they are possessed without perplexing care, or a guilty conscience, or a dread of consequences. The hope of the righteous is gladness. If the Lord see good he can give them wealth, and exempt them from the sorrow and vexation attending ungodly prosperity. He can prolong their days, while vice shortens the lives of wretched multitudes. He will make their diligence acceptable and useful, while disgrace attaches to the slothful. He will give them strength and courage in his ways; and they shall not be moved for ever, being built on an immoveable foundation. ‘This is the heritage of

* Witherspoon.

† Bp. Patrick.

the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.'”

II. There is a duty to be performed, in promoting the wealth and outward estate of others. The great law of Christian benevolence, “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” or, “whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,” is applicable here, as in other cases.

1. In all matters of contract or traffic, we are to act conscientiously and fairly; to do as we would be done by. In making a contract we are not to conceal any thing which, if known to the other party, would lead him to avoid or refuse the bargain; or to propose terms which he is led to accept, merely because he is ignorant of something known to us, but hidden from him. Neither is it lawful to take advantage of the pressing necessities of others, for an immediate supply of some want which, if they could wait a little, or apply elsewhere, they might obtain for much less than we demand. If a general necessity or demand in a community has raised the value of any article of trade or commerce, it is not unfair to take the price that is current; for any thing may be justly reckoned to be worth as much as the price at which it is currently sold. But to avail ourselves of the ignorance, or the urgent wants of our neighbour, to take from him any part of his property, however small, which he might and would save, if better informed, or less pressed for immediate relief, is certainly inconsistent with Christian integrity, to say nothing of benevolence or kindness.

The concealing of the known defects of an article of merchandise or trade, or the extolling of the value of an article beyond the truth, or the setting of an unreasonable price with a view to obtain it if possible, and to fall from it if necessary, these, and all similar practices, however common, must be avoided by those who would keep a conscience void of offence. In like manner, it is to be reckoned unfair, to decry what is offered us by another, with a view to induce him to abate his demand. This fraudulent practice is

strikingly described in the Book of Proverbs—"It is naught, saith the buyer, but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."

Any deception in the use of weights and measures, is manifestly iniquitous; and nothing is more pointedly reprobated in the scriptures of truth. In the law of Moses it is said, "Thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have; that thy days may be lengthened, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." And Solomon says, "A false balance is abomination to the Lord; but a just weight is his delight." It is scarcely necessary to add, that in the delivery of articles purchased, to diminish any thing in weight or measure, or to transfer worse goods than were actually bought, is cheating in its worst and most odious form.

2. Any individual who is conscious of having defrauded another, can never perform the duty we are now considering, without making restitution, if it be at all possible for him to do it. On this subject, the law given by Moses was express and particular; as you may see by consulting Exod. xxii. 4. Lev. vi. 4—28. 1 Sam. xii. 3. And in the New Testament, we find that the publican Zaccheus gives it as the proof of the sincerity of his repentance, that he made restitution—"Behold Lord—said he to the Saviour—the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four fold." Here is the example which all who have dealt fraudulently—from him who has committed actual theft, to him who has overreached another in a bargain—ought to set before themselves for imitation. Not indeed as to the very letter. It may not be incumbent in every case, scarcely perhaps in any case, to restore four fold; but in every case such restitution must be made as that the party defrauded shall sustain no eventual loss, in consequence of what was taken from him unlawfully. If the party defrauded be dead, then his heirs, or relatives, or descendants, if they can be found, should receive the property to be restored. If none of these can be discovered, the

whole amount of the sum purloined should be given to the poor, or to benevolent and pious uses. It must, in all cases, be shaken from the hands of the defrauder, before he can be entitled to consider himself as a real penitent, and as such forgiven of his God. Without reformation there can be no true repentance.

In cases of bankruptcy, where a legal discharge has been obtained, it is usually considered as an act of generosity, rather than of justice, if the bankrupt, when again possessed of property, pays with interest the losses which his creditors have sustained by his failure. In some instances this may be a strictly just estimate. But in many others, even where the bankruptcy has been in no degree fraudulent, the losses sustained may have been occasioned by such want of care, prudence, management, vigilance or foresight, that a truly conscientious person will feel that justice and equity require that, when able, he should indemnify his creditors, if not fully, at least in part.

3. Affording relief to the necessities of the poor, is an incumbent duty, in promoting the wealth and outward estate of others. There are many who seem to consider it as a matter perfectly optional—a matter of mere inclination, in which no moral obligation is involved—to supply the wants of the poor and needy. This is altogether erroneous. The relief of the necessitous belongs indeed to what moralists denominate *imperfect rights*; that is, relief cannot be demanded, by those who are in want. Yet in view of our responsibility to God, there is no duty more obligatory and sacred; and as it cannot be enforced by human authority, we are taught in the sacred Scriptures that it is one of which the Most High takes a special cognizance. He declares that he will hear the cry, and be the retributor of the poor and needy, when they are wronged or injured, or unfeelingly left to perish, or to suffer want: And on the other hand, he declares that “he that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.” In a word, I know of no one duty of the second table of the law, which is more frequently en-

joined and urged, and in regard to which more powerful motives to its performance are set before us, both in the Old Testament and the New, than giving to the poor.

This duty is doubtless peculiarly incumbent on the rich. They ought to remember, that all which they possess has been given them of God; that he has made them his stewards, in part for this very purpose; and that he will, in the judgment of the great day, demand of them an account of their stewardship, in this particular. Our Saviour takes special notice of the performance, or the neglect of this duty, in his statement of the retribution of the final judgment, in the 25th chapter of Matthew: And the apostle Paul directs Timothy—"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life!" For all the wealth of the world, my young friends, you ought not to be willing to take the responsibility of that rich man, who has not been kind and liberal to the poor. And I cannot here forbear the remark, that there are few rich men, even among those who are highly praised for their munificence, who give in proportion to their wealth. Where is the man of wealth, who gives to such a degree, as to render it necessary for him to forego a single gratification of himself or his family? How seldom is one found who surrenders even a single luxury, that he may give to the poor, or to benevolent and pious uses?

But although the rich are to bestow out of their abundance, they are not the only individuals on whom this duty is incumbent. We are all to give, according as God has prospered us. "Even the poor ought to give a small testimony of their gratitude to God, by sparing a little, if they can, out of what they get in the world, for those who are poorer than themselves;

which if it be but a few mites, it may be an acceptable sacrifice to God; and if persons have nothing before hand in the world, they ought to work for this end, as well as to maintain themselves and families.”*

It is not practicable to lay down any general rule, as to the proportion of our property that we ought to assign to charitable purposes. Those who have families, are certainly not under obligation to give away as much as those who have none. Yet it would often have been well for the children of the opulent—more conducive to their real happiness, as well as their usefulness and respectability—if their parents, in place of leaving them wealth that has rendered them *independent*, as it is called, had left them only enough to facilitate their own exertions to support themselves; and had given the whole of the remainder to feed the poor, and to promote knowledge, virtue, and piety. The practice of giving but a little while a man lives, with the intention of giving much by bequest after death, is foolish in the extreme. It often results in really giving nothing—nothing to the purposes intended to be subserved. The whole is wasted, or misapplied, or perverted by the unfaithfulness, or carelessness of those entrusted with its application; or lost by some unforeseen or unavoidable occurrence. Far better it is for a man to be his own executor, in every charity that he proposes to favour, and to leave little or nothing to be distributed by others, after his decease. Those, indeed, who have only enough to sustain themselves comfortably while they live, cannot act on this rule; and yet they may, by will, give to charitable designs their whole property: but in all other cases, a man would better give with his own hands and eyes, than leave it to be done by those who are to come after him. On the whole, every Christian must determine for himself, and in view of the account which he is to render to God, what is the proper proportion of his worldly substance, to be appropriated to charitable uses. But every one would do well to give on *system*, and not by caprice or inclina-

* Ridgley.

tion—some may give a tenth, others a third, and others the half, or even a larger part of their income. When a system is adopted, we are guarded against negligence on the one hand, and profusion on the other—against refusing to give when, and as much as we ought, and against giving beyond our ability, so as to cause an embarrassment that we ought to avoid.

It is of no small importance to make a right selection of the objects of our benevolence; otherwise we may do more harm than good, by all that we bestow. We should be careful not to minister to vice, nor to encourage sloth or indolence, but see that our charities really answer some valuable end—that they relieve the truly necessitous, help the helpless, comfort the widow, aid the orphan, instruct the ignorant, reclaim the vicious, succour suffering piety, promote education, extend the kingdom of the Redeemer, and benefit eternally the souls of our brethren of mankind. To any, or to all of these objects, “let every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, give; not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

The duty we have been considering is well summed up, by the author already quoted, in the following words: “Works of charity are to be performed prudently, as our circumstances will permit, and the necessity of the object requires; also seasonably, not putting this duty off till another time, when the necessities of those whom we are bound to relieve call for present assistance. ’Tis also to be done secretly, as not desiring to be seen of men, or commended by them for it, and cheerfully; also, with tenderness and compassion to those whose necessities call for relief, as considering how soon God can reduce us to the same extremity which they are exposed to, who are the objects of our charity. It ought to be done likewise with thankfulness to God, that he has made us givers rather than receivers; and as a testimony of our love to Christ, especially when we contribute to the necessities of his members.”

LECTURE LIII.

THE prohibitions of the eighth commandment, are now to be considered. "The eighth commandment forbiddeth, whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own, or our neighbour's wealth or outward estate."

The chief hindrances to our own wealth and outward estate have already been taken into view, in considering the duties enjoined in this commandment. Yet I will give a short summary statement of them, from an author to whom I have frequently referred. Fisher in his catechism says—"We may be said to *steal from ourselves* by idleness, niggardliness and prodigality—By *idleness*, when we live without a lawful calling, or neglect it, if we have any—by *niggardliness*, when a person defrauds himself of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given him—by *prodigality*, when persons are lavish and profuse, in spending above their income." The detestable vice of gambling, ought certainly to be noticed here; for it is not only iniquitous in itself, but very often reduces both the gambler and his family, from comfort or affluence, to wretchedness and want.

We have also somewhat anticipated, in the last lecture, the notice of the injury that may be done to our neighbour, in his wealth or outward estate. But we shall now bring more distinctly into view the various kinds of fraud, by which others may be deprived of their property, or lawful possessions. There is, however, but little need of reasoning or illustration, in regard to the violations of this command; because, however frequently such violations may be practised, they are rarely defended by any attempt at argument, except by the most abandoned, on whom moral considerations have no influence.

1. *Theft*—which is legally defined to be, “unlawful felonious taking away of another man’s goods, against the owner’s knowledge or will.”* This crime is commonly distinguished into *private* and *public*. Private theft, is the taking away a part of an individual’s property, without his knowledge or consent. Public theft, is a clandestine and felonious taking away the property of a community; and although the crime is secretly committed, it receives its appellation from the consideration that it affects a public interest. As committed against the commonwealth, it consists in embezzling, or counterfeiting the current coin, or the paper of legal banks, or in defrauding the public revenue; and also in what is called the *running*, or the false entry, of goods, or in any other act by which the public receives detriment, to increase the property of the purloiner. If committed against the church, it is called *sacrilege*, or *simony*. Sacrilege is the stealing, or clandestinely taking away, of any property which has been dedicated to a sacred use, or employed for that purpose. *Simony*, so called from its resemblance to the sin of Simon Magus, is the buying and selling of ecclesiastical places, offices, or influence, for money. It is a happy feature in the religious state of our country, that there is less opportunity, or temptation, for the commission of this sin, than in any other state of Christendom. Yet even with us, the sin is virtually committed, when, for the sake of worldly gain, or emolument of any kind, men are induced to act in religious concerns, as they would not act if such considerations had not an influence.

It is evident at once, that both in regard to private and public thefts, there must be a great variety, in the degrees of guilt, incurred by the perpetrators of these crimes. In all cases, however, the guilt is great in the sight of God; and when known, is justly punished by human laws. These laws are commonly modified, so as to adapt their penalty to the malignity of the offence committed. Yet I must not omit de-

* Cowcl,

livering it, on the present occasion, as my decided opinion, that human life ought never to be taken away for theft, either public or private. Confinement and hard labour, seem to be the proper penalties for all acts of theft. But without deep repentance, and if possible, full restitution also, no one guilty of theft, can justly expect forgiveness of God. *Thieves* are expressly mentioned, in that class of sinners who "shall not inherit the kingdom of God;" that is, if they remain impenitent and unreformed.

2. *Robbery.* This term is sometimes used as synonymous with secret theft; but it is more commonly employed to denote the taking away of the property of another, by *force* or *violence*. The presence, or knowledge of the owner of property, is always supposed in robbery; and his person may be injured, or his life be taken, or he may be put in such fear as to offer no resistance. As it cannot be known, when robbery is attempted, whether the robber intends murder or not, the civil law will justify his being killed, to prevent the accomplishment of his wicked purpose. The divine law, as contained in Exodus xxii. 2, 3, ordained that a robber killed in the act of housebreaking, if in the night time, should have "no blood shed for him;" but in the day time, it was considered a capital crime to kill him. It appears to me, that no conscientious person would intentionally take the life of a robber, unless there were the strongest indications of his intention to commit murder, as well as to rob. In such a case, I have no hesitation in saying, that it is not only lawful, but a duty, to preserve, if we can, an innocent life, by taking away a guilty one. But to defend property merely, at the expense of the life of a robber, is what I would advise you, my young friends, forever to avoid. Whatever may be said to justify it, conscience, if it be not callous or perverted, will, it appears to me, condemn it; and a clear and peaceful conscience, is of more value than the wealth of the world. Neither do I think that human laws, ought ever to punish robbery with death, unless it has been accompanied with actual, or attempted murder. Po-

licy too, as well as justice and humanity, dictates this procedure. Robbery is almost always accompanied with murder, in countries where it is considered and treated, in all cases, as a capital crime. "The dead tell no tales," becomes the robber's maxim; and life, as well as property, is taken to prevent detection. Humanity, therefore, to the unoffending, as well as to the guilty, calls for a lighter penalty than that of death, for the crime of robbery, when not complicated with murder. But in a moral view—in the eye of God—this is a sin, in all cases, of a highly aggravated character—more aggravated than secret theft; inasmuch as it not only deprives our neighbour of his property, but unjustly and wickedly puts him in fear, even when his person remains uninjured.

3. *Receiving and concealing stolen goods*, knowing them to be such. The proverb is not more trite than true, that "the receiver is as bad as the thief." All attempts to palliate this crime, or to soothe the conscience, because the offence was not contrived, nor actively aided, by those who receive property known to be purloined, is utterly vain. The truth is, they are the encouragers of thieves and robbers, and must be considered as the abettors of their villany; and therefore, by all laws, human and divine, they are justly considered as equally guilty with the principals. Speaking of this sin, the Psalmist says, "when thou sawest a thief, then thou consentest with him;" and in Prov. xxix. 24, it is said, "whoso is partner with a thief, hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not." It should be considered as a duty obligatory on every member of a community, not only to avoid purchasing any property suspected to be unlawfully obtained, but to use all suitable means to restore such property to its rightful owner, and to detect and bring to justice the fraudulent party.

4. *Unfaithfulness, or breach of trust*; whether the trust be devolved on us by nature, as that of parents towards their children; or by contract, as that of servants who are entrusted with the goods and se-

crets of their masters; or that which is involved in the known intention of those who appoint executors to their wills, or guardians to orphans, under age, provided they accept of this trust—if those who are thus put in trust, embezzle or squander away the substance of others, defrauding them to enrich themselves—this is not only theft, but perfidiousness, and highly provoking to God, and deserves a more severe punishment from men than is usually inflicted. To this add, all instances in which property is put into our hands for sake keeping, or to be delivered to others at a distance, or to be retained, as in the case of attorneys, till it can be paid over to the owner. If property held in trust be lost by unavoidable accidents, we are not responsible; but if it be used by us without permission of the proprietor, or lost by mere carelessness or inattention, guilt is incurred, and restitution ought to be made. The instances of late in our country are shockingly numerous, of the grossest frauds practised by those who have been entrusted with the property of others in public banks, and of clerks in post offices, and merchants' counting-houses and stores. The rage for speculation, the affectation of a splendid style of living, the love of theatres, and gaming tables, and of illicit pleasures of various kinds, creating demands for money which could not be obtained lawfully, have been the prolific sources of these evils. Guard, cautiously and most vigilantly, my young friends, against every inlet to these enormities—against the most distant approach to the causes of such transgressions. There is nothing of which a youth, who regards either his prospects for this life or the life to come, should be more careful, than of his moral honesty. An integrity that is not only above guilt, but above suspicion, he ought to regard as a precious jewel, which he would sooner lose his life than forfeit justly.

5. *Borrowing without a reasonable prospect of making punctual payment*, is a manifest violation of this command. The Psalmist says, “the wicked borroweth, and payeth not again.” “Nevertheless,

there are some cases in which a man is not guilty, though he borrows and does not pay, viz.—if, when he borrowed there was a probability of his being able to repay it; or otherwise, if he discovered his circumstances fully to him of whom he borrowed, to whom it would hereby appear whether there was a likelihood of his paying him or not; or if he gave full conviction, when he borrowed, that he was able to pay, but the providence of God, without his own default, has rendered him unable; in this case, mercy is to be shown him, and he is not to be reckoned a breaker of this commandment.”* But there will be a breach of this precept, if the lender is made to believe by the borrower, that his circumstances are better than they really are. Shocking instances of this kind, too often take place in trade, when a merchant borrows large sums of money, or purchases goods on credit, when he knows, or ought to know, that his affairs are desperate, and that in a short time he must be a bankrupt. In all cases in which money or other property is borrowed, when there is no probability, or very little, that payment can be made, a crime, little short of real theft is committed. Nay, if a man borrows money which, if he were frugal and industrious, he would be able to repay punctually, but renders himself unable by prodigality, unlawful expense in living, or by idleness and the want of economy, he certainly violates this commandment. Wherever creditors compound with their debtors, for a part instead of the whole that is their due, if the debtors afterwards become able to repay the whole, they are sacredly bound in conscience to do it, although the laws of the state may not be able to compel them. But I cannot leave this part of our subject, my young friends, without counselling you to impress on your memory deeply, what is said by Solomon, “the borrower is servant to the lender;” and therefore never to contract a habit of borrowing. Dread to be in debt; it will destroy your independence. Want much, rather than borrow often: and when you do borrow,

* Ridgley.

suffer not a little inconvenience, rather than fail to make punctual payments. He who borrows frequently and pays remissly, loses all dignity and influence of character; and is certainly not without sin in the eye of God.

6. This commandment clearly forbids *oppression*. It is not practicable to enumerate all the forms and instances of oppression. The rich may oppress the poor, by delay in paying them for labour they have performed; or for goods or manufactures they have furnished; or by not allowing them a reasonable compensation for their services; or by demanding an exorbitant rent of houses, or lands; and still more, by seizing their goods for rents, which, without their fault, they are unable to pay. To "grind the face of the poor," in whatever way it may be done, is a sin which God, their avenger, will not suffer to go unpunished. This commandment is also clearly violated by those who exact of servants, or apprentices, or hirelings, more labour than is reasonable, or deprive them of rewards or comforts, which they ought to possess. The monopolizing, or engrossing of the necessaries of life, so as to obtain for them an exorbitant price, in consequence of which the poor are driven to extremities, and others are obliged to pay unduly for what they obtain, is a form of oppression, which the spirit of this precept unquestionably prohibits. In a word, he who, in any respect or particular, has another in his power, as to matters of property, and *does as he would not be done by*, transgresses the commandment we consider. Nor do I feel at liberty to pass this particular, without stating distinctly, that nations, as well as individuals, may be oppressors. The Egyptians of old, suffered the just and sore judgments of Jehovah, for oppressing the Israelites; and we have great reason to fear that our nation will experience the marked chastisements of a righteous God, for our oppression of the African race, and the aboriginal inhabitants of our land—inhabitants to whom the Creator gave it, as their portion of

his earth, before it was ever seen by us, or by our fathers.

7. *Unjust and vexatious lawsuits* violate the precept before us. "The law is good, if a man use it lawfully." It is a great privilege and blessing to live in a country where law governs; and where therefore neither a tyrant nor a mob can injure a man in his person or property, without redress. To afford protection, and to redress injuries, is the proper office of the law. Yet slight offences and injuries, our Saviour has taught us, would in many instances be better suffered in silence than be redressed by an appeal to law; and the Apostle Paul teaches, that in all common cases, Christian brethren should endeavour to settle their differences and controversies, without going to law with each other. But the law, although intended to promote and ensure equity, may be, and too frequently is, used as an instrument of oppression and injustice. So it is used "when the rich make use of the law to prevent or prolong the payment of their debts, or to take away the rights of the poor, who, as they suppose, will rather suffer injuries than attempt to defend themselves—when bribes are either given or taken, with a design to pervert justice: and to this we may add, that the person who pleads an unrighteous cause, concealing the known truth, perverting the sense of the law, or alleging that for law or fact, which he knows not to be so; and the judge who passes sentence against his conscience, respecting the person of the rich, and brow-beating the poor; these are all confederates in oppression; and such methods are, beyond dispute, a breach of this commandment."*

7. *Usurious interest for money loaned*, is a violation of this precept. It has been very plausibly maintained, that it would be better for the community, if there were no laws fixing the rate of interest for money; but if this, like all other kinds of property, were left free, to be used to as great profit by the

* Ridgley.

owner, as he may be able to secure. But certainly while laws exist, they ought to be scrupulously obeyed by every good citizen; and especially by those who feel the obligation they are under to adorn their Christian profession and character, by "abstaining from all appearance of evil." It is reproachful among worldly men of fair and honourable character, to take the advantage of individual necessity and embarrassment, to discount notes at an enormous premium; or in any other way, to extort an exorbitant interest on money loaned. It will not unfrequently happen, that the poor may be more benefited eventually by the lending of small sums, without interest, than by an absolute gift. In this way, a wealthy and benevolent Christian will, as he has opportunity, rejoice "to do good and communicate." To exact interest from the poor, when the loan made was to procure the necessities of life, is ever to be regarded as unchristian.

8. *Gambling of every species*, is to be esteemed a flagrant breach of the eighth commandment. As it relates to the violation of the duty which a man owes to himself, I have already noticed it. Now we consider it as an unlawful acquisition of the property of another. Such it surely is; for if it is sinful for him to risk his property in gaming, his doing it voluntarily, can never make it innocent for the winner to profit by his neighbour's guilt. The winner and the loser are alike guilty; and I am persuaded that no instance can be produced, of a truly pious and conscientious man, who did not regard gaming as highly sinful, and the practice as deeply injurious to society, and in every view detestable. Lotteries have sometimes, it cannot be denied, been countenanced and shared in, by men of unquestionable piety. But so have some other things, which reflection and observation have at length ascertained to be wrong, and of evil consequence. Among such things, I hesitate not to say, that lotteries hold a conspicuous place. Their effects are, beyond a question, of evil influence on society; and often ruinous to individuals also, whether they miss or obtain a prize. I counsel you to have nothing

to do with them, and to use your whole influence to banish them utterly from society.

9. Finally, *Unfaithfulness in rendering service to an employer*, is a transgression of the command we consider. Wages, or compensation, are always stipulated for a certain amount of lawful profit or advantage, which an employer expects to derive from faithful service to be rendered. Now unfaithfulness always diminishes that amount, and sometimes occasions an entire loss; and such diminution or loss, to its full extent, is an actual fraud, committed by him who fails to render the service which, from him, was justly due. I have spoken of the injustice that may be done to apprentices, or hirelings, by exacting from them an undue amount of service; but these latter should remember, that they may be chargeable with the very same injustice towards their employers, by the want of industry, activity and fidelity, in all that is reasonably expected from them. In whatever manner or form, my dear youth, you may be employed or entrusted by others, your duty to God, to your neighbour, and to yourselves, equally demands that you "show all good fidelity." Nothing will more contribute to gain you friends, to promote your worldly interest and prosperity, and to secure your own peace of mind, than to prove yourselves to be entirely *trust-worthy*, to prove that whatever you are expected to perform, will be actively, industriously, and faithfully done, to the extent of your ability. The habits you will form by such a course of action, will be a better fortune than they possess who have wealth by inheritance; will give you more influence and respectability of character as you advance in life; and will be most favourable to the reception and cultivation of those moral and religious principles, on which your everlasting happiness must depend.

LECTURE LIV.

THE ninth commandment, which we are now to consider, is—"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." This commandment "requireth the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man; and of our own and our neighbour's good name, especially in witness bearing." The requisitions of the precept before us, as here stated, will form the subject of the present lecture: and the first thing to be considered, because it is fundamental in the whole of the discussion, is the nature and obligation of truth.

The meaning of some words is so plain and obvious, that it cannot be made more so. It is, I think, scarcely practicable to give a definition of truth, that will impart a clearer idea of it, than is conveyed by the word itself. "Truth," says Locke, "is the joining or separating of signs, as the things signified agree or disagree." Johnson's definition is more plain and popular. He says it is "the contrary to falsehood; conformity of notions to things; conformity of words to thoughts."

Those who maintain that the foundation and sanction of all virtue is to be found in *utility* alone, relax the obligation of truth, to a degree that to me appears highly exceptionable and dangerous. In many instances it is not easy, and in some utterly impracticable, even for a well informed and conscientious man, to say what *utility*, taken, as it must be here, in its large sense, as relating to the *general good*, does really dictate: and to leave every man to speak truth or falsehood, on every emergency, according to his own views of what will, on the whole, be for the general benefit, is to rest a virtue of the highest importance on a very uncertain and slippery foundation. I mention this, my young friends, because some writers on

morals, who have fame and fashion on their side, have actually weakened the obligation of truth, as I apprehend, to a very dangerous extent, pleading *utility* as the justification of their doctrine.

It is *in the nature and will of God*, that we find the true foundation, obligation, and standard, of every thing that deserves, in a moral sense, the name of *virtue*. It is the highest honour, true happiness, and indispensable obligation, of every moral being in the universe, to be and act, in moral concerns, like his Maker, to the utmost extent of the faculties which have been bestowed upon him. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is our Creator's explicit command; and to be like our "Father who is in heaven," is, by our blessed Saviour, proposed as the high consideration, by which our conduct should be directed and governed. Now, it is the character of God, an essential attribute of his nature, "that he cannot and will not lie." Neither is there any one thing which is represented in holy Scripture as more hateful to God, more the object of his abhorrence, or more certainly subjecting the offender to his severe displeasure, than every species of falsehood and deceit. He declares that "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; this is the second death." He requires "truth and uprightness in the inner man." And it was the emphatic commendation of Nathaniel by our Redeemer—"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."

You will find indeed in the sacred Scriptures, several examples of good men who, under the force of temptation, or through the remainders of depravity, violated truth; and their guilt in this respect is not always explicitly stated, in the places where their sin is recorded. But in every instance their guilt is implied, and never extenuated; and in some cases, as in those of Abraham and Jacob, the punishment which followed their crime, is narrated at length. Abraham was put to shame before Pharaoh and Abimelech, and received reproof from both; and Jacob was long an exile, was deceived and imposed on by Laban,

and lived for many years in constant dread of his brother Esau—all as the consequence of his own and his mother's falsehood and deception.

Having made these general remarks on the nature, foundation, and obligation of truth, I shall give you some quotations from an author whose views entirely accord with my own: and I do it for the twofold reason of availing myself of his authority, and of expressing my thoughts, at once compendiously and with entire perspicuity. You will be careful to notice, that there are other *signs of thought* beside words, and that whatever be the sign, the obligation of truth is the same.

“Instituted signs are those that have no other connexion with the thing signified, than what has been made by agreement; as if two persons shall agree between themselves, that if the one wants to signify to the other at a distance, that he wishes him to come to his assistance, he will kindle a fire upon a certain hill, or hang out a flag upon a certain pinnacle of his house, or some part of his ship. Words and writing are properly instituted signs, for they have no relation to the thing signified, but what original agreement and long custom has given them.

“Customary signs are no other than instituted signs which have long prevailed, and whose institution has either been accidental or has been forgotten. It is also usual to apply the word customary, to such signs as depend upon the mode and fashion of particular countries. There are some signs and postures, which though they may seem perfectly arbitrary, have obtained very generally, perhaps universally, as bending down the body, or prostration, as a sign of respect and reverence; kneeling, and lifting up the hands, as a sign of submission and supplication. Perhaps both these are natural, as they put the person into the situation least capable of resistance.

“Sometimes there is a mixture of natural and instituted signs, as if a man sends a pair of wings, or the figure of them, to a friend, to intimate his danger, and the necessity of flying.

“In the use of signs, the great rule of sincerity is, that wherever we are bound, and wherever we profess to communicate our intention, we ought to use the signs in the least ambiguous manner possible. When we have no intention, and are under no obligation to communicate any thing to others, it is of small moment what appearances are; it is their business not to make any unnecessary or uncertain inferences. A light in a house, in the middle of the night, will perhaps suggest most probably, to a traveller accidentally passing, that there is somebody sick in that house; yet perhaps it is extraordinary study or business, that keeps some person awake.

“Nay, when there is no obligation to give, nor any reason for the party to expect true information, it is held generally no crime at all, to use such signs as we have reason to suppose will be mistaken; as one who does not desire to be disturbed keeps his chamber close shut, that people may conclude he is not there: or when a general of an army puts a fire in his camp, to conceal his march or retreat. And probably none would think it faulty, when there was an apprehension of thieves, to keep a light burning in a chamber, to lead them to suppose the whole family is not at rest.

“There are some who place in the same rank, evasive phrases, when there is an apparent intention to speak our mind, but no right in the other to obtain it. Such expressions may be strictly true, and yet there is all probability that the hearer will misunderstand them. As if one should ask if a person was in any house, and should receive for answer, he went away yesterday morning, when perhaps he returned the same evening. I look upon these evasions, however, as very doubtful, and indeed rather not to be chosen, because they seem to contain a profession of telling our real mind.

“Some mention ironical speech, as an exception to the obligation to sincerity. But it is properly no objection at all, because there is no deception. Truth lies not in the words themselves, but in the use of

them as signs. Therefore, if a man speak his words in such a tone and manner, as that the hearer immediately conceives they are to be taken in an opposite sense, and does really take them in the sense the speaker means them, there is no falsehood at all.

“Mr. Hutchinson, and some others, allow a voluntary intended departure from truth, on occasion of some great necessity, for a good end. This I apprehend is wrong; for we cannot but consider deception as in itself base and unworthy, and therefore a good end cannot justify it. Besides, to suppose it were in men’s power on a sufficient occasion to violate truth, would greatly destroy its force in general, and its use in the social life.

“There are two sorts of falsehood, which, because no doubt they are less aggravated than malicious interested lies, many admit of, but I think without sufficient reason.

“1. Jocular lies, when there is a real deception intended, but not in any thing material, nor intended to continue long. However harmless these may seem, I reckon they are to be blamed, because it is using too much freedom with so sacred a thing as truth. And very often such persons, as a righteous punishment in Providence, are left to proceed further, and either to carry their folly to such excess, as to become contemptible, or to go beyond folly into malice.

“2. Officious lies, telling falsehoods to children, or sick persons, for their good. These very seldom answer the end that is proposed. They lessen the reverence for truth; and, particularly with regard to children, are exceedingly pernicious; for as they must soon be discovered, they lose their force, and teach them to deceive. Truth and authority are methods infinitely preferable, in dealing with children, as well as with persons of riper years.” * * *

“A question is often moved in morals, how far it is lawful to deceive an enemy? especially if we hold the general and universal obligation of truth. To this it may be answered, in the first place, that we may certainly, with great justice, conceal our own designs

from an enemy, as indeed we may generally from friends, by silence, and guarding against every circumstance that may betray them. Neither do I think there is any thing at all blame-worthy in a general of an army using ambiguous signs, as feigned marches of a part or the whole, putting up lights or such things, because after a declaration of war, he does not pretend to give information to his enemy of his motions; nay, it is expected on both sides that they will do the best they can to overreach one another, in point of prudence. Yet I can scarce think it right to employ people to go to the enemy, and professing to be sincere, tell direct falsehoods, and deceive them by that false intelligence.” * * * * *

“All proposals tending to peace ought to be made with the greatest sincerity. Of all deceits in war, the most infamous is that of making a treaty, or asking a conference, only to take the advantage of one party to destroy him by assassination; or by breaking a truce to fight with advantage.”*

Thus it appears, that “in maintaining and promoting truth between man and man,” whether it be in common conversation, or in our promises, oaths, bargains or contracts, and whether the method of expressing our thoughts be by words, or by other signs or tokens, we are to observe a strict veracity; and that even toward an enemy, we are not to make use of falsehood, although we may lawfully conceal the truth, either in whole or in part, when he has no right to expect that we should make it known.

It remains to consider how we are to maintain and promote our own and our neighbour’s good name, especially in witness bearing.

1. We ought, in our own case, justly to estimate the value of a good name; and consider what we may do, and what we may not do, in order to preserve it. “A good name, says Solomon, is better than precious ointment;” and he elsewhere declares, that “it is rather to be chosen than great riches.” Without a

* Witherspoon’s Moral Philosophy.

measure of the confidence of those among whom we dwell, we can neither do them good nor be happy ourselves. Whatever is said or done by a man whom we distrust, stands for nothing in our estimation; and it does not belong to human nature to have inward satisfaction, when this distrust becomes universal. A reputation for integrity, therefore, is of inestimable value to every man, and he ought to regard it as above all price. But beside *integrity*, a character for benevolence, and for activity in lawful business, and in doing good to others as we have opportunity, increases our own happiness, and greatly enlarges our sphere of usefulness. Your first concern, therefore, my young friends, should be to *deserve* the esteem and affection of others, and your second, to *preserve* it when acquired. I would be far from directing you to aim at popular applause, or what the world calls fame. This often proves a most dangerous snare, and is contrary to the very spirit of the gospel. Your primary object should be to please God: and if you do this, you will not fail to secure the approbation and friendship of the good and virtuous, and ultimately to obtain more of the confidence, and even the applause of the world at large, than by any other course. When a man is believed to be thoroughly conscientious in all he does, bad men as well as good, will choose to commit their dearest interests to his management, rather than to any one of a different character. It has been well said by the author already so largely quoted, that "it is not a contradiction, but perfectly consistent to say, a man should be tender and even jealous of his character, and yet not greedy of praise. There is an amiableness and dignity in the first, but a meanness and littleness in the last." But with every real Christian, the strongest of all motives to preserve his character from stain, will be a desire not to bring a reproach on his profession—not to do injury to the cause of his dear and adored Saviour. This he will dread more than death itself.

It should be remembered, however, that it is not

possible for a Christian altogether to escape the reproach of an ungodly world; and that temptations to endeavour to escape it, by unlawful compliances, will ever be among the most insidious and powerful, with which the disciple of Christ will have to contend. Our Redemer has given us fair warning on this subject. "If ye were of the world, 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. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my sayings they will keep yours also." In every age of the world, the trial of "cruel mockings," has been one which the steadfast, consistent and zealous Christian, has had to endure: and he could not endure it, were he not sustained by the testimony of a good conscience, the known approbation of his God, the sympathy and prayers of his fellow believers, and the prospect of the acquittal and honour which he anticipates in the day of final retribution.

A defence of our good name, when it is assailed by slander or false accusation, and when defence may probably be effectual, is not only lawful but an incumbent duty. "There may be cases," says Dr. Wither-
spoon, "where vindications may be necessary and effectual, but they are not many. And I think I have seen in the course of life, reason to make the following distinction. If the accusation or slander be special, and relate to a particular fact, fixed by time, place, and other circumstances, and if it be either wholly false, or essentially mistaken in its nature and tendency, the matter may be explained, and justice may be done. But if it be a general character, that happens to be imputed to a man, he ought to attempt no refutation of it, but by conduct: the more he complains of it, the more he speaks of it, the more he denies it, it will be the more believed. For example, if it be affirmed that a man spoke profanely in a certain company, at a certain place and time, when he

was not present at all, it may be easily and completely refuted; but if he is accused of being proud, contentious, covetous, or deceitful, although these accusations are pretended to be supported by a train of facts, it is better to let them wholly alone, and suffer his conduct to speak for itself. There are instances in history, of accusations brought with much plausibility, and urged with great vehemence, which yet have been either from the beginning disbelieved, or by time confuted; which occasioned the Latin proverb, *Magna est veritas et prævalebit.*” *Great is the truth and it will prevail.*

In defending ourselves against attacks on our character, we may lawfully refer to commendable actions performed by ourselves, and to other circumstances and considerations, which it would otherwise be vain-glorious to recite. We have the example of the apostle Paul for this. But we ought ever to do it, as he did—evidently with a concern for the honour of our Christian character and profession—rather than with a view to self-exaltation. The apostle, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, says, “in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostle;” but he immediately adds—“though I be nothing.” And in a previous letter to this same church, he had, in the spirit of true humility, told them, “I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am.”

Except in a plea against slander, there are few cases, indeed, in which we should make any attempt to promote our own good name, in any other way than by zeal and activity in doing good. In all cases, the trite maxim is just, “that actions speak louder than words,” but in no case is it so applicable as in that which we consider. Self-praise is even worse than nothing—it is a sad blemish in a man of real merit, and is commonly so considered. He who proclaims his own good deeds, will find them far less proclaimed by others, than if he had been entirely

silent. Vanity and boasting are like Solomon's dead flies in the ointment of the apothecary; and he might have had a reference to the very case in hand, in adding as he does—"so doth a little folly, him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour."

2. We are to endeavour to promote our neighbour's good name, as well as our own. We here need no other rule, if we would faithfully apply it, than the general one, of doing as we would be done by. Yet I am ready to believe that this rule is never more frequently and palpably violated, than in the matter of treating our neighbour's character and reputation, as we would wish him to treat our own. The number of those who do this, is, I fear, very small. The violations of the rule will be considered in the following lecture: and in the mean time, in speaking of the positive duty, it may be sufficient to remark, that while we avoid all flattery, as dangerous to our neighbour's virtue, we should prudently and seasonably commend, and sometimes even applaud him, for worthy actions, that he may be encouraged to continue to perform them; and thus not only preserve, but increase the reputation and influence which he has acquired. A virtuous but diffident youth, by being discreetly commended and encouraged, may be led forward to exertions and usefulness, of which the world might otherwise have been deprived, and which may greatly redound to his own honour and happiness. In like manner, when we perceive any thing in our neighbour which is injurious to his good name, we should apprise him of it with meekness and love. This is sometimes a difficult duty to perform, in such a manner as to do good and not evil. Yet it is one which we must not neglect. The expressions of Solomon on this subject are remarkable—"Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend—He that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favour, than he that flattereth with the tongue." Fill your hearts with kindness, and your eyes with tears, my young friends, when you

tell a man of his faults, and you will very rarely offend him—Often he will thank and love you for your fidelity.

It is a sacred duty to defend the character of an absent individual, when we know or believe him to be innocent of the crimes, or offences, with which we hear him charged. Silence, in such a case, is really to make ourselves a party with the false accuser. We ought moreover freely to admit the merit of others, and duly to applaud their worthy deeds: and unless duty forbids, we should be silent in regard to the infirmities and blemishes of those, of whom we have occasion to speak. I have said we should do this, unless duty forbids it; for there may be cases, in which we ought to warn an unsuspecting person of his danger, when we perceive that he is about to put himself into the power of one whom we know it is perilous to trust: and on whatever occasion, when properly called on to declare what we know of a man's character, we ought to do it faithfully. But in all other cases, it is a Christian duty to be silent, in regard to the imperfections of character; and even when mentioned by others, we ought to extenuate them, as much as truth and duty will permit.

The answer of the Catechism we consider mentions "witness bearing," as an occasion on which we are "especially" to be cautious of uttering nothing but the truth. As we have heretofore treated of this particular, it is not necessary to enter far into the subject now. But it cannot be improper to remind you, that as a violation of truth is in all cases a heinous sin, so it is one of the most awful kind, when speaking under the obligation of a solemn oath—To prevaricate *then*, is to make an abjuration of "the help of God"—to renounce all claim to his protection and favour. When called to give testimony on oath, every thing should be said with recollected thought, and every word that is spoken should, if possible, be considered before it is uttered. No wishes or inclinations of our own, no partiality, favour, or affection to a friend, and no dislike or hatred of an enemy—in a word, no prejudice

of any kind, should be permitted, so far as we can help it, to give its colouring to what we say "in witness bearing." It is the tremendous declaration of the Most High—"I will be a swift witness against false swearers, saith the Lord of Hosts."

LECTURE LV.

WHAT is forbidden in the ninth commandment is to be the subject of the present lecture. "The ninth commandment, (according to our Catechism,) forbiddeth whatsoever is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to our own and our neighbour's good name."

Although in treating of the precept now before us, the arrangement adopted has been to consider separately its requisitions and its prohibitions, yet in speaking of the former, the latter has been in a measure anticipated. This anticipation, which it was not easy to avoid, is attended with this advantage, that of the two parts into which the answer now to be discussed is divided, namely, the violations of truth, and the injury of our own and our neighbour's good name, the latter has received so much attention, that a separate consideration of it does not seem necessary. What further notice it may require, will fall under some of the particulars embraced in the series which will be laid before you. In pursuing this series, I will speak:

I. Of whatsoever is prejudicial to truth in *courts of justice*. The awful sin of *perjury*, as it involves the crime of *profaneness* as well as of *falsehood*, was treated of in our lecture on the third commandment; and it was also noticed, with a distinct reference to *witness bearing*, in the close of our last lecture. But in courts of justice, in our country, there are not only witnesses, but judges, jurors, and attorneys: and of these, the judges as well as the jurors, always act under the solemnity and responsibility of an official

oath. The judge or magistrate, therefore, who pronounces a *sentence*, or gives instruction to a jury, contrary to what he knows to be law and justice, violates his official oath, and is really guilty of perjury, as well as of an act of gross injustice to the person, property, or good name of his neighbourhood. Nor is he scarcely less guilty, if he neglects to do all in his power to prevent, or detect, the suborning of false witnesses, or the false swearing of witnesses not suborned. In like manner, the juror who knowingly gives, or consents to a false verdict, breaks his oath, as well as incurs the guilt of doing injustice to his neighbour. The attorney, also, who labours to gain a cause which he knows to be altogether unjust, or to clear a culprit whom he knows to be guilty, is chargeable with a palpable and shameful disregard to truth. I do not say that an attorney may not lawfully appear as the friend and protector of a guilty party, to prevent his being punished beyond his desert. This is often an important service, and is what reason, as well as law, will approve. But it is no valid apology which is frequently made by those who endeavour entirely to clear the guilty, knowing them to be such, that the attorney identifies himself with his client; and that as the client would doubtless, if he acted for himself, endeavour to escape all penalty, or to gain his cause, although he knew it to be unjust, therefore the attorney, who acts for him, should do the same. The truth is, that supposing a wrong-doer to have become right minded, he would not himself seek to escape the penalty of the law, or to pervert it to the injury of his neighbour; and he who assists an offender to do so, is what the Scripture denominates "a partaker of another man's sin." Equally futile is the allegation, that the pleas on the opposite sides of a litigated question are to be made as plausible as their advocates severally can render them, and that thus the exact truth will be most likely to be clearly seen: for it is notorious, that an able and eloquent advocate may, and often does, make the worse appear the better cause, and that substantial injustice is the result.

2. *The uttering of known falsehood, with an intention to deceive*, is a manifest and palpable violation of the precept we consider. The kinds of falsehood which fall under this particular, and the degrees of criminality which they severally involve, are very various. A deliberate lie is more sinful than one into which a man is surprised by sudden fear, or by a strong desire to escape some unwelcome consequence of speaking the truth; although in both instances the liar is without excuse. In like manner, a malicious lie, intended to do injury to our neighbour, or one which from any cause is likely to be followed by serious evils, is more aggravated than one which involves none of these consequences, and is principally injurious to the falsifier himself. There are some persons who consider falsehoods told in jest as innocent. This is by no means to be admitted. Truth is a thing too sacred to be sported with. Of officious lies, something was said in the last lecture. But I feel constrained to add here, that physicians, who by falsehood make their patients believe they are recovering, or likely to recover, when they know that the sick are sinking to the grave, are chargeable with grievous and wicked simulation. While hope is entertained by the physician, he may and ought to cherish it in his patient. But when he has no hope, he acts with cruel falsehood, if both the sick individual and his relations and friends are not, in a discreet and tender manner, apprized of the truth. With a knowledge of it, the most important interests, both temporal and eternal, may be connected; and to these no other considerations can be a counterbalance.

Under this particular, also, I must warn you, my young friends, against ever indulging in the fashionable, but most unchristian practice, of falsely denying yourselves to be at home, when inquired after by a friend or a stranger. Such inquiry is a courtesy, which we are bound to reciprocate, if we are not actually so engaged as to forbid it; and if we are, a kind and frank statement of the fact, will give no offence to a reasonable person; and it is better to offend

the unreasonable, than to violate truth ourselves, or to teach domestics to lie, by putting a falsehood into their mouths.

It has been inquired, whether an individual who makes a promise which he fully intended to fulfil when he made it, but refuses to do so, in consequence of something occurring which he did not know or anticipate when he promised—whether such an individual is to be considered as telling a lie? I answer, that when we do all in our power to fulfil a promise, but are prevented by the providence of God, or by any insurmountable obstacles, we are clearly not guilty of falsehood; for every promise must be supposed to have been made subject to these contingencies. If however our best endeavours have not been used to fulfil every lawful and proper promise, failure always involves guilt—*much*, if no attempt has been made; *less*, if the attempt was not sufficiently earnest and persevering. Further—when a promise has been made with a sincere intention to perform it, occurrences may take place which would have prevented our promising, if we had foreseen them; and which every reasonable person will admit, should have prevented us at first, and ought to absolve us afterward. All such cases, however, ought to be very clearly marked. A conscientious man will choose, in all but extreme cases, to fulfil even an indiscreet promise, unless the party to whom it has been made will consent to release him; and if the promise relate to property, and is not plainly unlawful or impracticable in itself, the obligation to fulfil ought to be considered as indispensable, unless he to whom it was made will grant a free release. The Psalmist gives it as a discriminating feature in the character of a good man, that “he sweareth to his hurt, and changeth not.”

The expression of a purpose, or intention, is not binding, if on reflection we see reason to change our purpose. Yet even here, the duty we owe to ourselves should render us cautious. The man who is observed frequently to change his mind, after he has declared it, although it be in regard to things not im-

portant in themselves, will acquire a character for levity, or versatility, which will exceedingly diminish his respectability and influence. He who would have the greatest weight of character, must keep most of his intentions to himself, till he has the fairest prospect of carrying them into effect.

3. *Forgery*, or setting a false name to a writing, or fabricating the whole of a writing, with a view to deceive and defraud—is one of the grossest violations of truth that can be perpetrated; and at the same time it is a most nefarious deed, in relation to the property of another. It breaks two commandments, the eighth and ninth, in one act; being equally a theft and a deliberate lie. Its frequency is a lamentable indication of the prevalence of licentious principles and practice. In the country from which we derive our origin, it was, till lately, invariably followed, when detected, by the punishment of death; because in a commercial community, scarcely any other violation of law could be so injurious. Believing, as I do, that no crime but murder, or that which involves it, should be punished with death, I have marked with pleasure the efforts recently made—I am not sure that they have as yet been successful—to exempt forgery from the list of capital offences in Britain. Yet I wish by no means to diminish in your minds its moral turpitude. It is certainly one of the basest and blackest transgressions of the moral law of God, that can be committed; and the injury that it does to society is also of the most flagrant and inexcusable kind.

4. *Hypocrisy* is forbidden by the spirit and scope of the ninth commandment. *Self-deceivers* in regard to their spiritual state, are sometimes, both in Scripture and in common discourse, called *hypocrites*. But of such we do not now speak. We here refer to those who, knowingly, make a false and deceitful profession and show of religion; who assume the appearance of piety, and perhaps pretend to great zeal, on purpose to deceive the world, and promote their own temporal emolument; while, in their hearts, they

are opposed to religion, perhaps disbelieve and despise it utterly; and it may be, indulge secretly in gross vice. Of such persons it may be said with truth, that their whole life is one series of practical falsehood—one continued lie. Their guilt is beyond description; for the sin they commit is a direct affront to the heart-searching God; being a constant practical denial of his omniscience. It is as much as to say, that if they can deceive man, and escape his censure, they are regardless of the knowledge and displeasure of the Most High. It is worthy of remark, that they who are loudest in the condemnation of hypocrisy, and are apt to charge it on all who are strictly and eminently pious, are often gross hypocrites themselves. While they hate all religion, and know that they hate it, they are very unwilling that this should be known; and resent, as an unpardonable offence, every attempt to invest them with their true character in the view of the public.

You ought also to be apprized, my young friends, that those are not free from a species of hypocrisy, who are willing and desirous to be thought less anxious about the state of their souls, than they really are. It not unfrequently happens that persons, especially young persons, are, for a length of time, under pretty strong convictions of their guilty and dangerous state, and yet take much pains to keep this from being known, or even suspected, by others. To avoid it, practices are sometimes indulged in, which wound the conscience and occasion keen remorse. In such a course, there is both guilt and danger, of a very fearful kind. I would be very far from advising you to proclaim every serious emotion that you feel; or at any time, or in any form, to be forward and ostentatious in revealing what passes in your minds, in reference to your eternal interests. But on the other hand, beware of seeming to be unconcerned about your souls when you really are so; lest you be left of God to become in fact, what you are desirous to be thought. Always act in this matter as you feel; and with prudence and due reserve, disclose the state of

your minds to a pious and confidential friend, and especially to your pastor, whose business it is to watch for your souls, and who will rejoice to direct, and as far as he is able, assist your labouring spirits.

5. *Slandering the character of an absent individual*, is a manifest violation of the ninth commandment. It is clearly one form of bearing false witness against our neighbour. In speaking, in my last lecture, on the duties required by the precept before us, I endeavoured to enforce, with reference to this subject, the great gospel principle, of doing to others as we would wish they should do to us—to treat the character of every absent individual as we should desire, and think it reasonable, that he should treat our own. The departures from this rule, which we now consider, are exceedingly numerous, and of very various degrees of criminality—from the uttering of a wilful, malicious, and unqualified falsehood against our neighbour, down to the fault already noticed, of keeping silence when we hear him misrepresented.

As a fair character is of inestimable value to every man, he who blasts or blackens it by a deliberate, slanderous falsehood, is guilty of doing an injury to his neighbour, only less enormous than assassination and murder. Hence the pithy lines of the poet, known, I presume, to the most of you—

“Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
 'Twas mine, 'tis his; and has been slave to thousands.
 But he that filches from me my good name,
 Robs me of that which not enriches him,
 And makes me poor indeed.”

In holy writ, slandering and backbiting are placed among the basest and most atrocious crimes that men can commit. “He that slandereth his neighbour is a fool,” says Solomon. “Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off,” says David, when professing before God the manner in which he would act, as a magistrate and a sovereign: and “back-biters” are classed by the apostle Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, among the most

abandoned and shameless sinners that have ever existed on the earth.

But there is another form of slander, far more common than that of telling a deliberately fabricated and downright falsehood, to the injury of our neighbour. It consists in greatly aggravating or magnifying a real fault; or in giving a false colouring to something which, in reality, was a trifle, or perhaps no fault at all; in a word, by traducing an absent person's character by placing some action, or some part of his conduct, in a worse light by far, than that in which it would appear, if fairly and impartially represented. In this manner, the precept before us is transgressed with a frequency that is surprising and lamentable. Indeed, the ways in which this command may be violated, are more various than can be specified. Sometimes by mere hints and insinuations, that more is known than is told: sometimes by affecting to fear that there is too much truth in a flying report: sometimes by professing to hope that such a report will turn out to be false: sometimes by expressing a wish, that there were no ground for suspicion: sometimes by mentioning a rumour, with an injunction not to spread it: sometimes even by a significant sigh, or shrug, or smile. Be assured, that in the view of God, the sin of slander is committed in all such instances, and in many of a like kind, which are not, and indeed cannot be described.

6. *Tale bearing and tattling* are nearly allied to slander, and seldom take place without it. The Levitical law contained an express prohibition of this evil—"Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale bearer, among thy people."—Lev. xix. 16. In the book of Proverbs, we have it twice distinctly repeated, "The words of a tale bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." And again, "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out; so where there is no tale bearer, the strife ceaseth." Never was there a more exact description of an evil, and its remedy, than in these words. A very large part of all the strife and contention that takes place

among neighbours and friends, is owing to tale bearing; and remove the cause, and the effect will cease. Never, my dear youth, indulge in this mischievous, but very common vice. Never repeat to a friend, or a neighbour, what you hear another say to his disadvantage; unless it is clearly necessary to put him on his guard against an injury, to which he may otherwise be exposed. Then indeed it is a duty to warn him; but otherwise, you do evil both to him who spoke disrespectfully, and to him to whom you report it. You occasion painful feelings unnecessarily; and perhaps stir up strife, which may produce the most lasting mischief. Many harsh words are uttered hastily, or thoughtlessly, which the speaker himself may afterwards regret; and which would hurt nobody but the speaker, if they were never repeated. Tale bearers seldom fail to magnify the evil speaking which they report; and therefore are plainly slanderers, as well as otherwise injurious.

Tuttling is often productive of the same effects as tale-bearing; although there be no such intention in the tattler. Solomon tells us, that "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that restraineth his lips is wise." Talkative people often say much, for no other reason, as it would seem, but because they are unquiet while their tongues are still. This character is always a contemptible one; and dignity, as well as duty, is concerned in avoiding it. The government of the tongue is a most important point of prudence and duty, to which youth especially should give great attention. They will assuredly find it to be intimately connected, both with their respectability and their happiness, in the whole of their future life.

7. *Exaggeration* in relating facts, is the last transgression of the ninth commandment, which I shall mention. One of the historians of our own country, once observed to me, that in endeavouring to obtain correct information, in regard to facts and events in our revolutionary war, then recently terminated, it was difficult, almost beyond belief, to find a man,

although an eye witness of what he related, who would give an accurate, unvarnished statement, of what he narrated. "I have been ready," said he, "to say with David, 'all men are liars.'" He was reminded that David spoke thus "in his haste;" but indeed, my young friends, it is too true, that it is extremely rare to find a man whose words, in narrating facts, convey neither more nor less than the simple truth. Yet this is what a due regard to the command before us will lead us to aim at; and he who reaches the object of such an aim, will at once perform an important duty to his God and his fellow men, and at the same time add unspeakably to the respectability and weight of his own character. It was a high commendation bestowed on an eminent man, "that he always stated facts as if he was speaking under oath." Let it then be a distinct object with you all, to acquire the character indicated by the proverb, "his word is as good as his oath."

LECTURE LVI.

WE now proceed to the consideration of the tenth commandment, which is thus expressed—"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." This commandment requires "full contentment with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbour and all that is his;" and it forbids "all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbour, and all inordinate motions or affections toward any thing that is his."

You are aware, I suppose, that as the Papists dispense with the second commandment, because it manifestly prohibits their use of images; so, to keep up the number *ten*, they divide the one now before us—taking the first two clauses, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife," for the ninth commandment, and the remaining clauses for the tenth. To justify this, they say that the first two clauses of this precept relate to *property*, or *interest*; and the rest to *pleasure* or *gratification*. But besides the absurdity of such a distinction, in regard to one and the same sinful emotion—that of coveting—the thing asserted is not true in fact; for the ox and the ass of our neighbour, to say nothing of his servants, are as much parts of his property as his house. Besides, it is evident, beyond reasonable controversy, that the inspired lawgiver did not intend that this precept should be thus divided, because the two first clauses, which furnish the whole ground of the distinction contended for, are used interchangeably by himself, in two places, in which this precept is recorded. In Exodus, xx. 21, the com-

mandment begins with the words, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house;" but when Moses recites the decalogue to the children of his people, on the borders of the promised land, (Deut. v. 21,) he introduces the tenth precept thus—"Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife," and then goes on with the other parts, which chiefly relate to property. In truth, this Popish distinction is so absurd, that it is scarcely worthy of serious confutation.

A point far more worthy of attention is, to ascertain why this commandment was given at all; since the whole of the decalogue relates, not merely to outward actions, but in every precept, is spiritual in its nature and extent, reaching to "the thoughts and intents of the heart;" and the eighth commandment, when thus viewed, would seem to prohibit that coveting of our neighbour's property, from which actual theft, and all similar enormities proceed. In other words, when viewed spiritually, how does the tenth commandment differ from the eighth? The learned and eminent Pictêt, one of the successors of Calvin, before the Genevan school became corrupt, has gone at some length into this subject, thinking, as I certainly do, that it is one of great importance. I will give you the substance of what he says, on the inquiry specified.* In order, he states, to set the matter

* There is a real difficulty in explaining this commandment perspicuously, from the fact that the English verb, *to covet*, used in the prohibition, does not convey at once, the true meaning of the precept. The original word חָמַד (hamed,) by the consent of all the Lexicographers, and by its manifest and frequent use in the Hebrew Scriptures, signifies *to desire earnestly, lust after, take pleasure in, delight in, covet*. This word is, in the Septuagint, translated by the Greek verb ἐπιθυμῶ, (epithumeo), which signifies *to desire, long for, or lust after*, both in a good sense and a bad one; for *to lust after or against*, is sometimes taken in a good sense, as Gal. v. 17, the Spirit "lusteth against the flesh." From the verb ἐπιθυμῶ, is derived the noun ἐπιθυμία, which strictly signifies *any desire of the mind*, either good or bad; for both the verb and the noun have their origin from θυμός (thumos,) the mind. Now these two words ἐπιθυμῶ and ἐπιθυμία,—the former used sixteen times in the New Testament, and the latter no less than thirty-eight times—are, in the common version, translated in three or four different ways; and we will not say that, in any instance, the translation is a bad one; because the translators have manifestly sought to characterize the *mental affection*, when evil, by

in its proper light, we should observe, 1. That in relation to every action, there is the *external act*, the *resolution* on which it depends, and the *inclination*

some *single term*, denoting a *bad affection*, which could scarcely have been done, if they had kept, as the original does, to the use of two terms only. The verb *ἐπιθυμῶ*, is five times translated *to desire*; five or six times *to lust* or *to lust after*; not more than twice, or thrice *to covet*; and once it is translated *he would fain*;—"he would fain (*ἐπιθυμῶ*, *epithumei*,) have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat." The noun *ἐπιθυμία*, is between thirty and forty times translated *lust*; three times *desire*; and three times *concupiscence*; and not in a single instance is it translated *covetousness*. The original word for covetousness, which is pretty frequently used, is always *πλεονεξία* (*pleonexia*); and there is one remarkable text which shows clearly, that *ἐπιθυμία* and *πλεονεξία*, do not, at least always, denote the same, but different affections of the mind. It is Colos. iii. 5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affections, evil concupiscence (*ἐπιθυμίαν κακὴν* *epithumian kakeen*), and covetousness, (*τὴν πλεονεξίαν* *teen pleonexian*), which is idolatry." Here *ἐπιθυμία* and *πλεονεξία* are placed together as distinct items in the enumeration of vices: there is therefore a difference in their meaning. To translate *ἐπιθυμίαν κακὴν*, evil concupiscence, must be regarded as a *pleonasm*, and perhaps was intended to be so, because *concupiscence*, by itself, signifies an evil desire; the real meaning of *ἐπιθυμία κακὴ* is *evil desire*, generally, in regard to any object whatever; and thus it is distinct from *πλεονεξία*, *covetousness*, which is specific, relating only to an unlawful desire of property.

We may now ascertain what is the true import of the verb rendered *covet*, in the tenth commandment. As we have shown above, it primarily denotes, both in Hebrew and Greek, *to desire*, or *earnestly to desire*, and nothing more. But the desires of the soul, even earnest desires, are not necessarily sinful. The desires of the human soul are its moving springs; without them, man would make no improvement, if indeed he could even continue his existence. It is not unlawful for me even to desire the property of my neighbour, provided he is willing to sell it, and I am willing to give him what he asks for it. Without something of this kind, no fair bargain is ever made. Now, as the tenth commandment is expressed in the *prohibitory* form, it must relate to an *evil desire*. To *indulge an evil desire* towards any thing that belongs to my neighbour, whether it relate to his house, his wife, his servants, his cattle—THIS it is to *covet* them, in the sense in which this word must be taken in this commandment. The *evil desire*, in order to be sinful, need not proceed to the length that it did in the case of Ahab, in relation to Naboth's vineyard; or in that of Herod, in regard to the wife of his brother Philip. Nay, such sins as theirs, are not those which are contemplated in this commandment. It not only does not contemplate a *wicked act*, but it does not refer to a *formed purpose*, resolution, or determination to act wickedly. It specifically refers to a sin short of all these. Its specific prohibition is of those *desires*, *feelings*, *mo-*

or disposition of the mind, which precedes the resolution or determination to act. Now God, in the other commandments, forbids bad actions, and the resolutions, on which they depend, but in the tenth commandment he condemns the very *inclinations*, which precede bad resolutions. 2. We should further consider, that there are *three sorts* of inclinations, or *thoughts*, which precede the resolution to sin. There are thoughts, which as soon as they occur to our minds, are rejected with horror, so that they make no abiding impression on the soul. The mere occurrence of these thoughts is not sinful. But there are others which make a longer stay in the soul, and which afford it some degree of pleasure, although in the end they are rejected. Now here are the *inclinations*, or *feelings*, or *emotions*, which the law of God condemns in this commandment. There are still others, which, as it were, take up their abode in the soul, and obtain the full consent and approbation of the will; and these are the thoughts which the divine law condemns in the other commandments.

We ought not to doubt that the very *inclinations*, or motions of the mind towards evil, of which we have spoken, are sinful, since the law of God, in this commandment, condemns them. If we might *covet* (that is, have lascivious inclinations towards) our neighbour's wife, without criminality, although the law says, "thou shalt not covet," we might also have murderous inclinations without sin, which will scarcely be denied to be a violation of the law, which says, "thou shalt not kill." The Scripture says expressly, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in

tions, or *dispositions* toward evil, which are so resisted as not to produce even a real *purpose*, or a distinct determination to commit a wicked act, and yet are in their *very nature* sinful—abhorrent to that God, who searches the heart, and "who is of purer eyes than to behold evil." It is in this view of the tenth commandment—the only just one, it is verily believed—that the discussion in the lecture is conducted. The subject could not there be so well treated in a critical way, as in a note; and this note has therefore been added. The verbal criticism it contains seemed necessary. It may be useful to some of our readers, and can do injury to no one.

all things written in the book of the law to do them." But "Thou shalt not covet," is one of the things written in the book of the law. It follows therefore, that the man who violates this commandment is subject to a curse, and consequently that he sins. St. Paul, moreover, in the vii. chap. of his Epistle to the Romans, more than once, calls coveting a sin. It is objected, that in the first verse of the following chapter he says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus?" I answer, that it is true, nevertheless, that there is in those of whom this is said, a *subject* of condemnation; but God pardons their sin for his Son's sake. Some also object the passage of St. James, who says, "when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin," from which they infer, that lust itself is not a sin. I reply, that it only follows that lust is a sin distinct from that which it brings forth; and as a mother is always of the same nature with her child, so nothing hinders, that lust should be a sin, as well as that its fruit should be one. Since, indeed, every thing begets its like, we have much reason to conclude that lust is a sin, inasmuch as it conceives and brings forth sin. It is clear that by the *sin* which coveting brings forth, we are to understand those wicked works which proceed from this source; and that it is the design of the apostle to show in a few words, the progress of iniquity.

It has been said, that it is not in the power of the holiest of men, to prevent the motions of covetousness, and therefore that covetousness is not a sin. I answer, 1. That those who maintain that covetousness is not a sin in *believers*, because they have not power to avoid it, cannot deny that it is still far less in the power of *unbelievers* to avoid it. 2. That the reason alleged in the objection, only proves that the holiest of men are not perfectly renewed in the present life, and therefore that they still sin; but not that covetousness is not a sin. 3. If the objection were well founded, we might, for the same reason say, that a man who, by long practice, had contracted an invete-

rate habitude of committing a particular crime, would thenceforward not sin at all in committing it.

Thus you perceive, my dear youth, that the doctrine of the sound and eminent theologian I have quoted, is, that all those evil propensities, inclinations, dispositions, thoughts and desires, which exist, or spring up in the mind, but which meet with so much resistance from better principles, that they do not result in actual choice, or effective resolution to do evil—that *these* are the precise object of prohibition in this tenth commandment; making it to differ from, and constituting the whole difference between, what is forbidden in this commandment, and in the other precepts of the decalogue. On this account, I have thought it right to lay before you so full an explanation of the subject. I confess I had also another reason. I have made it a point in all these lectures, to endeavour to guard you specially against the errors and false principles which are current, or in danger of becoming popular, in the day in which we live. Now we have had a new theory on “the nature of sin,” lately broached in this country, which teaches that, “sin, in every form and instance, is reducible to the act of a moral agent, in which he violates a known rule of duty;” or in another form of expressing it, that “there can be no sin but what consists in voluntary action;” or still in another form, that “all sin consists in man’s own act of choice.” Now if this theory be true, there was, it seems to me, no necessity whatever for the tenth commandment; not at least, if the exposition given of its real and exclusive meaning by Pictêt, and by all other sound and orthodox divines, be just. They say it relates only to those sins which never reach to a real choice of the will, or an effective resolution to do evil. With this our Catechism, you will observe, exactly corresponds, declaring that it forbids “*all inordinate motions or affections* towards any thing that is our neighbour’s.” But the new theory says, there are no such sins—that there is not, and cannot be, any sin, antecedent to “the act of a moral agent—to voluntary action—to a man’s own act of

choice." Alas! and what then did the Apostle Paul mean by "the law in his members, warring against the law of his mind?" What in saying, "when I would do good, evil is present with me?" What, in a word, when he wrote the whole latter part of the vii. chapter of the epistle to the Romans? which extorted from him the pathetic exclamation of the 24th verse, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The apostle himself, in the 7th and 8th verses, and a few that follow them, explains the true import of the remarkable passage of Scripture which closes this chapter of his epistle. "Nay," says he, "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Here the original words, rendered in our translation *lust*, *covet*, and *concupiscence*, are all the same; except that one is a verb, from which the two which are nouns are derived: so that the literal—I do not say the better rendering of the passage—would be, "I had not known coveting, except the law had said thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of coveting." Read, at your leisure, the excellent commentary of Scott on this passage. I have used it to show what the apostle understands by *coveting*, which does not so fully appear in the common translation; and especially to show that it was under the influence of the new light, let in on his mind by the regenerating grace of God, that he came to be sensible of those *evil thoughts*, *propensities*, *desires*, and *emotions* called *coveting*, which he had never noticed in his unconverted state; but which he now clearly perceived, and which produced the sore conflict that he afterwards describes and bewails. These inclinations and tendencies to a violation of the divine law, were all *sinful*, although he did not deliberately approve of one of them; nay, although his will and choice resisted them continually, so that he could say, "I delight in the law of God

after the inner man." Yes, my young friends, let false metaphysics teach as they may, the exercised practical Christian has his greatest trial, as the apostle had, in contending against those corrupt propensities and workings of his partially sanctified heart, in which the violations of this tenth commandment essentially consist; but which, by the grace of God, do not, as a habit, so prevail as to obtain the choice of his will to sin, or an effective resolution to transgress. When they, occasionally, reach to this awful extent, it is only by deep and sore repentance, and a special application to the blood of cleansing, that he gets back to his better state. Therefore, "beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

The large and particular explanation which has been given of the spirit and design of the tenth commandment, will prevent the necessity of as much detail as would otherwise have been proper, in considering the requirements and prohibitions specified in our Catechism. Of the prohibitions especially, so much has already been said, that we shall not go over them in order, but only add a few further remarks respecting them, in stating the duties of which the sins forbidden are the violation.

1. The tenth commandment requires "full contentment with our own condition." It was, no doubt, a high and rare attainment which the apostle Paul had made, when he said, (Phil. iv. 11,) "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." Yet at this attainment we are constantly to aim, and by the aids of divine grace, in the use of the proper means, we shall make advances toward it; and at length, perhaps, be enabled to adopt the language of the apostle, as descriptive of the *prevalent state or habit of our minds*; which indeed is all that he could have intended by it, for doubtless in this, as in other graces, he would have been ready to say, "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."

There are several considerations, which, in the various situations or conditions of life in which we may be placed by the providence of God, will, if duly attended to, contribute greatly to render us *contented*—that is, willing, and on the whole choosing, to remain in the circumstances in which God has placed us, till he shall please to order, or make way for a change. The people of God may sometimes suffer, as their Saviour did, so severely, that their very nature may shudder and revolt; and they may earnestly pray that, if it be consistent with the divine will, the cup of anguish or affliction may pass from them; and yet they may and ought to say, with their Saviour, “not my will but thine be done.”

Prosperity is often, but very erroneously, thought to be most favourable to contentment. The experience of the world in all ages demonstrates, that ambitious and covetous desires generally increase, in proportion as they are gratified. In no human bosoms are anxiety and fear, in regard to the keeping of what has been acquired, and an eager grasping after something more, so restless and tormenting, as in those of the wealthy, the powerful, and the celebrated. It is therefore peculiarly incumbent on those who are in what is called a prosperous state, often and most seriously to consider, how vain and transitory are all earthly possessions and distinctions. Let them reflect that in the eye of God they are of no account; that in the divine estimation, a Lazarus possesses infinitely a better character than the luxurious worldling, who fares sumptuously every day. Let them labour therefore to restrain every craving desire; to use the world as not abusing it; to feel the responsibility which they hold to God as his stewards, for the proper use of all they possess. Let them be sensible that he has a right to take it from them, as he has done from many of their fellows, even before their death; and that by death they must be shortly and finally separated from it all: and let them be led by the whole view of their state, to choose God as their soul satisfying portion, saying with the royal Psalmist, “The Lord is the

portion of mine inheritance and my cup—whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

It is admitted by all, that to maintain “full contentment” is a difficult duty, in times of severe trial or great affliction. The proper extent and import of the duty at such times, have already been briefly indicated. Let me now lay before you some of the considerations, which are calculated to reconcile an afflicted Christian to his allotment. First of all, let him consider that murmuring and repining, under affliction, is both sinful and unwise—*Sinful*, because it is a rebellion against God, whose chastening hand, be the instrument what it may, is laid upon him—*Unwise*, because the affliction itself is greatly aggravated by all restiveness and impatience under it; while it is half annihilated by humble, quiet, and submissive resignation to the divine will.

Let the suffering saint further consider, that affliction is so far from being, as he is sometimes tempted to think, an indication of the angry rebuke of his heavenly Father, that it is expressly declared in the oracles of unerring truth, that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;” so that “if we are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are we bastards and not sons;” nay, that it is by affliction, that our heavenly inheritance itself is rendered more rich and valuable. The infallible word declares, “that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*” In view of these precious truths, the people of God have often, not only been contented in affliction, but thankful for it; have not merely borne to murmur, but have “joyed in tribulation.”

Is the believer, then, suffering under bodily afflictions? Let him ever remember, that they are not only consistent with love, but an expression of it; that the rod which chastens him is in a father’s hand; that his

sufferings are “for his profit, that he may be a partaker of the holiness” of Him who inflicts them; that the period of suffering will soon be over; and that although “no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them that are exercised thereby.” Is the Christian called to mourn the loss of near and dear relatives or friends? Let him endeavour to turn that current of affection which used to flow out, and perhaps unduly, toward a creature object, on God the Creator, where it can never be either excessive or disappointed. Let him recollect that he has a sympathizing covenant Saviour, who in the days of his flesh wept at the grave of a friend; a Saviour who sustains to him every dear and amiable relation, and who is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” Does the disciple of Christ suffer contumely and reproach? Let him recollect how much of these his Saviour endured for him; and that the apostles departed from the Jewish council, where they had not only been reproached, but beaten, “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name” of their Lord. Let him call to mind the host of martyrs, who have gone triumphing, through crowds of scorners and revilers, to the scaffold or the stake. Or are offences laid to his charge, of which he knows that he is innocent, and which his very soul abhors? Let him recollect that he has a promise which will certainly be fulfilled—perhaps in this world, and certainly in the judgment of the great day—that God “will bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon day.” Is it the lot of the pious, as we know that it often is, to suffer poverty and want? Let them call to mind the words of their Lord—“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God,” and recollect, that their hope of an admission into that kingdom might not have been possessed, if poverty had not been their lot. Let them consider, that though they be poor in this world, yet they may be “rich in faith,” as well

as "heirs of the kingdom." Is it asked, can a child of God be content, or ought he to be content, under divine desertion, or in the absence of a felt sense of the love of God? Certainly he ought to feel deeply the privation of that which is to him dearer than life itself, and earnestly to pray with the Psalmist—"Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me: Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." But in the mean time, he is to be very cautious, not to quarrel with his Maker for withdrawing the light of his countenance; but to remember, and endeavour to obey the gracious direction, left for his support in the very situation in which he now finds himself. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord and obeyeth the voice of his servant; that walketh in darkness and hath no light; let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

2. We are required by this commandment to cultivate "a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbour, and all that is his." The duty here enjoined is the same which our Saviour taught, as comprising the whole of the moral law of God, in relation to our fellow men—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Agreeably to this, is the teaching also of the apostle Paul, (Rom. xiii. 10,) "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law:" and in his extended and beautiful description of love, or charity, (1 Cor. xiii. 4—7,) he thus dilates on the exercise of this divine principle, as it has mankind in general for its object—"Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." He in whose bosom this holy principle has due influence, will never "envy or grieve at the good of his neighbour," but will carefully resist, and endeavour utterly to extin-

guish, "all inordinate motions or affections toward any thing that is his." He will cherish such a spirit of Christian benevolence, as will habitually "sway and determine him to rejoice in the welfare of his neighbour, both as to his spiritual and temporal concerns." When he observes the superior and shining gifts and graces, and large attainments of eminent Christians, he will be humbled under a sense of his own defects and short comings, and rejoice in the honour that is brought to God, by the riches of his grace, bestowed on these his honoured servants—rejoice to see what divine power can effect, on creatures naturally and totally depraved—rejoice to see some of his fellow men, by the extraordinary natural endowments bestowed on them by their Creator, and by his grace consecrated to his service, approximating the rank and performing the work of angelic natures. When he observes those whose circumstances or condition in the world appear to be better and more eligible than his own, he will recollect that his lot in life, as well as that of his neighbour, has been assigned by God; that great possessions are not always an indication of the Divine favour; "that if we enjoy communion with God, it is infinitely preferable to all outward prosperity without it;" and that it may be, that he has more of this best and highest blessing than he would have had, if the possessions of this world had been more largely bestowed upon him.

In concluding this lecture, let me remark to you, my young friends, that the view I have endeavoured to give you of it, is calculated to direct your attention, in an especial manner, to the origin and fountain of all sin, in the native and deep depravity of the human heart. Unsanctified sinners are often convinced of their guilt, in particular acts of wickedness; and sometimes feel keen remorse of conscience, when such acts have been those of enormous and reproachful transgression. But they scarcely go further than this. They seem to think that if particular sins could be blotted out, they should have little, or no cause for

self-condemnation. It is far otherwise with one who has been enlightened, renewed, and sanctified, by the Spirit of God. He traces all particular acts of sin to a corrupted nature, and sees in them only so many streams, from one and the same deeply polluted fountain. Thus we find that David's awful transgression, in the matter of Uriah, was traced by him to the original corruption of his nature:—"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." And his prayer was—"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Here is the great distinction between all sanctified, and all unsanctified men. The former know, by much sore experience, the plague-sore of their own hearts; the latter never do—their apprehensions of their inbred corruption are very slight, if they exist at all. I verily believe that the force of this tenth commandment, in its real spirit and intention, is never felt, except by those who are renewed in the temper of their mind. But *they* clearly perceive its import, and feel its power. They see that it condemns the very workings of that native corruption, that indwelling sin, of which they are most painfully conscious. The transgressions of this commandment give them more uneasiness, and more sore and constant conflicts, than those of all the other precepts of the decalogue put together; or, I should rather say, they see that all transgressions of the other commandments have their root and spring, from the motions of those vile affections or desires, which are directly condemned by this precept. Be not content, therefore, with the view of sin, which is confined to individual acts. Look deeper, and see the source of all, in the abominations of your hearts. See that you must be changed there, or be for ever miserable. In a word, learn the necessity of being cleansed in the blood, clothed with the righteousness, and transformed by the Spirit of Christ, in order to your being admitted to heaven, or qualified to be happy there. Amen.

LECTURE LVII.

AFTER considering and explaining the various duties enjoined in the Decalogue, or the summary of the moral law contained in the ten commandments, it is with peculiar propriety that the question is immediately asked in our Catechism—"Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?" The answer you are aware is—"No mere man, since the fall, is able in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them, in thought, word and deed."

That admirable discrimination, united with conciseness and perspicuity, which characterises the whole of our Shorter Catechism, is strikingly visible in the answer before us.

1. The *inability* to obey the law of God, of which the answer speaks, is predicated or affirmed, only of every *mere* man, among the descendants of Adam. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was truly man, and descended, according to the flesh, from the primitive parents of the human family: and he did, "in this life," that is, through the whole of his abode on earth, perfectly keep the commandments of God. Being "conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary," he was not, like every other descendant of the fallen progenitors of our race, "conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity." He had no taint of native depravity; and through the whole of his life on earth, he did, in thought, word and deed perfectly obey the law of God. Having been "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law," if there had been the least moral stain of his nature, or the least defect in his obedience, he could not have been "made of God unto us righteousness." But we are expressly told that "he did no sin, neither

was guile found in his mouth," and that "such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Such then was Jesus Christ as *man*; but you know that he was not a *mere* man. While he was truly man, he was also truly God—"God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person for ever;" as your Catechism elsewhere teaches, and we have had occasion to demonstrate from the Scriptures of truth. Not being, therefore, a mere man, his having perfectly kept the commandments of God, does not invalidate the assertion that all *mere men* are transgressors of those commandments; that is, they have been so—

2. "Since the fall," but not previously. For Adam, before his fall, was able perfectly to obey the divine law; and for a season he did actually thus obey it. Having been created "in the image of God," he was perfectly holy, and was, in his very formation, endued with all the power or ability necessary to his resistance of every temptation, and to his rendering to the law which his Creator gave him, a perfectly sinless obedience. It was therefore proper, that the answer before us should carefully limit, as it does, the moral impotency of man, to what has become his condition "since the fall."

3. Another limitation is, that it is only "in this life" that the inability in question will continue. For it is a most comfortable thought to the people of God, that "in the life to come" they will be, and for ever remain, as entirely free from sin as the angels of God in heaven. There they will eternally and delightfully obey the whole will of their heavenly Father; and find that in this entire conformity to his blessed will, the happiness of their glorified state will essentially consist.

4. Another, and the last qualification of the assertion contained in the answer before us is, that it relates only to a *perfect* obedience—"no mere man since the fall is able, in this life, *perfectly* to keep the commandments of God." This must be noted and remembered, because every real child of God certainly

does keep his commandments, truly, sincerely, impartially, and without reserve; although a degree of imperfection cleaves, for the present, to all that he does; and although he is liable to fall, and does sometimes actually fall, into aggravated sin. It is not easy for us to understand how any one who has just conceptions of the holiness of God, and the spirituality and perfection of his law, and who is acquainted with the depravity and deceitfulness of the human heart, and who reads in the book of God, that "there is not a just man upon earth who doth good and sinneth not," should still believe in a state of *sinless perfection*, as the attainment of any child of Adam, in the present life. So far is this from being the truth, that our Catechism is borne out by the plain testimony of the sacred Scriptures, when it asserts that every mere man since the fall, and in the present life, doth "*daily* break the commandments of God, in thought, word, and deed." Recollect that the commandments of God are broken by the want of perfect obedience, as well as by the actual violation or transgression of them; then think of the summary which our Saviour himself has given of these commandments—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself,"—and then say, whether in your own judgment, there has ever been a day of your life, since you were capable of moral action, in which there was no defect of obedience, nor any actual transgression of the Saviour's summary of God's holy law. Can you lay your hand on your heart, and looking up to Him who searches it say—"Great God, I appeal to thee, that on such a day my thoughts were all in *perfect* harmony with supreme love to thee, and with love to my neighbour as to myself; and when all my words and actions were without a fault?" I hope there is none of you that would dare to do this; because your doing it would be a demonstrative proof that you were most awfully blinded and infatuated, by the very sin which you denied. Consider attentively the following plain

citations from the oracles of infallible truth, and you will see that the statement of the Catechism does not go to an extreme—Gen. viii. 21—“The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” Job xv. 14—“What is man that he should be clean? and he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous?” John xv. 5—“Without me ye can do nothing.” 1 John i. 8—“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” James iii. 2—“In many things we offend all”—and v. 8—“The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” Rom. iii. 19—“that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” And add to these texts that remarkable passage in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, to which I referred in the last lecture, as illustrative of the evil desires and propensities even of the renewed mind; and in which the Holy Apostle represents himself as in a perpetual conflict with the indwelling sin of his heart.

The eminent and justly celebrated Richard Hooker, in his “learned discourse of Justification,” goes further than is expressed in our Catechism; but not further than its intended meaning and import, nor further than the truth of the case. He not only maintains that we sin *daily*, but that there is not *one* thought, word or deed, of our whole life, but what is imperfect, or mingled with sin. His language is a little antiquated, but it is very impressive. “Let,” says he, “the holiest and best things which we do be considered: we are never better affected unto God than when we pray; yet when we pray, how are our affections many times distracted! how little reverence do we show unto the grand Majesty of God, unto whom we speak! how little remorse of our own miseries! how little taste of the sweet influence of his tender mercies do we feel! Are we not as unwilling many times to begin, and as glad to make an end, as if, in saying—*Call upon me*, he had set us a very burthensome task? It may seem somewhat extreme, which I will speak; therefore let every one judge of

it, even as his own heart shall tell him, and no otherwise; I will but only make a demand: if God should yield unto us, not as unto *Abraham*, if fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, yea, or if ten good persons could be found in a city, for their sakes that city should not be destroyed; but, and if he should make us an offer thus large: Search all the generations of men, since the fall of our father Adam, find one man that hath done one action, which hath passed from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all; and for that one man's only action, neither man nor angel shall feel the torments which are prepared for both. Do you think that this ransom, to deliver men and angels, could be found to be among the sons of men? The best things which we do, have somewhat in them to be pardoned. How then can we do any thing meritorious, or worthy to be rewarded? Indeed, God doth liberally promise whatsoever appertaineth to a blessed life, to as many as sincerely keep his law, though they be not exactly able to keep it. Wherefore we acknowledge a dutiful necessity of doing well; but the meritorious dignity of doing well, we utterly renounce. We see how far we are from the perfect righteousness of the law; the little fruit which we have in holiness, it is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound: we put no confidence at all in it, we challenge nothing in the world for it; we dare not call God to reckoning, as if we had him in our debt-books: our continual suit to him is, and must be, to bear with our infirmities and pardon our offences."

In closing this lecture, in which our Catechism expressly declares that no mere man, since the fall, is *able* perfectly to keep the commandments of God, you may expect that I should say something of a controversy which has long been going on, and is not yet terminated, in our country, in regard to what is denominated "natural and moral inability." My first remark is, that the wording of the point in controversy appears to me to be unhappy, and calculated to produce confusion of thought and expression; because it will be allowed by both parties in this con-

troversy, that the *moral inability* spoken of, is *natural* to the whole human race since the fall of Adam; that is, it is a part of our nature.* An eminent and discriminating writer† on this subject, has said justly, “*That* is physical necessity which is the invincible effect of the law of nature; and it is neither less natural nor less unsurmountable, if it is from the laws of spirit, than it would be, if it were from the laws of matter.” Again—The parties in this controversy are agreed in another point; namely, that all actual sin is voluntary, and therefore criminal and inexcusable. Those, indeed, who contend for the difference between natural and moral inability, in reference to the sinful actions of men, endeavour to represent those with whom they contend, as opposing human liberty and accountableness. But the opposite party deny this unequivocally, protest against their being charged with a consequence of their system, which they affirm is not fairly drawn, and maintain that, although they may account for human guilt in a manner different from their opponents, yet they as fully and extensively admit and insist on its existence and criminality; and make the free offers of the gospel, and urge their acceptance, as sincerely and earnestly as any others. Once more—Both parties, if they maintain other Calvinistic sentiments, as the most of them hitherto have done, say explicitly, that not one of Adam’s fallen race ever yet did, or ever will, make use of his moral ability to renounce sin and accept the salvation proffered by the gospel of Christ, till disposed and inclined thereto by the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost. And those who deny the distinction in question, think and say, that it seems to be a singular kind of ability, which no child of Adam ever did or ever will exert, although urged to it by the strongest possible motives that can be presented to an intelligent being—will never exert this ability, till an influence comes on his mind from an external source. They think, too, that

* Perhaps the New Haven school of Theology should here be excepted; but if so, let it stand by itself on the present occasion.

† Witherspoon.

the assertion of this moral ability leads to the denial of the necessity of divine influence—one of the plainest and most important doctrines of the gospel—and that even those who admit the necessity of this influence, do often, in preaching, so leave it out of view, as to make the people think that the speaker does not regard it as indispensable. Neither is it admitted that a full sense of dependence on God, when real and rightly understood, has any tendency to discourage effort, or to dispose to a neglect of the use of means. On the contrary, it is maintained that nothing is so encouraging to a soul that truly perceives its helplessness, as to point it to an Almighty deliverer; that nothing will make it cry for help so earnestly, importunately, nor with such a prospect of success, as this very feeling of helplessness in itself; and that means are never so likely to be diligently and effectually used, as when they are represented as deriving their efficiency from the blessing of God, sought for in the way of his appointment—in the use of the means prescribed in his Holy word. On the whole, then, although I admit fully that there is a plain difference between moral and natural inability, such as would instantly strike you all, if I should ask one of you to rise from his seat, and request of another to fly in the air—yet when applied to the subject before us, I think it altogether improper—a distinction without a difference. The *disposition* to do right, is as essential to right doing, as understanding, judgment, conscience, or any other natural faculty of the mind; and if every man in his natural state is without this disposition, he has a natural inability, which is at the same time a moral inability, to act rightly. The word of God, also, as seems to me, is directly opposed to this distinction; as in the declaration of the Saviour, “No man *can* come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him;” and of the apostle Paul—“The carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed *can* be;” and in a great variety of passages of similar import.

I conclude the present lecture with a quotation

from Dr. Witherspoon, in which my own views of the topic before us are correctly expressed: "As to the inability of man to recover himself by his own power, though I would never attempt to establish a metaphysical system of necessity, of which infidels avail themselves in opposition to all religion, nor presume to explain the influence of the Creator on the creature; yet nothing is more plain, from Scripture, or better supported by daily experience, than that man by nature is in fact incapable of recovery, without the power of God specially interposed. I will not call it a necessity arising from the irresistible laws of nature. I see it is not a necessity of the same kind as constraint; but I see it an impossibility, such as the sinner never does overcome."

LECTURE LVIII.

THE next position of our Catechism which we are called to consider is this—"Some sins in themselves and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others."

This proposition, you perceive, consists of two parts. It affirms—

I. That some sins in themselves; that is, in their very nature, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

II. That the guilt or malignity of sin may be increased, by reason of several aggravations.

I do not think that either of these propositions requires any formal proof. Both of them are sanctioned, not only by very numerous and plain declarations of Holy Scripture, but by the common sense and feeling of mankind. Illustration, then, is all that is necessary in treating on this answer of the Catechism—thus,

I. In regard to the assertion that some sins in themselves, that is, in their very nature, are more heinous in the sight of God than others, we have only to say, that unqualified blasphemy is a more heinous sin than a minced oath; or that deliberate murder is a greater crime than a momentary feeling of unjustifiable anger: and every human being, who understands our language, and whose conscience is not perfectly stupified, will immediately assent to the truth of what we affirm. All perceive that blasphemy implies a depth of depravity, a force and strength of horrible impiety, in the blasphemer, that is not indicated by a degree of profaneness which the very act demonstrates, that he who is guilty of it, is still afraid of the extreme of the sin which he commits. In like manner, we cannot think without shuddering of that destitution of all

moral sensibility, and that infernal vindictiveness, which there must be in the soul of the deliberate murderer; while we regard a flash of unseasonable angry feeling, rather as an infirmity than a crime. Transgressions, therefore, both of the first table of the moral law and of the second—sins against God, and sins against man—are, by the feelings of every person who has any moral sensibility, immediately judged to be, in their very nature, of exceedingly different degrees of malignity. Accordingly, this truth is recognized throughout the Bible. To give but a single example: our Saviour represents the sin of Capernaum and Bethsaida, as unquestionably greater than that of Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah.

II. It is also evident that the guilt or malignity of sin may be increased, by reason of several aggravations. This will at once appear, when the circumstances and considerations which render sin aggravated are brought into view. These circumstances and considerations I have, to a considerable extent, already stated in my sixteenth lecture, to which I refer you; and request you particularly to regard the warning I have there given, against the common and pernicious evil of seeking to excuse and extenuate guilt, by comparing one sin with another. To what I have heretofore said, I shall only now add what the pious, judicious, and accurate authors of our Larger Catechism, have said on this subject. Their statement is at once so comprehensive and so particular, that it will not be found easy to think of a single circumstance or consideration that aggravates sin, which they have not specified. In answer to the question—“What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others?” this answer is given:

“Sins receive their aggravations,

“1. From the persons offending: If they be of riper age, greater experience, or grace; eminent for profession, gifts, place, office, guides to others, and whose example is likely to be followed by others.

“2. From the parties offended: If immediately against God, his attributes and worship; against

Christ, and his grace; the Holy Spirit, his witness and workings; against superiors, men of eminency, and such as we stand especially related and engaged unto; against any of the saints, particularly weak brethren, the souls of them or any other; and the common good of all or of many.

“3. From the nature and quality of the offence: If it be against the express letter of the law, break many commandments, contain in it many sins: If not only conceived in the heart, but breaks forth in words and actions, scandalize others, and admit of no reparation: If against means, mercies, judgments, light of nature, conviction of conscience, public or private admonition, censures of the church, civil punishments; and our prayers, purposes, promises, vows, covenants, and engagements to God or men: If done deliberately, wilfully, presumptuously, impudently, boastingly, maliciously, frequently, obstinately, with delight, continuance, or relapsing after repentance.

“4. From circumstances of time, and place: If on the Lord’s day, or other times of divine worship; or immediately before, or after these, or other helps to prevent or remedy such miscarriages: If in public, or in the presence of others, who are thereby likely to be provoked or defiled.”

I would recommend to you, my young friends, as a very profitable employment for an hour on the Lord’s day, to go over deliberately this enumeration of the aggravations of sin, contained in your Larger Catechism; to consider each article attentively; to connect it with an attentive reading of the Scripture proof, to which you will find a reference; and with a serious meditation on the whole. I know of no exercise better calculated to promote a holy fear of sinning, and to guard you especially against flagrant transgressions. If the exercise be rightly conducted, you can hardly fail to be led by it, to join in the exclamation and prayer of the Psalmist—“Who can understand his errors! Cleanse thou me from secret faults; keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be

upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”

There is one clause in the answer of our Catechism now before us, which has not yet been noticed, and which we must by no means overlook. It is, that the nature and aggravation of sin, is to be estimated as it appears “in the sight of God.” Men often regard particular sins, very differently from the manner in which they are regarded by God. Human estimate in such cases is always erroneous, and indeed in every case it is defective; but God’s estimate is always right and perfect. This is a point, my dear youth, that deserves your particular attention. You live in a sinful world, and you will frequently find yourselves, from a corrupt state of society, or the prevalence of fashionable vice, in great danger of putting evil for good, and good for evil. Unquestionable virtues you will often hear stigmatized as mean and contemptible qualities; and certain vices represented as indications of a noble and manly spirit. Vile practices, and very sinful acts, will often be disguised by giving them soft names, or by representing them as the venial aberrations of a generous mind and a good heart—and very often, as nothing more than the effervescence, or at worst, the frailties of youth. But, O remember! that “God seeth not as man seeth.” Take his holy word, and not the opinions of sinful men, blinded and perverted by their lusts, and passions, and prejudices, as the criterion of virtue and vice, truth and error. Although it be true, as you have just been hearing, that some sins are more heinous than others, yet remember that this does not imply that there are any *little sins*. No truly; every sin is a violation of God’s most just and holy law; and many of those practices which a world that lieth in wickedness think harmless, or regard as mere foibles of character, the oracles of infallible truth pointedly condemn, and show that they have sometimes brought down on those who indulge in them, the marked and severe displeasure of God, who is of “purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity.”

But in reality there are many sins, and some of very great enormity, which are "naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do," which are and will be hidden from every human eye, till the disclosures of that day, when "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." I have here in view, not only those acts of flagitious wickedness, which are never brought to light in this world; but also, and chiefly, those sins of the heart, which have been long cherished and brooded over, in the secret recesses of the soul, but which, for the want of opportunity, or from the fear of detection, have never issued in overt acts of transgression. When we consider that the heart is the seat and source of all sin—that the outward act, in a moral view, is nothing, further than as it indicates the state of the heart—we may easily perceive, that in the view of that "God who searches the heart," a man may be chargeable with sins of the deepest die, which have never broken forth into deeds of atrocity. There is no reason to doubt that there have often been, and now are, *mental* blasphemers, murderers, adulterers, thieves, and robbers, who are at present known as such to God, and whom he will judge and punish as such hereafter, who yet have never perpetrated, and never will perpetrate, the outward acts, to which their inward dispositions fully correspond. Cultivate, my dear young friends, an habitual sense of your Maker's omniscience, and the recollection that every secret of your souls, is as perfectly set in the light of his countenance as the most conspicuous action of your lives. This will produce a strong inducement to watch against all sin, both of heart and life; and it will tend to make you seek its pardon—to seek earnestly to be cleansed in your Redeemer's blood, clothed with his righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit, that you may be prepared to dwell with him in those pure and blessed mansions, from which all sin, and all its awful consequences, shall be for ever excluded.

It is, my young friends, a solemn and alarming truth

which is expressed in the next proposition to which your attention must be invited; namely, that “Every sin, deserveth God’s wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come.”

Perhaps you are ready, my young friends, to object to the doctrine which is here propounded, as inconsistent with equity, and irreconcilable of course with the divine attribute of justice. A careful attention to the subject, however, will, I am persuaded, satisfy you that no other proper answer could be made to the question, “What doth every sin deserve?” than that which is given in the Catechism. A principal design of the answer doubtless was, to oppose the absurd and dangerous distinction which is made in the Romish church, between some sins which are represented as *venial*, and others that are denominated *mortal*.

By *mortal* sins, the Romanists understand those which subject the parties committing them to the penalty of *death*—even death eternal. But there is, according to them, another class of sins which they call *venial*, and which do not subject those who commit them to such an awful penalty—sins which are in their nature so small and trivial, that they may be expiated by *penance*, or by some other mode of making satisfaction for them by the offenders.* We believe that this distinction, in regard to the *nature* of different kinds of sin, is not warranted either by reason or Scripture, but directly opposed by both. All sin, by the verdict both of reason and Scripture, is an evil of the *same kind*, however differing in de-

* The Romanists mention three kinds of venial sins—*Some* which are in their nature really bad, as *an idle word, excessive laughter*. *Others*, which are not voluntary, as the first motions of anger or of envy, which occur by surprise. *Others*, which are so small that they scarce claim attention, as the purloining of a *denier*—[The twelfth part of a French penny.]—*Pictét Theol. B. vii. c. 9. Note*.

Pictét also remarks, that the term *venial* was applied to sin by the Protestant Reformers, but in a totally different sense from its use by the Romanists. The Reformers used it to denote those sins which are pardonable, and which are actually forgiven to believers in Christ, thus distinguishing these from the unpardonable sin, or the sin unto death.

grees. We can give no other just definition of this evil, than that which is given in the sacred oracles—"Sin is the transgression of the law"—and of course, "where there is no law, there is no transgression"—no sin. What the Papists, therefore, call *venial sins*, are either no sins at all, or else they are transgressions of the law of God: And if they are transgressions of the law, they must subject those who commit them to the penalty of that law; for you will observe that it is essential to the very idea of a law that it should contain a penalty. A publication that holds forth no penalty, may contain counsel, or argument, or recommendation, or persuasion, but it is not a law. Now there is nothing offensive to God but what is a violation of his law; for he certainly has prohibited whatsoever is offensive to himself. If, therefore, the Papists cannot show that God has affixed two kinds of penalty to his law, they can never make out their class of venial sins. They seem indeed to have felt this consequence, and hence to have invented for their venial sins the penalty of penance, and human merit. But this is only adding a second error to the first; for the Scriptures teach us abundantly and unequivocally, that "without the shedding of blood—the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin—there is no remission."

As then *all* sin—and consequently what is called venial sin—is a transgression of law, and as every law must contain its own penalty, we have only to inquire what is the penalty which the law of God pronounces on *all* who transgress it, and we shall see at once *what every sin deserves*; for we know that the judgment of God is always according to truth. Thus then it is written—"Cursed is *every one* who continueth not in *all things* which are written in the book of the law to do them." The curse of the law is, and can be, nothing else than the penalty of the law; and it is here declared to rest on every transgression without exception. "The wages of sin is death," says the Apostle Paul. He makes no distinction between one kind of sin and another; and by

the *wages* of sin he manifestly means the *desert* of sin. Death, therefore, according to him, is the desert of *every sin*, which is precisely what our Catechism affirms; for by *death*, in this place, the context proves beyond a question, we are to understand *everlasting punishment*, which is the same thing that is intended in the answer before us, by “the wrath and curse of God, both in this life and in that which is to come”—all the sufferings of this life being the deserved effects of sin, and the commencement, to every finally impenitent sinner, of the wrath of God to endless ages. You scarcely need to be reminded here, that by the *wrath* of God we do not mean any thing like *passion*, which always implies change, and therefore imperfection, which we know cannot belong to the Supreme Being. By the wrath of God, we are to understand “that most pure and undisturbed act of his will, which produces most dreadful effects against the sinner.”*

I have said so much on this subject, because it is of the greatest practical importance to have just views of the very *nature* of sin—of its unspeakable ill desert. It is, in its essential nature, rebellion against God, the supreme moral legislator of the universe. It is, says Fisher justly, “opposition and contrariety to the holiness of God expressed in his law, which is the very thing that constitutes the enormity or heinousness of it.” Without a perception of the evil nature of all sin as possessing this character—the character, objectively at least, of an infinite evil—men will not be driven away from their vain attempts to cancel their sins by some acts of their own—will not be shut up to the faith of Christ, as the only ground of pardon and of hope, and thus make sure their salvation, from the awful consequences of their apostasy from God.

But it may now be proper to remark, that although we have shown what *every sin* deserves, there never has been, since the fall of our first parents, an individual of their apostate race, of whom it could be said, after he became capable of moral action, that he had committed but *one sin*. The penalty of the Divine

* Fisher.

law, therefore, will, in fact, be inflicted only on those whose sins are multitudinous. Such at least must be the creed of those who believe that neither ideots, nor infants who die in non-age, will suffer after the present life.

Again. It must be kept in mind, that no sinner will ever be punished beyond his desert; and that this desert, among the individuals concerned, is almost infinitely various. On this point the word of God is most explicit—"That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whom much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law. (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 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 show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."

My dear young friends, it is of the highest importance to us to hold correct *principles* in theology and morals. The connexion and the bearings of such principles are more extensive, strong, and practical, than you can easily perceive or comprehend. But when a retribution for sin is to be made, as in the present case, by the infinitely wise, just, and merciful God, we need not trouble ourselves with nice speculations how he will make it. We know, from all his attributes, that it will be made with perfect

equity—an equity which we may not be able to analyze, but which he will not fail to preserve in his award.

Finally. We are most impressively taught by the subject we have been considering, that the atonement made for sin by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is the only ground of hope for every child of Adam, that his transgressions of God's holy law will be pardoned, and his soul be saved from "the wrath that is to come." This great truth is expressed in our Larger Catechism, as a part of the subject before us. And, verily, when we consider that in every sin we commit there is a malignity which deserves the severe and endless displeasure of Almighty God, and call to mind that we are chargeable with ten thousand times ten thousand of these malignant acts; and especially that all *our* sins, who have enjoyed the clear light of the gospel, are of the most aggravated kind—what could keep us from sinking into absolute and endless despair, but the knowledge that our gracious God and Father has himself provided an adequate expiation for all our guilt, a complete remedy for our helpless ruin. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. 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." Never think, my dear youth, of seeking salvation by attempting to diminish your guilt—admit it in all its extent and aggravation; your hope of salvation is derived, not from the lightness of your disease, but from the infinite efficacy of the provided remedy, and the skill and power of the Almighty physician. Go to him, and tell him you are under a

mortal malady, and that without his interposition you are sure to perish. Cast yourself on his mercy—make it your sole reliance. Reject with abhorrence every thought of help, but from him alone. Accept and rely on him as your only and all sufficient Saviour; and be assured “though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool;” for “this—said the Saviour himself—this is the will of him that sent me, that whosoever seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” Believe him, trust him, rely upon him, and you shall be saved. Amen.

LECTURE LIX.

HAVING shown in the last lecture what every sin deserves, we are now to consider, that “to escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with a diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption.” Much that is contained in this answer of our Catechism, we shall have occasion to treat of hereafter under separate propositions, which therefore we shall endeavour not to anticipate. Several ideas of importance, however, which appropriately belong to the position now before us, will demand your present attention.

I. The first is, that there is an “escape,” which may be made from the wrath and curse of God. It is too little recollected, that for the possibility of such an escape we are entirely indebted to the sovereign grace and mercy of the Deity. You know that for the angels “who kept not their first estate,” no way of escape was provided or possible—they were immediately consigned to unavoidable, hopeless, and endless perdition: and God was under no obligation to deal in a different manner with our fallen race. He would have done us no injustice, if he had treated us just as he did “the angels that sinned.” But in his boundless love and compassion, he has provided for us a Saviour, and through him a way of escape.

Further—The very word *escape*, suggests two other important ideas. One is, that this word is never applied to any but to those who are in a state of *peril* or *danger*. We have seen in what an awfully perilous condition man was placed by his original apostasy, and how the divine benevolence has opened a way of deliverance. But it is not enough that the

way should be opened—it must be used; it must be entered and pursued, till it leads to a refuge of perfect safety. Every unregenerate sinner is still in a state of the most awful peril. Believe it, beloved youth, if any one of you who is not yet reconciled to God through Jesus Christ should have his eyes opened at once, to see all the danger of his condition, it would make him tremble. Awakened sinners, who get only an imperfect view of their fearful condition, do often tremble; and the only reason why any wonder that they do so is, because they themselves are blind.

The other idea suggested by the word escape is, *a flight* from the impending evil. He who escapes *hastens* away, with all possible speed, from the peril which threatens to destroy him. Now this intimates the duty which a regard to their own best interest, as well as to the command of God, enjoins on all un-sanctified sinners. They ought not to remain at ease for a single moment, in a situation in which they are constantly exposed to remediless misery. Hence we read of “fleeing from the wrath to come.” Hence the anxious demand of the convicted Jews, on the day of Pentecost, for immediate direction, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”—and of the trembling jailer at Philippi—“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Delay is pleaded by unawakened sinners under the gospel, and it destroys them by tens of thousands; but no sinner who has his eyes opened on the danger of an impenitent state, ever pleads for delay. He is all alive to make his escape from the brink of final perdition: and would to God, my dear youth, that every one of you, not yet savingly interested in the redemption of Christ, were in this very state of mind. You would then listen with all earnestness, to what I am still to state from the answer of the Catechism now before us—which is

II. That means are to be employed, in making an escape from the “wrath and curse of God due to us for sin.” These means are of two kinds, *inward* and *outward*. The outward means are to be particularly considered hereafter; the inward means are those that

claim our special attention in the present lecture. They are "faith in Jesus Christ and repentance unto life"—called inward means, because they are acts or exercises which take place entirely within the mind. When these, however, are called the *means* of escaping the divine displeasure, it is of the highest importance to understand and remember, that they are not the *meritorious cause* of the reconciliation of God to the offending sinner. The merits of the Lord Jesus Christ—his finished righteousness and prevalent intercession—are alone the meritorious consideration, on which pardon, justification, and eternal life, are granted to any of our guilty race. You will understand how faith and repentance operate as means of salvation, if you consider attentively, that none will be admitted to heaven, but those who are at once *entitled* to its ineffable bliss, and *qualified* to enjoy it; and that it is by faith and repentance that both the title and the qualification are obtained. The nature of these graces are to be particularly explained, in discussing the next answer of the Catechism. In the mean time, it may be sufficient to observe, that faith is exclusively the grace by which the believing sinner becomes connected and identified with the Saviour, and of course interested in all the benefits of his great redemption; and thus gains a title to those celestial mansions which the glorified Head of the redeemed has promised to all the members of his mystical body, and which he has gone to prepare for them. Repentance, at the same time—for faith and repentance always take place together—breaks the power of sin in the soul, turns the whole bias or current of its affections from sin to holiness; and thus the disposition is implanted and cherished, which, when perfected in the article of death, qualifies it for partaking in all the holy exercises and enjoyments of the heavenly state. It is in this way, and this only, that faith and repentance are means of salvation: and till it can be proved that there is merit in the acceptance, by a perishing individual, of offered life and happiness which he has a thousand times forfeited;

and merit in ceasing to hate, and beginning to love, what is supremely amiable and excellent—it can never be shown that faith and repentance are meritorious acts: for faith is really and summarily nothing more than the acceptance, by a perishing sinner, of spiritual and eternal life and happiness, procured for him and offered to him, without money and without price, by the Lord Jesus Christ; and repentance essentially consists in ceasing to hate, and beginning to love supremely, the ever blessed God, the source and sum of all that is excellent and lovely. But although excluded from all merit, in the matter of the sinner's escape from the wrath and curse of God, you perceive that faith and repentance are means to be used, indispensable in effecting this escape. Therefore,

III. God requires sinners to make use of these means—he requires of them faith in Jesus Christ and repentance unto life. Here arises the question—and we shall meet it at once—how can God require faith and repentance of the sinner, when he is utterly insufficient of himself to exercise either?—when we are expressly told that faith “is not of ourselves, it is the *gift* of God;”* and that Christ is “exalted to *give* repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sin?” I do think, my young friends, that this subject has been greatly perplexed and darkened by metaphysical speculations—“science falsely so called.” Cannot even a child understand that his father may equitably and reasonably require of him the performance of a duty, which he cannot perform without assistance—provided the father makes ready for him all the assistance

* That faith is directly spoken of in this passage as the gift of God, is the opinion of the best commentators and critics. Doddridge, in a note on the passage, has vindicated this construction beyond reasonable controversy. But even the other construction, which makes the whole gracious *constitution* of God the direct object of the apostle's declaration, does not at all invalidate the assertion in the lecture. For no one will deny that saving faith is a very important part of that constitution: and, if the whole be the gift of God, then certainly this part with the rest. But the same truth is clearly taught in other passages—see the references in Scott's Family Bible.

he needs, tells him of it, and tells him he must ask for it, and promises, if he suitably asks, he shall not fail to receive it; and warns him, too, not to think he can do the commanded duty without the provided help, and forbids him so much as to attempt it, by his own unassisted exertions. Now this is the very case before us. It is a solemn and important truth, which ought never to be disguised or forgotten, that we are utterly unable, by our own unassisted powers, either to believe or repent, to the saving of our souls. "No man," said the Saviour, "can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him—without me ye can do nothing." And the inspired apostle of the Gentiles says, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Yes, and if it had not been the office of the Holy Ghost, in the economy of our salvation, to work faith and repentance in the sinful human soul, it may be questioned whether God would ever have commanded any sinner either to believe or to repent—for God never trifles, never requires a man to do by his own powers, what he knows cannot be done without special divine assistance. But in the official work of the Holy Ghost, God has not only provided all needed assistance in the most ample manner, and informed us of the fact, but has graciously promised this assistance to all who suitably ask it—nay, he most earnestly invites and importunately urges us to ask, that we may receive it. Hear the words of the Son of God himself—"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?" and this solemn interrogatory, carrying all the force of the most explicit declaration, is introduced by an appeal to parents, that, evil as they might be, they would not mock the earnest cries of their children for food, with something that was not food; and thence, drawing the conclusion with the utmost force, that God our heavenly Father would not thus mock any who should earnestly ask the Holy

Spirit: and the whole passage is introduced by unequivocal and reiterated promises—"I say unto you, ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Now, my dear young friends, here is your duty; you are called to believe in Christ and to exercise repentance unto life: But you are not called, but forbidden, to attempt this duty in your own strength; you are to attempt it, and that without a moment's delay; but you are to call for assistance from God at every step; you are constantly to pray and plead for the needed and promised aid of the Holy Spirit; you are to be both importunate and persevering, like one who follows asking with seeking, and seeking with knocking—resolved to take no denial till the door of mercy is opened to you—till by the aid of the good Spirit of God, you are enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all the heart, and to exercise that "repentance which is unto salvation, and needeth not to be repented of." A falser notion cannot be named than that which some entertain and teach, that the sense of entire dependence on God for ability to believe and repent, will seal men up either in security or despair. This might, indeed, be the case, if God had not provided and authorized us to ask for the needed aid. But this being known to be the fact, the very opposite of the notion I condemn is the truth, as all experience demonstrates. In any case whatsoever, let a man feel his entire helplessness in himself, and know that effectual help may be obtained by earnest entreaty; and then, just in proportion to his felt sense of inherent inability, and the importance of the interest at stake, or the danger of the state in which he is placed, will be the urgency of his entreaty—the agonizing cry that he will utter, that he may receive help, and receive it speedily, from one who can bring it to him. The sinner who is actually brought to feel most sensibly that he cannot save himself, will cry with all the anxious earnestness of

sinking Peter—"Lord, save me or I perish." And when brought to this point—a point to which I most benevolently wish every soul that hears me were brought at this moment—help will soon be found. Yes, my dear youth, and you are not likely to find help till you are really brought to this point.* God will make you feel that he must do something for you that you cannot do for yourselves; and when he has made you feel this very sensibly, and brought you to cast yourselves on his mercy as perishing sinners, he will then "work in you to will and to do of his good pleasure, and the work of faith with power."—You will believe with all your heart to the saving of your souls; and will know too those deep relentings of soul for all sin, and most of all for the sin of unbelief, in which consists that repentance which is unto life. May God of his mercy bring you all to know this experimentally, and to know it speedily. Amen and Amen.

* It seems truly marvellous that some ministers of religion—are they really ministers of *the gospel*?—explicitly admit the truth of what is here asserted, and yet never preach it; assigning for reason, that it is best to let sinners find it out of themselves. Alas! is it not to be feared that they may never find it out of themselves? especially when they are told, as these teachers tell them, that they have a perfect ability in themselves, without any special help from God, to do all that he requires. This seems far more calculated to produce delay in turning unto God, than the doctrine which teaches an entire dependance on him. That which can be done without his special aid at any time, they are far more likely to postpone for the present time, than if they are made to believe, as the fact certainly is, that every delay grieves the Spirit of grace, and subjects the soul to the awful danger of final dereliction, and to certain perdition as the consequence. The doctrine of human ability, and the sinfulness of all unregenerate doings, as taught in many churches in our land, has, it is believed, done great injury to the souls of men. We would be as far as any from teaching that any holy act is performed by an unregenerate sinner. But we maintain that he is to essay holy acts, before he has any *evidence* of a renewed heart. This we think is the doctrine of the Bible, and if so, we care little what is the doctrine of metaphysics. Did not Peter tell Simon the sorcerer to pray, when there was only a *perhaps* he might be forgiven?—Yes, it is said, but he was commanded first to *repent*, and then to *pray*. But *after* true repentance, there would have been no *perhaps* that he would be forgiven. He was plainly commanded to attempt both duties at once, and immediately.

LECTURE LX.

IN the former part of this course of lectures, when treating of justification, adoption, and sanctification, and on the offices executed by Christ as our Redeemer, it was found necessary to explain, to some extent, the nature of saving faith, and of repentance unto life; without this, it would have been impracticable to do any justice to the subjects then discussed. But faith and repentance are of such vital importance in the economy of redeeming mercy; they enter so intimately and extensively into all the gracious exercises of the true believer, that they justly claim a particular and formal treatment; and we accordingly find a distinct notice and description of them in the unrivalled summary of theological truth contained in our Catechism. The first of these graces is thus defined, in the answer which is to be the subject of the present lecture—"Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel."

Faith, it is important to remark and remember, is a term of various signification in the Holy Scriptures. The whole of these I shall not enumerate, as such an enumeration is not necessary to my present purpose. You may find them all mentioned by Cruden in his Concordance, under the word FAITH, and it may be useful to examine them at your leisure. He specifies, as all the systematic writers do, four principal senses of the term, which we shall notice distinctly.

I. *Historical or doctrinal* faith. This is a simple assent to the truths of Divine revelation, both historical and doctrinal; which is yielded by many, probably by the most of those who have received a religious education. Of those who are embraced in this description, some may take more interest than others

in the contents of the sacred volume; but so long as none of them have more than a speculative or intellectual conviction of its truths, they have nothing beyond what the apostle James denominates *a dead faith*, and which he tells us the devils possess as truly as they—"the devils believe and tremble." It has been justly remarked, that persons of this character give their attention chiefly to those things in the volume of inspiration which interfere the least with their sinful passions, and occasion the least disturbance to their consciences in a carnal and unregenerate state. Yet even this intellectual knowledge and reception of biblical truth, may have considerable influence in restraining men from gross vice; and it may be found of great practical benefit, if they are ever brought to make serious business of religion; but unless what they know and assent to as true, shall reach deeper than their understanding and judgment, it will not save their souls, but aggravate their final condemnation.

II. There is *a temporary faith*—which not only receives the truths of Scripture, but, as our Saviour teaches in the parable of the sower, "receives them with joy;" that is, Divine truth produces a sudden and powerful effect on the natural affections of these "stony ground hearers." They appear for a time to be earnestly engaged in religion, and may perhaps show more warmth and zeal than the true disciples of Christ; nay, even upbraid them for their coldness and want of activity in the cause of God. Yet after all, the root of the matter is not in them—"He hath not root in himself, (saith the Saviour,) but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." Instances of this temporary faith are numerous and mournful. In great revivals of religion especially, when there is much that is calculated to awaken the sympathy and excite the passions of men, there are commonly a considerable number who deceive both themselves and others, with an apparent engagedness and zeal in religion, which proves to be

only transient. This has raised a prejudice in some minds against all religious revivals. But it is surely an unjustifiable prejudice. "What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?" Great harvests of souls are gathered into the garner of life eternal in these revivals—notwithstanding the instances of backsliding and apostasy which too often follow them. But the danger there is lest men take up with something for religion which will not stand the test of time and temptation, does certainly furnish a most cogent reason, why the utmost care should be taken to prevent so deplorable and fatal a mistake. It is a reason why there should be much sound and discriminating doctrinal preaching and instruction, in times of revival; why ministers and others who converse with inquiring souls, should treat them with great fidelity, mingled with great tenderness; and why an open and formal profession of religion should not be precipitated, but delayed till there has been some suitable period for the probation of those who hope they have passed from death unto life. The truth is, that it is no easy matter for any man to discriminate at once, either in himself or others, between truly gracious affections and their various counterfeits. I am ready to think that any one will be effectually convinced of this, who will read with care the excellent treatise of President Edwards on this subject, which he wrote in consequence of the great revival that he witnessed in the former part of his ministry, and which he was greatly instrumental both in promoting and defending. It has been justly remarked—and the fact is enough to make both ministers and people tremble—that when persons have apparently gone far and felt much in religion, whether in revivals or at other times, and then fall away, and become careless and insensible, they are the least likely of all men, to be ever awakened or softened afterwards. They seem to be examples of that awful dereliction, so fearfully described in the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews.

I must here remark, that it is not merely in times

of persecution for religion, or when those who profess it suffer opposition, shame, and reproach, that a faith which is not sound and saving betrays itself. Without the occurrence of any thing of this kind, there may be a gradual subsiding of those spurious affections and feelings which were once so ardent, and which were mistaken for the evidences of a renewed heart; and the subject of them, under no other influence than that of a carnal and worldly spirit, may, in the strong language of the apostle Peter, "return as a dog to his vomit, and as the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Nor have we any reason to doubt, that the kind of faith of which we have been speaking, although in this instance it may not strictly be called *temporary*, will delude many, till the delusion vanishes in the light of eternity. Hence the solemn warning of the Saviour himself—"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

III. The *faith of miracles* is mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. The exercise of this faith was confined as we believe, to the primitive church. It consisted in a firm belief that the possessor of it would, by the power of God accompanying his act, be able to perform a miracle himself; or that, by the same power, he would become the subject of one, wrought in his favour. We have examples of both these kinds of miraculous faith, clearly recorded in the New Testament. To the first, there is a reference when our Saviour said, (Matt. xvii. 20,) "Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder

place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Of the second kind, we have an example in the lame man at Lystra, in regard to whom it is said (Acts xiv. 9, 10,) "The same heard Paul speak; who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet, and he leaped and walked." In like manner our Lord said to two blind men (Matt. ix. 29, 30,) "according to your faith be it unto you, and their eyes were opened." We might be ready to suppose that this faith would be found only in eminently holy persons, and doubtless it was possessed by a number of such, in the first age of the church; but we have unquestionable evidence that it was not confined to sanctified men. The apostle Paul says (1 Cor. xiii. 2,) "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." And our blessed Lord expressly declares (Matt. vii. 22, 23,) "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity." By this singular dispensation it would appear, as indeed the apostle seems to intimate in the chapter to which I have referred, that it was the design of God to give a conspicuous proof, that the most shining gifts were valueless—were absolutely nothing—in the matter of our salvation, without the simple principle of *love to God and man*, which the humblest and most obscure believer might as certainly and fully possess, as those who were the most distinguished in the church; yea, might possess what they might lack, and lack to their eternal undoing.

You are aware that the papists maintain that miraculous powers are still possessed and exercised in their church: and the credulity with which the "lying wonders" which they have recorded, have been received by the devotees of that communion, is truly astonishing. But I am sorry to observe, that the pre-

tence of working miracles is, at this very time, set up by some individuals in the protestant churches, both of England and Scotland. May such pretences never be made in our country. They are unquestionably delusive, and in the event, highly injurious to true religion: And were they even capable of being sustained, you have just heard of what the apostle, in the context of the chapter referred to, declares to be "a more excellent way." Let the love of God fill your hearts and shine forth in your lives, and you have something far more excellent and desirable than the working of miracles—which, having answered their design, in the establishment of the infant Christian church, have long since entirely ceased.

I have gone at some length into a consideration of what may be called the *negative* part of our subject—showing what kinds of faith are *not saving*; because this is the only place in our system, in which the statement you have heard could properly be made, if made at all; and because I think it is calculated, if rightly considered, to be practically and highly useful. Let us now attend to a *direct* illustration of the answer before us.

IV. There is a *justifying faith*, or a faith which, in the answer of the Catechism now under consideration, is called *a saving grace*. In treating of this grace, I shall endeavour to bring the several clauses of the answer before us under the four following particulars—

1. The object of saving faith—Jesus Christ, as he is offered in the gospel.
2. The author of faith—God in Christ, working by his Spirit a saving grace in the human soul.
3. The nature and acts of faith—receiving and resting on Christ alone for salvation.
4. Some of the consequences, fruits, or effects of saving faith.

We are first to consider the object of saving faith. This, although mentioned last in the short definition of the Catechism, must manifestly take precedence of every thing else, in an orderly view of our import-

ant subject. Faith, it is plain, must always imply an object; that is, something to be believed; and this object, it is equally clear, must be distinctly apprehended, in order to a rational and unwavering faith or belief.

The whole revealed will of God, so far as it is known and understood, is *the general object* of that faith which is unto salvation. God speaks in his word, as recorded in the Bible; and he who understandingly disbelieves any word that God has spoken, is chargeable with the awful sin of making him a liar, and certainly can have no faith that is saving. It is not, however, essential to salvation, however desirable in itself, that the whole of revealed truth, as it is now contained in the Bible, should be known and believed. The people of God at first had no written revelation; and for a series of ages they had but a small part of what we now possess. Even at the present time, the heathen, to whom the gospel is carried by the missionaries, and many of whom appear to receive its saving benefit, have, at first, nothing but oral teaching; and for a considerable time after being taught to read, they have only a few detached parts of the sacred volume. Nor is it, we believe, fatal to salvation, when, through mistake or imperfect information, some apparently good and honest men do not receive as canonical Scripture, a portion of that which is really so. Luther, at least for a time, was disposed to exclude the epistle of James from the sacred canon; and till that canon was finally established on good evidence, several books of the New Testament were not received, by some of the primitive churches. But when men possess, or may easily obtain, clear evidence that any portion of the Bible is the revealed word of God, and yet *perseveringly* reject, or grossly pervert its plain sense and meaning, we believe this is really inconsistent with the possession of saving faith.

But there is *a special object* of saving faith, which may be summarily expressed by saying, *it is Christ in the gospel offer*. It is to this that the answer before us particularly refers, by calling it "faith in

Jesus Christ." But here we must take into view the true character, work, and offices, of our adorable Redeemer; and what is required of the sinner, in order fully to avail himself of the benefits of the great redemption, set before him and offered to him in the gospel. The *special object* of saving faith then, may be briefly stated thus—That Christ is God, the second person in the sacred Trinity: that he is "Immanuel, God with us;" having been, as to his human nature, "conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin;" that he is thus "God and man, in two distinct natures and one person for ever:" that he appeared in the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself: that he fully accomplished the purpose of his mission, by "becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"—restoring the honours of God's law, which the sins of men had violated and dishonoured, by rendering a sinless obedience to it; and by fully answering the penalty of that law, by bearing its curse in the sufferings of his whole life, and especially in the inconceivable agonies which he endured, in what has been emphatically called his *passion*, and which was consummated by his death on the cross: that he was entombed and remained under the power of death for a time; then rose from the dead, and after remaining on earth for forty days, and frequently conversing with, instructing, and finally commissioning his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature, he, in their presence, ascended triumphantly into heaven, where he is made head over all things to his church—sustaining the mediatorial office between God and man, and being the great prophet, priest, and king of all his elect people, and the appointed final judge of the quick and the dead. Such is the *object of saving faith*, in relation to the person, work, and offices of Christ.

But certain essential doctrines, or fundamental truths of the gospel, are also the objects of this faith. These, indeed, partly consist in the points just stated, and the viewing of them as verities delivered to us

by the word and authority of God, and to be received, distinctly, because they are thus vouched and sanctioned. There are, however, some other fundamental truths, always connected with these, which it may be proper very briefly and summarily to specify—such as the violation, by the primitive father of the human family, of the first covenant made with him by his Creator, by which he entirely lost the moral image of his Maker, became wholly corrupt and sinful in his nature, and transmitted the same to all his posterity—so that, without exception, his descendants are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, and on account of this entire native depravity are declared, by the unerring oracles of God, to be “by nature children of wrath.” That hence it becomes indispensably necessary, that every child of Adam should “be born again”—be regenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost; be brought to that unfeigned repentance for sin which needeth not to be repented of; to the exercise of that faith which sees in Christ Jesus “the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world,” by assuming the sinner’s place as his surety, and in his behalf satisfying the divine justice, both in its preceptive and penal demands—thus working out a righteousness, which, by imputation, becomes the believing sinner’s righteousness, so soon as he is rendered cordially willing to accept it as offered, and by faith does actually accept and rely on it solely, for justification before God. That the evidence of this justification is a holy life; a life of communion with God, and an impartial and persevering regard and obedience to all his commandments, whether they relate to God or man—the believer being always disposed, as well as required, to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things, so that others seeing his good works, may glorify his heavenly Father: that he who is thus regenerated by the Holy Ghost, repents of his sins sincerely, relies by faith on Christ and his righteousness alone for salvation, verifies the genuineness of his faith by his works, and perseveres in the same to the end, shall assuredly be saved—the truth of God

being pledged for the salvation of every sinner, even though he were the very chief of sinners, who in this manner passes from death unto life; that salvation in this form and manner, is "offered in the gospel" to all men without exception; that to proclaim it in all its freeness, is the principal design of the gospel ministry; and that he who believes it as thus freely offered must not except himself, but take it as a divine verity, that to him, as much as to any other individual of the human race, is "the word of this salvation sent." Such are the main facts, truths, and doctrines, which are the special objects of saving faith; and which will shortly be further illustrated, when the acts of such a faith will call for your attention.

I must further remark, however, before leaving this part of our subject, that it plainly appears, if faith must have an object, and its object comprises what you have just heard, that *knowledge* is essential to its existence. Yes, my young friends, we are so far from believing that "ignorance is the mother of devotion," that we hold there can be no true devotion without knowledge; and no genuine faith without an understanding of what we are required to believe. This is taught, or clearly implied, in many plain declarations, both of the Old Testament and the New. "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth," said holy Job. "By *his knowledge*," that is, *the knowledge of him*, "shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities;" said the evangelical prophet Isaiah. "This is life eternal," said our blessed Saviour himself, "to *know* thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The apostle Peter said to his Divine Master, "We believe and are *sure*, (*εγνωκαμεν*, have *known*,) that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." And the apostle John says, "We have *known* and believed the love that God hath to us." The absolute impossibility of exercising true faith without knowledge is also unquestionably implied, in the following interrogatories of the apostle Paul—"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not

believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Remember, therefore, my dear youth, that you never can exercise a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, without having some competent knowledge of the way of salvation by him.

2. We are to consider the author of faith—who is no other than God in Christ, working by his Spirit a saving grace in the human soul. Each person in the ever blessed Trinity, is occasionally represented in holy Scripture, as producing faith in the believer. Thus we are told in one place, that "faith is the gift of God;" in another that "Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith;" and in a third, that "the fruit of the Spirit is—faith." The truth is, we are taught in the sacred oracles that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, who are therefore sometimes spoken of as doing that which is, in the immediate act, done by the Spirit; for in the economy of our salvation it is the *official work* of God the Holy Ghost, to make application of all the benefits of Christ's redemption to the human soul. "He shall glorify me," said the Divine Saviour, "for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Hence the apostle Peter, speaking to the saints who were scattered abroad, calls them "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:" and the apostle Paul, addressing the believing Thessalonians, says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." And accordingly that beautiful cluster of Christian graces, "love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and temperance," as well as "faith," are all represented as fruits of the Spirit. My dear young friends, I wish to impress it on your minds that the gospel dispensation, which it is your unspeakable privilege to enjoy, is, in a peculiar degree, a dispensation of the

Holy Spirit—is so in a far higher degree than was the Mosaic dispensation, which preceded it. The Spirit's blessed influences are far more diffusively and copiously imparted, under the gospel than under the law. You are therefore called to honour the great Sanctifier; to feel your entire and immediate dependance on his gracious interposition and agency, to work in your hearts the grace of saving faith—called *a grace* because it is an unspeakable favour, freely conferred on the most unworthy—on sinners who deserved to have been left to perish in their own devices. I have recently shown you, in lecturing on the answer of the Catechism immediately preceding that which is now before us, that we are utterly unable of ourselves to exercise faith, or any other grace—that it is God “who worketh in us, to will and to do of his good pleasure.” On the general truth, therefore, it would be only a repetition to insist at present. But it is important that you should distinctly understand, and keep it constantly in remembrance, that it is God the Holy Ghost, to whose direct agency you must look, and for which you must earnestly pray, and to whose blessed influence you must endeavour to open your hearts, and implore him to come in with his almighty energy and aid—if ever you perform those acts of saving faith, which are to be described in the next particular, and which will form the principal subject of the following lecture.

LECTURE LXI.

3. THE nature and acts of saving faith—receiving and resting on Christ alone for salvation—now call for your most serious and engaged attention. The essential nature, as well as one of the principal acts of saving faith, is very happily described by the phrase, *receiving him, as he is offered in the gospel*. By this, *faith* is discriminated from the other cardinal graces. In *hope*, we pleasingly anticipate the possession of a future good. In *love*, our affections delightfully fix and exercise themselves on an amiable object. But in neither of these do we *receive* an object, and appropriate it to ourselves. To do this, is exclusively the province and function of *faith*. Its object has already been described—*Christ in the gospel offer*. This object, when about to be received in an act of justifying and saving faith, is most distinctly perceived by the mind, aided, as it always then is, by the Spirit of all grace. The soul looks alternately at its unspeakable wants and necessities, and at the complete provision which is made for them all, in the infinite fulness of Christ. It is seen that there is not, and cannot be, a necessity or a demand, for the supply of which a provision, exactly suited to it, is not most wisely and amply made. The offer, too, is seen to be made freely; not only demanding no price or recommendation, but forbidding all attempts to bring any. It is seen that the full salvation tendered, not only *may*, but *must* be accepted, simply and purely as a *free gift*. The anxious soul, it may be, hesitates. Here is something perfectly new—of a kind like nothing else. The greatest of all possible blessings is presented to the most undeserving; requiring nothing in the recipient, but a sense of guilt, and hopeless inability to help or recommend himself, and

a willingness to receive all that he needs from an Almighty, all-sufficient Saviour. Wonder and admiration fill his soul. He asks perhaps, have I indeed nothing to bring? A single glance at his state gives a decisive negative answer. He sees himself destitute of every thing but guilt, and misery, and want. Then, he thinks, this offer exactly suits my case. It requires nothing, it admits of nothing meritorious in me; and truly, I have nothing—nothing but demerit, and pollution, and desert of eternal death. “Oh blessed Saviour! can it be true that thou dost stand ready to impute to me thy righteousness; to account as mine, and to make over to me, all the fulness of thy redeeming merit, gifts and graces, if I be but willing to receive them, without money and without price! And am I not willing, yea, intensely desirous to receive them thus! Searcher of hearts, see if I deceive not myself—see all the powers of my soul bowing in humble and adoring thankfulness, to accept thy offer. I receive it, just as thou dost proffer it. I receive thee, O my gracious condescending Redeemer! in all thy precious offices, as my prophet, priest, and king. I receive thy atoning sacrifice as the full expiation of all my crimson and scarlet sins. I receive thy finished righteousness to be *upon* me, as my justifying righteousness, to satisfy all the demands of thy law, and to ensure me an acquittal as guiltless, before the bar of God—I receive it as my title to eternal life. I receive thy Spirit to lead me into all truth, and to sanctify me in all my powers. I receive thee as my holy, and rightful Sovereign, to give me thy laws as the rule of my duty in all things; to reign in my soul, to conquer its corruptions, and subdue it wholly to thyself; to protect me from all my spiritual enemies; to order my whole lot in life; to make thy grace sufficient for me at all times; to sustain me in the trying hour of death; to own me as thine in judgment, at the great day; and to make me a partaker, with all thy redeemed people, of the eternal and ineffable bliss of heaven. O astonishing, overwhelming grace! O condescension and love unutterable! that

such blessings should be conferred on a wretched, polluted, hell-deserving worm of dust! But such, O God! is thy own plan of mercy; such thy way of getting glory to thyself; and to thee be all the glory and the praise, for ever and for ever, amen and amen." My dear youth, I could not feel contented to give you merely a dry and doctrinal description of those acts of saving faith, in which the believing sinner receives Christ his Saviour. I thought too, that the subject would be best illustrated by a short description of the exercises themselves. Such exercises, or rather, such as my description does not reach, and indeed no language can adequately express, many a believer has known, on his first coming, in a saving manner, to Christ Jesus; and often afterward, in his spiritual intercourse with his Saviour. Yet you are to observe and carefully remember, that these high exercises, however desirable, are not essential to the actings of saving faith. They have, I doubt not, been but little known by some of the most sincere, deeply sanctified, and exemplary Christians. Religious sensibilities, of all kinds, depend, not a little, on constitutional make, habits of thought, and methods of education, as well as on the sovereign and special communications of divine grace. God adapts the dispensations of his Spirit, in a measure, to our natural temperament, and the allotments of his providence, awarded by himself, to each of his own people. What is essential to these actings of saving faith is, a complete rejection of all our own righteousnesses as filthy rags; an entire willingness to make the Saviour the all and all of our souls, in the matter of our salvation; a well-pleasèdness—an unspeakable preference to be saved by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, rather than in any other way; and an actual, hearty, fiducial reliance on his finished work, as the entire ground of our acceptance with God—accompanied with strong desires for the sanctification of the soul, deliverance from all sin, and conformity of heart and life to the whole law of God.

In our Shorter Catechism there is scarcely a re-

dundant word; and therefore it is reasonable to believe that its framers did not consider the terms, *receiving* and *resting* on Christ, as entirely synonymous. They have, indeed, a closely related, yet a somewhat different meaning. Those who truly receive Christ Jesus, always, in some measure, rest upon him; yet resting upon him implies not only a *continuance* of the acts by which he is received, but a *firmness* and *stability* of faith, and a *perseverance* in its exercise, which is something additional to what takes place at first. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord," says the Apostle Paul, "so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." The excellent commentary of Scott on these words is as follows: "As they (the Colossians) had by faith received Christ Jesus to be their Saviour, according to the several offices which he sustained for the benefit of his church, let them continue in habitual dependance on him, and obedience to him; let them seek all their wisdom, strength, hope, holiness, and comfort from him, and aim in all things to serve and glorify him. Thus being rooted in him, as trees in a fruitful soil, and builded upon him as a house upon a firm foundation; and being established by living faith in him, according to the doctrine which they had been taught; they would abound more and more in faith, and proceed in their course with fervent thanksgiving to God for all his benefits."

When believers obtain their first release from the bondage of sin and fear, by those lively views and actings of faith which you have heard described, they are ready to think that their difficulties and conflicts are terminated for ever—that their mountain now stands strong, and that they shall never be moved. Yet rarely indeed, if ever, are those high expectations realized. The vivid views of faith fade away. Darkness and doubt succeed; and perhaps the genuineness of all that has been experienced is questioned;

till a fresh gracious visitation, a renewed lively exercise of faith, restores confidence, and hope, and peace. In such fluctuations of elevation and depression, too many real Christians pass a great part, and some perhaps, the whole of their lives. They live, as it has been well said, entirely on their frames and feelings. This ought not to be so. Such believers can hardly be said to *rest on Christ alone*. They rest, so far as they have rest, too much at least, on the present state of their own minds. It is equally, my dear youth, the duty and the privilege of the child of God, to aim at knowing that he is one—knowing it on good evidence, and such as cannot be easily taken from him, or be greatly obscured. This is to be done by searching the Scriptures to ascertain the reality of his gracious state, and by much prayer for the illumination and guidance of the Spirit of grace and truth; and thus getting to see satisfactorily that he is really interested in the covenant of grace, and made one with Christ. Then, rest on him alone will take place. Frames and feelings may vary greatly, as they almost invariably do, but the soul that is thus brought to rest on the rock Christ Jesus, may see the waves and billows of distress or temptation breaking around him, and at times seeming to go over him, and yet, though perhaps somewhat shaken and partially alarmed, he will not be moved away from his steadfastness. His anchor is cast within the veil, and he will ride out every storm, without shipwreck, and with but little loss. But, my beloved youth, this happy state of Christian steadfastness—of a good hope through grace—of an abiding sense of the spirit of adoption—is not to be reached without much inquiry, much self-examination, real industry in the divine life, true and frequent communion with God, a tender and conscientious Christian walk, and a diligent use of all the appointed means of grace. Need I ask, is not the attainment of such a state, worth all the pains that can be taken to secure it? Yes, unquestionably; and if it were made a distinct object of the Christian's aim,

and the proper means to reach it were faithfully employed, it would be realized a thousand times, where it is now seen in a single instance.

The question is frequently asked—is assurance of the essence of faith?—to which I must return a brief answer, before leaving this part of the subject.

The Scriptures certainly make a clear distinction between a weak and a strong faith; and hence Pictêt has well remarked, that assurance is rather the perfection of faith than its essence. He asks, how does any one become assured of the forgiveness of his sins, or of his gracious state? It is, he answers, only by finding, on a careful examination, that he has a genuine justifying faith. Then, certainly, he remarks, the faith which existed before this examination took place, was a genuine faith, and yet not accompanied by assurance. The truth undoubtedly is, that there are many humble and diffident, but sincere believers, who seem never to have any thing that can be called the assurance of faith, or hope, and this simply and solely because they do not, or cannot, make a right estimate of their own mental acts or exercises. They have not a doubt of the all-sufficiency of Christ, not a doubt of the sincerity and freeness of his offers, and not a doubt that whosoever truly receives and rests on Christ, will assuredly be saved. All that they doubt is, whether they have, for themselves, truly received and rested upon him. They have done it in fact, and perhaps repeated it a thousand times; but they have doubts and fears in regard to this fact, from which they hardly ever get free. It is also unquestionably true, that many real Christians have seasons in which they have such clear views of the glorious plan of redemption, and such a freedom to trust themselves unreservedly into the hands of Christ, that while those seasons last, all their doubts and fears vanish—they can say, for the present, that “they know in whom they have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which they have committed to him.” And yet, at other times, these very persons shall be almost ready to condemn themselves

as entirely graceless. Nothing but those reflex acts heretofore described, and getting to understand and rely on the unchanging nature of the covenant of grace, can prove a remedy to these alternations of faith and unbelief, of hope and despondency. It must also be remarked, that those who have once, and perhaps long, possessed a good hope through grace, may lose it for a season, through remissness in duty, the prevalence of corruption, falling into some gross sin, the violence of Satanic injections, the occurrence of bodily melancholy, or the withholding of those divine communications which were once experienced—for some reason not perceptible at the time, if ever understood in the present life. Watchfulness, prayer, a sense of our dependance on God, and great care not to grieve the Holy Spirit, are the important duties taught and enforced, by the possibility of losing that blessed confidence toward God, which is indeed the light of life—a possession for which there can be no equivalent, no possible compensation.

4. I am to mention, and it must be very briefly, some of the consequences, fruits, or effects, of saving faith. The first of these is—the destruction which faith effects of all self-righteousness, and the giving of the entire glory of our salvation to the rich and free grace of God. There is scarcely a point which the great apostle of the gentiles labours more, or on which he dwells more at large, than that our salvation is all of grace through faith; that all ground of boasting, and all works, and all personal righteousness of every kind, are excluded utterly in the work of justification, which he attributes solely to the grace of faith. The conclusion which he draws from his long argument on this subject, in his epistle to the Romans, and on which he afterwards dilates most impressively, is in these words (Rom. v. 1.) “*Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Now, as faith itself is a work—a mental exercise in the mind of the believer—it may be, and has been objected, that here is *a work* which is concerned in our justification.

Concerned we admit that it is; but only *instrumentally*, we affirm; and that it will be absolutely impossible to reconcile the apostle with himself, if we allow to faith itself, even the smallest degree of meritorious desert, in the matter of justification. I have elsewhere had occasion to remark, that faith in its best acts is, like every other grace, imperfect; and therefore that the very act of faith by which a believer is justified, needs pardon for its imperfection, instead of being entitled to a reward for its exercise. The simple truth is, that by an act of faith, which, although imperfect, finds acceptance through the merits of that Saviour to whom it looks, he is received and appropriated, as a free and glorious gift of God's transcendent grace; every duty, as well as every sin, is renounced in this mighty concern; the crown is placed solely on the Saviour's head, and the believing sinner lies at his feet, to be sprinkled from all uncleanness by his atoning blood, to be clothed with the spotless robe of his righteousness, to be sanctified by his Holy Spirit, and thus, through his unmingled and superabounding mercy, to be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

2. It will ever be found, as one of the precious fruits or effects of a true justifying faith, that it both comforts and invigorates the believing soul. That complete renunciation of all self-righteousness which has just been stated, and which is taught in all that you have heard on this subject, never leaves the believer in an abject and forlorn situation. The renunciation which he makes is never constrained, or mingled with reluctance. It is made most willingly, and from a full perception and deep conviction, that it is demanded by reason and equity, as well as by the divine requisition: and now, having taken his proper place—having become emptied of himself—he is prepared to receive from the fulness of Christ, grace for grace—to be filled with all joy and peace in believing. In place of the filthy rags of his own righteousness, he now perceives—and O how he wonders while he perceives!—that he is arrayed in the righte-

ousness of his redeeming God. Instead of that proud self-gratulation, which used to be excited by some fancied merit of his own, he is now made to rejoice "with a joy that is exceedingly great and full of glory," by the views which he is enabled by the good Spirit of the Lord, to take of his interest in the infinite merits of his blessed Saviour; and in feeling the love of God shed abroad in his heart, producing consolations unutterable, and sometimes affording a prelibation of the felicity of heaven. My dear young friends, I am not delivering to you the fictions of fancy, or truths merely speculative. No, verily; they are truths both solid and practical. Every exercised Christian will cheerfully testify, that the highest happiness he ever knows on earth is experienced, when he is most emptied of himself, and drinks most freely and largely from the fountain of his Redeemer's plenitude. He will tell you, too, with the apostle Paul, that "when he is weak, then is he strong." That he never attempts duty with so much alacrity, nor performs it with so much vigour and so much effect, as when feeling most his own insufficiency, he goes to its discharge, leaning most sensibly on his Saviour—trusting in his strength for the performance, and looking to his power to crown his efforts with success.

3. One of the consequences of a true justifying faith, will always be seen in its tendency to increase every other Christian grace, and to render the believer fruitful in holiness, and in all good works. Faith may be called the foundation of grace. It is *alone* in the work of justification; but it is never alone in the soul where it exists; but is always associated with genuine repentance, a lively hope, a fervent love, and a deep humility; and its natural tendency to increase all these graces is obvious. Never is repentance so evangelical and so tender, as when faith takes her clearest look at the desert of sin in the cross of Christ, and sees its enormity and its pardon in a single view; never can hope be so lively and cheering as when faith lays her firmest hold on the Saviour's unfailing covenant; never can love to God, and love to man be so pure and

active, as when faith brings into view all the loveliness of Jehovah's attributes, and especially the love of God in the gift of his son to a guilty and perishing world; and when the Saviour's dying love, prayer for his enemies with his expiring breath, and his command to love the brethren, to forgive as we hope to be forgiven, and to do good to all men as opportunity offers, are, by faith, brought home to the believer's heart: and never is humility so perfect, so unaffected, and so amiable, as when in the bright visions of faith the Christian sees the condescension of his Redeemer, drinks most largely into his spirit, and desires most earnestly to walk in his footsteps.

"Show me thy faith by thy works," said the apostle James. Genuine faith will always abide this test; nay, just in proportion as faith is pure and vigorous, will the believer be ready to every good word and work. I have no time at present to illustrate this by argument; but facts are better than arguments. In whom, I ask, have been seen, the best and brightest, and most lovely examples, of all social and relative duties? In none, I affirm without hesitation or reserve—in none have they ever been observed to cluster more conspicuously, or to shine more benignantly, than in the decided advocates and practical exhibitors of this very doctrine of justification solely by faith, through the righteousness of Christ. To the names of Howard and Thornton, I could add very many, both of the living and the dead; but observe them for yourselves, my dear youth, both in your reading and in your intercourse with the world; and may the Spirit of all grace add you to the number of those who, through the influence of the faith which you have heard described, shall adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Amen.

LECTURE LXII.

IN the present lecture we are to enter on the consideration of the grace of repentance. It is thus defined in our Catechism—"Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience."

This admirable answer to the question, "What is repentance unto life?" cannot perhaps be illustrated more properly than by making its words and phrases, just as they stand, the subject of remark. Pursuing this method, I observe, that the words "repentance unto life is a saving grace," were probably intended to refer to two things; the first of which is, that there is a repentance which is not unto life; or to distinguish genuine evangelical repentance, from that legal repentance, or mere compunction of conscience, which the guilty often feel, but which is attended by no lasting and beneficial effects. Natural conscience seems necessarily to suppose, and to refer to a supreme and omniscient Being, who will punish the transgressors of his laws. While this principle therefore retains any measure of sensibility, (for we read of some "whose conscience is seared with a hot iron") there will be self condemnation and fear of punishment, when an individual is conscious of having violated the commands of God. Hence blasphemers, and other flagrant sinners, when their lives are placed in imminent danger, and speedy death seems to threaten them, are often filled with great fear, and sometimes with remorse and anguish of spirit, of the most fearful kind. They forbear their impieties, perhaps attempt prayer, and ask the prayers of others,

profess repentance and sorrow for their sins, and it may be, make solemn resolutions, promises, and vows of reformation, or of leading a new life, if they may only be spared to have the opportunity of doing it. But remove the danger, and permanent reformation seldom takes place. Sometimes they return to their former profligacy as soon as the peril of life ceases, and in most instances all their reformation "is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

There are other cases, indeed, in which a legal repentance is more lasting. Providential dispensations, the hearing of solemn sermons, the effects of religious education, excitement produced by seeing others awakened in a revival of religion, and the real, and for a time the powerful strivings of the Spirit of grace, make those whose case we now contemplate, deeply feel their guilt and their danger. Outward reformation takes place, real and anxious concern for the salvation of the soul is experienced, the means of grace are sought and carefully used, even secret sins are partially forsaken and watched against; and yet repentance unto life never takes place. Very many of those who are thus exercised, like those who, in our Saviour's parable of the sower, received the seed in stony ground, or among thorns, fall away in a time of temptation, or else the wealth, and cares, and pursuits of the world, choke, and ultimately extinguish, all their religious sensibility, and leave them as careless of their eternal interests, perhaps more so, than they were before they were alarmed. In other instances, this kind of repentance is taken for conversion; is put for justification, in place of the righteousness of Christ; and religion is professed and its forms are observed, while the power of godliness is never known; and these unhappy subjects of delusion perish at last, with a lie in their right hand. Hear the solemn warning of the Saviour himself:—"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at

the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all *ye* workers of iniquity."

The whole of the legal repentance of which I have just been speaking, is made up of fear, self-righteousness, and unbelief. The law of God, though greatly feared, is never loved, but really hated; his own exercises, acts, and doings, form the ground of the legalist's expectation of propitiating, and rendering himself acceptable to his Maker; while unbelief discredits the declaration that the blood of Christ "cleanseth from all sin," and hence prefers the filthy rags of self-righteousness, to the perfect and spotless robe wrought out by the Redeemer, in which, and in which alone, a sinner can stand before God with acceptance, and receive pardon, justification, sanctification, and eternal life—all as the fruit of the Saviour's purchase, and to the sinner, a gift perfectly free, and utterly undeserved. The difference between a legal and an evangelical repentance, will receive further illustration in the sequel.

The words "repentance unto life is a saving grace," further imply, both that there is a repentance which is infallibly connected with eternal life, and that such repentance is *a grace*; that is, an unspeakable and unmerited favour; consisting of a right state or disposition of soul, produced, as all other gracious dispositions and exercises are, by the operations of the Holy Spirit. It is by faith, my young friends, that the redeemed of the Lord become *entitled* to heaven, and by repentance that they become *prepared*, or qualified, for its employments and enjoyment. The original word (*μετάνοια*, *metanoia*) used throughout the New Testament to denote genuine and saving repentance, strictly means *a change of mind*, and a change that is at once salutary, radical, and permanent. You perceive, therefore, that *repentance* thus

taken, is but another word for true *conversion*, and such is indeed the fact; both these terms refer to a right, deep, and lasting change of the mind, by which the soul is turned from the supreme love of sin, to the supreme love of holiness; that is, its whole current is reversed; so that after the change, it hates what once it loved, and loves what once it hated; and hence the life, as well as the heart, is changed, and instead of being devoted supremely to the pursuit of sinful or worldly objects, is devoted to the service of God, and is regulated by a regard to all his commandments. Thus they who are the subjects of true repentance or conversion, will be constantly increasing in sanctification; for repentance, it must be remembered, is an exercise often repeated, and never terminated while any sin or corruption remains to be mortified; or in other words, till the saint drops his body of sin and death in the grave. You perceive therefore that sanctification is the end, of which repentance is the means; and that the means cease only when the end is fully attained—when the soul, escaping from all its pollutions in the body, rises pure and immaculate to the mansions of perfect holiness in heaven. What a consistent and glorious system is the plan of our redemption! Faith, by connecting the soul with the Redeemer, entitles it to heaven, and repentance, by carrying on the work of sanctification, prepares it for the celestial beatitude; and these graces, although their operations are different, are always found conjoined; and the result is, that no individual is entitled to heaven, without being prepared for it; and no one is prepared for it, without being entitled to its possession—the title and the preparation invariably go together.

The next thing which the answer before us calls us to consider is, that in order to a genuine and saving repentance, the sinner must have *a true sense of his sin*. The methods in which wandering sinners are brought home to God, are so various, that perhaps no one step of the process is always the same, or at least not perceptibly so, in the order of place and time. Yet, in most cases, that very legal repent-

ance of which you have been hearing in this lecture, is probably the first exercise of an awakened sinner; and hence it has been technically called a *law-work*. But as it goes no further than to make the transgressor see the *danger* of sin, and to put him on using improper endeavours to avoid that danger, it can never be said to proceed from such a sense of sin as the answer before us specifies. In a *true sense of sin*, its awful danger is indeed seen, and as I have just said, is probably, in most cases, the first thing that is perceived; but to this there is always added the following particulars:—1. Sin is seen to be a most unreasonable, wicked, and daring rebellion against a good and holy God. In a mere legal repentance God is feared, and the sentence of his law is dreaded; but he is feared as a tyrant, and his law is disliked as unduly rigorous. If the sinner could have his wish, it would be that the law of God should be relaxed, so that he might sin with impunity; and could this be the case, his fears and his concern about his sin, would vanish together. But he who has a true sense of sin, sees and says with the apostle, that the “law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” He sees that God has required nothing but what is perfectly reasonable, right, and good; and that in all his sins, he has been a wicked and daring rebel, trampling on the righteous authority and requisitions of the greatest and best of beings, to whose wonderful and unspeakable forbearance alone he is indebted, that he has not been consigned to the just punishment of his transgressions, in the pit of eternal perdition. He sees the aggravation of all sin to consist so much in its being committed against God, that he is ready to leave out of view all other considerations, and to say with the penitent Psalmist, whose great sin had a fellow mortal for its immediate object—“Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.” And hence it is, as this text fully warrants us to affirm, that a real penitent, one who has a true sense of his sin, will,

from his heart, justify the sentence of the law which condemns him—will see and feel that he deserves to die the death; and that if he were cast into hell, he would have no right to complain that he was punished beyond his desert. This, as will presently appear, is perfectly consistent with hoping for, and trusting in the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, and is indeed inseparable from it.

2. There is, in a true sense of sin, a very affecting view of it, as in its own nature unspeakably polluting and vile. Agreeably to this, we find that the words of the Psalmist already quoted, are immediately followed by these—“Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” And a little after, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” With the Psalmist, every true penitent will trace up all particular acts of sin—every polluted stream that has defiled him in body and in soul, to the fountain of abomination that there is in his very heart and nature. Think much of this, my beloved youth. That sinner has never yet had a true view of his case, who dwells only, or principally, on particular instances of transgression. He must be brought to see, what our Saviour so plainly and impressively taught, that “Those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the *heart*, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man.” Yes, and the true penitent will have such a sense of his moral defilement by sin, that he will, so to speak, sicken at the view. He will see sin to be unspeakably filthy, odious, and detestable, and that it has polluted by its abominations all his nature, every power of his soul, and every action of his life; and he will, from a real sight and sense of his condition and character, say with holy Job—“Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth—I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” To be purged and cleansed from

this state of deep and hateful defilement, will be, as we have seen that it was with David, the most earnest desire of his soul. No evil will appear so great as the evil of sin, and no deliverance so desirable as to be freed from its filthy stains. Mark how strikingly, in this particular, a true sense of sin differs from that which only produces fear—fear that punishment will follow it.

Our Catechism next teaches us, that true repentance is also connected with, and proceeds from, “an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ.” Much has been said on the question—Which is first in the order of nature, faith or repentance? You will observe that the question is entirely about *the order of nature*; for it is agreed on all hands, that these graces are inseparable, and always mingled together. Now it appears to me, that whether faith be taken in its larger sense, as relating to the whole revealed will of God, or be taken in its more restricted sense, as an acceptance and reliance on Christ alone for salvation, it must, in the order of nature, go before every kind and degree of repentance. Legal repentance could have no existence, if the sinner did not believe in a God, who will punish the violators of his law. Suppose a sincere and complete Atheist, and you suppose the existence of a man who can never feel a single compunction for sin. He may fear punishment from men, but certainly can fear none from a being who, as he believes, does not exist. All sense of guilt before God must plainly proceed from some kind of belief of his existence, of his law, and of his determination to punish those who offend him. Those who are merely legalists in their repentance, have commonly a speculative belief, not only of the being of God, but of the general truth of the Bible; and hence proceed all their anxieties, fears, remorse, and self-righteousness. *Such* faith as they have, precedes, and is the cause of *such* repentance as they exercise. And as to “an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ,” by which it was doubtless intended we should understand at least the incipient exercise of saving faith, it

appears to me, that in the order of nature, it must necessarily precede repentance unto life. We have no reason to believe that there ever was, or can be, any such thing as a salutary repentance, without some kind of apprehension that God may show mercy to the penitent individual. We thus conclude from what is witnessed in cases of a complete despair of mercy. Such a case was that of Judas. He had a powerful and overwhelming sense of guilt, and an utter despair of obtaining forgiveness. The consequence was, "he repented,"* and went and hanged himself: and such has been the effect of despair in numerous instances since the time of Judas; and it may be questioned whether this, or taking refuge in blank Atheism, would not always be the case, if there was not a lingering hope of mercy, in the minds of those who have, to their own apprehension, been in a state of despair. At the bottom of their hearts there has still been a hope of mercy, too feeble to be distinctly recognized, yet not without a real operation and influence. But when there is a distinct apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, it furnishes the only pure, as well as the most powerful motive to genuine repentance. While the soul is filled with self-abhorrence, in the view of having sinned against a merciful God and Saviour, it is melted into genuine sorrow for all its sin, made to look on it with the greatest detestation, and at the same time is filled with humble love and adoring gratitude to God, and with a most intense desire to avoid offending him in time to come. Here indeed is evangelical repent-

* It ought to be made known to those who cannot read the New Testament in the original, that the Greek word which is here translated "he repented," is entirely different from that which is invariably used to signify true repentance. To repent truly, or savingly, is always expressed by derivatives from the word μετανοειν, (metanoëō.) The word used to signify such a repentance as was that of Judas, is derived from μεταμελομαι, (metamelomai.) We lack single terms in the English language to denote the difference between the meaning of these two words in the original, and therefore both are translated by the same word. Campbell translates the latter *repentance*, and the former *reformation*.

ance—hatred to sin, because it is offensive and dishonourable to God our Saviour, and because it is in itself most loathsome and detestable. So that it may be truly said, that when faith and hope rise to assurance, then the most genuine repentance will flow forth; that is, the believer will hate sin most, and most earnestly desire deliverance from it, at the very time that he has not a doubt that through Christ Jesus he is freely and fully pardoned, and will never come into condemnation. But I am anticipating what, if God permit, will be more distinctly and fully considered in our next lecture.

LECTURE LXIII.

WITHOUT recapitulating any thing already said, I now ask your attention to the clause in the answer of the Catechism under consideration, which states, that in repentance unto life, a sinner “doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God.”

There is a very striking passage in the prophecy of Zechariah, (xii. 10.) which will furnish us with a just view of the chief source, and the just measure, of that grief which a true penitent will feel on account of his sin. “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born.” We know from the quotation of these words by the beloved apostle, (John xix. 37,) and his referring them to the crucifiers of our blessed Lord, that this was intended to be their primary application: and there was a striking fulfilment of the prophecy on the day of Pentecost, when many of those who had been concerned in the actual crucifixion of Christ, “were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?” But this, though the *special*, was not intended to be the *exclusive* application of the prophecy, it was doubtless intended to exhibit the feelings of *all*, who truly repent of their sins under the gospel dispensation, in a view of their guilt as exhibited in the cross of Christ. Scott’s remarks on this passage, in his commentary, are unquestionably just. He says—“Whilst we condemn the conduct of him who betrayed, and of those who crucified the Lord of glory, we shall not exculpate ourselves. We shall remember, that in fact our sins were the cause of the Redeemer’s crucifixion; our ingratitude and dishonour-

able conduct have often tendered towards the guilt of crucifying him afresh. We may therefore all look to him whom we have pierced, and upon our sins as the thorns, the nails, and the spear. This will increase the poignancy of our sorrow and remorse, while we hope for mercy, through that blood which we helped to shed. When our sins are viewed in this glass, we see more cause to mourn for them, than for the loss of any earthly object; and we become inconsolable, save by the consolations of the blessed gospel." To this place I have reserved what might have been added, and if strictness of method had alone been considered, should have been added, as a third particular, when I showed in my last lecture, what is included in *a true sense of sin*. But as the deepest mourning does commonly arise in the mind of the believer, from a view of his sin as being concerned in the awful and inconceivable sufferings and ignominious death of his Saviour, it seems peculiarly proper to point your attention to this source of godly sorrow, when speaking distinctly of the true penitent's *grief* for sin. Often when he thinks of the ineffable agony and unparalleled humiliation of the Son of God, at the time that the combined inflictions of heaven, earth, and hell, fell upon him, he is ready to cry out—"My sins had a share in it all; yes, those very sins which he thus suffered and died to expiate, were concerned in degrading, and tormenting, and murdering my blessed Saviour. What a guilty wretch have I been!—'O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night' for those crimson and scarlet crimes, which insulted and slew the Redeemer in whom is all my hope. He has indeed forgiven me all; but that matchless generosity, grace, and goodness, is the very thing that touches me the most tenderly; so that when I think what to him was the cost of his forgiveness of me, I am ready to ask, how shall I ever forgive myself? Shall I not for ever grieve to think that the best friend of my soul, he who has delivered me from eternal perdition, and raised me to the hope of heavenly

bliss, was wounded for my transgressions, was bruised for my iniquities, that the chastisement of my peace was upon him, and that with his stripes I am healed." My dear youth, such grief for sin as this, is discriminating. The ungodly world know nothing of the kind. The carnally minded may indeed weep, and I believe they sometimes do in fact weep, when they hear a lively description of the sufferings of Christ. But they weep, just as they do at a tragedy in the theatre. They seldom, I suspect, weep in secret; and I am persuaded they never grieve and weep under a view of their own sins, as the crucifiers of the Lord of life and glory. They never weep at the indignities and anguish which their guilt caused to him who must save them, if saved they ever are, from the awful wrath to come. This is a weeping and a grief, which belong only to the genuine and pardoned penitent.

The sensibilities of some minds are much keener and stronger than those of others, and this difference of natural temperament will, as I have heretofore remarked, commonly show itself in religion, as in every thing else. But that individual who has tears in abundance to shed over earthly losses—over the loss of relatives, of property, of personal reputation, or of public calamity—and yet never weeps for his sins—knows nothing of the repentance which is unto life. Think of the strong language of the text I have quoted—"they shall mourn as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first born." Can any construction be given to this language, which can render it applicable to those who think of their sins with but a slight and seldom repeated sorrow? Truly I am ready to believe, that he who has been for any length of time in the profession of religion, and has not shed more tears before his God, on account of his sins, and in pleading for their remission and for renewed pardon, than he has shed for all other causes, and on all other occasions of weeping, in his whole life—he, I am ready to believe, is a Christian only in profession. Of genuine repentance, it seems to me, he must be entirely

ignorant. How did the apostle Paul, although he was assured of his forgiveness, humble himself through the whole of his life, in the recollection of his guilt in his unconverted state; and after all his high attainments in grace, how did he mourn and lament over the remaining sinfulness of his heart—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I now proceed to remark, that he who truly grieves for sin, will of necessity *hate it*. We never grieve, because we possess that which we love, and in which we delight. It is true, indeed, as has been shown, that he who has only a legal repentance, may be really sorry that he has exposed himself to punishment. But let any one perceive impressively, that his sin has rendered him a guilty and an inexcusable rebel against his God; has made him loathsome and abominable in his own view, and in the view of all holy beings; and has made him a partner with the crucifiers of that Saviour through whom alone he has the hope of pardon and eternal life—let him have this apprehension of sin, and he cannot but hate it—hate it, worse than he hates any thing beside. He will hate it in all its shapes, and forms, and degrees. Shame, and poverty, and pain, and death itself, will not be the subjects of as much aversion, as that which he feels against sin. He will be ready to say, "Keep me from sin, and let whatever else befall me, I can and will, by the help of God, endure it." The inbred sin of his nature, and the sin which most easily besets him, he will hate as much as any overt acts of transgression whatsoever. In a word, love and hatred are the exact opposites of each other; and as the love of holiness is implanted in the heart of every true penitent, sin, which is the opposite of holiness, must be hated—and hated just in proportion as holiness is possessed.

From the perceptions and feelings that I have now described, you may see at once, that he who experiences them must and will *turn from sin*. We are

naturally and strongly prone to turn away from that which we loathe and hate, and when left to our voluntary choice, we do so in every imaginable instance. Now, there is no other conceivable object, as we have seen, that is so perfectly detestable, to every genuine penitent, as sin. From this, therefore, he will turn with the most deep-felt abhorrence. It is no valid objection to this assertion, that the remainders of sin adhere to the really penitent while they live, and that there is not a day of their lives in which they can say that they have not sinned. Our position may seem like a paradox, to those who have no experimental acquaintance with a divine and spiritual life. But hear the apostle Paul, whose explanation of this paradox needs no comment:—"For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Again, this same apostle says—"The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Alas! my young friends, it is this abhorrence of all sin, and himself on account of it—this turning away from it, and struggling against it, while a portion of unsanctified nature is perpetually drawing in an opposite direction—drawing him into what he hates—it is this very thing, that constitutes the believing penitent's

sores conflict while he remains in life. Still it is true, that he watches and strives against all sin, and all temptations to it, both outward and inward; and therefore it may be said with the strictest truth, that he *turns from it*, and “exercises himself to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man.”

The Catechism adds, that it is “unto God” that the true penitent turns. This is the point which distinguishes genuine repentance from every counterfeit. Every legalist, and all unsanctified persons, whatever length they may apparently go in religion, do not return unto God. It was this, of which the prophet Hosea represents the God of Israel as complaining—“They have not cried unto me with their *heart*, when they howled upon their beds. They return, but not to the Most High.” It is no uncommon thing for impenitent men to turn from one sin to another; from sins which are reproachful before the world, to those which have fashion or popular opinion on their side; or to impieties or impurities which may be indulged in secret. But the real penitent turns from all sin unto God. To God he comes, through faith in Christ Jesus as the great Mediator and Intercessor between him and his offended Maker; as the appointed propitiation for the sins of men—he comes and confesses his aggravated guilt; he comes and pleads the efficacy of that blood which cleanseth from all sin, that he may be pardoned, and cleansed, and justified, and sanctified, and saved; he comes and prays for the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, to renew and sanctify him more and more, to destroy the love of sin, and cherish the love of holiness in his heart; he comes and pleads that God would constantly strengthen him against the power of temptation; he comes, in a word, and devotes himself unreservedly to God, to do his will, to obey his commandments, to be his guide even unto death, and his eternal portion beyond the grave.

It cannot be otherwise than that he who acts in the manner just described, should have “a full pur-

pose," and use his most strenuous "endeavours," to walk before God in "new obedience." A *full purpose* to yield obedience to all the commands of God, may here be considered as opposed to a purpose that is partial or temporary, or to one that is to be carried into effect at some future time. How many are there who purpose to leave off the commission of certain sins, and even do what they purpose, while they form no resolution to abandon others of equal moral turpitude? How many are there whose resolutions of an entire amendment, however ardently formed, are broken and forgotten, without being followed by any lasting change of outward conduct, or inward disposition? And how very many are there, who purpose and fondly flatter themselves that at some future period they will turn from sin to God, and yet live and die impenitent and utterly unreformed? But the execution of the *full purpose* we consider, is commenced without any delay, is directed against every sin, and becomes a fixed principle of the mind. He who entertains it says with the prodigal, "I will arise and go unto my father." Hence it is, as the Catechism states, that this full purpose is connected with an "endeavour"—and it is a *full*, or strenuous endeavour—to yield a new obedience to all the Divine requisitions. Purposes without endeavours, professed repentance without reformation, declarations of sorrow for sin without forsaking and avoiding it, are all empty, vain, and useless. They indicate nothing, except that the parties concerned deceive either themselves or others. He who has a sincere and full purpose to obey, will look to God in earnest prayer for grace and strength, and in reliance on these will instantly endeavour, with all his might, to carry his purpose into effect, and into effect, notwithstanding great imperfection, it will, in some good measure, be carried. True repentance will always produce, as its natural fruit, obedience to what God requires.

The terms *new obedience*, used not only here, but in another answer of the Catechism, seem to demand some special attention. Why, it may be asked, is the

obedience which the true penitent endeavours after, called *a new obedience*? In what respects is it *new*? I answer, 1. it is new in regard to its *extent*. Impenitent men, as we have seen, may render a *partial* outward obedience to the commands of God; but they never go further. But the true penitent says with the Psalmist, “then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto *all* thy commandments.” There is with him no taking of one duty and leaving another; no satisfaction in obeying the second table of the law, while the first is disregarded; no separating the duties which we owe to God, our neighbour, and ourselves; no severing of the feelings and affections of the heart from outward visible actions. In a word, a new obedience, though imperfect in degree, is impartial and universal in regard to its objects. It says with David—“I esteem all thy precepts concerning *all things* to be right; and I hate *every false way*.” 2. The obedience we consider may be called *new*, because it proceeds from *new principles and motives*. Men in their natural state are often influenced to perform what they call duty; and which, as to the external act, is duty, from the dictates of natural conscience, from a regard to their own interest or reputation, or from a mercenary hope of heaven, or a slavish fear of hell. But evangelical obedience—the obedience of every true penitent—springs from sources of a character entirely different. Its origin is the imparted grace of God, and it flows forth as the expression of faith and love—“The *grace of God* that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Show me thy *faith* by thy *works*—Whatsoever is not of *faith* is sin—This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your *faith*—faith that worketh by *love*. *Love* is the fulfilling of the law.—If ye *love* me keep my commandments—The *love* of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live

should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again." A slave obeys his master through fear, a dutiful child obeys a kind parent from love. Here is the grand difference between every legalist, and every child of God. All the obedience rendered by the former to the divine requisitions is through servile fear; that of the latter is from filial love. The legalist, moreover, renders his obedience that he may merit a reward. He whose repentance is unto life, thinks of no merit as worthy of reward, but the infinite merit of Christ, and considers his own imperfect obedience as making no other return to his Saviour, than an expression of gratitude—a very inadequate expression too, for unmerited and infinite favour. When, therefore, an individual ceases to obey from fear, and begins to obey from love; ceases to think of earning a reward, and thinks only of expressing humble gratitude; his obedience may be called with emphatic propriety *a new obedience*. 3. The obedience we consider is *new*, because he who renders it, no longer relies on his own strength to effect his purpose, but on the strength of another. Once he made resolutions and attempted duties, with a feeling of entire self-sufficiency for the performance. Now he feelingly believes the words of Christ—"without me ye can do nothing;" and he speaks and acts as did the holy apostle when he said—"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God"—yet, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." 4. The obedience of which we speak may be called *new*, because in yielding it, the end or design which is regarded is *new*. Unsanctified men have always some selfish end in view; their own advantage or happiness is supremely and solely regarded, in all they do. It is otherwise with him who is renewed in the spirit of his mind. He is not indeed regardless of his own happiness; but he has learned that the glory of God, as the highest and best of all objects, should be supremely regarded in all he does; and that if he thus regards it, God will

take care of his happiness, better than any care which can be taken of it by himself. He therefore heartily approves of, and constantly endeavours to obey, the command—"Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"—For all these reasons, then, the obedience of him whose repentance is unto life, may, with emphasis, be denominated
A NEW OBEDIENCE.

In closing this discussion let me remind you, my young friends—and may God impress the admonition deeply on each of your hearts—that you have been hearing of a Christian grace, which every individual of you must possess, or be lost for ever—"Except ye repent," said our Saviour, again and again—"except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Yes, verily, *to repent or perish eternally*, is the only alternative for each of you. Nor ought you to delay this duty for a single moment. You cannot do so, without both guilt and danger unspeakable. By delay, you may grieve the Spirit of grace to leave you for ever to yourselves; and if thus left, you will never repent; and your eternal ruin will be sealed, as certainly as if you were at this moment in the pit of endless despair. Instantly, therefore, look to God for his blessed Spirit, to enable you *now* to begin the work of repentance; and never speak peace to yourselves, till each of you, viewing himself as an undone sinner, shall, out of a true sense of his sin, and an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience.
Amen.

LECTURE LXIV.

HAVING shown what are the *inward* means by which the benefits of the great redemption of Christ are to be obtained—faith and repentance—we are now to consider the *outward* means. And our Catechism teaches us, that “The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayers; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.”

You may observe that this answer speaks not only of *outward*, but of *ordinary* means—by which latter designation we are to understand those means which are most commonly and extensively used, and most frequently blessed, for the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints. All the ordinances of God are to be regarded, and are of great use in the church. These, in our Larger Catechism, are said to be—in addition to those mentioned in the answer before us—“church government and discipline; the ministry and maintenance thereof; swearing by the name of God; and vowing unto him.” These, as being divine ordinances; that is *commanded duties* in the divine word, are all to be regarded and observed, in their proper place and season; “yet *the word, sacraments, and prayer*, are the *chief, or principal* outward means, for communicating the benefits of redemption.”

The providences of God are doubtless frequently blessed, to awaken and alarm careless sinners, and to correct and recall backsliding believers; but this is done, only by leading them to reflect on their duty as taught and enjoined in the written word of God; and therefore the providences themselves, are not, in the Catechism, considered as standing on the same ground with those which are more directly means of grace.

There are two ideas of great importance, that here demand your most serious attention. The first is, that the means have no inherent efficacy in themselves, to produce the blessings of redemption. This is distinctly taught in the answer before us, where it is said that they are "*made* effectual to salvation." *Means* are not *ends*, and are never to be rested in, till the end is attained, for which alone they are used. To this error of resting in means, there is in many a strong, and often, it is to be feared, a fatal proneness. They give a formal, and perhaps a pretty constant attendance, on at least some of the means of grace; and they think that this places them in a very hopeful way. Thus they quiet all their fears and anxieties, in regard to their souls' eternal welfare; till at last, they perish in an unconverted, unsanctified state. Remember then, my dear youth, that till the means of grace have been made effectual to bring saving grace to your precious immortal spirits, they have not answered the only design for which they were appointed; and that if you die without this end being reached, all the means of grace you have ever enjoyed, will only have served to aggravate your final condemnation. Sensible of this, look constantly through the means, to that God who alone can give them their proper effect; and pray, whenever you use them, that he would take them, as instruments, into his own hand, and make them powerful and efficient, to bring you into a state of reconciliation with himself, through Jesus Christ.

The other idea to which I have referred is, that the blessings of redemption, or salvation, are not to be expected without the use of the appointed means of grace. That God could convert sinners, without any of the instrumentality which he has ordained for this purpose, there is no reason to doubt. He could, certainly, in an instant, without the intervention of any means, change the hardest and most rebellious human heart that ever existed, and form it to love and delight in himself: And something of this kind appears in fact to have taken place, in the conversion of the

apostle Paul. At the moment when he said, "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?" his heart appears to have been changed; yet means were still ordered to be used, for his instruction, direction, and comfort. This case, however, was strictly one of miracle; a departure from the ordinary way, in which God's mercy to sinners is exhibited. We know that in the usual dispensation of his grace, after human beings have attained the full exercise of their reasoning and moral powers, his method is to work upon them only through the instrumentality of second causes. Indeed the whole of his ordinary dispensation of mercy towards mankind, is a dispensation of means. Hence those who talk of sinners loving God before they can with propriety use any means, do, unless they look for a miracle, point out a way of obtaining salvation as really contrary to that which God has appointed, as those who expect salvation in the neglect of all means. In reality, these extremes, as often happens with extremes, meet in a point—they both expect an end without means. The only difference is, that the former class think that means are to be used for the *increase* of grace, after grace has been communicated without them. Never, beloved youth, never expect that God will meet with you in a saving manner, without the diligent, conscientious, prayerful, and persevering use of all the means appointed by him, and adapted to your existing state and character. Avoid, especially, the two opposite errors, of resting in means, while the end for which they were ordained has not been reached; and of neglecting the use of *means*, under the vain and arrogant expectation, that God, in your case, will depart from his ordinary method of bringing sinners to himself.

The answer before us says, that the ordinances of God's appointment are made effectual to the *elect*—and the implication is, to the *elect only*—for salvation. This is a solemn truth, which all observation and experience strongly confirm. How often do we see that among individuals, who have enjoyed all the same advantages of instruction, warning, reproof, and

entreaty, some are brought to a saving knowledge of the Redeemer, and others remain, apparently, destitute to the last of any salutary impressions. To what, I ask, but to the distinguishing grace of God, can this difference be rationally attributed? Doubtless it is true, that the one class made a right improvement, and the other did not, of the privileges equally enjoyed by both. But the question still returns, why did one make the right improvement, and the other not make it?—The grace of God alone, is the only proper assignable cause.

But, my young friends, I solemnly warn you not to abuse this truth. Say not, that if it is uncertain, after all, that the means of grace will effect your salvation, you may as well neglect as use them. Do you not see both the absurdity and the danger of such a conclusion? By neglecting the means of grace, you pass sentence on yourselves at once, that perdition is your lot. If you belong to the elect of God, you certainly will use the means, and use them faithfully. All your hope lies here. There is not a child of God on earth whose state, before conversion, was not exactly as uncertain as yours is now. Let your resolution, then, be this: "I will neglect none of the means which God makes effectual to all the elect. I will use the means with all diligence, fidelity, and earnest prayer, that they may be blessed to my eternal well being. Doing thus, I may hope, and I will hope, that the event will prove to me, as it has to others, that I have been chosen and ordained to life everlasting. If I am enabled, by the grace of God, cordially to embrace the gospel offer, I shall, in that way, make my 'calling and election sure;' and in no other way can I ever know, on this side of eternity, whether I am one of the elect or not; unless, indeed, I make and keep the awful resolution, that I will not seek salvation, in the only ordinary way in which it is ever found."

Oh, think much, I beseech you, on what is comprehended in the inconceivably interesting word—**SALVATION!** It implies, even in the present life, a

begun deliverance from all sin and misery, and a begun possession of all the happiness which arises from the friendship of God, a sanctified providence, and the hope of eternal felicity. In the world to come, it implies the two-fold blessedness of an assured deliverance from the deserved punishment of sin, in all the horrors of the second death, and an exaltation to all the high and ineffable bliss of the paradise of God; where, with the General Assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven, and with an innumerable company of angels, every saved soul shall spend an eternity, in such delights as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. This is the *great salvation* at which you are to aim, in the use of the means of grace. Need I ask, if it is not worth every effort, and every agony, which its attainment may demand!

“Salvation! O the joyful sound!
 ’Tis pleasure to our ears;
 A sovereign balm for every wound,
 A cordial for our fears.

Buried in sorrow and in sin,
 At hell’s dark door we lay;
 But we arise, by grace divine,
 To see a heavenly day.

Salvation! let the echo fly
 The spacious earth around;
 While all the armies of the sky
 Conspire to raise the sound.”

We proceed to consider the instrumentality of the word of God in the conversion and subsequent edification of sinners. “The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation.”

The gospel of Jesus Christ, under which it is our high and peculiar privilege to live, is a dispensation of the Spirit—It is so in a more eminent degree, by far, than the preceding patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations. Our Catechism, as we have heretofore seen,

teaches us, that "We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit." The *application* of the finished work of the Redeemer to his elect people, both before and after their conversion, belongs *officially* to God the Holy Ghost. They are "born of the Spirit," and all their graces are "graces of the Spirit." Neither the reading nor the preaching of the word, would ever become effectual to the salvation of a single soul, if they were not made so by the powerful influence of the blessed Spirit. This is a truth never to be overlooked or forgotten. The word of God is called the "sword of the Spirit;" and as a sword can effect nothing without a hand to wield it, so the word of God itself remains wholly inoperative, in the matter of our salvation, till it is taken into the hand of the Spirit, and applied by his almighty energy, to the purpose for which it has been provided. Yet, on the other hand, it must be kept in mind, that the Holy Spirit does not, ordinarily, work any saving change in the hearts of adult persons, without the word; and hence the unspeakable importance that the word should be carefully read and faithfully preached.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that by "the word," in the answer before us, we are to understand the whole revealed will of God contained in the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments. No part of this word is superfluous; although as I have heretofore shown, some portions of it are more practical than others, and on that account ought to be more frequently perused, and more diligently studied. But it is an error which cannot be committed without suffering loss, to omit the attentive and repeated reading of *the whole* of the sacred Scriptures. In ordinary circumstances, a portion of the sacred volume ought to be read daily, by every individual who possesses and is able to read it. This practice has sometimes been blessed to the conversion of unsanctified men; although perhaps adopted at first as a matter of education, or merely as constituting a good and useful

habit. But it is a practice which no professing Christian should fail to adopt, and carefully maintain. Its omission, I hesitate not to say, is a neglect of a very important mean of cherishing a lively and comfortable state of religion in the soul. The sacred Scriptures ought also to be read daily in every Christian household, in connexion with family prayer; and it is a good custom to read from the Old Testament and the New, alternately: and if a short commentary, with some practical observations, such as appear in Scott's Family Bible, or Doddridge's Family Expositor, be read in connexion with the sacred text, it may serve to illustrate, and more deeply to impress divine truth, on the minds of all who compose the family circle. The reading of a portion of holy writ ought, likewise, in my judgment, to form an indispensable part of every public exercise of religious worship in the house of God. He is wont to honour his own word, and no words of men ought to supplant it in his sanctuary. A single text—a short sentence—of inspired truth, shall sometimes go with an authority, and a power, and an effect, to the conscience and heart of a hearer, beyond any thing, or every thing else, that can be uttered. And although, happily, many more can now peruse the Bible for themselves, than were able to do so some years since, yet probably, in most of our large promiscuous assemblies, there are still some who cannot read; and there certainly are many who read the holy book by far too seldom and too little. But if there were not an individual of either of these classes, God's word, as already intimated, should be an inseparable part of his public worship. To the people of God it is always precious, and always new; and a text which has been read a hundred times, shall, on a new hearing, present some new view of divine truth, or come with a power and sweetness never known before.

But the Catechism teaches us, that “especially the preaching of the word,” is made an effectual means of convincing, converting, and edifying those who hear it. Inspiration itself testifies, that “faith cometh

by hearing," and all experience, from the days of the apostle who wrote these words, to the present hour, bears witness to the truth of his declaration. Probably a hundred, perhaps a thousand converts, have, in every age, been made by the ear, for one that has been made by the eye. In the matter of edification, after conversion, the proportion may have been less, but I believe it has always been great, in favour of hearing, beyond that of reading. Those who can hear, are not only more numerous than those who can read, but the attention secured and the impression produced, by the human voice and the appearance and manner of a living speaker, are far greater than is ordinarily made by truth, however pertinently stated, when it is to be received from a book, or a manuscript, with nothing to enforce it but its own naked, inherent excellence. But what is chiefly to be regarded, in relation to the point before us, is, that the preaching of the gospel is God's appointed and especial ordinance, for the conversion and edification of mankind. Hence, this is the instrumentality which he will *chiefly* bless; and on his blessing the whole efficiency of all means, intended for our spiritual benefit, entirely depends. No matter what may be our estimate of the natural adaptedness of any means to promote our soul's welfare; if we put it in place of God's ordinance, we have reason to expect that he will not bless, but frown upon it; and if so, nothing beneficial, but something injurious, will be the certain result. Those therefore, who "forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is"—those who seldom or never enter a place of public worship, under the pretence that they can read a better sermon at home than they can hear at church, or that they can be more devout in private than in public, have no reason to expect the divine blessing, on their arrogant substitution of their own invention for God's appointment. When sickness, or any other sufficient hindrance to an attendance on the preached word, meets us in the providence of God, we then indeed have reason to hope that our retire-

ment may be made a little sanctuary to us, in the use of reading, meditation, and prayer. This, doubtless, the people of God have often experienced. But the avoidance of hearing the word preached, when it is a matter of voluntary choice, I am convinced is never blessed; and I certainly never knew an individual, with whom this was habitual, that gave any rational evidence whatever of practical piety.

It follows likewise, from what we are considering, that in our endeavours to send the gospel to any unevangelized place, or to the world at large, nothing can supercede the necessity, or take the place of the preached word, with any prospect of general success. Other instrumentalities may, and must be used. They are indispensable, as *auxiliaries*, but the preached word must still be the principal means. That converts are made—yea, numerous converts when taken collectively—by reading the Bible and religious tracts, I readily and joyfully admit. But if the Bible were faithfully translated into every language under heaven—and we ought to desire, and pray, and labour, and give liberally of our substance, that it may be so translated—and if every individual of our race had a copy, and could read it freely, with expository and hortatory comments to any amount—all this would not form an adequate substitute for God's ordinance of a *preached* gospel. It would still be necessary to the conversion of the world, that a host of well-informed, devoted, apostolic *preachers of the word*, should go forth to every nation and tribe of our sin-ruined world. *Oral instruction*, as already shown, ever has been, and from the nature of man and of human society it ever must be, the principal and most efficient method of communicating information to the ignorant, and of stirring up the well-informed, by refreshing their minds with what they know, and urging them to act agreeably to what they believe and profess. The Divine ordinance of a preached gospel is manifestly adapted to the constitution which God has given us. We can, therefore, in this instance, clearly see the *fitness* of the means

appointed by God, to the end contemplated, or the effect intended to be produced; although his appointment, plainly revealed, would be obligatory, if its fitness were not discernible by us. I have dwelt longer on this topic than I should have done, if I had not thought that there is perceptible at present, in the laudable zeal which prevails to establish and patronize benevolent institutions, some danger of not giving its due prominence and importance to the regular preaching of the gospel. In penning the following beautiful lines, Cowper wrote like a discerning Christian, as well as an elegant poet:—

“ I say the pulpit, (in the sober use
Of its legitimate, peculiar powers,)
Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support and ornament of virtue’s cause.
There stands the messenger of truth: there stands
The legate of the skies!—His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the gospel whispers peace.
He ’stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wanderer, binds the broken heart,
And armed himself in panoply complete
Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms,
Bright as his own, and trains, by every rule
Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
The sacramental host of God’s elect.”

It is only, indeed, when the gospel is purely preached, that we have any reason to expect that the Spirit of God will render it effectual to the salvation of those that hear it. If the great and peculiar doctrines of the gospel are kept back, disguised, misrepresented, or but slightly noticed; or if abstract, philosophical, moral, or metaphysical speculations, take the place of the plain, pungent, and practical exhibitions of evangelical truth; or if a stilted style, or a florid eloquence, demonstrate that he who occupies the sacred desk, is aiming rather to preach himself than Christ Jesus; if, in a word, the whole counsel of God is not declared with simplicity and fidelity, the sav-

ing effects of a preached gospel are not likely to appear. But if sound doctrine be preached plainly, faithfully, sincerely, wisely, zealously, diligently, and perseveringly, God, the Spirit will, in his own best time, and to such a degree as in his holy sovereignty he may see to be right, bless it to the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints. This he has always done; and this he may still be expected to do. The promise is sure—"My word shall not return unto me void." At one time, some careless individuals, here and there in a congregation, will be effectually awakened, convinced of their sinful and undone state, and be eventually led to Christ Jesus, as the only refuge and hope of the soul. At another time or place, the influences of the Holy Ghost will descend on all around, like the rain or dew of heaven; and a glorious and general revival of pure religion will be witnessed. On every side, the anxious inquiry will be heard—"What shall we do to be saved?" Conviction of sin will be pungent, deep, and genuine; conversions will be multiplied exceedingly; and a great company of believers will be added to the Lord and to his church. O that such a display of God's grace and mercy as this, might be witnessed among you, my beloved youth! O that you might all be seen pressing into the kingdom of God, and taking it by a holy violence!

It must not be forgotten, that after even genuine converts have been gathered into the church, they still need to be built up in holiness and comfort, "through faith unto salvation." This I fear is, at the present time, not duly considered. Not long since, I was told of a minister of the gospel whose labours had been remarkably blest, in a congregation of which he had been the pastor, and who assigned it as the principal reason for his being willing to accept a call, which he had received to another charge, that where he had been labouring, there were few or no sinners remaining to be converted. Now, I am ready to admit that the great Head of the church distributes his gifts to his ministering ser-

vants with a considerable variety; and that some are better qualified to alarm the thoughtless, and even to direct inquiring souls to Christ for salvation, than to edify believers, and furnish constantly the food best suited to promote and speed their growth in grace. But it ought to be recollected that the word *pastor* itself, is derived from the office of one who *feeds*, as well as gathers and protects a flock. "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs," said our blessed Saviour to the apostle Peter. And the solemn charge of the apostle Paul to the Ephesian elders was, "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and unto the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to *feed* the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." To resolve cases of conscience, to direct and enlighten the perplexed, to comfort spiritual mourners, and to quicken and edify the whole body of the faithful, is a most important part of the pastor's office and duty. It is a part which he ought carefully to study, and for which he should seek to qualify himself, to the full extent of his powers. It is not easy to describe the sacred pleasure, and the unspeakable benefit, which established Christians derive from the preaching of an able and faithful pastor, who, from Sabbath to Sabbath, feeds them with what they love and seek, the unadulterated milk of the word. They are refreshed, they are strengthened, they are invigorated, they become increasingly exemplary, their inward peace, holy joy, and steadfastness in the faith are augmented, and they bring forth much fruit to the praise and glory of God their Heavenly Father. In a word, and as the answer before us well expresses it, "they are built up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation." May the great Head of the Church furnish it with many such pastors; and may the Holy Spirit crown their labours with his richest blessings, and prepare them at last to stand with their flocks before his throne in heaven, and say, "Here are we, and the children thou hast given us." Amen.

LECTURE LXV.

THE manner in which the word of God is to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation, is thus stated in our Catechism—"That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love; lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives."

To secure the salvation of the soul, must be acknowledged to be the great concern and chief business of life, by all who profess to believe in a future state of rewards and punishments. If this be so, and if it is from the word of God alone that we can learn the way of salvation, then it is obviously not too much to say, that *an attention to the word of God* should be regarded as the principal object of our existence in this world, and that we ought to treat it accordingly. How few, alas! do this; and yet, in doing it, consists our giving that *attention* to the divine word, the revealed truth of God, which our duty demands, and the answer before us enjoins.

Our Catechism teaches us, that the duty we here contemplate, is to be performed—

1. *With diligence*; that is, says Fisher, "with a careful observing and embracing of every seasonable opportunity that may offer in providence, for reading and hearing the word of life." How easily, my young friends, do we find time and opportunities to think of what we love; to attend to that in which our hearts and affections are much interested; to pursue after and improve in that in which we find our happiness, and in which we believe our highest and best interests are deeply involved? Now, let the reading and hearing of the word of God be the thing which we thus regard, and we shall find much time to read and

meditate on the Holy Scriptures, and we shall seize many an opportunity to hear the gospel preached, which we should otherwise neglect; and this too, without permitting one duty to crowd out another, or being chargeable with the neglect of any obligation, which our place or station in life imposes on us. Believe it, my dear youth, the want of diligence in reading and hearing the word of God, arises principally from the want of love to the exercise. If you could, with truth, say with the Psalmist, "Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Therefore, I love thy commandment above gold, yea, above fine gold. I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word. Mine eyes prevented the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word. I rejoice at thy word as one that findeth great spoil."—Were this, I say, the language of your hearts, how many books of little value, to say nothing of those of pernicious tendency, would you lay aside, for the reading and studying of the Bible? What a blessed familiarity would you acquire with its holy truths? How clearly would you understand, and how faithfully apply them? How readily would you forego every place and opportunity of even lawful, not to speak of unlawful amusement, if it interfered with the hearing of a sermon, a lecture on the sacred Scriptures, or any occasion of acquiring religious instruction or improvement? And be assured, if the word of God shall ever become effectual to your salvation, it will, in some good degree, produce these very effects on your hearts and practice. You will, in this manner, prove that your attention to the reading and hearing of God's word has been *diligent*.

2. *Preparation*; that is, some *special preparation*, for reading and hearing the word of God is necessary, if we hope to experience its salutary and saving effects. The human mind is so constituted, that it

cannot readily pass from one subject to another of a different character, without some preparation; and least of all is it reasonable to expect this, when the transition is to be made from sensible objects, to spiritual contemplations. We must take some time, and put forth vigorous efforts, to make our thoughts quit their hold on the world, and become concentrated on divine and invisible things; to change their employment from thinking on secular occupations and pursuits, to meditations on sacred, revealed truth; to turn their current from earth and time, to heaven and eternity. In making this preparation, "we should consider that the word has the authority of God stamped upon it; that it is Himself that speaketh to us therein; that it is his ordinance for our salvation; and will be the savour either of life or death unto us."* We should "duly consider how we need instruction, or, at least to have truths brought to our remembrance, and impressed on our heart; as also that this is an ordinance that God has instituted for that purpose. And as it is stamped with his authority, so we may depend on it, that his eye will be upon us, to observe our frame of spirit under the word. And we ought to have an awful sense of his perfections, to excite in us a holy reverence, and the exercise of other graces necessary to our engaging in this duty, in a right manner."† The chief reason why the reading and hearing of the word of God produces so little effect is, that people go to it in a careless, thoughtless manner. If they would endeavour to *prepare* for it, in the manner that has now been briefly stated, we should witness other results; its power and influence would be seen and felt, far oftener and more generally than they are, both in the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the edification and comfort of the people of God. Especially would this be the case, if to what has been recommended, there should be added—

3. *Prayer.* This is, indeed, essential. "We are not

* Fisher.

† Ridgley.

sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." "Without me," said the Saviour, "ye can do nothing." Let us never forget that it is God alone, who can rightly dispose and effectually enable us to perform any religious duty—perform it so as to be either acceptable to him, or profitable to our own souls. If, therefore, prayer to God for his gracious aid be neglected, all other means or efforts for obtaining edification, will be likely to prove entirely fruitless. We ought to confess with humility before God our inability to hear his word in a right manner, without his special, gracious assistance; and to plead his condescending promise to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. Devotional exercises of this kind, have a natural tendency to put us in a suitable frame of mind to read or hear divine truth with advantage, as well as to obtain those divine succours on which profitable reading and hearing must always depend. Especially when we are about to go to the public worship of God in his sanctuary, we ought to pray that God would assist his ministers in preaching his word, so that what they deliver shall be agreeable to his mind and will; and also, that it may be carried with resistless power to the consciences and hearts, both of ourselves and of all our fellow worshippers. O that there were more fervent and effectual prayer, that divine truth might be purely and faithfully set forth, and be made the power and wisdom of God unto salvation, to those who hear it! O that the ministers of the gospel, and the teachers of Sabbath schools and Bible classes, had a larger share in the fervent pleadings of God's people, for the right discharge of their sacred duties, and for his special and signal blessing on their faithful labours! Then should we see, more conspicuously than we have yet seen, the fulfilment of the promise—"My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

4. In order to the word of God becoming effectual to salvation, we must *receive it with faith and love.*

The sacred writer speaks it to the high praise of the Bereans, that "they received the word with all readiness of mind;" and the apostle, in writing to the Thesalonians, uses this remarkable and emphatic language—"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." In these passages of sacred writ, we have both the sanction and the illustration of the doctrine of our Catechism, in the points now before us. To receive the word with all readiness, is to open our minds freely and thankfully to the teachings of the Holy Spirit in the lively oracles, indited by his own inspiration; to give to them that welcome reception into our minds, which we yield to a message of our best friend, in relation to our most important interests. We receive the word in faith, when it comes to us as being, not the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, on which we place the most implicit reliance; as being a communication from that great and glorious Being whose "attribute it is, that he cannot lie;" and on which, therefore, we may rest whatever relates, not only to our happiness in this world, but to our eternal well-being—rest all our interests, hopes, and expectations, as on a foundation more stable than the pillars of creation; "for heaven and earth shall indeed pass away, but my words," says the Saviour, "shall not pass away." Whether the word of God therefore speak to us in promises, or in threatenings, of facts, or in doctrine, we shall, if we receive it in faith, take all that it declares as the most unquestionable verity, and as such bring it home to our hearts and consciences, according to its import, as applicable to our own state and character, or to the church of God and the world of mankind. This faith, moreover, will work effectually in them that thus believe; that is, it will be "a faith that worketh by love." We shall cordially love the word of God: love it just as we have it in the sacred volume; love the whole

and every part of it; love that which warns and re-proves, as well as that which encourages and comforts us; love to apply it, and love to obey it. For we are to add,

5. That we must *lay it up in our hearts and practise it in our lives*. Laying up the divine word in our hearts, is a striking and beautiful expression, full of important meaning. It teaches us to regard the truth of God contained in his word, as a precious and invaluable treasure; and our hearts as the place of deposite, where we are to lay it up for safe-keeping, and for constant use, as we have occasion to draw upon it. Happy, indeed, is he who does this: happy the man whose memory is richly stored with the word of God; whose understanding, aided and enlightened by the Spirit of grace, apprehends its true scope and design; whose will readily and delightfully chooses all that it enjoins, and refuses all that it forbids; and whose affections are most powerfully attracted by it, most firmly attached to it, and most delightfully exercised under the influence of its sacred truths. Now, in whomsoever this is realized, the whole life and conversation of the party concerned will receive its colour, tone, direction, and character, from the temper of the heart: "For out of the abundance of the heart," said our Lord, "the mouth speaketh." "The tree is known by its fruit; a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things." He whose heart is right in the sight of God, will discover it by obedience to all God's commandments. He will be a truly devout man. Communion with God will be his delight. He will be cordial and exemplary in the worship of his Maker, both in private and in public. He will feel such an indebtedness to his Redeemer, that he will withhold no effort or service, by which the cause of his dear and adored Lord may be promoted. He will be ready to speak a word for his Saviour, whenever a favourable opportunity offers. He will contribute liberally of his substance, according to his ability, for supporting and extending the influence of the gospel. He will feel the importance

of endeavouring to adorn and recommend the religion of Christ, in his whole life and conversation. His light will so shine before men, that they will take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus; and seeing his good works, they will be led by his example to admire the grace of God in him. His religion will appear in every thing with which he has a concern. It will make him conscientious in all that he does. By the influence which the gospel has upon him, he will be rendered a better man in all the relations of life, in every connexion which he holds with society—he will be a better husband, a better father, a better son, a better neighbour, a better friend, a better citizen. He will be just and upright in all his dealings; he will endeavour to owe no man any thing but a debt of love; he will fulfil all his engagements and contracts with punctuality; and his regard to truth will be so sacred, that his word will be as much accredited as his oath.

My beloved youth—It is a regard to this last part of the answer before us—it is by *practising* the truth of God in our lives—that our character is to be ascertained. It is only the man who *lives* religion, that is truly and savingly religious. The inward principles of faith, love, and a renewed heart, are, indeed, the source and spring of a holy life, without which it can never appear in its genuine excellence and lustre. But men may talk and profess much—and sometimes they do—about their inward feelings and exercises, when their lives are far from exemplary; and all this religion of the tongue is extremely suspicious, while they do not *practise* what the gospel requires. “Show me thy faith by thy works,” is the demand which we have a right to make of every man. Let nothing, I entreat you, short of this, satisfy you in regard to your own spiritual state. If you have clear views of God’s holy law, and right apprehensions of yourselves, you will indeed see cause continually to lament your imperfections and short-comings. Yet you may have, and ought to have, “the testimony of your conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not

with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, you have your conversation in the world." You may know, and ought to know, whether you do sincerely endeavour to discharge every duty that you owe both to God and man; whether you lament your defects, ask divine assistance, and put forth your strenuous endeavours to correct every error, to amend whatever you do amiss, and to live in all things as becomes the disciples of Christ—ever imperfect, and yet ever pressing forward after perfection, as an object of earnest desire, and of gradual approximation. Thus doing, you will have evidence that the word of God "dwells in you richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," and that it will eventually and surely be made effectual to your eternal salvation.

LECTURE LXVI.

“THE sacraments,” says our Catechism, “become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them.”

The chief design of this answer is to guard against erroneous apprehensions relative to the sacraments; especially those which are entertained and taught in the Romish communion. That corrupt church maintains two gross errors, in regard to these sacred ordinances. The first is, that the sacraments have an inherent efficacy in themselves, to convey saving grace to those who partake of them; so that they who receive the external elements are, by the very act of reception, placed in a state of salvation. This is a dogma not only without any support from Scripture, but one which facts, contained in the sacred records, directly contradict. We find that after Simon, the sorcerer, was baptized, an inspired apostle declared, “that his heart was not right in the sight of God;” that he had “neither part nor lot” in the saving benefits of the gospel; but was still “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” And in regard to the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, we know that in the primitive Corinthian church, a number of those who had partaken of the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of the Redeemer, so far from being placed in a state of salvation by the act, had most grievously sinned in that very act; and were visited in consequence with temporal judgments to bring them to repentance; “that being chastened of the Lord, they might not be condemned with the world.” In addition to this palpable evidence from the volume of inspiration, our own observation testifies, that there

is a melancholy number of the recipients, not only of the sacrament of baptism, but alas! of the Lord's Supper also, whose lives afford no indication that they are, or ever were, in a state of salvation; and the test of our Saviour himself is, "by their fruits ye shall know them."

But as our Catechism teaches, that the sacraments are not efficacious to salvation from any virtue inherent in them; so it also affirms, that their benefit is not derived "from him that doth administer them;" and thus the second error of the Roman church, to which I have referred, is combatted. The Papists maintain, that the efficacy of the sacraments depends on the will of the priest who dispenses them; and is communicated or withheld, just as he intends or purposes, at the time of the administration—They have efficacy if he wills it; they have no efficacy if he does not will it. This is truly a shocking absurdity. It supposes that the eternal welfare of the soul of one individual, may be effected by a single mental act of another individual—the latter a sinful and capricious being, as well as the former. It goes on the supposition, too, that there may be a mock exhibition of the most sacred rites of the Christian church—an exhibition of them in which the administrator intends they shall be useless, and actually renders them so by his voluntary choice. But beside all this, if the preposterous dogma in question were true, no mortal who receives the sacraments could possibly know, with entire certainty, whether he would be benefitted by them or not; for we can never be perfectly ascertained of any one's intentions except our own. To search the heart is the prerogative of God only; and whatever assurances an administering priest might give, they might still be deceptive; and he who holds that he might administer the sacraments deceptively, does much to invalidate any declarations he may make that, in any particular instance, he has administered them truly; that is, with an intention that they should benefit the recipient.

The Popish doctrine of *transubstantiation*, is also

gainsayed and condemned in the answer we consider, when it is said that the sacramental elements have no inherent "virtue in them." The Romanists hold that after the consecrating prayer of the priest, the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are changed in their substance, and become the real body and blood of Christ, which accordingly are eaten and drank by every communicant. They pretend to ground this most extraordinary dogma on the words of the institution—"Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you—this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many; drink ye all of it." The Papists contend that this language is to be taken literally, and that consequently the sacramental elements of the Eucharist, as often as it is administered, become the real body and blood of Christ. Protestants maintain that the language is metaphorical, and that the elements after consecration, or being set apart to a sacred use, still retain all their natural properties of bread and wine, and nothing more. Volumes have been written on this controversy; but the whole merits of it lie within a very narrow compass, being nothing more than the proper answer to the question, ought the words of the institution to be taken literally or figuratively? We say, they ought to be taken figuratively, because—1. On the contrary supposition, the primitive disciples of Christ, to whom he himself administered this ordinance, ate his body and drank his blood, while he was yet alive. 2. Not only, on the Popish supposition, is there an incessant repetition of the same miracle, but it is such a miracle as has no parallel in the whole bible. In all other miracles, the evidence of their truth and reality, is the testimony of the senses, of those who witnessed them. But here is a miracle, in which all the senses of the witnesses directly contradict what they are required to believe. The very test of miracles is thus destroyed. 3. There is no need of understanding the words literally. Figurative expressions, as strong as the language here, are frequent in the Holy Scriptures. God is called a Rock; and in the very discourse that precedes the

sacred supper, Christ had said, "I am the vine; ye are the branches." And elsewhere in the New Testament, he is called a foundation, a head, a body, a corner stone, a rock, and other appellations in the highest degree figurative; but the import of which is obvious and uncontroverted. 4. In the particular and connected statement of the institution given by the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 23—29, and which he declares he received by a special revelation from Christ himself, it is remarkable that after the consecration, which is recorded in the 24th, 25th, and 26th verses, one of the elements is still expressly and repeatedly called *bread*, and the *cup* is mentioned without the least intimation of a change in the nature of its contents.

I shall close these remarks on the Popish absurdities relative to the sacrament of the supper, with remarking, that although, in regard to the wine in this sacrament, an express command is given, "drink ye all of it;" yet the Romish priesthood allow none but themselves to drink of it. They refuse it entirely to the laity; to whom, in fact, they never administer more than half of this sacrament.

After stating, negatively, on what the efficacy of the sacraments does not depend, the answer before us affirms, that they become effectual means of salvation "only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit, in them that by faith receive them." But to enlarge on this part of the answer, would only be to anticipate what is more fully set forth in the following answers, which we shall have occasion to consider in their proper place and order. I shall here, therefore, only add the following excellent remarks of Fisher. He says, "We may learn from the necessity of Christ's blessing, and of the Spirit's working, in order to the efficacy of the sacraments, that our whole dependence for the blessing, whether upon ourselves, when we partake of the sacrament of the supper, or upon our children, when we are sponsors for them in baptism, should be on Christ alone, and on the saving influences and operations of his Spirit, held forth in the promise, to accompany his own in-

stitutions: and therefore our partaking of these solemn ordinances, dispensed by some ministers, to the slighting of them as dispensed by others, equally sound and faithful, though perhaps in our esteem somewhat inferior in outward gifts, says upon the matter, that the efficacy of the sacraments depends, some how upon the administrator, and not on the blessing of Christ alone, quite contrary to the mind of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. iii. 7, ‘So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.’”

Let us now proceed to the next answer in our Catechism, in which we have a definition of a sacrament as follows:—“A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed and applied to believers.”

The tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in the Paradise of Eden, have usually been considered as sacraments of the covenant of works. The definition before us was not intended to include these. It is confined to the sacraments of the new covenant, or the covenant of grace; so called because it succeeded to the covenant of works, which was broken by our first parents when they lost their innocence, by eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree.

The word *sacrament*, is derived from the Latin word *sacramentum*, used by the Romans to express the oath which their soldiers took to be true and faithful to their prince or commander, pledging them solemnly not to desert his standard. It is used in the Christian church, not only to signify something that is sacred, but likewise a solemn engagement to be the Lord's. It is called a holy ordinance in the answer before us, because the elements which compose it have been set apart from a common to a sacred use, because it is designed to promote holiness in those who receive it, and because they are, by profession, a holy or peculiar people.

As Christ is the head of the church, and has the sole power and authority to enact laws and appoint

ordinances for the government and benefit of his people, it is essentially necessary to the validity of a sacrament, that it be instituted by his express command. Hence we find the apostle Paul, when reproving the Corinthian church for the abuse of the sacramental supper, is explicit on this point. Referring to the introduction of this sacred rite among them by himself, he says—“*I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you.*”

In our Larger Catechism we are taught, that “there are two parts of a sacrament; the one an outward and sensible sign, used according to Christ’s appointment; the other an inward and spiritual grace thereby signified.” The outward and sensible signs—so called because they are perceptible by our outward sense of seeing, tasting, and feeling—have no *natural* resemblance to the things which they symbolize. They owe their significance entirely to the divine institution; yet the divine wisdom is manifest in the appointment of the sensible emblems, since between them and the spiritual benefits signified, there is a beautiful analogy, as we shall have occasion more fully to show in a subsequent lecture.

“Christ and the benefits of the new covenant,” constitute “the inward and spiritual grace” conveyed to believers in the sacraments; for to believers, and to them only, as the answer before us states, the benefits of the new covenant “are represented, sealed, and applied.” None but a true believer, one who possesses and exercises genuine faith in Christ, can have those spiritual views of him, and that perception of the benefits to be derived from union and communion with him, which these holy ordinances are calculated, and were intended, to exhibit to the eye of faith. But by every such believer, when faith is in exercise, Christ and his benefits—summed up in grace here and glory hereafter—are discerned in a most lively, glorious, and delightful manner, in the sacramental signs. Nor are they merely seen and admired, they are also *sealed* and *applied*. They are sealed, because, as a seal ratifies and confirms a contract or

legal instrument, so it is one of the uses of the sacramental signs, solemnly and formally to ratify and seal to believers, on the part of Christ, all the benefits of the new covenant, procured for them by his precious blood. These benefits are also actually *applied* to believers, in the use of the sacraments; that is, there is a present experience and enjoyment of these benefits. Probably there are few of the people of God who would not be ready to testify, that some of their sacramental seasons have been those in which their graces were in the most delightful exercise, their communion with Christ and his people the most sensible, and their assured hope and expectation of the heavenly inheritance the most lively, strong and satisfying.

LECTURE LXVII.

WE are now more particularly to consider the sacraments of the New Testament, which are stated in our Catechism to be, "Baptism and the Lord's Supper."

When the sacraments of the *New* Testament are specially mentioned, there is an implication that there were also sacraments under the *Old* Testament. Such is the fact, and it is a fact of importance to be noticed; because we believe that the Christian dispensation was engrafted on the Mosaic; both dispensations being equally given under the covenant of grace, and the latter being only the completion or perfecting of the former.

It appears from several passages of the New Testament, that Baptism and the Lord's Supper in the *Christian* church, have succeeded to Circumcision and the Passover in the *Jewish*. If you will read attentively the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and the third chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, you will see that the blessings of the covenant which God made with Abraham, and of which circumcision was to him the seal, were not intended to be confined to the Jews, his natural descendants, but to be extended to the Gentiles also; he being by the divine appointment the father of the faithful to the latter, as really as to the former. It will also appear from the four last verses of Galatians iii., that Christians are "*baptized* into Christ," as *their* seal of the gracious covenant, just as *circumcision* was that seal to Abraham and his seed.

That the Lord's Supper is the Christian Passover, is not less evident. It was in the close of the Jewish Passover supper, that our Redeemer instituted the sacramental supper of his own death; thus engrafting the new dispensation on the old, and in place of the

type exhibiting the antitype, the substance instead of the shadow; and for the paschal lamb, directing the view of his disciples to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world—the Lamb, without blemish and without spot, slain from the foundation of the world. Hence the apostle, Cor iv. 7, says, “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”

In the 17th chapter of Genesis, we have a full and distinct account of the institution of the rite of circumcision, which you ought to read with attention and care. Speaking of the spiritual meaning of this sacramental ceremony, Fisher says justly, “It signified the impurity and corruption of nature, the necessity of regeneration, or being cut off from the first Adam as a federal head, and of being implanted in Christ, in order to partake of the benefits of his mediation, together with a solemn virtual engagement to be the Lord’s.”

In the 12th chapter of Exodus, we have a very particular and interesting account of the institution of the Jewish Passover. You are aware that it derived its name from the fact, that the destroying angel, who smote to death all the first born, both of man and beast among the Egyptians, *passed over* every house of the Israelites, whose door posts and lintels were sprinkled, according to the divine direction, with the blood of the paschal lamb. Every part of this remarkable institution was typical, and strikingly significative of the redemption of Christ, and the benefits of his most precious blood-shedding. The very name of the institution imported much—imported that the sword of divine justice will pass over, and never slay the soul, which is sprinkled with the atoning blood of the Saviour. The passover lamb was to be without blemish, to denote that although our sins were imputed to Christ, yet he was in himself “a Lamb without blemish and without spot—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” The paschal lamb was to die in no other way than by shedding its blood; to intimate that without the shedding of the blood of our Redeemer, there could be no re-

mission of sin; that in no other way could divine justice be satisfied, and the sinner be reconciled to his God. The lamb of the passover was to be prepared for being eaten, exclusively, by being roasted with fire; intimating that the Redeemer, when he stood as the Surety of sinners, was to endure the most exquisite and extreme sufferings, and to be made, in body and soul, a burnt sacrifice, as it were, for the sins of those in whose room and stead his awful agonies were endured. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him—God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." The lamb of the passover was to be eaten *entire*—no part of it was to remain unconsumed. Did not this signify that faith must receive *a whole Christ*—in all his offices, and for all the purposes for which he became a Saviour?—That he must be made of God unto all his people "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel" were required to prepare and partake of the passover supper, *at the same time*; to denote, we may reasonably believe, that there is enough in Christ to satisfy the spiritual necessities of all his people, be the number ever so great. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

"The solemn *eating of the lamb* was typical of our gospel-duty to Christ. The paschal lamb was killed, not to be looked upon only, but to be fed upon; so we must by faith make Christ ours, as we do that which we eat; and we must receive spiritual strength and nourishment from him, as from our food; and have delight and satisfaction in him, as we have in eating and drinking, when we are hungry and thirsty. . . . It was to be eaten immediately, not deferred till morning. *To-day* Christ is offered, and is to be accepted while it is called *to-day*, before we sleep the sleep of death. It was to be eaten *with bitter herbs*, in remembrance of the bitterness of the bondage in Egypt. We must feed upon Christ with sorrow and brokenness of heart, in remembrance of sin; this will give an additional relish to the paschal

lamb; Christ will be sweet to us if sin be bitter. It was to be eaten in a departing posture. When we feed upon Christ by faith, we must absolutely forsake the rule and dominion of sin, shake off Pharaoh's yoke; and we must sit loose to the world and every thing in it; forsake all for Christ, and reckon it no bad bargain."*

As it is of no inconsiderable importance to know the typical import of the ancient rites of Circumcision and the Passover, not only that their true nature may be understood, but as illustrative of the spiritual design of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which have come in their place, I thought it proper to give the somewhat extended explanation, to which your attention has just been called. I only add, that although "the sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were for substance the same with those of the New;"† yet as the former looked forward to a Saviour who was yet to come, and the latter regard him as having come, and made known, fully and distinctly, the nature and design of his mediatorial undertaking, they make the spiritual things which they represent, far more plain and impressive to believers under the gospel, than they were to those who lived under the legal and typical dispensation which preceded them.

In concluding my remarks on the answer now before us, it may be proper just to mention, that the Papists, among the other unauthorized supplements which they have impiously made to the word of God, have added five sacraments to those which that word prescribes and sanctions; namely, *confirmation, penance, ordination, marriage, and extreme unction*—for none of which can even a plausible plea be made out, from any passage of sacred Scripture.

We now proceed to the next answer of our Catechism, in which Baptism is thus defined.

"Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing

* Henry.

† Confession of Faith.

with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our engrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's."

Baptism is a word of Greek derivation,* and the verb from which the noun is derived properly denotes, in its use as applied to this ordinance, *to wash*. That such is its true signification, and that it is applicable to every species of washing, whether by sprinkling, affusion, or dipping; and whether a part only or the whole of a substance is to be washed or cleansed, has been clearly, and I think most conclusively shown, by the learned Dr. John Owen, in his short treatise on the subject of Baptism. On this point, however, as well as on the question whether infants are the proper subjects of baptism, volumes of controversy have been written; and the controversy is apparently as far from being settled now, as at any former period. The mode of baptism, however, is, I think, allowed on all hands to be less important, than the point which relates to the proper subjects of this ordinance. In considering the next answer in the Catechism, I shall be called to discuss briefly, the subject of infant baptism; but in regard to the manner of administering this ordinance, I shall add but little to the remark already made. It is admitted that baptism by dipping, or by immersion, is lawful and valid. Yet as it is never necessary,† and in this climate is sometimes improper, if not impracticable, and in my apprehension is never expedient, I have for myself, always declined administering it in this form; yet I would not censure those of my brethren who, to satisfy the scruples of certain individuals, have adopted a different course. Although there is reason to believe from some passages of Scripture, that in the land of Judea,

* Βαπτίζω—Βαπτισμός.

† "Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water, upon the person."—Confes. Faith, chap. 28, sec. 3d.

where ablutions were frequent, grateful, and healthy, the baptism of John, and of the apostles of Christ, was sometimes administered by dipping, yet there is neither precept nor any clear example, for the *immersion* of the whole body in water, when an individual is baptized. On the other hand, there are numerous examples of baptism, recorded in the New Testament to have taken place, in such circumstances that neither dipping nor immersion was at all probable, if in some it was even practicable. It would not be difficult to show, that the three thousand who were baptized on the day of Pentecost, and whose conversion and preparation for that ordinance could scarcely have taken place before mid-day, or even a later hour, could not, in the remainder of that day, have been immersed, although the whole twelve apostles had been constantly employed in the service; that is, on the supposition that the parties were taken individually, and the words of the institution were repeated in each instance separately, as we ought to believe was the fact. In like manner, it is highly improbable that the jailer of Philippi and his household, who were baptized in the night, had either the means of immersion at hand, or went abroad for the purpose. The baptism of the centurion Cornelius, and of the apostle Paul himself, as well as of the households that we are informed were admitted to this ordinance, was far more probably performed by sprinkling or affusion, than by dipping or immersion. In a word, we have no scriptural precept in regard to the *mode* of administering baptism, except that it is to be performed by the application of water, in the name of the Three one God; and the recorded examples of its administration were attended by circumstances which render it in a very high degree probable, that the ordinance was much more frequently administered by sprinkling or affusion, than in any other way.

LECTURE LXVIII.

“BAPTISM, according to our Catechism, is a sacrament wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our engrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord’s.”

In appointing baptism to be the introductory ordinance of the visible Christian church, our Lord wisely adopted a rite, with the formal part of which the primitive Jewish believers were already familiar. The Mosaic dispensation itself abounded in ceremonial purifications, by the application of water; to which, indeed, unauthorized tradition had made burdensome additions, which our Saviour disregarded and condemned. It appears, moreover, that when gentile proselytes were received into the Jewish church, they were not only circumcised, but washed or baptized with water—the former by divine direction, the latter without it; yet, as strikingly significative of their being cleansed from their former idolatrous pollutions. The forerunner of our blessed Lord was called the Baptist, or Baptizer,* because it was a part of his commission to administer the baptism of repentance for sin, to those who received his doctrine and professed to be waiting for the appearance of the Messiah.

When our Lord therefore, after his resurrection and immediately before his ascension into heaven, commissioned his apostles, and through them the ministers of the gospel “to the end of the world,” to administer baptism to believers of “all nations”—for till now it had been confined to the Jews—he needed only to declare the nature and design of the

* Βαπτιστης—“A title from John’s office, not a proper name.”—*Campbell*.

institution, since the mode of its administration was already full known.

Theologians have been divided, as to the proper answer to the inquiry, whether John's baptism was the same as Christian baptism; that is, the same as that which our Lord commanded his disciples to administer, after his resurrection. In the beginning of the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we have this record:

“1 And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples,

“2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

“3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

“4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, That they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

“5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

“6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.”

Those who maintain that John's baptism and Christian baptism did not differ in any thing material, insist that the fifth verse in this quotation, is to be considered as affirming that those who had received John's baptism did, by the mere hearing and believing the statement of the Apostle Paul, become “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” This I confess has always appeared to me a forced and unnatural construction of a plain passage of sacred Scripture.*

* In the criticism on the original of the sacred text, on which is founded the opinion of Beza, L. Infant, and other learned men, who favour the construction which I oppose, much reliance is placed on the correspondence, which they affirm is always observed, between

I must also say, with Dr. Doddridge, that “ I think it evident beyond all dispute, that the *baptism* of John and of Christ, were in their own nature *quite different*; and that it is plain, in fact, that when persons were *converted to Christianity*, they were *baptized of course*, without inquiring whether they *had*, or *had not*, received *the baptism of John*, which we know vast multitudes did, (Matt. iii. 5, 6,) who probably afterwards received *Christian baptism*. Compare Acts ii. 38—41; iv. 4; vi. 7.” The comment of Scott on the 5th and 6th verses of the above quotation, seems to me so candid, judicious, and satisfactory, that I shall close what I have to offer on this point—one which is important though not essential—with quoting it at large.

“ Several learned critics, of different sentiments concerning baptism, have argued that these are the words (in the 5th verse) of Paul, showing the disciples, that when John baptized those who heard his doctrine, he virtually baptized them in the name of Jesus; and not the words of the historian relating the baptism of these persons, subsequent to the apostle’s instruction of them. Some of those who first contended for this interpretation, did it out of zeal against such as they called *Re-baptizers*, lest they should adduce this example in support of their practice. But by maintaining the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ to be *entirely* the same, they have furnished their opponents with a far more plausible argument, than that which they wanted to wrest from them. But, however that may be, I cannot think that any impartial man, who never heard of these controversies, would, either from reading the original, or our translation, put this construction on

the Greek particles, $\mu\epsilon\iota$, in the 4th verse, and $\delta\epsilon$ in the fifth verse: this, it is affirmed, proves satisfactorily, that these two verses are to be considered as the continued language of Paul. But the investigations of Griesback have led him to reject the particle $\mu\epsilon\iota$ altogether, and to expel it from the sacred text, as plainly a spurious addition. If this be a just decision, as it probably is, the main support of Beza’s opinion is at once entirely subverted. Paul’s language is confined to the 4th verse; in the fifth the historian speaks.

the words. If John could in any sense be said to baptize his disciples in the name of the Lord Jesus, Jesus himself must have been baptized virtually in his own name. Even St. Paul's question, 'Unto what then were ye baptized?' implies a distinction between different kinds of baptism; and shows that he concluded that they had not received Christian baptism, having never heard of the Holy Spirit, in whose name Christians were baptized.—'This is visible even in the words of St. Paul here, John said to those that came to his baptism *ἰνα πιστευωσιν*, not that they *did*, but that they *should*, believe in him that was coming after him; now they were not to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, till they did actually believe in him, which they who had received John's baptism were so far from doing, that they were "musing whether John himself were not the Christ." (*Whitby*.) After Christ's ascension no inquiry was made, that we read of, whether the converts had been baptized by John, or no: and if but one of the three thousand, who were baptized on the day of Pentecost, had been John's disciple, (and probably numbers were such,) the baptism of John and that of Jesus must have been distinct ordinances. The difference between that introductory institution to the Christian dispensation, and the initiatory external seal of that dispensation, has been already considered, (*Notes, Matt. iii.*) Some have indeed said, that if John's baptism and Christ's were different, our Lord had no communion with the New Testament in baptism, as he had with the Old Testament Church in circumcision. But he was made *under the law* to fulfil its righteousness, as our Surety; and must therefore, both on that account and as our example, obey every command, and attend on every institution of God then in force: but there was not the same reason for his joining in the ordinances of the gospel, which he appointed merely as our Lord and King. Doubtless he ate the passover with his disciples, yet it does not appear that he partook of the eucharist: (*Luke xxii. 17—20*;) it is not probable that he did; neither

can it be supposed, that he was ‘baptized into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,’ which seems essential to Christian baptism. I apprehend therefore that these persons, being further instructed by Paul, were admitted into the Church by baptism; previously to the communication of the Holy Spirit to them, by the imposition of the apostle’s hands.”

Water, the element employed in baptism, is, in its nature, emblematical of the spiritual objects and benefits referred to in this sacred ordinance. Water is so abundant, that the freedom of its use, by all who need it, is proverbial; and its cleansing or purifying qualities are confessedly pre-eminent. Thus, the great salvation of Christ is freely offered to all who desire to embrace it; and in its application, the soul is purified from all its moral defilement. By the blood of Christ, the soul of the believer is cleansed from the *guilt* of sin, and by the powerful influences of his Holy Spirit, the *stain* or pollution of sin is gradually, and at length entirely, removed; and both these inestimable spiritual benefits are significantly shadowed forth by the washing of water in baptism.

According to the answer of the Catechism now under consideration, baptism is to be administered “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;” and as this is in accordance with the express and particular command of Christ himself, it must be held as essential to the validity of the ordinance, that these very words of the original institution be used in every instance of its administration. The Greek preposition, *εις* (*eis*), which, in the common version of our Bible is, in this place, rendered *in*, properly denotes *into*, and is so rendered in many other passages of the New Testament. Christians are therefore baptized “*into* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;” and I have met with nothing more satisfactory, in explanation of the important and solemn import of this sacred formula of Christian baptism, than that which is given by Scott, in the following passage of his commentary:

“The Apostles and preachers of the gospel were ordered to baptize those who embraced the gospel, into the *name* (not *names*) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This is a most irrefragable proof of the doctrine of the Trinity; that is, of the Deity of the Son, and of the distinct personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit; for it would be absurd to suppose that a mere man or creature, or a mere *modus*, or quality of God, should be joined with the Father, in the *one name*, into which all Christians are baptized. To be baptized into the name of any one, implies a professed dependence on him, and devoted subjection to him: to be baptized, therefore into the “name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” implies a professed dependence on these three divine Persons, jointly and equally, and a devoting of ourselves to them as worshippers and servants. This is proper and obvious, upon the supposition of the mysterious unity of three coequal persons in the unity of the Godhead; but not to be accounted for on any other principles. Christianity is the religion of a sinner, who relies for salvation from wrath and sin, on the mercy of the Father, through the person and atonement of the incarnate Son, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit; and who, in consequence, gives up himself to be the worshipper and servant of the triune JEHOVAH, in all his ordinances and commandments; that according to the ancient and excellent Doxology, “Glory may be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.”

The answer before us further states, that baptism “doth signify and seal our engrafting into Christ, and partaking of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord’s.”

1. It signifies and seals our engrafting into Christ. It has been justly remarked, that baptism does not constitute a visible subject, but only recognizes one already existing; it does not introduce an individual into the covenant of grace, but it *signifies* that he is already there. It *seals* a covenant already formed,

and which, indeed, would not admit of a seal, if it were not previously made, and prepared for sealing. Abraham had "the righteousness of faith," before he was circumcised; Cornelius "feared God and was accepted of him," before he was baptized; and every adult candidate for baptism ought to give credible evidence of being born of God, before he is admitted to the ordinance. The infant seed of professing Christians, in virtue of their parents' faith and standing, are born members of the visible church, and are considered as partakers of those benefits of the covenant of grace which belong to the offspring of believers, before they are baptized: and hence it appears, that when professing Christians have not had a proper opportunity to offer their children in baptism, and they die without it, no fear or regret should be indulged by their parents. Their children were born within the covenant, and no duty has been neglected, if a fit occasion for affixing the outward seal has not occurred. If indeed such opportunity has been enjoyed, and yet neglected, then the guilt of the parent is unquestionable—guilt which it still may be hoped will not affect the future state of the child, but which, if not repented of, will surely affect that of the sinful parent. It clearly follows, also, from the fact that a participation of the grace of God is supposed to precede baptism, that this ordinance cannot be essential to salvation. Many, doubtless, have been partakers of the saving grace of God, who have died without baptism. The penitent thief, on the cross, was, we know, an example of this kind. Yet when this, or any other plain duty, is deliberately, wilfully, or carelessly neglected, it may well occasion doubts and fears in the minds of the neglecters, that they are not, and never have been, sharers in the saving grace of God. Another remark may here find its proper place; namely, that as among men there are certain transactions which can be rendered valid only when the evidence of them is sealed by the proper civil officer, so our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has commissioned none but his ministers to affix the baptismal

seal of the covenant of grace, and has commanded that they be accounted “as stewards of the mysteries of God;” and therefore it is on good and scriptural authority that our Confession of Faith teaches [chap. xxvii. sec. 4.] “that neither of the sacraments may be dispensed by any, but by a minister of the word, lawfully ordained.” And as there is no command, and no adequate example for the repetition of baptism, our Confession of Faith also declares, in the chapter just cited, that “The sacrament of baptism is but once to be administered to any person;” and that “by Christ’s own appointment, it is to be continued in his church until the end of the world.”

2. Baptism signifies and seals a “partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace.” This follows of course, from being ingrafted into Christ, as members of his mystical body, and the head of that gracious covenant which has been ratified in his blood. The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians (Gal. iii. 27,) says, “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have *put on* Christ.” Compare this with Romans iii. 22, where the same Apostle declares that “the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all, and *upon* all them that believe,” and you will see that the union with Christ which baptism signifies and seals to every believer, assures to him the inestimable benefit of being clothed upon with the Redeemer’s perfect righteousness, and consequently of justification from the condemning sentence of the law—with the favour of God, and all the blessings of time and eternity promised in the covenant of grace. The benefits of this covenant are justly stated in our Larger Catechism to be, “remission of sins by the blood of Christ; regeneration by his Spirit, adoption and resurrection unto life everlasting.” Our Confession of Faith also very properly reminds us, that “The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time in which it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised, is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to

such (whether of age or infants,) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time."

3. A solemn "engagement to be the Lord's" is contracted, by all who receive the sacrament of baptism. It may be considered as the seal of God set upon every recipient; a seal of the covenant voluntarily assumed on the part of the believer, and pledging him to the fulfilment of his covenant stipulations; binding him to renounce utterly, and oppose for ever, all rivals and competitors of his God and Saviour; and engaging him to be the Lord's, in all that he has and is—in body, soul, and spirit, for time and for eternity. In a word, as our Larger Catechism teaches, "the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's."

It would be a lamentable error, my young friends, if any of you who were baptized in infancy, should think, or say in your hearts, that you have been subjected to a grievous hardship by your pious parents, when in this ordinance they offered you up to God in your infancy, and had you sealed as his property, and engaged for you, so far as their influence, efforts and example could avail, that you should do and be all that is implied in the baptismal covenant, as now explained. You would not have thought it a hardship, if your parents had, by acting in your behalf in your non age, secured to you the eventual possession of a large and valuable worldly estate, on condition of your doing and acting, in your coming years, in a manner most reasonable in itself, and most worthy of yourselves. But infinitely more and better than this, did they do for you, when they devoted you to God in infant baptism, and placed you under the bonds of his gracious covenant. Nothing can be so reasonable in itself, and so worthy of your rational and immortal nature, as that you should renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, cordially embrace the great salvation of your redeeming God, and walk before him to your life's end, in obedience to all his

commandments, and in the observance of all his ordinances and institutions: and doing this, you will be the sure possessors of an inheritance infinitely richer than all the treasures of the world—an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, in the mansions of eternal bliss. Oh, may none of you be guilty of the sacrilege of alienating yourselves—the property of God—from his service to that of his adversary! May you all esteem it your privilege, as well as your duty, to be consecrated unreservedly to the Lord, and make your parents' act your own, by your voluntary choice and assumption; and thus insure to yourselves all the blessings and benefits of heirs of God and joint heirs with his own Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I close this extended lecture by quoting from our larger Catechism, the admirable statement it contains of the improvement that ought to be made of their baptism, by all who have received it. “The needful, but much neglected duty of improving our baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long, especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others, by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein; by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to, the grace of baptism and our engagements; by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament; by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace; and by endeavouring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ, and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same spirit into one body.”

LECTURE LXIX.

IN the lecture on which we now enter, we are to consider who are the proper subjects of baptism. Our Catechism teaches us, that "Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church, are to be baptized."

In order to a right understanding of this article of our creed, you must observe that it consists of two distinct parts; the first part referring exclusively to persons of *adult age*, and the second part to *infant children*.

1. In regard to those whose faculties or powers are so far matured that they are able to comprehend the truths of the gospel, and who have not been baptized in infancy, and of course "are out of the visible church," it is declared that they are not to be baptized "till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him." Small indeed was the number of those who had faith in Christ, when the ordinance of Christian baptism was instituted by our blessed Lord, shortly before his ascension into heaven. Even among the Jews, the company of believers was emphatically "a little flock," and among the Gentiles it was still less.* But the injunction to the apostles was, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have

* The Syrophenician woman, the Greeks introduced to our Lord by Philip at the last passover, the Centurion whose servant our Lord healed at Capernaum, possibly the nobleman also who received a similar favour at the same place, appear to have been believing Gentiles. Of the Samaritans, beside the woman who first met our Saviour at the well, it is said that "many believed on him." Yet in all, the number was probably less than the one hundred and twenty, mentioned Acts i. 15.

commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

It is plain from the nature of the case, that adults were, in this commission, contemplated as the first recipients of Christian baptism; for till they had become believers themselves, they would not be disposed, even if they had been permitted, to receive this sacrament for their children. It is therefore no valid objection to infant baptism, that in the original institution there was a command “to teach” those to whom it was to be administered; of which infant children, we know, were, and ever will be, altogether incapable.

The gospel was to be preached, and when, under the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, its saving efficacy should be experienced, the subjects of this blessed operation were, on their profession of their faith in Christ and obedience to him, to receive this seal of his gracious covenant, and to be enrolled as members of his visible church. This was accordingly done both to Jews and Gentiles in the apostolic age, and was prescribed in the command, to be done in every successive age to the end of the world. But although Heathen, Jews, and Infidels, and the ignorant and uninformed among professing Christians, and even those who had been ever so well instructed, were not to be baptized till they were prepared to make a credible profession of sincere faith in Christ and obedience to him; yet, as soon as they were thus prepared, no matter what might have been their previous character, they were, by this ordinance, to be admitted into the visible Christian church.

That a profession which implies a *saving* reception of evangelical truth, is to be made by all who receive baptism in adult age, may be gathered from the command to “*teach*” the recipients of this sacrament—to *disciple* them it is in the original—to observe all things whatsoever, which Christ delivered to his apostles: for the injunction here given manifestly related to a *teaching* which should be *effective*; and which appears to be so, at the administration of the

ordinance. But in regard to this point, we have example as well as inference. We find that when those who were converted under the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, and the Ethiopian eunuch who was taught the essential truths of the gospel by the evangelist Philip, received this sacred rite, it was connected with the visibility, or profession, of a saving faith. I remark, further, that the words of the institution, while they imply what has already been stated, indicate also, that teaching should *accompany* the celebration of Christian baptism. Accordingly, our Directory for worship requires, that "before baptism, the minister use some words of instruction respecting the institution, nature, and ends of this ordinance."

Private baptism, although not forbidden either by the divine word or the standards of our church, but recognized by both, as lawful in special cases, ought nevertheless, to be regarded only as an exception to a general rule. If the united prayers of God's people in public worship are valuable on any occasion, they certainly are so on this; the witnessing of the ordinance also, is calculated to be useful to every spectator; and when an addition is made to the members of the church, whether those members be in adult or infant age, there is an evident propriety that, in ordinary cases, it should be made publicly.

It is evident from the circumcision of John the Baptist, that a name was given, when that rite was administered by the Jews,* and it is usually given in the administration of Christian baptism. But the remark of Dr. Doddridge on this subject is, in my apprehension, both just and important. He says—"The giving a child its *name*, was no more a part of the original intent of *circumcision* than of *baptism*: it was an incidental circumstance that custom had

* The Bible certainly contains no precept relative to the giving of a name when the rite of circumcision was celebrated. Yet the conjecture seems not improbable, that the *usage* originated from the circumstance that Abram was called *Abraham*, when circumcision was appointed.

added. And I cannot forbear saying that, in administering the Christian ordinance, I think care should be taken to order the voice, so that it may plainly appear we only then speak to the child by the *name* that hath been already given it."

2. The second, and affirmative part of the answer now under consideration is, "that the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized."

The first question here seems to be, "Who are members of the visible church?" To this, our larger Catechism, in exact accordance with Chap. xxv. of the Confession of Faith, answers—"The visible church is a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world, profess the true religion, and of their children;" and our form of government, chap. ii. sec. 4, says—"A particular church consists of a number of professing Christians, with their offspring, voluntarily associated together, for divine worship, and godly living, agreeably to the Holy Scriptures; and submitting to a certain form of Government." Agreeably to these constitutional articles of the Presbyterian church, which the passages of Scripture, to which they refer, clearly show to be in conformity with the unerring oracles of God, it appears that the *children*, or offspring of church members, are themselves members of the church, as really and fully as their parents; and all that we have said hitherto on the subject of baptism, is in coincidence with this idea. The offspring of professing believers, then, having, by their birth and baptism, a complete standing in the visible church, have, it appears, a right to present their children in baptism; unless they *forfeit* this right by such acts or neglects, as justly to subject them to the discipline of the church: and that this right may be forfeited or suspended, both by actual transgression and by the neglect of duty, is a principle which few will deny, and which we shall here take for granted. On this principle, many churches in our communion, regarding a neglect of the express command of Christ in regard to the sacramental supper, "Do this in remembrance of me," as marking, in all cases, a very

censurable deficiency in Christian duty, exclude from the privilege of offering their children in baptism, all who are chargeable with this neglect; although they are the offspring of believing parents, and the general aspect of their character, and the declared exercises of their mind, are such as would otherwise entitle them to the privilege which is denied them. Other churches in our communion think this system unduly rigorous, and adopt a different practice. This subject has been referred to the supreme judicatory of our church in repeated instances; and the result has been that each particular church has been left to pursue, in this matter, the course which to them may appear most conformable to the principles of the gospel, and most conducive to Christian edification.

I have hesitated, my young friends, whether I would introduce this topic at all, in the course of lectures which I am now delivering to you. But being willing, on every topic of religion and morals, to make, on all proper occasions, a frank avowal of my sentiments, and considering that the matter in question is one of practice in the Presbyterian Church, I thought on the whole, that my duty required that I should offer you my sentiments upon it. This, however, I must do briefly and summarily, as the nature of these lectures do not admit, in any case, of an extended discussion. Let me then be understood as delivering my own individual sentiments, and not as advocating any opinions or any practice, inconsistent with the statement I make. With regret and grief I admit, that in some churches of our denomination, there is what appears to me a very criminal laxness, in regard to the administration of this ordinance. Neither have I any belief in such a thing as a *half way covenant*; nor am I prepared to say, that the essential qualifications for participation in both sacraments are not the same: and I distinctly say, that baptism, in my judgment, ought not to be administered to those of whom there is not reasonable ground to believe, after examination and inquiry, that the requisitions of duty, specified in the vii. chapter of our Directory for Wor-

ship, will be solemnly regarded, and their performance conscientiously endeavoured. All this notwithstanding, I cannot make abstinence from the Lord's supper, the ground, in all cases, of precluding from the privilege of devoting their infant offspring to God in baptism, some who are desirous of doing it, although they cannot, for the present, view themselves as prepared to go to the table of the Lord. It is one thing for me to be willing to admit a person to the holy communion, and another thing for that person to be willing to come; one thing to be actually prepared to come, and another thing to be satisfied that such is the fact; one thing to be confounded and silenced by arguments, which go to show that if you are prepared for one sacrament you must also be prepared for the other, and another thing to be so convinced and satisfied of this, as to have freedom to act in so solemn a concern. Confusion and silence are not satisfaction or conviction.

From whatever cause it may arise, the fact is indisputable, that there is in some minds—and they are often among the best minds—a scrupulous tenderness about going to the table of the Lord, which it is extremely difficult to satisfy or remove. In the congregation in which I was born and brought up, and in which what is called the *strict plan* was most strictly followed, there was a man who was regarded by its pastor, my own father, as second to no man in his charge, as an exemplary Christian, and yet this man never could, and to the day of his death, I believe, never did, get his own consent to approach the table of the Lord—nor were his children baptized. It is no very uncommon thing for a communicant of decided Christian character, after partaking of the eucharist for years in succession, to become so scrupulous in regard to his fitness to sit down at the Lord's table, as to absent himself from it for a season—in some instances for a long season. Are persons of this description fit subjects for discipline? I think not; on the contrary, it seems to me they are subjects for much Christian sympathy, and great tenderness of treatment.

And should such individuals as those to whom in the two foregoing instances I have referred, be willing and desirous to offer their children in baptism—and so they might be—ought they to be refused? My answer is decidedly in the negative. It may be said, I am aware, that the refusal of baptism, in such cases, might be the means of bringing the parties the sooner to the full discharge of duty; but I cannot persuade myself that the Saviour, who taught his disciples “as they were able to bear it,” and bore with their infirmities to a very great extent; nor the apostle who enjoined so much tenderness toward those who “were weak in faith,” and “babes in Christ,” would either have inflicted discipline in any such case, or refused any privilege of which the parties concerned were willing and desirous to avail themselves. Doubtless, all hollow pretences, and all fabricated or lightly formed excuses are, when manifest, to be utterly disregarded; but where there is good evidence of real conscientiousness, and a careful regard and attention to Christian duties in general, I would never preclude an individual from any Christian privilege, that he was disposed to claim.

On the whole, then, I would say, let all profane persons, all neglecters of public or family worship, all who are uninstructed in the nature of the sacrament of baptism and the solemn duties which it imposes, all, in a word, as has already been said, in regard to whom there is not reason to hope and expect, that they will conscientiously endeavour to comply with the obligations which they come under in the baptismal service—let all such be refused baptism for their children, till they are better prepared to be admitted to the privilege: but let all such be admitted, as are not chargeable with any of the disqualifications now specified. When the first application for baptism is made by parents, not in full communion with the church, let the pastor see them by themselves; inquire into their knowledge of the nature of baptism, and the obligations it involves; instruct them, if they need it; learn the state of their minds in regard to religious

duty in general; remind them that there is another sacrament, in the neglect of which they cannot live contentedly without sin; converse with them in a very tender, serious, and impressive manner; and conclude with as solemn, appropriate, and affecting a prayer as he can offer. If he find, as he probably sometimes will, that the parties need more instruction, or more engagedness in religion than they possess at his first visit, let him, with affectionate fidelity, tell them so; defer, for a short time, a compliance with their request, visit them again, and endeavour to aid them in attaining such preparation as that he may eventually admit them, with freedom on his part and advantage on theirs, to this sacred rite. And if such procedure as is here stated give offence, as in some instances it may, it is a clear indication that the parties concerned ought to be refused the privilege which they seek, till they manifest a better spirit. This system, I am fully aware, will give a pastor far more trouble, than that in which baptism is at once refused, to all who do not partake of the other sacrament. But it will be trouble well taken; for, if I mistake not greatly, the course contemplated will be attended with several very important advantages. It is calculated, when properly conducted, to gain for a pastor a high degree of confidence and affection from his people, especially from the younger part of his charge; and it will give him a most desirable opportunity to learn the state of their minds, and to address to them instruction and counsel of the most appropriate and beneficial kind; it will often furnish him with information that will be of great use in his public preaching; and it will not unfrequently result in bringing into the full communion of the church, a number who will be among its brightest ornaments; but who might otherwise long deprive themselves of an invaluable and comfortable privilege, and the church of the advantage of their example, and of their aid and influence.

The truth is, that in most of the churches of our denomination, there is a mournful disregard of the

duty which ought to be performed toward baptized children. They are not viewed and treated as members of the church at all, nor more regard shown to them than to those who are unbaptized. This is a grievous and very criminal neglect. If baptized children were often reminded, both by their parents and by the pastors and elders of the churches, of their early consecration to God, and their actual standing as members of the church of Christ; and if they were, with great affection and kindness, instructed in their duty, and the performance of it was brought home to their consciences; and if to all this, much earnest and special prayer were constantly offered to God in their behalf—we should see numbers of them more early, and with no objection from any quarter, partaking of both the sacraments which our merciful God and Saviour has instituted, for the comfort and edification of his church.

As to those who are in the full communion of the church, no argument is necessary to show their claim to present their children in baptism, if such a claim be granted to any in the word of God. On this point there is no controversy. The portion also of our Standards which teaches, that if either parent of a child be a church member, the child is entitled to baptism, is fairly and firmly grounded on the passage of Scripture to which our Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism refer, 1 Cor. vii. 14. "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." If this text has not a reference to infant baptism, it seems to be incapable of any rational explanation; but with such a reference, its meaning is plain and pertinent. I will give you the paraphrase of Doddridge on the words, and the note with which he accompanies it. "*For in such a case as this, the unbelieving husband is so sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is so sanctified by the husband, that their matrimonial converse is as lawful as if they were both of the same faith: otherwise your children, in*

these mixed cases, *were unclean*, and must be looked upon as unfit to be admitted to those peculiar ordinances, by which the seed of God's people are distinguished; *but now they are* confessedly *holy*, and are as readily admitted to baptism in all our churches, as if both the parents were Christians; so that the case you see, is in effect decided by this prevailing practice."

The note is as follows:

"On the maturest and most impartial consideration of this *text*, I must judge it to refer to *infant baptism*. Nothing can be more apparent than that the word *holy*, signifies *persons*, who might be admitted to partake of the distinguishing rights of God's people. Compare Exod. xix. 6; Deut. vii. 6; chap. xiv. 2; chap. xxvi. 19; chap. xxxiii. 3; Ezra ix. 2; with Isa. xxxv. 8; chap. lii. 1; Acts x. 28, &c. And as for the interpretation, which so many of our brethren, the Baptists, have contended for, that *holy* signifies *legitimate*, and *unclean*, *illegitimate*; (not to urge that this seems an unscriptural sense of the word,) nothing can be more evident, than that the argument will by no means bear it; for it would be proving a thing by itself, *idem per idem*, to argue that the converse of the parents was lawful, because the children were not *bastards*; whereas all who thought the converse of the parents *unlawful*, must of course think that the children were *illegitimate*."

The comment of Scott on this passage is to the same effect as that of Doddridge, and is well worthy of your perusal.

But you are aware that there is a large denomination of Protestant Christians; who admit that the sacrament of baptism is of divine institution, and of perpetual obligation, and yet deny that it is, in any case, to be administered to infant children, or to youth in nonage. In a former lecture I have remarked, that this has been, and still is, the subject of much and ardent controversy, and intimated that my discussion of the point would not be extensive: and indeed if baptism has come in place of circumcision, as I have en-

deavoured to show, and the passage of sacred Scripture just referred to is rightly expounded by the able commentators quoted—to which a host of others might be added—the point is already settled, that the infant seed of believers are, by divine appointment, to be baptized.

Indeed, my young friends, although volumes upon volumes have been published on this controversy, yet the substance of it lies in a narrow compass, and is of a character to be judged of by any candid and moderately informed Christian. Some years since, when called, in the performance of pastoral duty, to administer this sacrament to an infant, in the congregation which I then served, I introduced the administration in nearly these words—“Are we asked why we baptize infants? I answer, we have the clearest evidence that by divine appointment they were once introduced into the church of God, and there is not a particle of evidence that he has ever, by a subsequent order excluded them from it; and if God has once conferred this privilege on the children of believers, and has never withdrawn it, who or what is man, that he should take from these little ones and from their parents, a grant which their Maker has made them?” This short statement, I was well informed, settled satisfactorily the question in relation to infant baptism, in a mind which had been labouring under painful doubts on the subject, for twenty years. Now, my young friends, here is really the essence of the matter in controversy; and as the brief statement I have repeated, satisfied one anxious mind, and I am confined to narrow limits, I have offered it to you, in the hope that it may have a similar influence on your minds. We believe that God, in a transaction with Abraham, as the father of the faithful to the end of time, made this solemn declaration. (Gen. xvii. 7.) “I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” We know that of this covenant circumcision was the seal; and we believe that in the New Testa-

ment, there is unequivocal evidence that “the blessing of Abraham has come upon the Gentiles;” that Christian believers are regarded as his spiritual seed; (Gal. iii.) and that baptism has come in the place of circumcision as the seal of the covenant originally made with him. Now, all the evidence which does or can exist in regard to this subject, is contained in the Bible, which we have in our own language; and hence I have said, that every candid and moderately informed Christian can judge of it for himself. Let him carefully, candidly, and prayerfully compare the Old Testament with the New, and decide for himself on the points I have stated; and doing this, he decides the question at issue between us and the Antipædo Baptists. They endeavour to set aside almost every point in the statement I have made. But the Bible, they admit with us, must determine where the truth lies; and the Bible is open to us all; it is a popular book, intended for common Christians as well as for the learned; and when read and made its own interpreter, by comparing one part with another, the very truth, all false reasoning notwithstanding, may be known on this, as on all other important subjects—provided only that there be simplicity of purpose, diligence of research, and prayer for divine guidance, in the Christian inquirer. One of the most specious arguments used by our Baptist brethren is, that a positive institution requires a positive precept, and is not to be rested on any inferences, however direct or conclusive they may seem; and that there is no precept in the word of God for infant baptism. But this objection, it has been shown, must bring on the Baptists the charge of palpable inconsistencies in their own practice—shown that it will, among other things, prohibit female communion altogether; since there is neither express precept, nor recorded example for this, in the New Testament. Nor is this a solitary difficulty—others, equally formidable, attend the objection; and I shall put an end to this extended lecture by a short quotation, touching the point before us, from Ridgely’s *Body of Divinity*—“I cannot but

think," says Ridgely, "that this objection would equally hold good against Christ's dying for infants, as well as others, or of their being capable of justification, regeneration, and the saving blessings of the covenant of grace; and it might be as well inferred from hence that they are not to be devoted to God in other instances, besides that of baptism; or that we have not the least ground to expect their salvation; for it would be as hard a matter to find this contained in express words of Scripture, as that which is the matter of controversy, to wit, that they are not to be baptized."

LECTURE LXX.

THE Lord's supper, which is to be the subject of the ensuing lecture, is, according to our Catechism, "a sacrament, wherein by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace."

The sacrament we now consider is called the *Lord's supper*, because it was instituted at the close of the Jewish passover, which was always celebrated in the evening. It does not appear, however, that the time of the day at which the celebration takes place is important; further than that it be that part which is most convenient to the communicants. It is probable that in the primitive church there was scarcely an hour of the four and twenty, at which this holy ordinance was not sometimes administered—occasionally, to avoid interruption or persecution, at a late hour of the night, or just before the dawn of the morning.

In some periods of the church there have been warm controversies, and even at present there are some Christian sects that are disposed to be exceedingly strenuous, in relation to the mere circumstantial of this sacred rite: whether the bodily attitude in which it should be received, should be kneeling, sitting, standing or a recumbent posture; whether the kind of bread that is used, should be leavened or unleavened; whether the wine that is employed should be in colour red or white; whether all the communicants should be seated at a table, or whether any other table is necessary than that on which the sacred symbols are placed; and whether the officiating minister should himself hand the sacred symbols to each individual

communicant, or whether this may be done by deacons and lay elders, or by communicants themselves, passing the bread and wine from one to another. There has also been a difference of opinion, as to the frequency with which this sacrament should be celebrated. I would by no means say that all these circumstantialia stand exactly on the same footing. So far as any of them are superstitious, or uncommanded, and yet are treated as of divine obligation, they are certainly, in that view of them, not to be admitted.

The denomination to which we belong are in the habit of partaking of the holy communion in a sitting posture, thinking, that as this ordinance was originally celebrated in the posture then used at a common meal, it is most proper that the posture which is now in use at a common meal should be observed; and they object to kneeling, as being without precept or example in the New Testament; and also because it is of Popish origin, and connected with worshipping the consecrated elements, in the belief that after consecration, they become the real body and blood of Christ. Our church likewise think, that as the bread and wine in common use were employed by our Lord in the original institution of this sacrament, such of these elements as are now in common use, in any particular part of the church, may there be freely employed without scruple. It is held by us as essential, that a regularly ordained minister of the gospel should administer this ordinance, but that it is immaterial by whom the bread and wine are conveyed from one communicant to another; although where elders or deacons can perform this service, it is deemed most proper that it should be done by them. As to the frequency with which this sacrament should be dispensed, the usage is different in different churches of our denomination. In some, the celebration takes place but once or twice a year; in others it is quarterly, and in others monthly. The circumstances of churches ought certainly to have some regard, in ordering this important concern; but in general, it ought to be more frequent than twice in a year. There is indeed no

precept in the New Testament on the subject; but in the primitive church the celebration, if not weekly, was very frequent. In some parts of our church, all the communicants go to tables prepared for the purpose; in other parts, no other table is used but that on which the bread and wine are placed; and still in other parts, some sit at tables, and others in adjoining seats or pews. These last mentioned usages appear to me quite unimportant: otherwise than as education or habit, and the association of ideas which they create, are deserving of some regard. That the communicants should, in all cases, be separated from the mass of a congregation, and appear as a company by themselves, is in my judgment highly expedient and useful. It exhibits the separation which now exists between the church and the world, and is a striking emblem of the separation that will take place in the final judgment.

But let me admonish you, my young friends, not only in relation to the subject now before us, but in regard to many other things in religion, to keep up a distinction in your own minds, between *circumstantials and essentials*. All circumstantials are not to be considered as either indifferent or unimportant; and in choosing for ourselves, we should adopt those which appear the best, or the least exceptionable. Yet in our difference from others, we ought always to consider whether that difference relates to essentials or only to unessentials. In the matter under consideration, for example, I know of no protestant evangelical denomination, among whom the sacrament of the supper is so defectively and erroneously administered, as wholly to pervert it, or entirely to destroy its great design and its precious benefits. But in the corrupt Romish church, I am of the opinion that the doctrine of transubstantiation, the worshipping of the elements, and the entire refusal of one of those elements to all but ecclesiastics, must be considered as destroying essentially the very nature and design of this sacred institution.

Let us now attend to that part of the answer before

us, in which we are reminded that the ordinance under consideration owes its institution "to Christ's appointment." He only, as the Lord and head of the church, had a right to abolish the Jewish passover, and to put in its place the commemorative supper of his own death. But as his right to do this was supreme and unquestionable, the appointment becomes obligatory on his disciples to the end of time. There is no intimation whatever, that this was to be only a temporary institution; on the contrary, the apostle Paul (1 Cor. xi. 26,) states that the reason given by the divine Saviour himself, for the perpetuity of this sacrament was—"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."*

It is an interesting and affecting consideration that the point of time at which our blessed Lord instituted this sacrament, was that which immediately preceded his last inconceivable sufferings; when he had in near and distinct view his awful agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and the whole train of outward and inward distresses, which were to terminate in his death on the cross. Even then, his love to his redeemed people, whose law place he had assumed, was so intense, that he postponed, as it were, all attention to himself, that he might provide for their edification and consolation, till his second coming. O, my dear youth! when we think in what circumstances our now glorified Redeemer gave to his disciples, and through them to us, this memorial of his dying love,

* In addition to his paraphrase on these words, Doddridge gives the following note:

"*Until he come.* Nothing can be more unreasonable, than to refer this, (as the Quakers do,) to the time when Christ should come, by his *spiritual illumination* on their minds, to take them off from carnal ordinances; for, not to insist upon it, that we have at least as much need of the Lord's supper as the primitive Christians had, (not having so many advantages as they, to keep up the memory of Christ in our minds, to quicken us to holiness, and to unite us in love,) it is evident, the grand coming of Christ by the Spirit was, when it was poured out on the day of Pentecost; an event, which had happened many years before the date of this epistle."

how ought our love to him to rise and overflow! Did he repeatedly say, "Do this in remembrance of me?" And shall not every heart respond, "Yes, adored Immanuel, we will, in the strength of thy promised grace, remember and obey thee, 'while life, and breath, and being last!' We will meet at thy hallowed board, and commemorate the triumphs of that love—'its breadth and length, and depth and height'—on which hang all our hopes of an escape from hell, and an admission into heaven—the heaven whither thou hast gone to prepare a place for all thy faithful followers."

The sacrament of the supper formally and essentially consists, in "showing forth the death of Christ, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to his appointment." Having in my sixty-ninth lecture, when describing the nature of a sacrament, exposed the chief errors and abuses of the Papists, and having in the present lecture said all that I consider necessary in regard to the circumstantialia of this holy ordinance, let us now fix our undivided attention on its true design. In its original institution we are told that our Lord gave thanks, and blessed the sacramental symbols, before they were distributed to his disciples. Hence it is evidently indispensable, that in every administration of the Lord's supper the bread and wine be set apart from a common to a holy use, by thanksgiving and prayer—thanksgiving to God, for his ineffable love in the gift of a Saviour to fallen and sinful man; for the great redemption which was effected at so astonishing a price as the bitter sufferings and death of his only begotten and well beloved Son; and for the ample provision made for the edification and consolation of his people in the institutions of the gospel, and especially in this deeply affecting and unspeakably precious ordinance—prayer for the pardon of sin, through the atonement symbolized in this holy rite; for a blessing on the sensible emblems of the broken body and shed blood of the Redeemer, now set apart to their sacred use; and for the special aid and influence of the Spirit of Christ, to enable his people, even

the weakest of his flock, worthily to participate in this memorial of his dying love.

The bread and wine in the eucharist represent the broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus, when he offered himself without spot to God, as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice for the sins of his believing people; and when they receive and eat this bread, and drink this wine, they do, in the most solemn manner, avow their sole and entire dependance on what their Redeemer then did for them, for their justification unto eternal life. As bread and wine nourish and cherish the life of the body, so they avow their reliance on what was done in their behalf, by their bleeding and dying Lord, for the life of their souls; and as the sensible emblems become incorporated with their bodies, so they avow their desire to be incorporated into Christ, as members of his mystical body. Thus they *show forth his death*, as the consummation of that obedience to the law of God, and endurance of its awful penalty, which constitute the finished righteousness that is “unto all, and upon all them that believe,” and with which being invested, they will stand acquitted in judgment, and be accepted as righteous, even in the sight of that God “before whom the heavens are not clean, and his angels chargeable with folly.”

Let us now consider the position that the worthy receivers of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper are, “not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits.” The principle here asserted was intended both to correct an important error, and to inculcate a most important truth. The error opposed is, that monstrously absurd doctrine of the Romish church which is called *transubstantiation*—and of which enough, I apprehend, has already been said. The truth inculcated is, that it is by faith, the worthy receivers of this sacrament are made partakers of the body and blood of Christ, with all his benefits. To this truth I request your very serious attention. Some recurrence of thoughts already suggested, can scarcely

be avoided; and on a topic so momentous, a degree of repetition seems rather desirable than objectionable.

Let our first inquiry be, who are the *worthy* receivers of this sacrament? In rebuking the Corinthian church, (1 Cor. xi. 23—34,) for a scandalous profanation of this sacred institution, the apostle Paul twice speaks of eating and drinking *unworthily*;^{*} and from this, the terms *worthy* and *unworthy* have come to be applied to communicants; and *worthily* and *unworthily*, to the manner in which they attend on the table of the Lord. The meaning of the apostle in the word *unworthily* manifestly is, *a manner UNSUITABLE to the nature of the ordinance*; which, in the case of the Corinthians, was a grossly profane, carnal, and irreverent manner.

The general truth, therefore, taught by the inspired apostle, is, that all who partake in a manner suited to the nature of the ordinance, partake *worthily*; and that those who partake in any way or manner not suited to the nature of the ordinance, partake *unworthily*. Our English word *worthy*, is generally understood to denote *merit* or *excellence* of a high order, when applied to persons or character; and by thus understanding it, in reference to those who may properly partake of the Lord's supper, many humble Christians fear to approach it. But truly, if *personal merit and desert*, as these timid believers seem to suppose, were the qualifications demanded of those who might lawfully go to the table of the Lord, not one of our fallen race could ever be prepared to appear there. Not one could ever affirm with truth, that he had any such excellence of character as to *entitle* him to claim this privilege as a right. Our Lord's parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, who went up to the temple together to pray, was intended to rebuke in the most pointed manner, every plea of personal merit, when a sinner stands as a party with his God; and if any man say that "he hath not sinned, he deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him."

Deep humility of soul, self-emptiedness, and a sim-

* ἀνεξίτως, in the original.

ple reliance on the grace of God in Christ Jesus, with an impressive perception of the solemnity of the ordinance, constitute the temper, feeling and views, best suited to all who sit down at the table of the Lord; these therefore, are the qualities which constitute a *worthy* communicant. This point will receive a more particular attention in discussing the next answer of the Catechism.

Let us now consider that it is by faith, that worthy communicants partake of the body and blood of Christ, with all his benefits, in this sacrament. By the body and blood of Christ, figuratively represented in the Lord's supper, we are undoubtedly to understand his whole work of satisfying the justice of God in behalf of his peculiar people, which was consummated, or completed, when his body was broken and his blood shed on the cross of Calvary; together with the privileges and blessings resulting, both in this life and that which is to come, from their Saviour's finished work.

All these rich and inestimable gifts of divine grace, faith receives and applies in the proper celebration of this holy rite. Not that faith is, in itself, more excellent than its sister graces; for an inspired apostle says, on a comparison of faith, hope and charity, that the greatest of these is charity,* or true love to God and man. Neither is faith *separated* from the other Christian graces, either in receiving the sacred emblems of our Saviour's bloody death, or at any other time of its exercise; for evangelical faith always "worketh by love," and is never separated from a measure of hope. But yet it does exclusively belong to the actings of the grace of faith, to appropriate to the soul by which it is exercised, all the ineffable benefits of Christ's redemption exhibited in this precious ordinance; in which, inspiration declares, that Jesus Christ is evidently set forth, crucified before the eyes of his believing people. Is it then essential to salvation, that Christ Jesus should be seen in the glory of his mediatorial character? Faith is the eye which beholds this glory. Is it indispensable that the infinite

* *Αγαπη* in the original.

value of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and the perfect satisfaction which it makes to the offended justice of God, should be clearly perceived? This perception is obtained in the exercise of faith. Is it all important that the soul, in view of all its aggravated guilt and misery, should be delivered into the hands of the Saviour—in confidence that his blood will cleanse away its deepest stains, and remove the guilt of all its transgressions, and that his perfect righteousness will be upon it for its complete justification before the tribunal of eternal justice, and for giving it a title to that everlasting life which the King of Zion has merited, and will assuredly confer on all his faithful subjects? It is faith, in lively exercise, that surrenders the soul to Christ; it is faith that confides in the cleansing efficacy of his blood; it is faith that puts on the robe of his righteousness; it is faith that pleads it now as a full answer to all the demands of God's holy law; it is faith that looks forward to the eternal crown which the Redeemer will give to every one "that overcometh, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life;" and it is faith which antedates a measure of heavenly peace and joy—drawing them from the Saviour's fulness, into the soul in which its vigorous actings are in operation.

It is in the sacramental supper, in a pre-eminent degree, that faith effects all this for the Christian believer—while it looks through the sensible emblems, to the spiritual blessings they symbolize and assure, to every worthy participant. Justly does our Confession of Faith declare, when speaking of this sacrament, that "the body and blood of Christ are as really, but spiritually present, to the faith of believers in this ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses."

O my young friends! what blessed visions of faith are those, in which this precious grace creates an ideal presence of the suffering, bleeding, dying, atoning Saviour. When Gethsemane, and Pilate's hall, and the cross, the thorny crown, the nails, the spear, the hill of Calvary, are in present view; when the

astounding cry of the coequal Son of the Father, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," thrills through the ear to the heart; when the joyous voice quickly follows, proclaiming, "it is finished—Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Yes, it is here that faith sees the sinner's ransom amply paid; sees every divine attribute meeting, reconciled, illustrated and shining on the cross—"mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissing each other,"—and seeing all this, flings the believing soul under the droppings of atoning blood, and sees every crimson stain washed away; looks at the finished work of redemption, accepts it as offered, and says in holy exstasy, *it is mine, mine for ever*; and in sacramental emblems, seals it as its own, in the covenant of that God who cannot lie; triumphs in the promise, "I will never fail thee nor forsake thee;" looks forward to a victory over death, the grave, sin and hell; rises on her strongest pinions and enters within the vail; beholds face to face, the once crucified but now reigning Redeemer; prostrates herself at his feet, and begins the pæans of the adoring throng, that shall last while eternity endures.

Well may it be added, that "spiritual nourishment and growth in grace" must be the result of views and exercises such as these. Be assured, my dear youth, the people of God will testify that often, when they have held in their hands and pressed to their quivering lips the consecrated bread and the hallowed cup, their souls have been so refreshed and nourished, and they have felt their spiritual strength so increased and invigorated, that no duty appeared difficult, and no suffering by which their Saviour might be honoured, seemed appalling or unwelcome.

In closing this lecture, let me counsel such of you, my beloved youth, as are at present non-communicants, never to withdraw from the assembly of God's people, during the celebration of this blessed ordinance. Stay and witness its administration. Stay and observe attentively, and meditate closely and solemnly on what you see and hear. Think that the

blessings represented in this ordinance are as necessary to you, as to those whom you behold receiving them. Think that without a personal interest by faith in that atoning sacrifice which you now see exhibited in its appointed symbols, you perish inevitably and eternally. Think on the command of the dying Saviour, "do this in remembrance of me." Think on the ingratitude, as well as the danger, of continuing to disobey this command. Think of your sins, as concerned in the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory. Think of his love in making an expiation for these sins, in behalf of all who truly repent and believe in him. Let earnest aspirations ascend to the throne of God's mercy, to enable you truly to devote yourselves to him, and cordially to take part with his people, in commemorating your Saviour's dying love; and purpose, in divine strength earnestly implored, to give no peace to yourselves till you belong to the church of God, both visible and invisible, the latter as preparatory to the former.

Again. I counsel such of you as indulge some hope—though it be but a faint and trembling hope—that you have passed from death unto life, not unduly to delay an approach to the table of the Lord. From a rash and hasty approach, I would indeed dissuade you. Do not take some lively impression of divine things, recently received and little examined, as a sufficient preparation for so solemn a transaction, as that of professing yourselves the devoted followers of the Redeemer. Take time enough to put your present excited feelings to the test of some endurance, and of much inquiry and examination. But if investigation, and suitable delay, and much prayer for divine illumination and guidance, result in a prevalent hope that you have chosen that good part which shall not be taken from you, hesitate not, although your hope be mingled with many fears, to turn your back on the world, and bind yourselves to the Lord by sacramental obligations. This decided step will save you at once from a thousand solicitations and temptations to forsake the path of duty, to which you

will otherwise be exposed. He who wishes to be safe, should place as many guards around his virtue and fidelity, as lawfully he may; and not keep himself in a situation in which the ease of returning to a dangerous course, will operate as a constant temptation to do it. Besides, the sacraments are means by which grace is increased, when any measure of it is possessed. The Lord's supper was intended for those who are weak in faith and babes in Christ, as well as for those whose faith is the most vigorous. Beware of being ashamed of that Saviour who bore so much shame, and scorn, and suffering for you. Remember his own fearful declarations in regard to all such. Disregard the sneers and ridicule of the profligate and profane, and resolutely determine to obey the call—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Finally, I counsel such of you as have already made an open profession of religion, by coming to the table of the Lord, to be careful not to dishonour it, by yielding to any of the seductions to which your youth and inexperience will render you peculiarly liable. Treat all your young companions, from whom your profession of religion has, to a certain extent, separated you, with the utmost kindness and courtesy; and by your amiable and winning deportment, endeavour to recommend religion, by showing them that it is not that gloomy and forbidding thing which its enemies represent it to be, but that it is the highest grace and ornament of every other excellence. Yet beware of injury to yourselves, even from the practice of this duty. Cautiously guard against giving your countenance to any criminal pleasures, indulgences, and frivolities of the young and the gay, by participating in them yourselves. Rather bear your testimony against all these things, by showing—more by your conduct than by your words, and yet occasionally by the latter as well as the former—that you cannot in conscience

take part, in what you have known by experience to be inconsistent with the love and service of God. Again, I therefore say, beware, that in attempting to win the world to piety, the world does not win you from your Saviour. O endeavour to live much in communion with him! Youth is the season when the affections are the most ardent; and you cannot so well consult your temporal and eternal happiness, as by giving these ardent affections to your precious Redeemer and to his holy cause. Especially improve every communion season for this purpose. Meet every such season, so far as your circumstances will permit, with all the preparatory exercises that are calculated to render it, at once, the most impressive and most delightful. Endeavour to derive from every such season a greater depth, as well as a greater flow, to your religious affections; and a firmer, as well as a more lively purpose, to discharge with fidelity every Christian duty. Thus will you be sure to render your profession of religion most satisfactory and comfortable to yourselves, most honourable to your Saviour, most useful to the world, and most conducive to a triumph over death, and a joyful entrance on the rest and the rewards of the faithful followers of the great Captain of salvation. Amen.

LECTURE LXXI.

THE answer of our Catechism now to be discussed, is thus expressed—"It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves."

In our last lecture, a general explanation was given of the terms *worthily* and *unworthily*, as applicable to the manner in which the sacrament of the Lord's Supper may be received; and it was intimated that in illustrating the answer now before us, this point would receive a more particular consideration. This I shall attempt by showing—

I. That self-examination is an important duty, in coming to the table of the Lord.

II. The subjects of this examination.

III. The danger of neglecting the duty prescribed.

First, then, let us consider that self-examination is an important duty in coming to the table of the Lord. The truth of this position is clearly taught in the apostolical injunction—"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup;" and it is on the result of this examination, that each individual must form for himself the important decision, whether he can *worthily* partake of this holy ordinance or not. The ordinance requires that every participant should possess some good evidence of his being in a gracious state; and the examination of which I am speaking essentially consists in a careful inquiry as to this fact, and forming an impartial judgment respecting it, according to evidence derived from the Scriptures of truth. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith;" says St. Paul, "prove your

own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates." And as the word of God is to be the rule and test of the trial, so the Holy Spirit, who indicted that word, is to be earnestly implored to enlighten, assist, and guide us to a right conclusion. In the scrutiny we contemplate, the prayer of every communicant should be that of the Psalmist—"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Self-examination is at all times a duty of great importance, and one in which every Christian ought to be much employed. No day should ordinarily pass, without some attention to it; and no Lord's day should go by, without attending to it more particularly. But in the immediate prospect of the holy communion, unless prevented by uncontrollable circumstances, there ought to be a formal, extensive and thorough examination. Every part of duty, and every relation of life, as well as the existence and exercise of those graces which are presently to be specially noticed, ought to be the subject of careful review, and of serious search. However frequently such an examination as this may have taken place in time past, it ought when practicable, to be renewed at every communion season—by the oldest communicant, as well as by the youngest. I have said that this ought to be done *when practicable*; for it should be understood, that Christians may sometimes be in such circumstances, as not to admit of much deliberate premeditation. When absent from home, they may have an unexpected opportunity to go to the Lord's table; and when at home, events in providence may occasionally forbid retirement, or much abstraction from active and social duties.—In all such cases, there should be no hesitation to approach the Lord's table; for where there has been no *voluntary* neglect, we may always hope for *special aid*, in attempting any duty to which we may be called. It has sometimes been said, that an habitually holy life is the best of all preparations

for going to the holy communion: and this is unquestionably true; for such a life can never be led without much self-searching, and a special attention to it, whenever it is practicable, at communion seasons.

II. Let us now consider the subjects of examination, as they are specified in the answer under discussion—

1. *Of our knowledge to discern the Lord's body.* This must imply, in all cases, that the party who contemplates going to the Lord's table has knowledge enough to distinguish the use of the bread and wine in the sacrament, from the purposes which they serve as ordinary food, or in a common meal. Hence, in the Protestant church, these sacred symbols are never dispensed to idiots, to infants, or to any who are grossly ignorant of the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, whatever may be their age. All such individuals are absolutely incapable of that examination which the divine command explicitly enjoins. But those who are not incapable of discerning the Lord's body, from idiocy, or infancy, or ignorance, may still neglect to do it, from carelessness or inattention; and this was the very abuse which the apostle so severely reprehended in the Corinthians. They went to the Lord's table as they would have gone to a carnal feast; and, shocking to repeat! "one was hungry and another drunken." All such excesses as these are utterly impracticable in our day, from the manner in which the communion is celebrated. Yet, alas! it is neither impracticable, nor, it is to be feared, very uncommon, for this holy rite to be attended on, by some who never look through the sensible signs to the spiritual objects which they signify. A part of the necessary examination therefore, consists in a very serious inquiry into our *practical knowledge* of the spiritual significancy of the broken bread, and the wine poured forth and received, in this precious institution—an inquiry whether we do *know and recollect* that they are the sacred emblems of the broken body and shed blood of the dying and atoning Saviour; and are to be received by us as the most solemn and sin-

cere profession of our reliance on his sufferings and death, as the sole and all-sufficient expiation of our sins, and the only possible ground of our justification and acceptance with God. Without this, we cannot be prepared for an examination—

2. *Of our faith to feed upon him.* In the course of these lectures, the graces of faith and repentance, and the nature of new or evangelical obedience, have been fully considered; and the operations of faith in the sacramental supper, were shown at considerable length in the last lecture. On these topics, therefore, I must refer you to what has already been said, with some short additional remarks, bearing directly on the duty of self-examination, in the immediate prospect of the sacrament we consider. In the near view of an approach to the table of the Lord, there should be an inquiry into the reality and genuineness of our faith, and whether or not it is in present exercise; and if not in present and lively exercise, whether there is at least a strong and earnest desire, that it may be called into such exercise, and that an attendance on the sacrament may be the blessed means of producing this effect. Fisher says, justly, that “to feed upon Christ in the sacrament of the supper, is to receive into our souls all the spiritual good exhibited to us in the promise, (John i. 16,) of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. That faith feeds in this sacrament upon all those discoveries of him that are made in the word; such as his person, offices, mediatorial characters and relations—and that to know whether we have that faith which feeds on Christ in the word and sacrament, we must consider that where there is true and saving faith, it is of an appetizing nature, whetting the spiritual appetite after more and more of him: it purifies the heart; accounts all things but loss for Christ; and is careful to maintain good works.” Have I any measure of a faith of this description, and a strong desire after a greater measure?—is the question that each communicant should put to himself, when about to go to the table of the Lord.

3. *Of our repentance.* Our repentance ought to

be renewed on going to the Lord's table, by calling to remembrance, so far as we are able, the sins of our whole life, and especially those which have been committed since the last renewal of our covenant vows in this sacrament. The sins of his people were the cause of the awful sufferings and death of their Redeemer—"He bare our sins in his own body on the tree:" And it is peculiarly incumbent to mourn for them, with deep contrition, and to renounce them renewedly and with the sincerest abhorrence, when we attend on an ordinance which brings into view the tremendous agonies which the Lord of life and glory endured, when he made an expiation of them. A contemplation of the evil of sin as it is seen in the cross of Christ, is at such a time peculiarly proper.

4. *Our love*—Love to God, and love to man, should be the subject of special inquiry and self-examination, in preparing for a worthy participation of the Lord's Supper. Every communicant should put to himself such questions as the following. Is my love to God really supreme? Has he the highest place in my affections, so that I would forfeit and forego any thing, and every thing else, rather than give up my love to him, and lose the hope of his love to me. Am I not able, at some favoured seasons, at least, to say with truth and sensibility, what was said by the inspired Psalmist—"Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee?" Do I love all the attributes of God—his justice, truth, and holiness, as well as his goodness, grace, and mercy? Do I love to think of God, as of a being in all respects such as he is represented to be in his holy word? Do I especially delight in contemplating the divine attributes, as they meet, and harmonize, and shine, in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ? Do I here find the perfections of God displayed in the most glorious and transcendent manner? Is God in Christ the object of my warmest love, my highest delight, the theme of my sweetest meditations?

Do I love all mankind, with the love of benevolence? Do I so love them, that I am willing to lay myself

out, to promote their happiness?—so that I am willing to part with property to relieve their wants; and to use personal and even painful efforts to do them good? Is the salvation of the souls of men a thing that I most earnestly desire? Can I think of the multitudes around me who are living in sin, or the greater multitudes who are deprived of gospel ordinances, and the unnumbered myriads of the heathen world who have never heard of the name of a Saviour, without a very painful anxiety that they should receive and embrace the offers of salvation? Am I in charity with all mankind? Do I forgive, wish well to, and pray for my enemies? Can I even go to the table of the Lord with one who I know is my enemy,* having freed my heart from all malice against him, and feeling that I sincerely desire that he may be forgiven of God, and be prepared to meet me in that blessed state where there is no enmity? Do I love the people of God with a pure heart fervently? Do I love them because they are the people of God, and bear his image? Do I delight in their company? Are they in my esteem “the excellent of the earth, in whom is all my delight?” Do I hope to hold with them the communion of saints, in the ordinance immediately in prospect—to mingle my faith and affections with theirs, in looking to our dear common Lord, and to

* It is a gross, and yet a common perversion of the text, Matt. v. 23, 24, when Christians make it the ground of abstaining from the table of the Lord, because a personal injury has been received from an individual, or several individuals, who will be present there. The text is completely inverted. It says—“If thy brother hath aught against thee;” not “if thou hast aught against thy brother.” If I have injured my brother, *he* has aught against *me*—I have sinned against my neighbour; and as the evidence of my sincere repentance, I must go to him, confess my fault, and ask his forgiveness, before I can go to the communion table with a clear conscience. But if my Christian brother has, without guilt on my part, injured me, I may and ought to forgive him from the heart, pray for him, that he may repent and obtain forgiveness of God. Doing this, I may go to the table of the Lord, let his feeling or conduct toward me be what it may. It would be strange indeed, if, in addition to the injury I have received, it were in the power of the injurious party to deprive me of a precious privilege, and an inestimable benefit.

feel toward them as my brethren and sisters in Christ?

5. Finally—*of our new obedience*—so called, because it proceeds from that new principle of sincere love to the law and commandments of God, which no unsanctified man possesses; and which is yielded only by grace and strength derived from Christ, as the source of all divine influence; while his perfect merits, and not any obedience or deserts of our own, are relied on for acceptance with God. Am I, let the professing Christian ask, conscientious in the discharge of every known duty both to God and man? Am I conscious of pleading for no indulgence to a favourite lust? Do I watch against easily besetting sins, and grow in the strength of my desires to be delivered from them? Have I, since I last went to the table of the Lord, gained some advantage over my spiritual foes? Or have I not rather so fallen into sin, that I need on this occasion specially to bewail my guilt, to be deeply humbled on account of it, and to look to the atoning blood of Christ for a fresh cleansing, and earnestly to implore the aids of his Holy Spirit to strengthen and keep me in all time to come?

III. We are to consider the danger of neglecting the duty prescribed—“lest coming unworthily, says the answer before us, we eat and drink judgment to ourselves.” You perceive that the framers of our excellent Catechism, in quoting the apostle here, have avoided the terrific term “damnation,” and taken the word “judgment” which our translators unhappily placed only in the margin. It is much to be regretted, that the marginal reading of this passage, which is unquestionably the proper one, had not been originally placed in the text; for standing as it does, it has often been a sad stumbling block to tender consciences, keeping away from the table of their Redeemer, for a season at least, if not for the whole of life, some whom the Saviour himself would certainly have welcomed there. You have only to read to the end of the chapter, (1 Cor. xi.) to see from the apostle’s own showing, that it was not eternal damnation, or final

perdition, which the Corinthians brought on themselves, by even the shocking abuse of this ordinance with which they were chargeable. It appears that temporal calamities, "weakness and sickness," had been sent upon them, to bring them to deep and thorough repentance, for their great sin in so shamefully and awfully profaning this holy sacrament; and that this was done, "that they should not be condemned with the world." It also seems to be intimated, that those who had even died under the diseases inflicted, had not been finally lost; since their death is called "a sleep," the term commonly used in the New Testament, to denote the *rest* from sin and suffering of those who die in the Lord.

But do not suppose, my dear young friends, that by any remarks I have now made, I would, in the close of this lecture, abate any thing I have previously said, on the importance of self-examination, as preparatory to an attendance on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; or speak lightly of the sin of those who partake of it in a careless and irreverend manner. They who do so, are expressly declared "to eat and drink judgment to themselves;" that is, they will bring upon themselves the judgment or displeasure of God; unless it be prevented by sincere contrition and repentance. God may correct them, as he did the Corinthians, by inflicting on them temporal calamities, as a chastisement that shall render them sensible of their guilt, and humble and penitent on account of it. And if this effect is not produced, by some of the methods by which God restores his backsliding people, those who have been guilty of the sin of profaning this sacred ordinance, will suffer his judgment for it, in common with all their other aggravated sins, in a future state of misery and perdition. On the whole, therefore, be sensible of the danger of communicating unworthily, and endeavour to avoid it, by a proper attention to the self-examination which I have endeavoured to explain and inculcate in this lecture. Carefully seek to avoid all errors and extremes, in regard to this most interesting concern.

Remember what the apostle Paul says to Timothy—“God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Pray for this sound mind—for a sober judgment, heavenly wisdom, and firmness of purpose, so that you may neither be kept away from this sacrament by unnecessary and unwarrantable fears, nor come to it rashly or carelessly; but coming with suitable preparation, you may partake of all the inestimable benefits, which it was intended and is calculated to convey to every sincere disciple of Christ.

LECTURE LXXII.

WE are now to consider the important duty of prayer, the last subject treated of in the unrivalled summary of theological truth set forth in our Shorter Catechism.

“Prayer, says the Catechism, is the offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.”

Previously to entering on the illustration of this proposition, I think it important to obviate certain objections, which the enemies of religion raise against the duty of prayer—objections which go to set it aside altogether, and which I have reason to know have had a melancholy influence on the minds of some young persons, and which indeed, have occasionally operated as perplexing temptations, even to the pious. I shall endeavour to state these objections in all their strength; and hope to reply to them in such a manner as to satisfy every attentive and candid mind, that they are utterly unfounded and false.

1. Some have said that prayer is unnecessary and useless, because the Supreme Being is so good that we ought not to suppose that he needs any entreaties to bestow on us what we need; and that he is so wise that we cannot suppose he requires any information of what we want. To this I reply, that God is indeed both good and wise, and that in an infinite degree; and yet that he may, and does, require us to make known our requests to him, for the purposes of *our own benefit*. By asking from him in prayer the supply of all our wants, we cultivate and increase a sense of our dependence on Him, and of our obligations to Him. We are constantly kept mindful that all the good we enjoy proceeds from the hand of God, that we are wholly indebted to him both for its recep-

tion and its continuance, and are consequently accountable to him for the right improvement of his gifts. Now, here is the foundation of all religion, and of all moral obligation. The foundation of all unquestionably is, a just sense of our entire dependence on God, as our Creator and Benefactor, and the obligation thence arising, to endeavour to please him, by rightly employing our faculties, and by an obedience to his requisitions: and it is too obvious to need argument, that prayer, in which dependence, indebtedness and obligation, are constantly and solemnly acknowledged, must have a direct and powerful influence, in augmenting the force, and keeping in lively exercise, these fundamental moral sentiments and principles. Nay, I firmly believe it may be asserted, without danger of mistake or error, that without prayer, these sentiments and principles do, and will, for ever remain, if not absolutely inoperative, yet exceedingly weak and partial. It follows then, that although God is disposed to do us good, and perfectly knows all that we need, yet without prayer, we shall not be prepared to receive his benefits *with a suitable temper and disposition*, and that, on this very account, they may not be conferred: that wanting a right disposition, God may foresee that we should pervert and abuse his gifts, if they were bestowed, and hence that his very *goodness*, as well as his justice, may be concerned in withholding them from us. Prayer, therefore, by preparing us for the divine favours, gives us the best reason to expect them, and renders them real blessings when they are received.

2. It has been said, that we ought not to suppose that it is agreeable to God, to receive those humble acknowledgments of dependence and obligation, and those ardent expressions of praise and thanksgivings, which are usually offered in prayer; since these are not pleasing or acceptable, even to a good man. This is a most insidious and delusive objection, and will appear to be so, if carefully examined. Let it be considered then, that there is but little ground for any comparison whatever between God and man, in the

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point before us. Every good man is made to believe and feel, by the very goodness which characterizes him, that all the benefits or obligations which he confers, *entitle* him to but little praise; for he must, in the first place, have the power and means to confer benefits on his fellow creatures given him by God; and in the second place, the very disposition to confer them, must come from the same source. High praise is therefore not his due. He has only endeavoured to act the part of a faithful steward, in distributing the bounties which the Great Giver of all good has committed to his management and disposal. But that Great Giver himself, is the underived and overflowing fountain of all beneficence; and to him, of course, the highest praise is justly and strictly due. Besides, great and frequent praise, bestowed on the best man in the world, is calculated to endanger his virtue, which is still imperfect. But as the moral excellence of God is both perfect and immutable, it can never be endangered by the warmest and most unceasing acknowledgments of indebtedness, and expressions of gratitude. Who sees not now that nothing like an exact parallel can be run between man and his Maker, as is attempted in this objection? Yet after all, it is true that every good man, while he seeks to avoid all extravagant encomium, nevertheless does desire to know that one on whom he has conferred favours, is suitably grateful for them. A virtuous parent expects this from his children, and is always displeased if it be found wanting. The Great parent of all good, therefore, agreeably to this analogy, may well be supposed to look for the manifestation of a suitable gratitude from all his moral offspring, and to be displeased when it is found wanting: and as all the conceptions and expressions of our obligations to God, which we can ever form, must fall far short of what is his due, we need never fear an excess, in the warmth and elevation of the praise and thanksgiving which we offer him. Thus it appears, that so far as there is, in this concern, any fair reasoning from man to God, it is conclusively in favour of the duty of prayer,

which always includes thanksgiving, as an essential part.

3. It is objected that prayer cannot possibly have any influence in obtaining what we need and request from God, because all his purposes are fixed and immutable. This is the most formidable and specious objection; yet it would be satisfactorily answered, if we could say no more in reply, than has already been said, in responding to the first objection; namely, that prayer has the happiest influence in preparing our own minds for the reception and right improvement of the divine favours. But as it is a truth abundantly taught in the Holy Scriptures, that prayer has a direct influence in obtaining the blessings for which we pray, so I am satisfied, that it can never be shown how this is a whit more inconsistent with reason, than to believe in the influence of any secondary cause whatever, in producing its appropriate effect. How the immutable purpose of God consists and connects itself with the result of diligence or negligence in the use of means, is, at bottom, beyond our powers to penetrate and explain. This has been shown at large, in the lecture on the decrees of God. We only know that such a connexion exists, and that the divine purpose itself always (except in the case of miracles) includes, and never excludes, the use or neglect of the secondary cause. The secondary cause, although it may consist in the voluntary choice of a free agent, is as much the subject of the divine purpose or decree, as the natural and necessary effect to be produced. Hence it is manifest, that what the Scriptures teach in regard to the direct influence of prayer, in obtaining what it seeks from God, is just as reasonable, and no more difficult to be understood, than that ploughing and sowing should have an immediate and indispensable influence in the production of a crop. In both cases, the divine purpose is equally certain, and in both the influence of means, or secondary causes, is precisely the same. In both cases too, the means are the objects of voluntary choice and adoption, and when rightly used, the divine constitution authorizes

us to expect a favourable result, and forbids us to expect such result, when the proper means are neglected. The prayer of faith, indeed, is more certainly connected with the divine favour, than the labours of the husbandman are with the harvest which he hopes for. In the former case, the blessing never fails; in the latter, disappointment sometimes ensues.

Having now replied, I hope satisfactorily, to the objections which are made to the duty of prayer, I shall only add a single remark, which I deem of considerable importance. It is, that prayer, or propitiatory offerings, have been made to superior beings, in all nations and ages of the world; and hence, that it may seem to be a dictate of our nature itself. Yes, my young friends, let a man know that there is a God, and place him in circumstances of extreme necessity, where no human help can any longer avail, and you will not easily prevent his praying. The most profligate blasphemers, and even professed Atheists, have exemplified the truth of this remark.

I now proceed to observe, that there are different kinds of prayer; or rather, that the same duty is performed in different modes and circumstances. These have commonly been divided into two great classes—*public and private prayer*—I would rather say, *social and secret prayer*.

Of social prayer there are several kinds. 1. Public worship, in which a pastor, or some regularly authorized preacher of the gospel officiates, and is the mouth of the people to God. This worship is a part of the appropriate service of every Lord's day, where the ordinances of the gospel are enjoyed: but it may be celebrated on a variety of other occasions. Thus, when the Apostle Paul had addressed the Ephesian elders, and those that were assembled with them at Miletus, as recorded in the 20th chapter of the Acts, it is said (v. 36.) "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all." Public prayer is always used in administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; for the blessing of the elements of bread and wine, or setting them apart to their sa-

cred use, is done in prayer. It was no doubt with reference to the public devotions of the sanctuary, that the Psalmist said, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."

2. Social prayer is offered up by devout Christians, when they meet together, in a manner less public and formal than ordinarily takes place in the house of God, or when the whole service is conducted by one or more ministers of the gospel. This kind of prayer is clearly countenanced and greatly encouraged, by our blessed Saviour. He makes a special promise to social prayer, when it is made by the smallest number that can form a union, or agreement for the purpose. His words are remarkable—"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." What a remarkable example have we of this kind of prayer, when the primitive Christians employed it, and found an immediate answer, at the time the Apostle Peter was sentenced to death, by the cruel mandate of Herod. See Acts xii. 1—17.

3. Family prayer is another kind of social devotion. It is an awful imprecation of the prophet Jeremiah, "Pour out thy fury on the heathen that know thee not, and on the families that call not on thy name." The morning and the evening sacrifice, under the ancient Jewish dispensation, appears to have been intended to intimate the duty of a daily and repeated acknowledgment of God, in our social character. Christ our Saviour, not only taught his disciples to pray, but he prayed with them—with Peter and James and John, on the mount of transfiguration, and with the whole of the holy family, in his wonderful intercessory prayer. It is the unquestionable and indispensable duty of every head of a family, to see that in ordinary circumstances, no day be permitted to pass without family prayer.

Secret prayer is of two kinds—

1. Closet prayer, in which an individual retires and secludes himself from all company, and pours out his heart before God, in the fullest and freest manner. This is expressly enjoined by our Saviour, and most impressively recommended by his own example. His injunction is, “When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.” In more instances than one, it is recorded that our Redeemer sought retirement for secret prayer, and once that he passed the whole night in this holy exercise. In his agony also, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he withdrew even from his most favoured disciples, while thrice he prayed that if it were possible, the awful cup of sufferings might pass from him, and as often sweetly submitted the pleadings of his holy soul, to the will of his heavenly Father. It is in this kind of prayer, my dear youth, that all the people of God have their principal communion with the Father of their spirits; and the degree of any Christian’s sanctification, may generally be measured by the frequency and fervour of his secret prayers, and the delight which he finds in his retirement, in pouring out his soul into the bosom of God his Saviour. All the eminent Scripture saints were distinguished by their devoutness; and no man can be eminent in piety, who is not characteristically *a man of prayer*—of much secret prayer.

2. Ejaculatory prayer, which, says Fisher, “is a secret and sudden lifting up of the soul’s desires to God, upon any emergency that may occur in providence—either by a simple thought, darted up to heaven, as it would seem Nehemiah did, chap. ii. 4; or by words uttered in the mind, yet so as that the voice cannot be heard, as we read Hannah did. 1 Sam. i. 13. These ejaculatory breathings of the soul have met with very quick and happy returns, as in the instance of Moses, who in the midst of the people’s murmurings at the Red Sea, despatched his desires to

heaven in some short ejaculations, to which the Lord gave a present answer: *Exod. xiv. 15.* "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." Ejaculatory prayer tends to maintain fellowship with God, without any interruption of our lawful callings. It is also a mean to repel sudden temptation; and dispose the heart for a more solemn performance of the stated duties of prayer and praise, in the season of them." Those who endeavour "to walk with God," as Enoch did, will be much in the practice of ejaculatory prayer.

Let me, in closing this lecture, recommend to you, as you may have opportunity, the careful perusal of Dr. Watts' treatise, entitled—"A Guide to Prayer;" in which he treats excellently of "the gift, grace, and spirit of prayer, with plain directions how every Christian may obtain them."

LECTURE LXXIII.

THE accuracy of expression or definition, which is apparent in every part of our Catechism, is very observable in the answer now under consideration. Prayer is said to be "the offering up of our *desires* to God for things agreeable to his will." *Desire* is here represented as being an essential attribute of every address to God, which can claim to be regarded as prayer. Let the language made use of be in itself ever so proper, or ever so impressive, if it be not the expression of real *desire* in him who uses it, nothing which the Great Hearer of prayer will regard with approbation, is offered by the apparent worshipper. And on the other hand, if the *desires of the heart* truly and earnestly go forth unto God, it is acceptable prayer with him; although not a single word be uttered, or although the words employed be not in themselves the correct expression of the desires. "The Lord *heareth the desires* of the humble," says the Psalmist: and the apostle Paul instructs us, that the Holy Spirit makes intercession in the hearts of the children of God "with groanings *which cannot be uttered.*" Be ever mindful, then, my dear youth, of these two things—first, that in prayer you always stand as parties with God, whom you immediately address, and with whose presence and glorious majesty you should be deeply impressed; and secondly, that the sincerest desires of your soul must accompany the language you use, if you expect audience and acceptance with Him.

In the anti-christian church of Rome, they offer prayers to saints and angels, as well as to God. But in my lectures on the first and second precepts of the Decalogue,* I have shown that this whole practice,

* See Lectures 39 and 40.

as well as the use of images, or sensible representations of the Deity, or of any of his creatures, in religious worship, is pointedly forbidden in those precepts, as well as in other parts of the revealed will of God. I need therefore only recommend what is there said on these topics to your careful attention; and add on the point before us, the answer given in our Larger Catechism to the question—"Are we to pray to God only? A. God only being able to search the heart, hear the request, pardon the sins, and fulfil the desires of all; and only to be believed in and worshipped with religious worship: prayer, which is a special part thereof, is to be made to him alone, and to none other"—Each person of the adorable Trinity, being truly divine, may occasionally be directly and specially addressed in prayer; but in general, our direct address is to the Father, through the Son, by the aid of the Spirit.

As we are to desire of God in prayer such things only as "are agreeable to his will," it is of great importance to ascertain what things are agreeable to his will. Here our guide must be the revelation of that will, as contained in the Holy Scriptures; and to this we must be careful to adhere, both with respect to the matter and manner of our desires and petitions. The matter or subject of prayer, is in general, whatsoever is calculated to promote, or is consistent with, the glory of God and our own greatest good; and familiarity with the divine word can alone give us a clear discernment of both these objects. That word will teach us, that there are some things which we may and ought to desire and ask for *absolutely*, or without any qualification; and that there are other things, that we must petition for only *conditionally*; that is, if infinite wisdom see that what we ask is proper in itself, and if granted will really promote our best and most enduring interests. Thus, for example, we know that we may pray *absolutely* that God's name may be hallowed, or his declarative glory be promoted; that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven; and for ourselves, that God

would forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and not abandon us to temptation, but deliver us from all evil—plainly implying the pardon of our sins, on the terms of the gospel covenant, and our being preserved from falling irrecoverably before temptation, and into final perdition. Yet even in regard to these subjects of prayer, the time, and the means, and the manner, in which our requests shall be granted, are all to be prayed for *conditionally*. We may, for instance, pray that certain missionary operations may be eminently blessed for the promotion of God's declarative glory and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom; but this must be done with an express submission to the will of God. Possibly he may not see it best to prosper and bless the particular mission contemplated, but to make use of some other, or of some means which we do not think of, to effect the good for which our prayer has been offered. In like manner, the way, and means, and time, in which we shall obtain the forgiveness of our sins, and a final deliverance from all their fearful consequences, must not be prescribed by us. We may indeed earnestly and repeatedly pray with David, "Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation;" or with our Redeemer himself, importunately cry that a bitter cup may pass away from us; but with him we ought, in all such cases, to feel and express an entire submission to the will of our heavenly Father. We should remember that the promises of God are to be at once our guide, and the ground of our petitions and pleadings, in prayer. We ought therefore to study the promises very carefully; for in the true and real sense in which a promise is made in the oracles of infallible truth, it will, if we plead it in faith, be always fulfilled; but if we mistake the nature of the promise, it will not be answered, and the disappointment may prove a grievous discouragement and stumbling block to us.* This

* Unhappy consequences have sometimes followed from not distinguishing the promises which were made to the faith of miracles, from those which the possessors of saving faith (for the faith of miracles was not always saving) may plead in every age of the church. We

is a very important practical subject, and I hope the few hints I have now offered may lead you to study it, and understand it aright. I shall only add, that genuine prayer, or what is sometimes called the prayer of faith, will never be without benefit to those who offer it. Let the nature of the promises be truly apprehended, and petitions grounded on them be perseveringly sent up to God, *believing*—or *in faith*—that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him,” and then assuredly the petitioner will have the thing which he asks, if God sees that it will be best for him; and if it is seen that the best interest of the petitioner would not be promoted by granting the specific thing prayed for, God will either give him something better in its place, or so sanctify a total refusal, as to render *that* a greater blessing than the granting of the special request. It appears that the apostle Paul never obtained the removal of the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, and for a deliverance from which he “besought the Lord thrice;” but he got the promise—“My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness;” and this was better for him, and so he was fully convinced, than if he had obtained exactly what he had thrice prayed for—“Most gladly, says he, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Surely, my dear youth, it can require no laboured argument, to prove that it is an unspeakable privilege to have infinite wisdom and goodness to choose for us, rather than to be left to our own erring understanding or misguided passions, to choose for ourselves. Even a heathen poet (Juvenal in his tenth Satire) has shown most impressively, that God may and frequently does, chastise men in the most fearful manner by granting their requests, and eminently favour and bless them

believe that miracles have long since ceased, and therefore that such passages of Scripture as Matt. xvii. 20, and xvi. 21. Mark xi. 23. Luke xvii. 6. 1 Cor. xii. 9, and xiii. 2, must, when taken in their literal sense, be applicable only to those who lived in the primitive age of the church.

by sometimes disappointing their fondest wishes and earnest entreaties.

I have already mentioned incidentally, that the time for granting the requests which we proffer to God in prayer, must be submitted entirely to his will. But this is a point that deserves some particular attention. The Father of mercies may delay to answer our petitions—may delay long, nay, even seem for a time to repulse us; and yet this, as in the case of the Syrophœnician woman who came to our Saviour, may be only intended to try our faith, to put our perseverance to the test, and to render the rich and abundant blessing which shall ultimately be conferred, the more delightful and precious. Christ spoke a parable to this end, “that men ought always to pray and not to faint.” And in the epistle to the Hebrews we are admonished, that “we have need of patience, after that we have done the will of God, that we may receive the promise.”

The next clause in the answer under consideration tells us, that our desires are to be offered up to God “in the name of Christ.” Our blessed Lord said to his disciples, “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.” And again, speaking of what should take place after his resurrection and ascension, he says, “at that day ye shall ask the Father in my name.” And still more explicitly and fully he declared, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” The truth is, that but for the intercession of Christ, there would be no access for sinners to a holy and sin-hating God; and to the exercised believer no passages in the sacred volume are more precious than those which speak of the priestly office of Christ, an essential part of which consists in his being the intercessor and advocate of his people, before the throne of God on high. Every prayer that we utter, my beloved youth, ought to be put, as it were, into the hand of Christ, that he may present it with acceptance before the mercy seat in the upper sanctuary. There are no arguments or pleadings that we can use in

prayer comparable to those which we derive from what Christ has done for sinners, and the encouragement he has given, even to the chief of them, to plead his merits, and to ask in his name. Indeed, without these, as already intimated, nothing else would be of any avail. I mention it with grief; that we sometimes hear prayers, or rather what are called such, in which the mediation and intercession of Christ are scarcely mentioned, or alluded to at all; or if it be, it is done in a very cursory and formal manner. It seems to me, that a distinct recognition that we come in the name of Christ, and hope to be heard and answered only for his sake, should be among the very first things that we say, or think of, when we attempt to pray; and I am sure that the more our minds are affected through the whole of our prayers, with the recollection that our petitions and praises go up through him who is "our advocate with the Father," and whom "the Father heareth always," the more sweet and delightful, and animating, will be our whole performance of the sacred duty which we have now in view.

Nor must it be overlooked, that without the aid and influence of the Holy Spirit, we can never pray in a right manner. "The Spirit, says the apostle, helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." This blessed agent is represented in the Holy Scriptures as "the Spirit of grace and supplications," and is promised to be "poured out" for this purpose. It is therefore well said in our Larger Catechism, that "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, by enabling us to understand both for whom, and what, and how prayer is to be made, and by working and quickening in our hearts (although not in all persons, nor at all times in the same measure) those apprehensions, affections, and graces, which are requisite for the right performance of the duty."

Confession of Sin is another important part of prayer. In standing as parties with God, it is indispensable that we should distinctly recognize our true character: and as we are sinners, the full and free admission and confession of this humiliating fact, should make a part of all our prayers. It is this fact which renders the intervention and intercession of a Mediator necessary, in order to our addressing the Majesty of heaven with the hope of acceptance; for the holy angels do not need a mediator between them and their Créator, nor would man have needed one, if he had retained his primitive state of perfect rectitude. The obtaining of the pardon of our sins, is, moreover, a leading and essential part of the errand on which we go to the throne of mercy; and in the nature of the case, as well as in the prescribed condition of our offended Maker and Judge, confession of our guilt must precede pardon, for guilt and pardon are correlative terms. Hence the declaration that "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy;" and again, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There is little danger, my young friends, of our representing ourselves more guilty before God than we really are; although those who have never had any right conception, either of his holiness or of their own vileness, have often taken offence at the strong expressions of a sense of guilt and criminality, which they have heard in the prayers of pious Christians. The truth is, the greatness and malignity of our moral pollution exceeds all the conceptions that we can form of it, and this ought to be acknowledged in our prayers, with unfeigned grief and contrition; and should serve to endear to us, in an unspeakable degree, that precious Redeemer, by the infinite efficacy of whose atoning blood our sins are expiated, and our souls cleansed from their guilt. In our private prayers, we should specially confess and bewail those sins of our hearts and our lives which may be known only to God and

to ourselves; but sins of this description ought not to be *specified* in social prayer, although the general acknowledgment of our unspeakable moral vileness and ill desert in the sight of Him before whom the heavens are unclean, may be made in the most public manner, and with the greatest propriety.

A thankful acknowledgment of the mercies of God, is the last constituent part of prayer, which is mentioned in the answer of our Catechism, now under consideration. Thanksgiving and prayer are expressly connected together by the Psalmist. (Psalm cxvi. 17,) "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call on the name of the Lord." Thanksgiving is indeed both an essential and a delightful part of this sacred duty; and I am persuaded it ought to constitute a larger part of prayer than it too often does. Nor is there any part in which we should be more careful than in this, to guard against formality and mere lip-service. Our thanksgiving ought to be the genuine expression of cordial gratitude to the Great Bestower of all good, for his numerous and undeserved favours. These favours are, with the utmost propriety, denominated *mercies*, in the answer before us, and ought to be seen and felt to be such, in our acknowledgment of them. By our sins we have forfeited all good at the hands of God, and must therefore receive it as a matter of pure mercy. The greatest of all mercies, and that through which all others are bestowed, is God's unspeakable gift of his Son to be our Saviour. With him, it is that "he freely giveth all things" to his believing people—his Spirit to be their monitor, comforter, and sanctifier; the revelation of his will to instruct them in duty, to direct and cheer them in their earthly pilgrimage, and to conduct them to their heavenly rest. Our spiritual mercies of every kind, should be the theme of our frequent and heartfelt thanksgiving to God, and ought to have, in our esteem and in our prayers, the preference to all others. Yet the common bounties and protection of the good providence of God, and particularly all special deli-

verances and favours, ought not to be overlooked, but to share in our sincere and devout thanksgiving.

Three parts of prayer only are mentioned in the answer before us—petition, confession, and thanksgiving. Strictly speaking, it is only the first of these, that can be denominated *prayer*. Yet the duty, as taught by Scripture examples, contains not only the three that have been mentioned, but also *invocation*, in which we call on God by some of the names by which he is made known to us in his word; *adoration*, in which some of his glorious attributes are brought into view, as objects of the deepest reverence; *blessing*, in which we express our sense of his goodness and kindness; *intercession*, in which we pray for others; but this indeed is only a particular subject of petition—Prayer is commonly and properly concluded, either by a doxology to the Three one God, or by a recognition that we ask all in the name and for the sake alone of Christ, our Redeemer and Mediator.

I cannot conclude this lecture, my young friends, without inculcating the importance of your endeavouring earnestly to guard against the wandering of the mind in prayer. It is an act of infinite condescension in the great and glorious God, that he permits such worms of the dust as we are to approach him, and to address him by the endearing appellation of Father. We never can duly estimate this privilege; and whenever we avail ourselves of it, our whole souls ought to be engaged to improve it aright. It is not prayer, but awful profaneness, when we address words to God, while our minds are wandering after worldly vanities. It is indeed difficult, in all circumstances, to keep our minds duly intent and suitably devout in this sacred duty. But we ought to use all proper means, and put forth our best efforts, and make it the subject of many and earnest petitions to God, that he would enable us to worship him with an undivided mind, and a truly devotional spirit; for God is a spirit, and they that worship him must do it in spirit and in truth, if they would hope for a favourable audience and a gracious answer to their supplications.

LECTURE LXXIV.

ON the rule which God has given for our direction in prayer, our Catechism teaches us, "That the whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the special rule of direction, is that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called *the Lord's prayer*."

It has heretofore been shown, in answering the objections which are made to the duty of prayer, that it is a dictate of natural feeling to cry to God for help, in circumstances of extreme, and otherwise hopeless distress. Yet it is equally true, as was shown in our last lecture, that we know not *how* to pray, nor *what* to pray for, except as we are taught by the Spirit of God. Now it is to be observed, that the Spirit teaches us *what* to pray for, in the word which he has indited; and *how* to pray, both by his word, and by his motions in our own minds. In every part of the sacred oracles, we may find something that is useful, for our direction in our addresses to the Great Hearer of prayer. It is by the revealed will of God that his nature and attributes are most fully and clearly made known. Here we learn that it is at once our privilege and our duty to draw nigh to him, and pour out our hearts before him; that it is not a vain thing to pray, but that the fervent and effectual prayer of the righteous man availeth much; that the way of access to the throne of grace is through a Mediator, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit; and that we have an assurance that whosoever cometh unto Him, in this new and living way, he will in no wise cast out. In the word of God also, we have the record of prayers which have been offered up by saints of old, and of the gracious answers which they have obtained, and by this are encouraged to the performance of the duty,

as well as by the promises which are made to those who pray in faith. The promises of the divine word, indeed, contain the very matter of prayer; they furnish us with the pleas and arguments, so to speak, which we should make use of in our devout supplications. Here too we are taught what is the use which we are to make of the offices of Christ in the performance of this duty; and how we may avail ourselves of the great doctrines and leading truths of God's revealed will, so as to pray understandingly both for ourselves and for others, and especially for the church, and the prosperity and extension of the Redeemer's cause and kingdom. In short, there is scarcely any part of the divine word from which the careful and serious reader of it may not gather materials for prayer—for confession of sin, pleading for pardon, and thanksgiving for mercies received. The very sins which we read of in the Holy Scriptures, and the judgments which have been inflicted on those who committed them, may and ought to serve as powerful motives, urging us to pray that we may be preserved both from the guilt and the punishment of those whose transgressions have been recorded—recorded for the very purpose that they might serve as warnings to others, even to the end of time. No individual will excel in the gift of prayer, who is not familiar with the contents of his Bible.

“But the special rule of direction—says the Catechism—is that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's prayer.” A question has been raised, whether this can with propriety be called a form of prayer. When our Saviour dictated it to his disciples, he said, “after this manner pray ye,” and hence those who most earnestly oppose forms of prayer have said, that this ought to be regarded as *a pattern* of prayer, suggesting only the matter of our supplications; rather than *a form*, in which the very words we are to use must be considered as prescribed: and they remark, in support of their opinion, that our Lord's prayer is actually given with some variation of the language, by the two evan-

gelist, Matthew and Luke, by whom we find it recorded. An objection has also been made to its being called "a *special* rule of direction; inasmuch as two important parts of prayer, thanksgiving and the confession of sin, are not found in it with any distinctness of expression, and especially because it does not teach us to ask in the name of Christ, which our Saviour afterwards informed his disciples they were always to do. But these objections, although somewhat specious, do not seem to be valid. The distinction between a pattern and a form, as applicable to the point before us, is scarcely more than verbal. We sometimes and properly, speak of a form, when we do not mean, nor are understood to mean, that there must be an exact resemblance of it, in every thing to which it is to serve as an exemplar; a general conformity, and not a precise likeness, is all that is intended. Nor does a special rule of direction imply that there may not be other rules, which require to be carefully regarded—it may be *indispensable*, and yet not *exclusive*. As to the parts of prayer, we shall find in the sequel that they are virtually included in this; and as to asking in the name of Christ, it was not proper, in the beginning of our Lord's ministry on earth, when this prayer was dictated, that it should be explicitly mentioned. It was just before his crucifixion, as we learn from the evangelist John, that he said to his disciples, speaking of what should take place after his resurrection and glorification, "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. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." And in a preceding part of the same address, we find him saying—"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." In a word, the reason why this prayer is called a form and a special rule, and the manner in

which we ought to regard it, are correctly, though briefly stated, in our larger Catechism—"The Lord's prayer is not only for direction as a pattern, according to which we are to make other prayers, but may be also used as a prayer, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other graces necessary to the right performance of the duty of prayer." The wonderful *comprehensiveness* of this incomparable form of address to God, has been the admiration of all who have closely examined it, and will be the more apparent, the more it is made the subject of investigation and meditation.

This is the proper place to say something, (if I notice the subject at all in these lectures,) on the proper use of forms of prayer in general. You are aware that in the church to which we belong, forms are never employed in the public service of the sanctuary. This topic has been productive of much discussion and controversy, and plausible things may be said, and frequently have been said, on both sides of the litigated question. "Those who are advocates for forms, observe that they prevent absurd, extravagant, or impious addresses to God, as well as the *confusion* of extemporary prayer: that forms were used under the Old Testament dispensation; and in proof of this, they cite Num. vi. 24, 26, and x. 35, 36. On the other side, it is answered, that it is neither reasonable nor scriptural to look for the pattern of Christian worship in the Mosaic dispensation, which, with all its rites and ceremonies, is abrogated and done away; that though forms may be of use to children, and such as are very ignorant, yet *restriction* to forms, either in public or private, does not seem scriptural or lawful. If we look to the example of Christ and his apostles, every thing is in favour of extemporary prayer. The Lord's prayer, it is observed, was not given to be a set form, exclusive of extemporary prayer. It is further argued, that a form cramps the desires; inverts the true order of prayer, making our words to regulate our desires, instead of our desires regulating our words; has a tendency to make us

formal; cannot be suited to every one's case; that it looks as if we were not in reality convinced of our wants, when we want a form to express them; and finally, in answer to the two first arguments, that it is seldom the case that those who are truly sensible of their condition, and pray extempore, do it in an impious and extravagant manner; and if any who have the gift of prayer really do so, and run into the extreme of enthusiasm, yet this is not the case with the generality, since an unprejudiced attention to those who pray extempore must convince us, that if their prayers be not so elegantly composed as those of a set form, they are more appropriate, and delivered with more energy and feeling."*

But although forms be rejected, yet those who lead in social prayer, especially in the public worship of God's house, may, and generally ought, to observe a *method* in their prayers; so that they may neither omit any important part of public devotion, nor pass backward and forward from one part to another—mixing the whole into a confused mass, unproductive of any distinct impression, and inconsistent indeed with devotional edification. Some unhappy examples of this sort furnish the advocates of forms, or an established liturgy, with their most plausible objections against the use of free prayer. To prevent this, those who are to lead others in prayer ought to make serious business of endeavouring to qualify themselves for this most important service. Do they premeditate, and even write much, that they may be able to speak to their fellow men in an acceptable and edifying manner, and can they think of speaking to God, without reflecting at all on what they shall say? It is admitted that in secret prayer, language and method are of less importance; but in social prayer our words should be well ordered. It is a gross error to imagine, that some premeditation and preparation will hinder the warmth of devotion, or the expression of the thoughts that may arise in the mind while uttering our prayer. A general view of what we

* Buck's Theological Dictionary.

propose to say in leading the devotions of others, by its favourable influence on self-possession, will help and not hinder us, in the proper introduction and expression of extemporaneous thought.

In acquiring the gift of prayer, beside a familiar acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, and cherishing a devout spirit by much intercourse with God in secret, important assistance may be derived from reading those forms of prayer which pious and discreet authors have penned and published, suited to all the circumstances and occasions that occur in life. The committing of some of these to memory, will well reward the pains of doing it. This should especially be done by those heads of families who want confidence to lead their households to the throne of grace, without such assistance. Far better it is, in my opinion, devoutly to *read* a prayer to a kneeling family, than to omit this sacred and most important duty. But in private, the expression of our own thoughts in our own words, ought never to be omitted; and by a familiarity with this blessed exercise, few indeed will fail at length to acquire the confidence to pray before others, without great embarrassment, and to the edification of all who unite with them in the solemn service.

The Lord's Prayer, consists of a preface, or introduction, six petitions, and a conclusion. With respect to the first of these, our Catechism says—"The preface of the Lord's prayer (which is, *Our Father which art in heaven*) teacheth us, to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a Father, able and ready to help us; and that we should pray with and for others."

Invocation is the introductory part of prayer, and consists, as I have heretofore had occasion to observe, in calling on God by some of the names by which he is made known to us in his word. In the form of address which we now consider, and which our blessed Saviour has taught us to use, we are directed to call upon God under the endearing appellation of "*Our Father which art in heaven.*" The astonish-

ing condescension of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity, in permitting and teaching us thus to address him, is indeed beyond all expression or conception. This we ought deeply to feel, and if we do, it will be an effectual preservative against all undue familiarity of language; and yet more against all levity or carelessness of spirit, whenever we attempt the duty of prayer. We shall recollect, as the answer before us teaches,

1. That in prayer we “draw near to God.” It is indeed true, that at all times and in all places “God is not far from every one of us—We can no where go from his presence—In him we live, and move, and have our being.” Yet, as in regard to an earthly superior of great eminence and excellence, we feel differently when we directly speak to him on an important and interesting concern, from what we do when we are merely in his presence, without any purpose of addressing him personally; so in regard to the great Father of our spirits, although a sense of his universal presence ought always to be a restraint upon us, that we allow not ourselves in any thing offensive to his pure and all-seeing eyes, yet in immediately addressing him we ought to feel the impression of his glorious Majesty, beyond what we habitually experience. We then draw near for the express purpose of making ourselves, as it were, a party with him; and this may well fill us,

2. “With all holy reverence.” Reverence, or veneration, is a mental affection composed of *awe* and *love*—Let us for a moment attend to the first of these separately; reserving the second for the next particular, to which it properly belongs. In religious awe, a sacred dread or fear is the predominant feeling. Thus it is recorded of the patriarch at Bethel—“Jacob awakened out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not: and he was afraid and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God and the gate of heaven.” The same sacred dread we discover in the language of the Father of the faithful, when pleading

that the guilty city of Sodom might be spared—"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." And again, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak." And finally, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once." This holy fear is always accompanied, or rather it is in a great measure produced, in every right-minded supplicant, by a deep sense of unworthiness, guilt and pollution. It is this which makes us most impressively sensible of our need of a Mediator and Intercessor—sensible that without a day's-man between us and the holy God whom we approach, we should be without hope, and must shrink back from Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, into utter darkness and despair. But knowing that "we have an Advocate with the Father," who is always heard and always prevalent, and coming in his name, and putting every request into his hand, we are enabled to draw near—

3. "With confidence, as children to a Father, who is able and ready to help us." Confidence in offering a request, must always arise from the belief that he to whom we offer it, is both able and disposed to grant what we ask. Hence the inspired declaration, that "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a *rewarder* of them that diligently seek him." The confidence which dutiful children feel that the requests they make to a wise and kind father will be favourably heard, is ever mingled with conscious love to that father. Love, indeed, is the source and vital spring of this confidence. It is this love, tempering the awe of which I have spoken, that constitutes that true filial spirit by which the people of God draw near to him in prayer, as children to a father—It is the spirit of adoption, "whereby they cry Abba Father."

In the sacred Scriptures there are various senses in which God is represented as our Father. Sometimes he is thus denominated because he is our Creator, Preserver and Benefactor. Hence the prophet says, "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God creat-

ed us?" Elsewhere he is called "The God of the spirits of all flesh" and "the Father of spirits." The apostle Paul quotes even a heathen poet as saying of God "For we also are his offspring." And in numerous passages of the sacred oracles he is represented as protecting, providing for, and doing good to his dependent creatures. The Psalmist, speaking of God says—"Thou openest thy hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Again. God is sometimes, in the volume of inspiration, called the Father of his professing people, in virtue of the covenant relation which subsists between him and them. In this sense those Scriptures are to be understood in which Jehovah says, speaking of his ancient chosen people, "Israel is my son, even my first-born—I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me—If then I be a father, where is my honour—Wilt thou not, from this time, cry to me, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth." Once more and especially: God is called the Father of his people, in consequence of the relation in which he stands to them by their regeneration and adoption—They are "born of God," are "partakers of a divine nature," have "received the adoption of sons," are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ;" and the eternal Son of God himself—most astonishing thought! "is not ashamed to call them brethren." Now, beloved youth, if you give yourselves entirely to the Lord—for only on this condition can you do it—you may, with holy confidence, draw near to God as your Father in all the respects and relations that I have mentioned. You may view him as your Father *in heaven*—the Great God who "dwelleth in the high and holy place," the Sovereign of all worlds, having all beings in the universe, every thing, whether animate or inanimate, under his perfect control and at his absolute command. Such a Being you cannot for a moment doubt is "*able* to help you;" and if you can look up to him as your Father by adoption, you ought not to question that he is as *ready* to help as he is able. "For like as a father pitieth his children, so

the Lord pitieth them that fear him." You may pour all your sorrows and complaints into his compassionate bosom; you may go to him for help when creatures can help no longer; you may look to him to supply all your wants, to relieve all your necessities, and to protect you against all dangers and all enemies. Such a Father is God, to all who are reconciled to him through Jesus Christ, his Son our Saviour. Those who are not thus reconciled, may indeed regard him as their Creator, and if, by parental faith, his covenant has been taken hold of in their behalf, they may plead that relation also; but till they are his children by being "born of his Spirit," they can never avail themselves of the angelic privilege, and share in the holy and sublime pleasure of crying "Abba Father," when they approach him in acts of worship—when offering their petitions and uttering their thanksgiving and praise. Never be contented, therefore, till in this high and peculiar sense you can regard and address him as your Father in heaven. Let it be the burden of your souls and of your prayers; that by the regenerating grace of his holy Spirit he may make you his children, by a saving union with Christ Jesus his well beloved Son—that you may have the privilege and know the sweetness of access to him with holy boldness, and taste of that delightful communion with the Father of your Spirits which is heaven begun on earth—a preparation for, and prelibation of, the heaven of eternal felicity, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

But the answer before us teaches that the words "Our Father which art in heaven," intimate that we are to pray with and for others." We pray with others, both when we are their mouth to God in this sacred exercise, and when another performs this office, and we join in the petitions which he offers. It ought ever to be kept in mind, that in social prayer every one is bound to pray—it is his duty to be as devout, and as earnest, and to guard as much against wandering thoughts, when another leads, as when he is himself the speaker. Our presence, and profession to join

in the devotional act, identify us with the speaker, and we awfully trifle and are chargeable with profaneness, if we do not use our utmost endeavours to accompany the words which are uttered, with the sincere desires of our souls. Alas! there is much sin committed, in that very exercise in which we profess to plead for its pardon.

The Lord's Prayer may doubtless be used with great propriety in private, as well as in social or public worship. Yet in private prayer, we are not bound always to speak in the plural number. Much of our address to the great Hearer of prayer may and ought to relate to our personal wants, and necessities, and obligation to gratitude and thanksgiving, in which propriety requires that we speak as individuals. It would seem, however, to be the intention of our blessed Lord, to teach us in this prayer to recognise our connexion with the whole household of faith—the whole family of the adopted children of God; and although we pronounce this prayer in secret, to join with them in the acknowledgments and requests which, as his sons and daughters, they cannot but make, and in which their spirits, however separated for the present, do always harmonize and sweetly unite. This is the blessed communion of saints, commenced on earth and to be perfected in heaven.

LECTURE LXXV.

WE are now to consider the import of the first petition of the Lord's prayer, which is, "Hallowed be thy name." In these few words, as our Catechism teaches us, "We pray that God would enable us and others to glorify him, in all that whereby he maketh himself known, and that he would dispose of all things to his own glory."

It is worthy of remark and remembrance, that in teaching us to pray, in this brief summary of devotion, the same order is observed as in specifying our moral obligations in the decalogue; that is, the duty which we owe to God takes precedence of that which is due to ourselves, and to our fellow men. Of six petitions contained in this prayer, the first three relate exclusively to God; teaching us to regard his glory as supreme, and as claiming our attention before we even mention what relates to the welfare of his creatures. It ought also to be noted, that when we pray that God would *enable* us and others to glorify him, we impliedly confess that we are *unable* to do it, without his gracious assistance. The utter impotence of fallen man, if left to himself, for any good thought, word or work, is a truth most clearly taught in the oracles of inspiration. "No man, said the Saviour, can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." And again, "Without me ye can do nothing." "Not, says St. Paul, that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." When therefore we say—"Hallowed be thy name," we must be considered as recognizing the truth, that so far as our agency is concerned, we indispensably need, and therefore ask, the aid of the Holy Spirit, in the discharge of the duty we essay.

God will, indeed, glorify himself by us and others,

yea, "by all that whereby he maketh himself known," whatever may be the inclinations, or whatever the course of action, of any of his rebellious creatures. It is said in the book of Proverbs, "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea even the wicked for the day of evil." "Surely, says the Psalmist, the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." In the creation, arrangement and order of the material universe; in peopling it with sentient beings, from the smallest insect to the highest angel; and in all the transcendent manifestation of his perfections in the plan and work of man's redemption, his own glory was, most fitly, the supreme and ultimate object of the ever blessed God. In the eternal and ineffable happiness of all those intelligent and moral beings who love and obey him, it is his purpose to exhibit his goodness, grace and mercy, as inconceivably glorious; and in the punishment and everlasting perdition of all those who finally refuse him their cordial allegiance, he has determined to glorify his equity and justice. Now our duty consists, in praying that we and others may not be the *unwilling* subjects *on* whom God shall glorify himself, but that we may be *voluntarily*, actively, delightfully and eternally employed, in contemplating, admiring and showing forth his glory, as it is displayed in his attributes, ordinances, word and works—in creation, providence, and redemption.

We glorify God in his attributes or perfections, when we conceive of them justly, and speak of them with suitable reverence, and endeavour to cultivate, in regard to them, the proper mental exercises. We glorify him in his ordinances, when we reverently and delightfully attend upon them, and make them instrumental to our spiritual improvement, consolation and growth in grace. "A day in thy courts, said the Psalmist, is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." We glorify him in his word, when we in faith "receive it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God,

which effectually worketh also in them that believe.” We glorify him in his work of creation, when the contemplation of it leads us to admiring and adoring apprehensions of its Author, whose wisdom, power, and goodness, shine conspicuously throughout the whole—“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.” We glorify him in his providence, when we cherish a grateful sense of his protecting care, of his abundant mercies, of the provision which he has made to supply the wants of every living thing; and when we eye his hand in all that befalls us, and tremble at his judgments. We glorify God in the work of redemption, when we receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel; and when the harmony and lustre of the divine attributes, as displayed in the astonishing device of saving sinful men and making them heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, is the frequent theme of our adoring admiration and praise. “God, says the apostle, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.”

But we are also to pray that others, as well as ourselves, may be brought to glorify God. This particularly relates to making the prevalence of true religion the subject of our supplications; which we shall have occasion to consider more at large, in treating of the two next petitions. Here, however, it may be proper to remark, that the whole heathen world, as well as all under the light of the gospel, who have adopted an erroneous system of religion, have improper and degrading ideas of the Deity; if indeed the heathen can be said to have any just conceptions at all of the divine nature and attributes. Erroneous or inadequate ideas of God, indeed, lie at the foundation of all false religion. Now, as we understand by the *name of God* in the answer before us, those attributes or perfections by which he makes himself

known, and by which right apprehensions of Him are acquired, so, when we pray that his name *may be hallowed*, we desire and ask that all false notions of the divine character may be banished from the minds of men; and that, conceiving of his majesty, purity and holiness aright, a rational fear and worship of him may pervade the world—That atheism, infidelity, heathenism, Mohammedan delusion, Popish superstition, heresy, all will worship, and all heartless formality in religion, may vanish before the luminous and powerful influence of gospel truth and vital godliness.

In praying that God would “dispose of all things to his own glory,” it is especially proper that we take into view those things whose direct and natural tendency is adverse to his glory, but which he can so overrule as to promote it in the most eminent degree. I will mention a few instances of this kind, for the illustration of this important point. The most wonderful instance of all, is the sufferings and death of Christ. The sun never shone on another scene of guilt so awful and complicated, as was exhibited by those who crucified and slew the Lord of glory. Indeed you know that for a time the sun refused, as it were, to shine upon it. Satan and the agents whom he employed in this awful transaction, expected, no doubt, that a death blow had been given to the whole work of Christ, when they saw him expire on the cross. Yet by the all-disposing wisdom and power of God, this very event is made the foundation of every sinner’s hope—is overruled, to bring to glory the whole elect and ransomed people of the Lord. Again. The persecution of Christians, is, in its natural tendency, and in the design of persecutors, adverse to the glory of God, as it is promoted by the truths of the gospel and the holy and exemplary lives of true believers. Yet persecution has often been overruled, in a most remarkable manner, for the extension of the cause and kingdom of Christ. It became proverbial with the primitive Christians, that, “the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.” The

persecutions of the apostolic age resulted in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who became the great apostle of the Gentiles, and who laboured more abundantly and more successfully than any other individual of the apostolic college. Once more. The grievous sins and falls of true believers, are overruled by God to render them more humble, watchful and exemplary, in the whole of their subsequent lives. Such, you are aware, was the effect of the falls of David and Peter, as narrated in the sacred volume; and the record of their fall and recovery, however it may have provoked the sneer of the infidel, and proved a stumbling block to the careless and inconsiderate, has kept many a broken hearted penitent from utter despair, encouraged him to return to his God, caused him to experience anew the consolations of divine grace, and to proclaim to others the freeness and riches of recovering mercy.

Thus you perceive, that God's name may be hallowed—his glory may be and often is promoted, by disposing to that end, events and actions, in their nature and tendency most hostile to such a result.

Our Catechism teaches, that "In the second petition of the Lord's prayer which is, *Thy kingdom come*, we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened."

Three kingdoms are mentioned in this answer—the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory; and we are taught to pray for the destruction of the first of these kingdoms, for the advancement or extension of the second, and for the hastening of the third—I will endeavour to illustrate each of these particulars in order.

The term Satan is a Hebrew word, the strict import of which is, an *adversary*, an *enemy*, an *accuser*. He appears to have been originally an angel of light of a high order, and the chief or leader of the angels who fell, and to be at present "the prince of the devils," the same as Beelzebub, who is thus denomi-

nated in the controversy of the Pharisees with our Saviour. To this apostate but powerful spirit there is doubtless reference, when we read of "the prince of this world being cast out;" "of the God of this world blinding the minds of them that believe not;" of "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" and of "the dragon, that old Serpent, which is the devil and Satan, being bound a thousand years" in the Millennial age. Under him is a host of evil spirits, all engaged in promoting his cause, and extending his empire. To this empire or kingdom, which is directly and malignantly opposed to the kingdom of grace, all unsanctified men, from the fall of Adam to the end of the world have, according to the sacred Scriptures, belonged, or will belong. It is affecting to think how extensive, and at times almost universal, this empire or kingdom of the enemy of God and man has hitherto been. It has included all those nations of the earth among whom there has been no knowledge or worship of the true God. It now includes the whole heathen world, comprising a very large majority of the human family. It also comprehends all the atheists, infidels, holders of fatal heresies, and all mere formalists in religion, who have lived, or now live, under the light of the gospel. Nay, we have the authority of inspiration for asserting, as already intimated, that every unregenerate sinner belongs to the kingdom of Satan; for the sacred oracles declare that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and a text, already quoted, affirms, that the prince of the power of the air is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;—they are "taken captive by the devil at his will."

It is of the utmost importance, my dear young friends, that you should keep in mind, that those over whom the adversary of our race extends his power and empire, are his *willing* subjects. Cruel and fearful as his reign is, they who submit to it act voluntarily; they choose the state of subjection, the awful thralldom, in which they are held. In other words,

the seat of Satan's empire is in the heart of every un-sanctified sinner. This is manifest from the passages of Scripture just now repeated. In one of those passages the inspired apostle, after speaking of "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," immediately adds, "among whom also we *all* had our conversation in time past, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." When, therefore, we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed, we ask that the mighty power of God may dethrone him in the hearts of the children of men, till the whole world shall be emancipated from his sway. This leads us to consider

2. That we are to pray that the kingdom of grace may be advanced. You will understand that whenever Satan loses a subject, that subject is translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son—the kingdom of grace. This blessed kingdom was established in opposition to that of Satan, immediately after the fall of our first parents; and they probably were the first subjects of it, although the adversary, no doubt, thought that he had secured them for himself. And from that time onward, this kingdom, which is no other than the church of God, has existed in the world; so that we are not to pray for its *commencement*, for that has already taken place, and a promise has been given that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In praying for the *advancement*, or extension of this kingdom, we have great encouragement to be importunate and persevering. For although, as we have seen, the empire of Satan has hitherto been, and still is, very extensive, yet we are assured that such will not always be the fact. Infallible truth is pledged that the heathen shall be given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; that the time shall come, when men shall no more need to be taught, saying, know the Lord, for all shall know him, from the least unto the greatest; that the prince of darkness, mighty as he is, shall be bound and cast into the abyss, and be there shut

up, so that he shall no more deceive the nations, for a thousand years. Then the kingdom of grace will probably be more widely extended than the kingdom of Satan has ever been. For the introduction of this Millennial era we are constantly to offer the prayer of faith; believing that what God has promised, he is both able and faithful to perform.

In the duty enjoined in this petition, the Catechism teaches us to begin with ourselves—to pray that first *we*, and then that *others*, may be brought into the kingdom of grace, and kept in it. Both we and others, if we have a place in this kingdom, must have been brought into it by the gracious and transforming influence of the Spirit of God, accompanying the faithful dispensation of revealed truth: And we must be kept in it “by continued emanations of grace out of the fulness of Christ, whereby the principle of grace is quickened, strengthened and preserved.”

Scott, in his excellent commentary on the petition of our Lord’s prayer which we now consider, says—“This petition implies, first an earnest desire, that this kingdom of God may be set up in our hearts, reducing all within us to entire subjection to Christ our King: then, that it may be set up in the hearts of our children, relatives, servants, friends, neighbours; that all who call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth and holiness; that the true gospel may be every where preached, with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, to render it efficacious; and that ‘all kings may fall down before the Redeemer; that all nations may do him service:’ and in short, that in due time, sin and Satan, and all his party, may be banished out of the world, and shut up in hell, never more to defile or disturb the creation or kingdom of God. Every thing relative to the sending forth, qualifying, and success of ministers, the conversion of sinners, the peace and purity of the church, the subversion of Antichristian Powers, and the bringing of Jews, Pagans and Mahometans into the church, is implied in this petition.”

3. We are to pray that the kingdom of glory may

be hastened. The church militant on earth, is a nursery for the church triumphant in heaven. The latter is called the kingdom of glory, because there the blessed Redeemer and all his faithful people, however they may have been disesteemed and dishonoured by an ungodly world, will appear ineffably glorious; while all their irreclaimable enemies will be clothed with shame and everlasting confusion and contempt. The saints in heaven will obtain a perfect conformity, in their measure, to the likeness of their glorified Saviour—"we shall be like him," says the apostle John, "for we shall see him as he is;" and they will have an uninterrupted vision and fruition of God to all eternity. They will enter this kingdom of glory immediately after the dissolution of the body; they will appear with Christ when he shall come at the last day, "to be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe;" they will be assessors with their Lord in the condemnation of wicked men and angels, and will hear his plaudit before the assembled universe, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" and thus shall they enter into the joy of their Lord, to be ever with him, beholding and partaking of his glory, with increasing and never ending delight.

When we pray that this kingdom of glory may be hastened, our meaning should not be, that the set time for the coming of Christ, either in reference to our beatific vision of him immediately after death, or his final coming to judge the world in righteousness, "should be *anticipated*, or *come sooner*, than the moment fixed for it in infinite wisdom." In the proper use of this petition, there is nothing more than the expression of that state of feeling, in which the soul of the believer springs forward, if I may so speak, to the period of its glorification, and is ready to wish that it were just at hand. The apostle Paul expressed this feeling when he said, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better;" while yet, for the good of the church and the glory of God, he was willing to live, and labour, and suffer, till his

appointed time for entering on his eternal rest and reward should arrive. All the people of God must and do desire to be with Christ in glory, "that an eternal period may be put to all their sinning, and to every thing that has a tendency to detract from the glory of his kingdom, and the happiness of his subjects; wherefore, as *he saith, surely I come quickly: So they pray, Amen, even so come Lord Jesus.*"* The feelings of a holy soul in praying that the kingdom of glory may be hastened, are admirably expressed in the following beautiful hymn, said to have been the last composed by the poet Cowper—

To Jesus, the crown of my hope,
My soul is in haste to be gone;
Oh bear me, ye cherubim, up,
And waft me away to his throne.

Thou Saviour, whom absent, I love,
Whom not having seen, I adore,
Whose name is exalted above
All glory, dominion and power—

Dissolve thou the bands that detain
My soul from her portion in thee;
O break off this adamant chain,
And make me eternally free.

Then that happy era begins,
When arrayed in thy glory I shine;
And no longer pierce with my sins
The bosom on which I recline.

In the next, or third petition of the Lord's prayer, which is, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," "we pray," says our Catechism, "That God, by his grace would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven."

The will of God here spoken of may be considered as two-fold; namely, his *providential* and his *preceptive* will. By the former we understand his government of the universe, according to his own eternal purpose and sovereign pleasure—disposing of all events and all creatures, throughout his vast domi-

* Fisher.

nions, as seemeth to him right and good. By the preceptive will of God, we understand his laws or requisitions, made known to his intelligent and moral creatures, for their obedience and direction in duty. Both the providential and preceptive will of God are contemplated in this petition; and it is clearly implied in the answer of the Catechism now before us, that by nature we, and all men, are so blinded and perverted by sin, that we do not see the true design of God's providential dispensations, and are prone to murmur and repine against them, especially when they are afflictive to ourselves; and that we are utterly unable and unwilling rightly to understand and readily to obey his holy will, as revealed in the Scriptures of truth; but on the contrary, are disposed to rebel against it, and to do the will of the flesh and of the devil. Hence we are taught to pray, that God by his grace, imparted to us by his Holy Spirit, would enlighten us to see the import and intention of his providential dealings with us, and open our understandings that we may rightly understand the Scriptures, so as to know their proper scope and their spiritual meaning; and that He would incline and enable us to perform our duty, when we are brought to see what it is, or what it demands of us. "It is God, says the inspired apostle, who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure."

When we are taught to pray that the will of God may "be done on earth as it is in heaven," or, that we may conform our hearts and lives to it, "as the angels do in heaven," it is of importance to understand that the word AS implies *resemblance*, and not *equality*. There is a perfection of knowledge in the angels, an absorption of their will in the will of God, and a readiness and completeness of their obedience to his will in all things, which no man on earth, since the fall of our first parents, ever did or ever will exemplify. But although our conformity to the divine will can never *equal*, yet it may have a good degree of *resemblance* to that of the holy angels. We ought to endeavour to imitate them; and we may possess a

measure of that reverence and aptitude, that fidelity and diligence, that sincerity and pleasure, that zeal, constancy and entire devotedness, with which the superior order of happy spirits in the heavenly world worship, obey and execute the commands of our common God and Father. The saints on earth and the glorified spirits in heaven, all belong to the same family; for as already intimated, the church on earth is a nursery for heaven. A portion of the heavenly temper must be possessed in this world, by every individual of the human race who is either prepared for, or has any right to expect, an admission to the kingdom of glory above. In a word, as has often and justly been said, heaven must commence on earth; and the more of a heavenly disposition any individual possesses now, the more happy and useful will he be while he remains in the body, and the better will he be prepared for that glorious state on which he will enter, when "mortality shall be swallowed up of life:" and he who does not now desire and endeavour to know, obey and submit to the will of God, in some good measure as the angels do in heaven, has no reason to expect that he will or can be admitted, till better qualified, to the society and bliss of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. In the expected Millennial age, when pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father shall be exemplified among all the nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues of the whole earth, the petition we consider will be answered in all its extent.

This third petition seems to be intended principally as an explanation or illustration of the second; and I shall close the present lecture with the concluding part of the note of Dr. Scott, of which the former part has already been cited. He says, "All the inhabitants of Heaven do the will of God, universally, cheerfully, constantly, perfectly, harmoniously, and without weariness, and with ineffable delight; and we are taught to pray that all the inhabitants of the earth may imitate, and emulate their example; that all men becoming the disciples and subjects of Christ, may renounce

all sin and wickedness, and obey God's commandments with constancy, harmony and alacrity, as angels in heaven do; that an end may be put to all injustice, oppression, fraud, violence, bloodshed, intemperance, licentiousness, ungodliness, malice and contention; and that righteousness, truth, goodness, mercy, purity, love of God and each other, may fill the earth, even as they fill heaven. And what a change would this be! What an extensive petition is this!—At the same time, we are taught to pray, that all men may rejoice in the sovereignty, authority and glory of God, and be contented and satisfied with his appointments respecting them, without envy or ambition; but rejoicing to see others honoured, prospered, and happy, even as the inhabitants of Heaven do. And while we ask such and so many blessings for others, we are taught to ask for this obedient, submissive frame of mind for ourselves, and to seek for it and aim at it, in our whole conduct.”

LECTURE LXXVI.

OUR Lord having taught us in what manner we are to address our heavenly Father, in praying for the advancement of his kingdom and glory in the world, dictates three other petitions, in which we are to pray for ourselves—for those favours or mercies, in which both our temporal and eternal interests are involved.

In the fourth petition, which is “Give us this day our daily bread,” we pray, says our Catechism, “That of God’s free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them”—You ought constantly to keep in mind, my young friends, that you should supplicate and receive the protection and bounties of God’s common providence “as a free gift.” This is too often neglected or forgotten. The forgiveness of sin, and the saving influences of divine grace, none who know what these things mean, will fail to ask for as benefits, to which, as a matter of right, they have no claim. We have forfeited the favour of God, and to expect its restoration in any other way than one that is purely gratuitous—in any manner but as “a free gift,”—is seen at once to be absurd. But it is not so readily admitted and recollected that by our sins we have also forfeited all *temporal good*—every present enjoyment, as well as all future happiness; and therefore that the very air we breathe, the health we possess, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, in a word, every thing that contributes to our earthly comfort, does actually come to us as “a free gift.” Man, by the violation of the first covenant under which he was placed, forfeited life itself, and consequently every thing appertaining to it, into the hands of divine justice. It is through the intervention of Christ the Mediator, that all our earthly blessings are bestowed

upon us. His redeemed people receive them in the channel and as the gift of covenant love; and unconverted sinners ought to receive them, as proofs of the divine forbearance, and as affording space, and opportunity, and a call to repentance. It is said justly, as well as beautifully, by Dr. Watts—

“Our life is forfeited by sin,
To God’s avenging law;
We own thy grace, immortal King,
In every gasp we draw.”

“Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, said Moses to the children of Israel; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth;” and this injunction is as important and as applicable now as it ever was. Keep it in constant remembrance, my dear youth, that neither talents nor industry will insure you success in acquiring worldly possessions of whatever kind, unless you are blessed and prospered of God; nor will such possessions when obtained render you happy, but rather increase your discontent and misery, if they are not accompanied by those outward circumstances, and that inward state of mind, which God alone can order and bestow.

We ought to be willing to leave it with our heavenly Father, to whom our prayer is addressed, to determine for us what is “a competent portion of the good things of this life.” “They that will be rich,” says the apostle; that is, they who are bent, at all hazards on accumulating wealth, and will never rest unless they obtain it, “fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hateful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” Considering how much is said in the New Testament of the danger to which wealth exposes the immortal soul of its possessor, we may well wonder at the general eagerness with which it is pursued. Persevering industry and constant economy are duties; and if in the use of these, riches, without an over anxiety for attaining them, come into our possession, we may hope that by the grace of God we may be preserved from abusing them to our own destruction. Yet however

obtained, riches always bring with them a weighty and fearful responsibility for their proper use and employment: so that, as a matter of choice, the prayer of Agur should be ours—"Give me neither poverty nor riches—feed me with food convenient for me." This is in perfect accordance with the petition before us—"Give us this day our daily bread." "Bread," says Scott, in commenting on these words—Bread is one principal part of the things which are needful for the body, and is often put for the whole: by the use of this word we are taught to ask only things that are necessary, without craving superfluities; and to refer it to our heavenly Father to determine what things are necessary, according to our station in life, our families, and various other circumstances. All Christians, whether rich or poor, are taught to ask this provision from God; for all depend upon him for it, should receive it as his gift, give him thanks for it, and use it to his glory; whether it come from their estates, commerce, husbandry, professions, labour or skill, or from the liberality of other men. We are taught to ask it for the day (perhaps with reference to the manna which Israel received fresh every day) and this instructs us to beware of covetousness, to be moderate and contented with a slender provision, and to trust, God from day to day"—And thus the poet,

"This day be bread and peace my lot;
All else beneath the sun,
Thou know'st if best bestowed or not,
And let thy will be done."*

"A little that a righteous man hath, says the Psalmist, is better than the riches of many wicked." To "enjoy God's blessing" with what we possess, is es-

* Pope's *universal prayer*—a composition framed on the infidel notion that the "Great First Cause," may be worshipped with equal acceptance by Jews, under the appellation of "Jehovah;" by heathen, under that of "Jove," or "Jupiter;" and by Christians, under that of "Lord." Yet this monstrous absurdity does not prevent this composition from containing, like the other moral writings of this eminent poet, many just thoughts, expressed with unrivalled propriety and beauty.

sential to real happiness; and having this, we cannot be miserable, be our providential allotment what it may. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." Be it your chief concern, therefore, my beloved youth, in all your efforts to obtain wealth, or to rise to distinction, to act in such a manner as that you may humbly hope that the blessing of God will constantly attend you; and endeavour, "having food and raiment, to be therewith content." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things (of a worldly kind, and necessary for your happiness) shall be added unto you." I conclude what I have to offer on this petition, with the excellent statement of the duties it involves, as given in our larger Catechisms—"We pray in this petition for ourselves and others, that both they and we, waiting upon the providence of God from day to day in the use of lawful means, may of his free gift, and as to his fatherly wisdom shall seem best, enjoy a competent portion of the outward blessings of this life, and have the same continued and blessed unto us in our holy and comfortable use of them, and contentment in them: and be kept from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort."

We now proceed to the fifth petition, which is—"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"—in which, according to our Catechism, "we pray that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because, by his grace, we are enabled, from the heart, to forgive others."

It ought to be particularly noticed that this petition is connected with that which immediately precedes it, by the copulative conjunction *and*—thus teaching us, that we ought to pray for the forgiveness of our sins as often as we ask for our daily bread; and that without the pardon of sin, there is no true enjoyment of the common bounties of God's providence.

By the word *debts* in this petition, we are to understand *sins*. This is put beyond question by the very same petition being expressed in the gospel of Luke

by the words “forgive us our sins:” and sins, whether of omission or commission, are, with great propriety denominated debts, inasmuch as punishment is their *due* from the justice of God. The apostle declares, “that the *wages* of sin is death.” Now we ask the *forgiveness* of these debts, because “neither we nor any other creature can make the least satisfaction for them,” as our Lord himself shows, in the parable contained in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, in which he teaches and illustrates at length, the doctrine and duty of forgiveness. The way in which we are to ask and expect forgiveness, is pointed out in the answer before us—we are told, that in the very language of the petition, when rightly understood and properly used, “We pray that God, for Christ’s sake, would freely pardon all our sins.”

It is the prerogative of God alone to forgive sin. In every sin, although a fellow creature be the immediate object of it, God is the party whom we should consider as chiefly offended—because of his Supreme Majesty, and because every sin is a transgression of his infinitely righteous and holy law. Hence we find that when David came to confess his great sin in the matter of Uriah, he says, addressing himself to Jehovah, “against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.” We are therefore to apply ourselves directly to God, and to ask of him, for Christ’s sake, to “acquit us both from the guilt and punishment of sin;” that is, to extend to us his pardoning grace, “through the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, apprehended and applied by faith.”* Christ having fully satisfied the divine law and justice in behalf of every believer, all his sins are blotted out for the merits’ sake of his surety Saviour. The Saviour’s righteousness, according to the express words of the holy oracle, is “unto and upon all them that believe,” not only to cover and conceal all their offences, but to ensure to them the heavenly inheritance.

* Larger Catechism—See the answer to the 194th question.

In my lecture on Justification, I have shown at some length, how sin is "*freely* pardoned," although it is done entirely on account of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Here, therefore, I shall only repeat what is said by Fisher on this point, in considering the answer before us. He remarks, that "God's accepting of Christ as our surety, and his fulfilling all righteousness in our room, were both of them acts of rich, free and sovereign grace. Therefore, though the pardon of our sins be of debt to Christ, yet it is free to us:" and he very pertinently refers to Ephes. i. 7, where it is said, speaking of Christ, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

The answer we consider, concludes by saying, that "we are the rather encouraged to ask" forgiveness of God, "because, by his grace, we are enabled, from the heart, to forgive others."

If we examine the discourses and sayings of our blessed Lord, as recorded in the evangelists, we shall find there is scarcely a topic on which he speaks more frequently, or more at large, than on the duty of forgiving those who have offended or injured us. Let us, therefore, examine into the nature of this duty carefully. Let us consider what it does not, and what it does require.

1. It manifestly does not require, that a man who has been offended or injured, should be insensible that such is the fact. The very duty of forgiveness necessarily implies, that we know and feel that we have something to forgive. We ought indeed to be careful not to estimate an injury beyond its real magnitude, nor to dwell and muse upon it, so as to inflame our minds, or fill them with angry or revengeful emotions. This is to be carefully avoided; yet we not only may, but ought to be, sensible of an offence or injury, when it has plainly and palpably been offered or inflicted.

2. We are not required to withhold from the offending party the knowledge or information, that we consider him as having done us wrong. On the contrary, it is a duty expressly enjoined by our Saviour, to go

to an offending brother, and tell him his fault; at first privately, and then, if we do not obtain satisfaction, to take measures to have him censured and disciplined. But all this is to be done, not vindictively, but so if possible as to “gain our brother;” or, failing in this, to prevent the injury which might arise from his example.

3. Neither are we required to place confidence in one who has given us unequivocal evidence of a disposition to injure us. We ought not to put ourselves in his power, so as to enable him to repeat or add to the injury he has done us. For this we have the warrant of our Saviour’s perfect example, who would “not commit himself” to his enemies, till he was fully prepared to terminate his mission by his death.

But 4. Our duty positively and indispensably requires us, to be ready to be reconciled to an offender. We are not to repel, but to favour and facilitate any advance or overture of the injurious party, when he seems disposed to acknowledge his fault. We are to show that we are not hard to be appeased, not difficult to be won to forgiveness. We are not to require the offender to humble himself greatly, before we meet him for reconciliation. We are not to insist on greater concessions than are equitable; but rather to accept of less than might be exacted, if rigorous justice were done—provided always, that we have evidence of real regret for his wrong doing, and a disposition to be friendly, or not hostile, in time to come.

5. We are, from first to last, cordially to forgive the offender. We are to wish him no evil; we are to guard our hearts against all hatred, malice, and every vindictive feeling. We are to feel *benevolently*, to cherish unfeigned good will toward our bitterest enemy. We are to desire sincerely that he may lay aside his hostility, and become reconcilable. We are to pray earnestly that God may bring him to repentance, and for the sake of Christ, forgive him freely—forgive the injury he has done to us, and the much greater offence which he has committed against God, by his flagrant violation of the law of love, and the sacred

principle of doing as he would be done by. Of all this, our adored Redeemer, you know, exhibited a most wonderful instance, in his prayer for his murderers in his expiring moments: and there was a close imitation of this high example, in the first Christian martyr, Stephen. Happy they, who feel and exhibit the same *likeness* to their Redeemer which Stephen did, in performing a duty so contrary to the naturally proud and resentful human heart.

Yes, my young friends, I must here repeat, what was mentioned in a former lecture, that in praying God to “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” the particle *as* must be considered as expressing *likeness* and not *equality*. Alas! all that we do is imperfect; and if God did not remit our sins, more purely, perfectly and freely, than we remit those of our offending brethren, we should never escape condemnation. Still, this is never to be made a plea, even for the imperfection of our forgiveness. We are to mourn the imperfection, and earnestly strive to avoid it. Then we shall have the “encouragement” mentioned in the answer before us—the encouragement which is derived from evidence, that we have been made partakers of the renewing and sanctifying grace of God; for it is this alone, that will ever enable any one rightly to discharge the duty which has now been explained—A duty in which we make no atonement for our sins, and can plead no merit for its performance; but which, when properly performed, gives proof that we have, by divine grace, been embued with a portion of the spirit and mind of Christ; and consequently, may cheerfully hope that we shall be made partakers of all the benefits of his great salvation.

LECTURE LXXVII.

IN the sixth petition of the Lord's prayer, which is, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," our Catechism teaches us, that "we pray that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted." This answer is in accordance with an explicit promise, made in the Scriptures of truth to the people of God, in the following words—"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." It is in answer to prayer, it should always be remembered, that God is wont to fulfil the promises he has made to his children. If they neglect to ask the things which he has promised, he usually teaches them their duty by withholding the stipulated benefit, till its loss brings them to cry to him earnestly, both for the pardon of their sin in neglecting to ask that they might receive, and for the conferring of the favour which, on account of their neglect, has been justly withheld: and when brought to this temper, they again experience, perhaps in a more signal manner than ever before, the fulfilment of a promise which had seemed to fail.

It is important, my young friends, that you should understand, that the verb *to tempt*, has two distinct and very different meanings, in our translation of the Bible—otherwise, the holy Scriptures may appear to contradict themselves. In Genesis xxii. 1, it is said explicitly, "that God did tempt Abraham;" and in James i. 13, it is declared, in the same unequivocal manner, that—"God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man." You will observe then, that in the first of these instances, the verb *to tempt* is of the same meaning as the words *to prove*, *to try*, *to put*

to the test. Thus when Abraham was commanded to offer up his son, which was the thing in which it is said God tempted him, the faith and obedience of Abraham were *tried, put to the proof, or test,* by requiring him to do an act to which the most powerful objections would arise, in any mind not in the possession of the most vigorous faith and unbounded confidence in God. But in the second instance, the verb *to tempt,* is used in its more common signification, which is, *to entice, to seduce, to allure* into error, vice, or sin, by placing objects or considerations before the view of the mind, which may have a powerful tendency to produce such an effect. Now, in this sense of the word, God can never be tempted; he is incapable of being *enticed, seduced, or allured* to any evil; and he is equally incapable, from the perfect purity and holiness of his nature, of producing such an effect on others, by any direct influence on their minds; or by entrapping or ensnaring them, when they are desirous to avoid evil, and have used their endeavours and sought his aid, that they might escape it. Yet when men have not done this, but on the contrary have chosen and sought evil, and have refused his instructions, admonitions, warnings, and reproofs, he may justly leave them to be overcome by the temptations which they have sought, and loved, and complied with; yea, he may, in his righteous displeasure, so order his providential dealings, that they will be tempted even to their certain perdition.

It is against this fearful divine dereliction, that the petition under consideration, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” is pointedly and especially directed. “Abandon us not to temptation,” is Campbell’s translation of the first part of this petition; and he shows, I think conclusively, that the original words* have this import in other passages of the New Testament, and ought to be so understood in the Lord’s prayer. “My brethren, says the apostle James, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,” and the reason immediately follows,

* Μη εισερχησθε υμεις εις πειρασμον.

“knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience:” and in the sequel he adds, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” Now, as the providence of God directs and orders all the events of our lives, he may be said *to lead us into temptation*, when he permits us to fall into it; and this may be done in mercy, knowing that the temptation, by grace and strength derived from him, will be overcome, as it was in the case of Abraham; and that our crown of eternal life, like his, will be the more glorious, as the reward of the victory achieved. But to be *abandoned to temptation*—to be left not merely to fall *into* it, but to fall *before* it, to be overcome by it, and to abide under its power, unreclaimed, and without deliverance or help from God, this indeed is awful beyond all expression—it is to be judicially left to certain and eternal ruin.

Having thus given a general, and I would hope sufficient explanation of the petition demanding consideration at this time, I will call your attention to a number of particulars, in which a somewhat comprehensive, and yet summary view, shall be given of the subject of temptation, which is one of great practical importance.

1. We are always to avoid temptation as much as we can, without neglecting, refusing, or deserting our duty. Whoever rushes carelessly, or unnecessarily into temptation, has no reason to expect that he will escape without injury; far less can he reasonably hope to avoid even gross sin, if, as it has sometimes been expressed, “he tempts the devil to tempt him;” that is, seeks for scenes or objects of temptation, to gratify an unhallowed curiosity, or rather, (as I suspect in such a case is always the fact) is prompted by the desire of indulging, *mentally* at least, in the sin to which he knows he will be allured. In a word, we are never voluntarily, and of choice, to expose ourselves to any temptation, but on the contrary, to avoid it by all proper precautions. Hence we ought

not to think it an extreme, if admonished carefully to consider our constitutional make, to know what are the transgressions to which we are most prone, that we may with peculiar vigilance guard against provocatives to easily besetting sins. This is a consideration that should have influence on youth, in choosing a trade or profession, and even on those who are thinking of offering themselves as missionaries, when they examine into their qualifications for the undertaking they contemplate. The inquiry should be, will not the course of life on which I think of entering, expose me to temptations, to a compliance with which I am, from constitutional make, or some other cause, peculiarly prone. But on the other hand, whenever in the providence of God, without our seeking, and contrary to our choice, "we fall into temptation," and plain and important duty requires us to meet it, we ought to look to God for special aid, and go forward with determined resolution.

2. It ought to be habitually impressed on our minds, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to resist any temptation. It has been justly observed, that the foul transgressions of eminent saints, of which we read in sacred story, took place by the commission of sins to which we should suppose they, of all men, were the least exposed—as Moses, the meekest of men, sinned by intemperate anger; Abraham the father of the faithful, by a distrust of the providence of God; and so of several others. The truth is, that as through Christ strengthening them, his people can do all things, so without him they can do nothing. Hence they are taught, in all things to distrust themselves; and to be sensible of their insufficiency, without divine aid, for any good work, or for the avoidance even of enormous sins; and to look constantly to him to uphold and guard them—thus showing, that "when they are weak then they are strong"—strong, not in themselves, but "in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."

3. In connexion with what has just been said, it is proper to notice what has been called *tempting God*. "Men *tempt God*, when they unseasonably and ir-

reverently require proofs of his presence, power, and goodness; when they expose themselves to danger from which they cannot escape, without the miraculous interposition of his providence; and when they sin with such boldness as if they wanted to try whether God could, or would, know and punish them.”* Good men may commit this sin by expecting extraordinary interpositions in their favour, beyond what God in his word has authorized them to expect. But none except the most impious and abandoned, can do that which is last mentioned by the author I have quoted.

4. It is of importance to remember, that when a temptation solicits or assaults, if we would have any rational prospect of withstanding it ultimately, it must be resisted at once, and with the most decisive resolution and effort. Indeed, all dallying with temptation, as I have elsewhere shown, is sinful in itself; and it may provoke God to withhold, or withdraw, that gracious influence, without which we are sure to fall. Let a temptation, whether it be alluring or terrifying, get possession of the fancy and the feelings, and its full prevalence is all but certain. On this point, let me recommend to your review and careful attention, what I have said in my fifteenth lecture, on the temptation by which our first mother was fatally seduced.

5. The sources of temptation are the world, the flesh, and the devil. *The world*, proves a source of temptation both from the good and the evil which we may meet with, in our progress through it. The profits, pleasures, and emoluments of the world, often prove a snare and the occasion of sin. Hence we should pray with the Psalmist, that God would “incline our hearts unto his testimonies, and not unto covetousness,” and that he would dispose and enable us, agreeably to the apostolical injunction, “to set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.” The dismaying evils of the world which may prove temptations, are the outward troubles and

* Brown’s Dictionary, under the word *tempt*.

afflictions which we meet with in it—poverty, persecution, the death of friends and relatives, loss of reputation, and sometimes of life itself. “In the world,” said our Saviour, “ye shall have tribulation.” When we are exercised with temptations of this description, we should think much of what Christ our Saviour endured for us, and how little, in the comparison, we are called to suffer for our fidelity to him; and we should pray that our outward afflictions may be “for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness,” and that we may neither “despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of him.”

The flesh, that is our corrupt and depraved nature, is also a fruitful source of temptation. In the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, the apostle gives a catalogue of “the works of the flesh,” and sets these in contrast with “the fruit of the Spirit.” He shows that in every sanctified soul there is a constant conflict between these opposing principles. His direction is, “walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh;” and he declares that “they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” It is with his corrupt nature that every believer has his longest and sorest conflicts; and his constant prayer should be, for those supplies of grace from the fulness of Christ, by which he may at length be brought off a conqueror and more than a conqueror, over these dangerous enemies of his soul.

Satan, is by way of eminence, denominated “the Tempter.” He was so called emphatically, when he assaulted Christ in the wilderness. He began to act in this hateful character when he assailed our first parents in Paradise, and he has been making his assaults upon all ranks of mankind ever since. “Be sober, be vigilant, says the apostle Peter; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” But it should never be forgotten, that Satan has no *direct* control over the human will; he cannot force or compel us, to yield to his temptations. Hence the direction, “resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Yet the

arts and wiles of our great adversary are such, that if he were not limited and controlled by God, he would doubtless succeed in his attempts to destroy imperfect man, since he found the means of seducing the parents of our race, when they had no imperfection. But Christ, our Saviour, was "revealed to destroy the works of the devil;" and to the blessed Redeemer we should especially and directly apply for protection and deliverance, when temptations come more immediately from the great enemy of God and man. This was the counsel of Luther. He advises that under the manifest assaults, suggestions, and injections of our adversary the devil, we should pray to the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, to God in Christ, directly, specially, and solely, for his interposition and succour; since he was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin, and is able to succour those who are tempted. Doubtless, Satan is ever ready and constantly engaged to enforce, as far as he is permitted, every temptation that assails us, from whatever quarter it may arise. But there are some temptations, and of the most terrific kind, sometimes called "fiery darts of the devil," which seem to proceed immediately from this fearful enemy. A flood of blasphemous, strange, horrible, dismaying, and almost overwhelming *thoughts*, or, as I would rather call them, *imaginationations*, are sometimes poured in on the soul. Sometimes such thoughts, in a more separate and unconnected manner, rise up in the mind, or are suddenly and unaccountably darted into it; and having once entered, they are renewed from day to day, till the sufferer is harassed and tormented almost beyond endurance; and perhaps is distressed with the apprehension of having committed the unpardonable sin, and is even tempted to self-destruction. Individuals of a melancholy temperament, or of a nervous habit, are most frequently afflicted with this calamity, and commonly to the greatest degree; but persons of every kind of constitutional make, and some of the most vigorous health and best spirits, are not always free from a measure of these most distressing mental af-

fections. Nor are persons of the most eminent piety exempted from them. On the contrary, persons of this character have often been peculiarly subject to this class of temptations.

In regard to this great affliction, the first thing to be observed in seeking relief, is to recollect, and keep it in mind, that temptation, considered by itself, is not sin. Our Lord Jesus Christ, "who did no sin," was tempted by Satan; nor can we easily conceive of more horrible suggestions, than those of worshipping the devil, and of plunging down a precipice; and yet these were among the temptations of our blessed Lord. These thoughts, or imaginations, therefore, so long as they are promptly resisted, rejected, and abhorred, are not sinful. The next thing to be remembered is, that we cannot reason them away. "To attempt to think them down is madness," said Dr. Johnson, to one who consulted him on the subject. To the same effect precisely, was the opinion of Luther; and indeed of all who have written most discreetly on the subject. The great point to be carried, is to prevent them from being brought before the view of the mind, and as much as possible to disregard them, and not even to notice them distinctly, when they do occur. All recalling of them, or thinking them over—to which there is often a strange propensity—is to renew their impression and increase their strength. The plain duty of the afflicted party therefore is, to lift up the heart in fervent aspirations to the once tempted and now glorified Redeemer, for his protection—for grace and strength to endure the trial while it lasts, and to grant deliverance in his own time and way; and then immediately to occupy the mind vigorously with some lawful object or pursuit. Idleness and solitude are to be avoided as much as possible. "Be not solitary, be not idle," was the summary advice of Burton, in his "Anatomy of Melancholy," which Dr. Johnson thought should be amended thus—"Be not solitary when you are idle, be not idle when you are solitary." By the observance of these directions, and a resolute and persevering adherence to them, the

temptations we consider will at length vanish without injury; nay, it may be, with lasting benefit to the afflicted party. The excellent John Newton, in a letter to one who, under the distress we contemplate, asked his advice, makes a remark to this effect—that however horrible and dismaying these temptations seem, while they last, yet after they are removed, *they leave no scar upon the conscience*. Such certainly has been my own observation, in the cases—considerable in number—on which I have been consulted, and my advice requested. It is by sap and mine, far more frequently than by these furious assaults, that the great adversary of souls effects his purposes. It is by promoting, by every means in his power, carelessness, gradual backsliding, a worldly spirit, neglect of watchfulness, and the conscientious discharge of duty, that he gains an advantage against the professed disciples of Christ; and it is by artful and gradual seductions into flagrant sin, or by endeavouring to keep them in carnal security, or a delusive contentment, derived from purposes of future amendment and repentance, that he ensures, most frequently and certainly, the eternal perdition of unregenerate sinners. With warning you, therefore, my young friends, in the most solemn manner against these artifices of the great tempter and deceiver, I close my discussion of the sixth petition of the Lord's prayer; and proceed immediately to a brief consideration of its conclusion—

This conclusion is thus expressed: "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever, Amen." In these words, according to our Catechism, "we are taught to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power and glory to him: and in testimony of our desires and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen."

The word *for*, with which the conclusion of the Lord's prayer is introduced, intimates that what immediately follows is to be considered as a *conclusive reason*, why every petition of this inimitable prayer

may properly be offered up to God, and why the answer of the petitions may be expected by every truly devout worshipper: and need any thing be said to show the force and sufficiency of the reason thus assigned? Surely a Being who is the Sovereign of the universe, infinite in power, and whose glory transcends all conception, and which will endure to eternal ages, must be the proper, and the only proper object, of supreme worship, adoration and praise; and the source also from which his dependent creatures may expect, in the way of his own appointment, a gracious answer to all their reasonable requests, and the supply of all their real wants. But let us dwell for a moment, on each of the clauses in the answer now under consideration.

1. We are "to take our encouragement in prayer from God only." Since God is the only proper object of religious worship, if he has pointed out a particular way and manner in which our approach to him may be acceptably made, it is plain that all our *encouragement* to hope for a favourable hearing and answer of our requests, must be taken from a compliance with his prescribed order. If we adopt any method of access to him, different from what he has prescribed, so far from having reason to hope for a gracious audience and acceptance, we have every ground to expect his frowns, and the rejection of our petitions. Now, God in his holy word has taught us in what manner we are to approach him in prayer. We are to regard him as the only living and true God—abhorring all idols, and all participation of any creature with him in religious homage. We are also to come to him through the mediation and intercession of Christ alone—rejecting all other mediators and intercessors, of whatever character or rank. We are, moreover, to come humbly confessing our sins, and in the exercise of true faith in his promises of forgiveness, and justification unto eternal life, through the atoning blood and perfect righteousness of his Son, and the renovating and sanctifying influence of his Holy Spirit. Those, therefore, who deny the media-

tion of Christ; those who look to any other mediator than to him alone; and those who mention, or rely in any measure on their own merits, or on any human merit, to recommend them to God—oppose his prescribed way of access and address, and adopt one of their own, which he will never regard, or treat with any thing but rejection and abhorrence.

2. In our prayers to God we are to praise him. That thanksgiving and praise to God constitute an essential and most delightful part of prayer, I have heretofore distinctly and fully shown. I need therefore only here remark, that in ascribing “kingdom, power, and glory to God, this itself is a high act of praise, and that this was what was intended in the answer we consider. To show this very summarily, I remark, that when we say “thine is the kingdom,” we ascribe eternal and absolute sovereignty over the whole universe of material and immaterial beings to God, as the great “I AM:” that when we say “thine is the power,” we acknowledge his omnipotence; that he is not only the Creator and upholder of all things, but that nothing is too hard for him to effect; that his counsel shall stand, and that he will do all his pleasure: that when we say “thine is the glory,” we acknowledge “that he is possessed of all those excellencies that render him glorious in the eyes of men and angels; and that the praise and honour of every thing that is great and excellent, or has a tendency to raise our esteem and admiration, is due to him.” And we recognise the truth, that this kingdom, power, and glory, all belong to God, in the word “forever;” that is, he will possess them, without any intermission or diminution, to all eternity.

3. In testimony of our desire and assurance to be heard, we say Amen. The word *Amen* is a purely Hebrew term (אמן) which denotes firmness, certainty, fidelity. In devotional exercises, this word signifies both *so be it*, and *so it is*; and both these meanings we are taught to give it in the answer before us; the former, as a testimony of our *desire*, and the latter as the expression of our *assurance* that we shall be

heard. Now the use of the word will be the testimony of our *desire*, when “by faith we are emboldened to plead with God that he would fulfil our requests;”^{*} and it will be the expression of *assurance* to be heard, when, in the same exercise of faith, “we quietly rely upon him,” to grant us what we ask in accordance with his holy will. It was, therefore, with a striking propriety, that the whole canon of scripture was concluded with the repeated use of this significant term—“He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

And thus, beloved youth, I close not only this lecture, but the whole of those which I have delivered to you on our excellent Shorter Catechism—thankfully acknowledging the goodness of God, that he has spared me and strengthened me, to complete this laborious undertaking—the most important, it may be, of my ministerial life, and on which I earnestly implore his blessing—hoping that not only while I live, but when my body shall have returned to its native dust, these lectures may remain, as my testimony to his holy truth; and praying that through his condescending and superabounding grace, he may make them, with all their imperfections, the humble instrument, in his own Almighty hand, of bringing many sons and daughters unto glory, with whom the author may be permitted to rejoice, and say, “Here am I, and the children thou hast given me.” Amen and Amen.

* Larger Catechism.

QUESTIONS AND COUNSEL,

FOR THOSE WHO HOPE THAT A WORK OF SAVING GRACE HAS BEEN
WROUGHT UPON THEIR HEARTS.

BY REV. ASHBEL GREEN, D.D.

QUESTIONS.

1. HAVE you seen yourself to be, by nature and by practice, a lost and helpless sinner? Have you not only seen the sinfulness of particular acts of transgression, but also that your heart is the seat and fountain of sin?—That in you, naturally, there is no good thing? Has a view of this led you to despair of help from yourself?—To see that you must be altogether indebted to Christ for salvation, and to the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit for strength and ability rightly to perform any duty?

2. On what has your hope of acceptance with God been founded? On your reformation? on your sorrow for your sins? on your prayers? on your tears? on your good works and religious observances? or has it been on Christ alone, as your all in all? Has Christ ever appeared very precious to you? Do you mourn that he does not appear more so? Have you sometimes felt great freedom to commit your soul to him? In doing this, (if you have done it) has it been, not only to be delivered from the punishment due to your sins, but also from the power, pollution, dominion, and existence of sin in your soul?

3. As far as you know yourself, do you hate, and desire to be delivered from all sin—without any exception of a favourite lust? Do you pray much to be delivered from sin? Do you watch against it, and against temptation to it? Do you strive against it, and in some good degree get the victory over it? Have you so repented of it as to have your soul really set against it?

4. Have you counted the cost of following Christ, or of being truly religious? That it will cut you off from vain amusements, from the indulgence of your lusts, and from a sinful conformity to the world? That it may expose you to ridicule and contempt; possibly to more serious persecution? In the view of all these things, are you willing to take up the cross, and to follow Christ, whithersoever he shall lead you? Is it your solemn purpose, in reliance on his grace and aid, to cleave to him, and to his cause and people, to the end of life?

5. Do you love holiness? Do you earnestly desire to be more and more conformed to a holy God, and to his holy law? to bear more and more the likeness of your Redeemer? Do you seek, and sometimes find communion with your God and Saviour?

6. Are you resolved, in God's strength, to endeavour conscientiously to perform your whole duty—to God, to your neighbour, and to yourself? Do you perform common and relative duties conscientiously, as a part of the duty which you owe to God?

7. Do you make conscience of secret prayer daily? Do you not sometimes feel a backwardness to this duty? Do you at other times feel a great delight in it? Have you a set time, and place, and order of exercises, for performing this duty?

8. Do you daily read a portion of the Holy Scriptures in a devout

manner? Do you love to read the Bible? Do you ever perceive a sweetness in the truths of Holy Scripture? Do you find them adapted to your necessities, and see, at times, a wonderful beauty, excellence, and glory, in God's word? Do you make it the man of your counsel, and endeavour to have both your heart and life conformed to its doctrines and requisitions?

9. Have you ever attempted to covenant with God? To give yourself away to him, solemnly and irrevocably, hoping for acceptance through Christ alone; and taking God, in Christ, as the covenant God, and satisfying portion of your soul?

10. Does the glory of God ever appear to you as the first, greatest, and best of all objects? Do you desire to promote the glory of God, as the chief object of life?

11. Do you feel a love to mankind, such as you did not formerly feel? Have you a great desire that the souls of men should be saved, by being brought to a genuine faith and trust in the Redeemer? Do you love God's people with a peculiar attachment, because they bear their Saviour's image, and because they love and pursue the objects, and delight in the exercises, which are most pleasing and delightful to yourself? Do you from your heart forgive all your personal enemies, and refuse to cherish or entertain any sentiment of hatred or revenge? If you have injured any person, have you made reparation, or are you ready and willing to make it?

12. Do you feel it to be very important to adorn religion by a holy, exemplary, amiable, and blameless walk and conversation? Do you fear to bring a reproach on the cause of Christ? Does this appear to you extremely dreadful? Are you afraid of backsliding, and of being left to return to a state of carelessness and indifference in religion?

13. Do you desire and endeavour to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ your Saviour, more and more? Are you willing to sit at his feet as a little child, and to submit your reason and understanding implicitly to his teaching; imploring his Spirit to guide you into all necessary truth, to save you from all fatal errors, to enable you to receive the truth in the love of it, and to transform you more and more, into a likeness to himself?

COUNSEL.

1. Remember that these questions are intended to point your attention to subjects of inquiry the most important. Do not, therefore, content yourself with a careless or cursory reading of them. Read and deliberate, and examine yourself closely on the questions under each head; and let your heart be lifted up to God, while you are considering each particular question, in earnest desire that he may show you the very truth. You cannot ordinarily go over all these questions at one time. Divide them, therefore, and take one part at one time, and another at another. But try to get over the whole in the course of a week; and do this every week for some months. When you find yourself doubtful or deficient in any point, let it not discourage you; but note down that point in writing, and bend the attention of your mind to it, and labour and pray till you shall have made the attainment which will enable you to answer clearly. It is believed that you cannot fail to see how each question ought to be answered.

2. Remember that secret prayer, reading the word of God, watchfulness, and self-examination, are the great means of preserving com-

fort in religion, and of growing in grace. In proportion as you are exact and faithful in these, such, usually will be your inward peace, and the safety of your state. Unite them all together, and never cease to practise them while you live. Think often of the character of Enoch, and try to walk with God. Read Mason's little book on self-knowledge; I recommend it as excellent.

3. Besides the Bible, have constantly in reading, at your leisure hours, some author of known piety and excellence. I particularly recommend Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul." Also select pieces of Owen, Baxter, Watts, and Witherspoon's essays on Regeneration and Justification, and his sermons generally.

4. Do not suppose that any evidence of a gracious state, which at present you may think you possess, will release you from the necessity of maintaining a constant vigilance in time to come; nor from repeated examinations and trials of yourself even to the end of life. Many marks and evidences of a gracious state are set down by pious writers. But they must all come to this: to ascertain what is your *prevalent* temper and character; whether, on the whole, you are increasing in sanctification, or not? If you are, you may be comforted; if not, you have cause to be alarmed. It is only he that endureth to the end that shall be saved.

5. I think it of very great importance to warn you not to imagine that true religion is confined to the closet, or to the church; even though you apprehend that you have great comfort and freedom there. Freedom and comfort there, are, indeed, most desirable; but true religion reaches to every thing. It alters and sweetens the temper. It improves the manners. It goes into every duty, relation, station, and situation of life. If you have true religion, you will have a better spirit, you will be better sons, or daughters, better husbands or wives, better friends, better members of general society, and more exemplary in the discharge of every duty; as the sure consequence of this invaluable possession. And if your religion does not produce these effects, although you may talk of inward comforts, and even of raptures, you have great reason to fear that the whole is a delusion, and that the root of the matter is not in you. "Herein," said the Saviour, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

6. Be careful to avoid a gloomy, and to cherish a cheerful temper. Be habitually cheerful; but avoid levity. Mirth and laughter are not always sinful; but let your indulgence in them be clearly innocent, not very frequent, and never of long continuance. Be very humble. Be not talkative. Before experienced Christians be a hearer, rather than a talker. Try, in every way, however, to promote religion among your relatives and friends. Win them to it by your amiable temper and exemplary deportment. "Flee youthful lusts." Shun every excitement to them. Guard against dissipation: it extinguishes piety. Be not disconcerted by ridicule and reproach. Your Saviour bore much of these for you. Think of this, and be ashamed of nothing so much as of being ashamed of him. Trust in his protection, live to his praise, and you will spend an eternity in his blissful presence.

