

229, 20

S E R M O N S

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY

ALEXANDER HEWAT, D.D.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY A. STRAHAN, PRINTERS-STREET,
FOR T. CADELL AND W. DAVIES, IN THE STRAND;
MURRAY AND HIGHLEY, FLEET-STREET;
AND J. BELL, OXFORD-STREET.

1803.



THE
CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

On PIETY.

JOB, xv. 4. *Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.* Page 1

SERMON II.

On PURITY.

MATTHEW, v. 8. *Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.* - 25

SERMON III.

On the DELIVERANCE and DESTINATION
of MOSES.

EXODUS, ii. 6. *And she had compassion on him, and said, this is one of the Hebrew children.* - - - - 46

SERMON IV.

On the COMPASSIONATE and ROYAL BENEFACTRESS.

Exodus, ii. 6. *And she had compassion on him, and said, this is one of the Hebrew children.* - - - Page 70

SERMON V.

On FILIAL WISDOM and GRATITUDE.

Proverbs, x. 1. *A wise son maketh a glad father.*—— - - - 93

SERMON VI.

On FILIAL FOLLY and DISOBEDIENCE.

Proverbs, x. 1. *But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.* - - - 116

SERMON VII.

On BENEVOLENCE.

John, xiii. 34. *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ;*—— 142

SERMON VIII.

On BENEFICENCE.

John, xiii. 34. *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ;*—— 167

CONTENTS.

SERMON IX.

ON MAN'S FALL and RESTORATION.

ROMANS, v. 19. *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.* - - - Page 195

SERMON X.

ON the SUFFERINGS of CHRIST.

[Preached before our partaking of the Lord's Supper.]

ACTS, iii. 18. *But those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.* - - - 220

SERMON XI.

ON the NECESSITY of HOLINESS under the GOSPEL.

ROMANS, vi. 15. *What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.* - 250

SERMON XII.

On the DESIGN, USE, and IMPROVEMENT
of AFFLICTION.

PSALM cxix. 67. *Before I was afflicted I
went astray: but now have I kept thy word.*
Page 276

SERMON XIII.

On PATERNAL TENDERNESS.

GENESIS, xlii. 36. *And Jacob their father
said unto them, me ye have bereaved of my
children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not,
and ye will take Benjamin away: all these
things are against me.* - - 302

SERMON XIV.

On LOYALTY and FIDELITY.

[Preached on the First General Fast Day, on account of the
War with France.]

PROV. xxiv. 21. *My son, fear thou the
Lord, and the King, and meddle not with
them that are given to change.* - 326

SERMON XV.

On FRIENDSHIP.

PROV. xvii. 17. *A friend loveth at all times,—*
13 360

SERMON XVI.

On the LOVE of our COUNTRY.

[Preached at KELSE, where the Author received his grammatical Education, on a Day of General Thanksgiving for a great Naval Victory.]

PSALM CXXXVII. 5, 6. *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.*

Page 386

ERRATA.

Page	Line	
8,	19,	for Sarach read Sirach
75,	26,	for Springs read spring
97,	26,	for accursed read cursed
182,	7,	for friends read favours
336,	3,	for dearly read clearly
345,	2,	for affected read effected
372,	18,	for neutarlity read neutrality



S E R M O N I.

On PIETY.

JOB, xv. 4.

*Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer
before God.*

THOUGH the fear of the Lord be the beginning of wisdom, and no duty more reasonable in itself or more becoming rational creatures, than to fall down before their Creator and reverently worship and adore him; yet, how many are there who seem regardless of this duty, and live as if the great Author of Life were not in all their thoughts? What multitudes among us are guilty of the same base and impious conduct which Eliphaz laid to Job's charge in the words of my text, guilty of casting off the fear of God and restraining prayer before him. To what causes
B shall

shall we impute this strange indifference to God the giver of all good, this shameful neglect of the primary duty of man? Is it owing to levity and dissipation of mind, or to coldness and depravity of heart? Or is it owing to self sufficiency and pride of understanding, which will not permit us to humble ourselves before God; and acknowledge our indigent and dependant condition? Or is it owing to an irreligious education, and habits of forgetfulness of God; or to our folly in permitting the cares, the business, and pleasures of the present world so much to engross our thoughts as to leave us neither time nor inclination to attend to any thing beyond it? To some one or other of these excuses perhaps our neglect of pious duties may be ascribed. But be the cause what it may, the effect is too obvious to escape the observation of any one; and certainly to cast off the fear of God, and restrain prayer before him, must be pronounced by every considerate person, disgraceful to human nature, and dishonourable to the Creator. For if man, to whom God has given more knowledge than the beasts of the field, and more wisdom than the fowls of heaven; if man, formed in the divine image,
and



and endued with reason and understanding, live regardless of his Maker; if man, the last and noblest work of God, and blest with the faculty of speech, remain silent and insensible to God's goodness, who then shall utter his mighty acts, or shew forth all his praise? What knee shall be found on earth to bow before the Lord, what tongue to confess him before men, and celebrate his honour and glory?

To shew, therefore, that reverence is due to God, and that prayer to him is a dictate of reason, as well as the express command of revelation, and consequently that it is very unbecoming any man or any Christian to cast off the fear of God, and restrain prayer before him, shall be the purport of the following discourse.

To this end let it be remarked, in the first place, that in no age hath God left himself without a witness in earth. By the visible things that he hath made, the invisible powers and perfections of the Deity are clearly seen, and may be understood by every rational and intelligent creature. Whether we look up to the heavens which he hath made, and contemplate the sun, moon, and stars, which

his fingers have formed, or whether we look down to the earth, and consider the vast variety of living creatures that move upon the face of it, or whether we look inward into ourselves, and examine the powers and faculties of our souls, no where can we turn our eyes but there we perceive the brightest characters of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. "The heavens declare the glory of God, "the firmament sheweth his handy work; day "unto day uttereth speech, night unto night "sheweth knowledge: there is no speech nor "language where their voice is not heard: their "line is gone through all the earth, and their "words to the end of the world:"* So that all are left without excuse who know not God; and knowing him, are still more inexcusable in not worshipping him.

For if there be any impression which the mind of man is formed to receive, it must be a sense of obligation to that being, who is the former of his body, and the father of his spirit. Even in the darkest ages, mankind were not without some sense of the Deity, nor entirely ignorant of their dependence upon Providence. They were not only sensible of

* Psalm xix. 1-4.

wants,

wants, but knew that they stood indebted to a superior power for supplies. The hand that nourished and fed them, all seemed heartily disposed to acknowledge. Among Gentiles and Jews may be perceived symptoms of a pious spirit. The Indian savage and the wandering Tartar had their modes of religious worship, as well as the Jewish priest, or Greek and Roman philosopher. Mistaken forms of worship, doubtless, many there have been, in every age; and multitudes of blind and unfortunate children of nature have been seen bowing before stocks and stones, which they set up as gods and ignorantly worshipped. But even in the darkest æras, and among the rudest and most scattered tribes, we behold men acknowledging a Ruler of the universe, and bowing down before *Him* whom they believed to be the Supreme Govenor of the world, and the great Disposer of all events. "If you search the world," says an intelligent Heathen*, "you may find cities without wealth, without walls, and without princes, but no man ever saw a city without a Deity, without a temple, and without prayers."

* Plutarch.

B 3

Indeed,

Indeed, a Creator, a Preserver, and a Governor, must always have been a proper object of religious homage; because upon him men depended not only for life, but the means of its preservation. Were it possible to breathe into a statue the breath of life, what, suppose ye, would be its first act? would it not be to kneel before the Author of its existence, and reverently worship and adore him. And who was it but God that breathed into us all the breath of life, and we became living creatures? To whom are we indebted but to him alone for our preservation, and those supplies necessary to our being and well-being? We live in his earth, we breathe in his air, and every moment he spareth life, we are monuments of his care, goodness, and mercy. He is the Author of all the noble powers and affections of our nature; and in the proper exercise of these powers and affections, the very essence of piety consists. To God, therefore, the Maker of heaven and earth, and all things visible and invisible, and the Giver of life, breath, and all things; to God, in whom all excellence centers, and from whom all that is good and perfect proceeds, let the voice of prayer, praise, and
thankf-

thanksgiving, ascend from every tongue. For great is He, and greatly to be feared ; his greatness is unsearchable.

Permit me to ask, for what end was man created, but to shew forth the greatness and glory of his Maker? For what purpose was he made a little lower than the angels, and capable, in some measure, of knowing, loving, and worshipping his Creator and Preserver? not, surely, that he might forget him in the midst of his benefits, and treat him with indifference and neglect ; but that he might serve God with gladness, and render unto him all he had to return, the sacrifice of an humble, devout, and grateful heart. This is man's reasonable service. And is there any among the sons of men, that can look up to the Lord God Omnipotent, and consider the operations of his hands, without sentiments of reverence and godly fear? Who can view him under the endearing relation of a father, a friend, and a benefactor, without feeling the affections of filial love and gratitude glowing in his breast? Or who can contemplate him as the moral Governor and righteous Judge of the world, before whom all things are naked and open, and from whose sight no secrets are hid, with-

out a suitable sense of respectful awe and veneration? Now, if these affections are awakened by serious thought and contemplation, it is by prayer they find utterance and an habitual direction towards their proper object. It is, I say, by means of prayer that the pious emotions of the heart find vent, and arise to heaven like incense. To such exercises the Almighty lendeth a propitious ear, and the proper language of devotion is always acceptable unto him.

Nor need any of his creatures be afraid when God is the object of their devout affections, that they shall be too lavish of their praise, or entertain too exalted ideas of his perfections; for let the tide of their love and gratitude rise ever so high, it will fall infinitely short of the mark. "When ye glorify God," says the son of Sirach, "exalt him as much as you can, for even then he will far exceed; and when ye exalt him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary, for ye can never go far enough.*" Even when your souls, and all that is within you, are stirred up to bless and magnify his name, still

* Ecclesiasticus, xliii. 30.

your

your best services will be imperfect, and nowise proportioned to what is his due, and your reasonable duty.

What though your goodness cannot extend to the Most High, nor yet your pious services add any thing to the essential glory and happiness of the divine nature, still piety is the first of virtues, pleasing to God, and, in many respects, profitable to yourselves. What though your heavenly Father stand in no need of you or your services, do not ye stand in continual need of his favour and blessing. Without the renewed influences of his goodness, ye cannot have your existence prolonged one moment; but must fall into the dust whence ye were taken. What though your best returns of duty bear no proportion to what ye all owe; yet if God is pleased to accept according to what a man hath, and not what he hath not; to accept the willing mind, and the sincere and upright heart, instead of perfection, it is for you to yield a cheerful obedience to his will in all things. He hath declared himself to be the hearer of prayer, and therefore unto him should all flesh come. He hath told you that praise is comely from the mouth of dependent beings, and that

that the prayer of the upright is his delight ; and surely this declaration is sufficient to warrant the habitual and unceasing practice of devotion, and engage us to serve him in holiness and righteousness all our days.

Yet whoever casts his eyes among the abodes of men, and surveys the manners of the world, what does he meet but cold indifference towards God, and shameful negligence with respect to the primary duty of mankind ? There is a spirit of levity and dissipation gone forth into the world, which, more or less, pervades all ranks and descriptions in it, and allows them no leisure to think whence they come, or whither they are going. It permits neither the young to think soberly as they ought, nor the aged to number their days, so as to apply their hearts unto wisdom. From the church, that universal school of piety and virtue, it is the manner of some to be always absent ; and of the worship of the family and closet, it is the practice of many to live in the habitual neglect. They are become lukewarm and care for none of these things. Instead of sanctifying the Sabbath unto the Lord, a day instituted by God, and set apart from the beginning of time as a day of rest
from

from ordinary business and secular employments, and appropriated to the devout offices of prayer and meditation, is it not prostituted to the purposes of pleasures, extravagance, and amusement? How many spend that precious day in vanity and folly, regardless of their duty to God, their neighbour, or themselves? Hence the visible decay of piety and religion, and the alarming growth of profaneness and immorality. And no wonder; for when the best institutions for nourishing a pious spirit, and keeping alive in the minds of men a proper sense of religion are despised, or slightly regarded; when the chief means of grace and improvement are set at nought, and the solemn ordinances of the gospel are forsaken, then a door is opened wide for the incursions of vice and all manner of ungodliness.

Fearless of God, however, and indifferent as not a few are become with regard to public worship, cold and lukewarm as multitudes have waxed, as to the private duties of devotion, still there are certain seasons when the poorest and most stupid wretches; and even the most dissipated characters betray a propensity to prayer. Cast your eyes around you, and mark the manners of the age, and you shall

shall perceive that there are certain circumstances in life which rouse the most ungodly from their lethargy, and cause pious sentiments to awake in the most callous and insensible heart. For instance, when God thunders awfully with his voice, and the earth quakes, it is not in man to remain fearless of divine wrath, and unconcerned for his own safety in the midst of impending dangers. When the tempest rages and the sea gapes, and is ready to swallow him up, even the stout heart of the profane mariner fails him, insomuch that he is found not only calling upon his God himself, but beseeching Jonas, when asleep, to awake and implore the divine protection. To whom do the poor and needy, the persecuted and oppressed, apply for relief when all other resources fail, but to God, their last refuge and hope? How often have we seen the sons and daughters of affliction, when all human means of help have proved fruitless and ineffectual, lifting up their eyes to God, and imploring mercy and deliverance? Or when death has laid upon us his cold hand, and all is eternity before us, where is the man to be found that can withstand the force of nature, and not fervently pray

pray that the Author of Life may be his guide through the dark vale of death, and his portion for ever? In such circumstances it is not in man, however irreligious, to cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God. There is no need of arguments to prove the reasonableness of the duty. No question is made in regard to its propriety or utility; no doubt is entertained as to its efficacy; but moved by an impulse of nature, not only the pious but the impious spontaneously apply to God for assistance. Now whence this propensity to prayer, so strong, instinctive, and universal, if it be not a dictate of reason? if it be not congenial with the nature of man, and interwoven, by the Father of Spirits, with our frame and constitution?

On these, and many more occasions of perplexity and distress, which I have not time at present particularly to notice, nature, that is, the voice of God within us, powerfully prompts us to our duty. But still, it may be asked, though the more ignorant, heedless, and illiterate part of mankind may, under such circumstances, find it hard to cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God, may not the profane scoffer, and learned philosopher

pher, resist every impulse of nature, and rise above such scruples and propensions? May not the vain laugh at such idle scruples or reason themselves out of all apprehensions, by declaring them vulgar prejudices and fears, that belong only to ages of darkness and superstition? We answer, they may; but notwithstanding all the arts and refinements of science, they must still feel themselves to be but men; and men oppressed with numerous wants; and wherever a sense of want is felt, it will be a powerful incentive to prayer. One objection after another they may start to the duty, and by living in the habitual neglect of prayer, endeavour to bring it into disrepute, but by such methods they only mock God, and deceive themselves. They may tell us that God knoweth our necessities before we ask, and that he is too good to deny us what he knoweth to be fit and expedient for us, whether we ask it, or ask it not. But the design of prayer is not to inform God of our wants, but to humble ourselves before him, and acknowledge our needy condition, and continual dependence upon his providence; not to importune him to grant favours, but to qualify ourselves to receive them; not to
press

press him to alter his eternal purposes, but to shew our desire of living always in obedience of his will. None of the sons of Adam have any words to move God. None, not even the best, have any merit to plead before him. We are a race of weak and sinful creatures, all unworthy and unprofitable servants, who must expect their Lord's approbation not from the merit of their service, but the mercy of their judge. We are required to pray, because it is good for us to draw near to God; and prayer is the nearest approach we can make to him in earth. We are commanded to pray, because the fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much towards the improvement of human nature. We are taught to pray, because it tends to keep us humble, mindful of God, and thankful for what we are daily receiving from his hands. He who knows that God is, that he is ever present with him, the witness of his whole conduct, will certainly stand in awe of his majesty, and tremble at the thoughts of offending him. He who is sensible that he has nothing that he has not received, and who expects fresh favours every day he lives, will certainly have many incitements to please that God upon whom

whom alone all his hopes and expectations depend. How many are our wants, both of a temporal and spiritual kind, which God alone can supply. If God, then, hath made prayer, on the part of man, a condition upon which he grants undeserved favours, what reason has any one to expect his blessing who neither asks nor regards him? With what countenance can we look to him for supplies in the time of need, or expect success in our designs and undertakings, when we either care not, or scorn to implore his favour and assistance.

But, besides the giddy and thoughtless youth, and the vain scorner and philosopher, there is another description of men, who too often cast off fear and restrain prayer before God, and these are the men of the world. Being cumbered about many things, they neglect the one thing needful. They seldom or never raise their eyes towards heaven, because their whole heart and affections are set upon earthly objects. They forget God, and seek not his eternal favours; because they mind only temporal acquisitions, such as riches, honours, or pleasures. Call upon them when ye will to the duties of public worship or private devotion,
and

and you are sure to find them either otherwise engaged, or ready to plead their different excuses, such as the world will always furnish in abundance for a neglect of religious duty. Invite them to prayer, and they will put the old question of the foolish and sordid wretch in scripture, in answer to your invitation: "Who is the Lord that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him*?" Shall the works of our hands prosper better than theirs who pray not at all? Shall our flocks, and herds increase faster, or our fields flourish more? Shall our families become richer than those of our neighbour, if we neither forsake the house of God, as is the manner of some, nor the assemblies of his people, as is the custom of others; but make conscience of walking in all the ordinances and commandments of God blameless? Yes, my friends: there is, surely, good ground to hope that it shall be well with them that fear God, and wait on him in all the religious institutions of his appointment. There is always the very best reason to expect "that they shall be blessed in their basket and in their store, in the fruit of their body and in the fruit of their ground, in the city and in

* Job, xxi. 15.

the field, in their comings-in and in their goings-out*." Not that health, success and prosperity are always attendants on pious worshippers, because such temporal blessings are not always good for us, nor does happiness, by any means, consist in the abundance which a man possesseth. No, God's goodness is not less conspicuous in denying us what he foresees will be pernicious, than in granting what he knows will be beneficial. However desirable such temporal blessings may be in themselves, it is plain they are of little value in the sight of God, because they are often bestowed on the most worthless and unjust. Instead of improving our virtue, they often prove, when not blest by God, a snare, serve to foster vice, and corrupt the heart. Instead of being the best of blessings, when abused to the purposes of pride, luxury, and intemperance, they often become the worst of curses. As God, therefore, is the best judge what is good for us at all times and in all circumstances, we ought to acknowledge his wisdom and goodness, not only in what he bestows, but in what he denies. As he can make all things work together for good, to

* Deut. xxviii. 3, 4, 5.

them

them that love and serve him, it is our duty to submit to his will, to trust in his power, and learn, in every condition, therewith to be content. As all things are at his disposal, it belongs to us to rest satisfied, that both we ourselves and our affairs are in better hands than our own; and to be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to spread our wants and requests before God.

Especially as we know this, that what the light of reason and nature has suggested, revelation has enjoined and confirmed. If any man lack wisdom, says the apostle, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering or doubting. Indeed whoever approaches the throne of God in any act of religious homage, must come believing that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all who sincerely and diligently seek him. This is what both natural and revealed religion require. But with respect to the duty of prayer, revelation furnishes many motives and encouragements, which the feeble light of reason was utterly insufficient to afford, many consolations to which the children of nature were

entire strangers. Nature, indeed, always hoped that God, who was good unto all, would not be strict to mark what was amiss in the conduct of his children, but could never give sinners any assurance of pardon upon their repentance. The very farthest she could go towards the relief of a transgressor was, "Who can tell whether God may not turn from his wrath, and I perish not?" and, alas! how small would be the comfort that this would bring to a soul conscious of guilt. Whereas revelation has assured us that God is merciful and gracious, long suffering, and slow to wrath; and that with Him there is forgiveness, and plenteous redemption to every humble and contrite heart, every penitent and reformed sinner. Nature always shuddered at the thoughts of annihilation, and desired and earnestly breathed after eternal life, but was left to struggle, between hope and fear, and in the midst of darkness and doubt, until life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel. Now, blessed be God, that he hath been pleased not only to declare himself reconcilable to sinners, but hath published the means of reconciliation, and the terms of

ac-

acceptance. These are tidings of great joy to all people; and this is, indeed, a comfortable, a cardinal truth, that eternal life is the gift of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And what can be a stronger incitement to continue constant in prayer, or a greater encouragement to every pious duty, than the prospects and promises of the gospel? Can there be a nobler or more exalted and triumphant expectation than that of dwelling with God and Christ for evermore, in the abodes of perfect light and happiness? Never was an affectionate parent more ready to give good gifts to his children, than our Heavenly Father to give good things to them that ask him.

Bow down on your knees, therefore, all ye inhabitants of the earth before the Lord your Maker, and serve him with gladness. Ask, and it shall be given unto you, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you. "Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning." True wisdom, purity of heart, tranquillity of mind, joy in the Holy Ghost, the peace of God, which passeth understanding, and, in short, all the

virtues and graces of the spirit, what are they all but gifts from above; and thence they will not descend of themselves, but we must use the means of God's appointment for bringing them down. Hear how our Lord argues with earthly parents: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father, infinite in goodness, give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him*," and, together with him, all the gifts and graces of the spirit.

Finally, Let me exhort you all, high and low, rich and poor, to beware of casting off the fear of God, and restraining prayer before him. Reverence is always due to a Father, and gratitude to a preserver and benefactor, and though your pious services cannot be profitable to the Most High God, they are reasonable, and, in many respects, profitable to yourselves. Beware, I say, of proving a barren soil in point of gratitude, amidst the blessings of light; and while God's grace, like the dew of heaven is descending upon you. Self-sufficiency and conceit, levity and pride of understanding, are unbecoming men who are pretenders to reason; and still more unbecoming Christians who are believers in re-

* Matthew, vii. 11.

velation,

velation. Avoid all manner of fellowship with the profane scoffers of the age, who laugh at every appearance of piety, and treat the serious professors of religion with scorn and ridicule. Go not in the way of ungodly men, however gay and witty; nor associate with those of loose and dissipated characters, however high their rank, or flourishing their circumstances. "Watch, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." In an especial manner we exhort you, O ye rising generation, to be upon your guard against all appearances of evil, and all the fascinating scenes of vice and licentiousness. Evil communications corrupt good manners. They are fools that make a mock of sin, and set at nought the exercises of piety and religion. They are worse than fools who know neither to be sober, grave, and temperate, nor yet serious, godly, and devout. Therefore, acquaint yourselves early with God, and be at peace. "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh in which ye shall say, we have no pleasure in such sacred employments*." Take the wise and the worthy

* Ecclesiastes, xii. 1.

for ensamples of godly living. Isaac went out at eventide to the fields, for the purposes of calm prayer and meditation. David frequently sought, and was happy to find a quiet retreat from the pomp, noise, and splendour of a court, in order to maintain devout intercourse with God, and offer up unto him the morning and evening sacrifice. Christ Jesus, the great pattern of piety, made choice sometimes of the mountain, and other times of the garden for private prayer; and while he taught his disciples how to pray, recommended the closet and the still hours of the night, as well adapted for such heavenly ejaculations and employments. To which I shall only add that solemn and dying charge which the pious King of Israel gave to his son, and then conclude. "Thou, Solomon, my son," says he, "know, thou the God of thy father, and serve *Him* with a perfect heart and willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever*."

* 1 Chronicles, xxviii. 9.

S E R M O N II.

ON PURITY.

MATTHEW, v. 8.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see
God.*

HAPPINESS being the chief end of man's creation, no wonder that it has been the subject of much enquiry in every age, and principal object of every man's desire and pursuit. It is beyond doubt that pearl of great price, for which all have searched as for a hidden treasure. But although all have agreed in acknowledging its inestimable value, and in pursuing it with zeal and earnestness, in nothing have they differed more than in the ways and means commonly chosen for obtaining this desired end. Some were of opinion that happiness consists in the pleasures
of

of sense, and therefore searched for it only in the low indulgences of passion. Others perceiving the many conveniencies and advantages which riches bring to their possessors, have concluded, that without them there can be no happiness. Some have considered honour as the chief good, and, consequently, have bent their whole attention to the attainment of worldly preferment and distinction; while others have aspired after nothing so much as power and authority, deeming all other attainments as mean and vulgar, and far below the notice and regard of men of sense and understanding.

Our blessed Saviour, observing how ardently men in general were pursuing the same end, and each taking different ways to compass it, had compassion on human infirmities, and pointed his earliest instructions towards rectifying their common errors and mistakes. In his sermon from the mount, he tells the multitude, that the real happiness of rational and immortal beings consisted not in the pleasures of sense, but in the virtues and graces of the spirit; not in external honours or great possessions, but in internal purity of heart; not in stations of power and authority among
men,

men, but in holiness of life, in the approbation of conscience, and in such moral attainments as rendered men like unto God, and prepared and qualified them for the everlasting enjoyment of him. Hence we are told, that the multitude stood astonished at his doctrine, and confessed, saying: "Never man spake like this man. He teacheth as one having authority, and not like the Scribes*."

But of all the various obstacles to the felicity of human nature, there is not, perhaps, a greater, or one more hard to surmount, than an impure and corrupt heart, whose affections are attached to gross and sensual pleasures, and devoted to worldly objects and pursuits. It may not, therefore, be an unprofitable employment of your time to point out the unworthy and fallacious nature of such attachments. To every hearer such doctrine may be useful, but especially to the young, whose ears ought ever to be open to wholesome and divine instructions. "Blessed," saith the great Teacher from heaven, "are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." From which words we shall now take occasion, first, to shew what is implied in purity of heart: and, secondly, recommend it as a virtue essential to

* Matthew, vii. 29.

the happiness of man, and a qualification indispensibly requisite to the enjoyment of God.

In the first place, as our blessed Saviour knew what was in man, and is styled "the Physician of Souls*," so he was capable of prescribing remedies to every disorder of which human nature is susceptible. He knew "that the heart of man was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; and that out of it proceeded evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, and that these were things which defile a man." To prove that his religion was of God, he knew that it must penetrate the inward man, and purify the fountain head; without which no sweet waters could be expected to flow from it: and, therefore, to cleanse the heart, that great source of moral evil, was the first object of his care, and the principal aim of his earliest instructions. Without purity of heart, he knew well, there could be no holiness of life. So that the religion of Christ, considered merely as a system of reformation, or as the means appointed by infinite wisdom for cleansing and sanctifying human nature, and raising it to a conformity with the divine,

* Matthew, ix. 12.

may

may justly be considered as a religion springing from God, and worthy of all acceptance by men.

But to shew this more particularly let it be remarked, if purity of heart cannot be supposed to imply absolute innocence and perfection, it certainly implies sincerity towards God. Without this virtue it is impossible to please God by any act of religious worship. It behoves all men to examine their heart diligently, that they may learn the true springs and principles of their outward conduct; for out of the heart are all the issues of life. If we draw near to God with our mouths, and honour him with our lips, while our hearts are far from him; if we do justly and love mercy, only to be seen of men; if we attend public worship, with a view to gain popular favour, or to avoid the censure of the world; or if we assume the cloak of piety and religion merely to save appearance, to comply with fashion, and maintain a fair character; in all such cases we but deceive ourselves, and our religion is vain. Our devotion may be specious, but it is not unfeigned. It may pass with the world, which judges from outward appearance, but not with God, who

who is the searcher of the heart, and the trier of the reins of the children of men. We have the shadow of religion, but not the substance; a form of godliness, but are unacquainted with its power.

As all manner of guile and hypocrisy is an abomination unto God, purity of heart implies not only fair professions, but good intentions; not only a regular conduct, but conscious rectitude. It consists not only in good actions, but sound principles. We are required both to serve God, with a pure heart, fervently, and to love him in sincerity and truth, as the most amiable and perfect of all beings. Times were when multitudes were pretended puritans, and assumed the cloak of religion to cover hearts devoted to insurrection and rebellion, and actuated by principles of treachery and ambition. Being filled with all manner of guile and hypocrisy, they were no better than counterfeits; externally, sober and decent, internally, perverse and corrupt. With hearts steeled to the sentiments of humanity, and hardened in sin, they could kill one another, and think that they were doing God service. Nay, they even tried to persuade themselves that the killing of each others
families

families and friends was no murder. For such criminal hypocrisy there is no remedy, but a belief that God is, that he is the constant witness of man's conduct, and that from his all-seeing eye no secrets can be hid. It is not in man to dive into the depths of the human heart, and trace all its windings and crooked ways : but however easily the hypocrite may hide his wicked purposes from others, and however artful he may be in reconciling them to his own conscience, he cannot impose upon God, who seeth in secret, and will reward men openly according to their deeds.

Such characters our blessed Saviour took much pains to expose to general view, as objects of just hatred and detestation. "Woe unto you," saith he, "Scribes and Pharisees! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but inwardly are full of extortion and excess." Ye hide your criminal designs under the fair mantle of religion, and pretend to uncommon sanctity, that ye may sin with more security and less suspicion. Ye say, and do not. Ye exact strict obedience in little matters, and neglect those of great consequence. "Ye lay heavy burdens upon

upon others, but touch them not with one of your fingers. Ye make long prayers, but from the very worst of views and motives, to deceive the weak, and to devour widows' houses. Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which are indeed beautiful without, but within, are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Ye shut the kingdom of Heaven, in short, against men, and neither go in yourselves, nor suffer them that are entering to go in*."

Now indeed the times are changed, and so, likewise, are the manners of the times. Instead of ostentation in religious observances, what multitudes have run into the contrary extreme, and laid aside even the appearance of religion. In place of being righteous over-much, how many affect to appear less religious than they really are. Our burning zeal has given way to frigid indifference. So far from making religion the subject of conversation on every occasion, it is now, in a great measure, banished, I had almost said, from every company. Instead of flocking to the temples, for the purposes of religious worship, what multitudes are ashamed to be seen in the house of

* Matthew, xxiii. 13, &c.

God,

God, and in the posture of humble supplicants at his throne! How many seek to be thought Heathens in the midst of Christian light! Such is the new fashion of the age; a fashion equally unbecoming men as the old; equally offensive in the sight of God, and equally inconsistent with purity of heart. What is it in fact but a different species of hypocrisy. Now there is not in the whole sacred volume a threatening, more awful, or a sentence more alarming, than that which is denounced by our Lord against this false shame, this criminal affectation of paganism in a Christian land. "Whosoever," saith he, "shall be ashamed of me and of my words before this sinful and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of Man be also ashamed when he shall come in the Glory of his Father with his holy angels *."

But further, in the third place; purity of heart implies not only sincerity of soul, and a mind free from all kinds of guile and hypocrisy, but chastity in opposition to vile and corrupt lusts. It is not enough that we abstain from all lewd and immodest words, which are a sign of inward corruption, but

* Mark, viii. 38.

holiness unto the Lord must be written upon our hearts. And, on the other hand, however good our intention, it will not excuse the scandal and contagion of a bad example ; therefore there should always be a correspondence between our inward thoughts and outward conduct. In this life there is a continual contest between reason and passion, between the law of our members and the law of our minds, and happy are they who are enabled to resist every temptation to vice, and finally to overcome. In vain does any one plead passion in justification of transgression ; for as God hath required holiness of heart and life as our indispensable duty, we may be assured that he has either given, or, if we be not wanting to ourselves, promised to give, grace and strength sufficient for obedience. In the times of our Saviour it should seem that the moral law, to favour the corruption of nature, was very generally and shamefully perverted by the inventions of men, and obscured by false glosses cast over it by Jewish interpreters. Hence that laudable zeal which he discovered for restoring it to its original purity and perfection. " Ye have heard," saith our Lord, " that it hath been said by them
" of

“ of old time, Thou shalt not kill ; and who-
“ soever shall kill shall be in danger of the
“ judgment. But I say unto you, That
“ whoever is angry with his brother without
“ a cause is in danger of the judgment*.” A
malicious and revengeful disposition harbour-
ed in the heart, though it be not carried into
action, is highly criminal in the sight of
God. Again, “ Ye have heard that it hath
“ been said of them of old time, Thou shalt
“ not commit adultery. But I say unto you,
“ That whosoever looketh upon a woman to
“ lust after her, hath committed adultery
“ with her already in his heart.” For the
law prohibits not only the criminal act, but
extends its restraining power to the lust of
the eye, and the wanderings of every vicious
desire and inclination. It matters not whe-
ther the vile sensualist find the opportunity of
sinning which he seeks or not ; the guilt lies
in the intention, and in the settled purpose
and imagination of the heart.

In the fourth place, purity of heart implies
probity and truth in opposition to flattery and
falsehood. We dare not say that flattery is a
vice entirely destroyed among us, even by the

* Matth. v. 21—27.

Christian religion : it is countenanced and established by the custom of the world. Thus when we address men of high rank and great power, we do not indeed tell them, as some were wont in the days of the Psalmist, "that they are gods*;" but we tell them that they are not as other men are, frail, fallible, and imperfect beings. We praise them, and declare that they possess many good qualities which others want, and many shining virtues of which most men of inferior rank are destitute. Thus also are the weaker sex often flattered and idolized by artful and designing men, and told, that for beauty, wit, and fine accomplishments they are the wonder and admiration of the world. Intoxicated by such flattering words they are tempted to think more highly of themselves than they ought, and to fancy that they are not women but angels, and beings of superior order, never dreaming that all are but words of course, or perhaps used for the base purpose of seduction and ruin. Of all sources of delusion self-love is the greatest ; and while this is the predominant passion in either sex, the demon of flattery will find it no difficult

* Ps. lxxxii. 6.

matter to prevail over the vanity and pride of the one, and the simplicity and weakness of the other. Both are willing to hear themselves praised and admired ; and while this is the case, the world will furnish crafty and interested persons in abundance disposed to please, or rather, determined to deceive them.

Lastly, Internal purity implies not only probity and truth, but innocence, integrity, and singleness of heart, such as are found in little children yet artless and unspotted from the world. For little children, if they be not untainted by original corruption, they cannot be said to have learnt any bad habits, or contracted any actual guilt. Having as yet received no bad impressions their hearts are soft, and easily susceptible of good ones. Being warped by no prejudices, their minds are open, candid, and ingenuous, and as readily imbibe the words of truth for mental instruction and improvement, as their mouths milk for bodily support and nourishment. They are justly characterised pure in heart. For the world is the great school for corruption both in principle and practice ; and such children have but little to fear, until they are initiated in its sinful mysteries, and have

learnt a conformity to its maxims and manners. Hence these words of Scripture to men of mature years, whose souls are contaminated with sin and guilt : “ Ye must be
 “ born again, and renewed in the spirit of
 “ your minds. Except ye be converted, and
 “ become as little children, ye cannot enter
 “ into the kingdom of Heaven *.”

The reason is obvious. God is a being of purer eyes than to behold iniquity but with the utmost abhorrence. Evil cannot dwell with him ; nor sinners stand in his sight. He is the high and holy *One* who inhabiteth eternity, and dwelleth in that high and holy place into which no unclean thing can enter. So that were it possible for an impure and guilty criminal to find admission to his presence, even Heaven itself would be, to such a character, rather a place of pain and torment than of peace and happiness. There the soul, conscious of guilt, could find nothing suited to its temper or taste. For what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial ? When a rebellious subject is admitted into the presence even of an earthly sovereign, whose authority he has despised, and whose goodness he has abused, does he not

* Matth. xviii. 3.

stand

stand appalled before him, and covered with shame and confusion of face? How much more confounded and terrified must be the sinner, conscious of guilt, when he appears before the King of kings and Lord of lords, who is perfectly acquainted with all his wicked ways, and whose vengeance is revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness of men.

Of this deplorable and wretched condition we have a very striking and remarkable instance in our first parents, after they had violated the Divine law, and eaten the forbidden fruit. No sooner were they conscious that God was offended, than terror took hold of them; and, stung with a sense of guilt, they fled from his presence, and hid themselves among the trees of the garden. That high and holy *One*, whom the eyes of innocence had been accustomed to behold with joy and rapture, the eyes of guilt could only regard as the avenger of sin, and presumptuous transgression. So inconsistent with peace of mind here, as well as with the glory which shall be revealed hereafter, is the whole body of sin. It is the voice not only of revelation but of reason, "that without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Thus have I shewn that purity of heart implies, first, sincerity in opposition to all manner of guile and hypocrisy; then probity and honesty in opposition to dissimulation and deceit; then chastity in opposition to all vile thoughts and affections, corrupt desires and inclinations; and, lastly, the innocence and simplicity of children in opposition to refined policy and contracted guilt. And after this little need be said in praise and recommendation of the virtue. Happiness is inseparable from purity and moral rectitude of mind. But my text affirms, that blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Happy, beyond doubt, are they who can rejoice in the testimony of their conscience; that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly lusts, but by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world; thrice happy are they whose heart is the seat of virtue, and whose delight is in the law of God after the inward man. They care not though their bosom were clear and transparent as the glass, and every thought and imagination of their heart were exposed to public view, being sensible that the more fully their designs are seen, and the more thoroughly their conduct is known, the surer they

they are of general esteem and approbation. But although the good man be satisfied with himself, still upon this ground, however solid, rests not the whole of the Christian's felicity. His soul pants with inutterable sighs and groans after eternal life in the Heavens. Nor shall the pure in heart be disappointed in their desires and expectations. They shall see God, not as the deities of the Gentiles were seen delighting in impure rites and bloody sacrifices, nor yet as the god of the Jews was once seen, when "so terrible was the sight that even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." They shall see God, not darkly as through a glass, but face to face, and as *He* is arrayed in all the brightness of his glory. They shall see him not only through the medium of his works, but as he has revealed himself to us in his word as a reconciled God, and Father in Christ Jesus. When they are come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the company of angels, to the church and general assembly of the first born, they shall regard God as the Father, the Friend, and Benefactor of mankind, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, as their all-powerful Intercessor,

cessor, and as the Great Judge of the quick and the dead ; and they shall behold his face in righteousness. Then they shall love and admire Him who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person being transformed into his likeness from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord.

Nor is this an imaginary prospect ; but what Christ hath promised, and taught his disciples to look for and expect at his second appearance, when their faith and hope shall terminate in real vision. " If thou wilt believe," said he to Martha, " thou shalt see the glory of God." So, though gone to his Father's house, he yet speaketh to every faithful follower who hath clean hands and a pure heart, and hath not lifted their soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall see God, and be satisfied with the goodness of his house. To this end alluded all the preparations of the heart, all the ceremonial washings and purifications under the law. To this end the eyes of every Christian are pointed under the dispensation of the gospel. He that hath this hope in him, and this prospect set before him, purifieth himself even

as

as God is pure. And Oh how happy is he who shall see God, the Author of all that is great and good, and the source of all might, majesty, and perfection! A spectacle truly illustrious; far surpassing every thing that eye hath seen, or can see in this world; infinitely more glorious than any heart can conceive, or words express! To behold the morning sun arising, dispersing the clouds of darkness, and diffusing every where around him the blessings of light, is, indeed, a noble spectacle. But how much more noble and delightful must it be to see the Creator of the sun, moon, and stars, and all things in nature, arrayed in all the brightness of his celestial glory, and imparting to his offspring life eternal, and perfect felicity. The cause must be supposed more excellent than the effect; and the Creator himself infinitely more admirable than the most illustrious and magnificent work of his hands.

Well then might Christ pronounce the pure in heart blessed, for they shall see God; the first and the last, the greatest and best of all beings; the self-existent, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal God, infinite in holiness, justice,

justice, goodness, and truth! None shall see *Him*, but the pure in heart. They are the sons of God, and bear the marks and lineaments of their high descent. Though sent into a world of trial and trouble, yet they are born for a better, and by proper culture, discipline, and improvement, are educated and raised to be the companions of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. They are heirs of the kingdom, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; and when they are washed and sanctified, and purified in the name of the Lord Jesus, by the spirit of our God, and their human nature is brought to a conformity with the divine, then they are fit to be admitted into the realms of light, and to dwell for ever with the Lord.

Seeing, then, that happiness is the great end of man's creation, and holiness of heart and life a virtue so requisite for the attainment of this end, and a qualification so indispensibly necessary to the enjoyment of God; seeing that Christ, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith, is the way, the truth and the life, and no man can come unto the Father but by him; and seeing that he who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners, hath

hath left us an example that we should follow his steps, let us endeavour to imitate him in all his inimitable perfections, and shew the world that we are Christians, not in appearance only, but in sincerity and truth. Let us strive, through divine assistance, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God. For a life of progressive holiness not only naturally terminates in happiness, but is, unquestionably, the best preparation for entering into the kingdom of heaven. Our progress in knowledge and virtue in this life evinces our destination for a higher station than the present world, and a happier and more permanent place of abode. But for our greater satisfaction and encouragement, we have set before us all the glorious prospects, and precious promises of the gospel; and what higher motives to constancy and perseverance in virtue can be conceived or desired? Let us, therefore, be going on towards perfection, that we may finally obtain our Lord's approbation, and hear these joyful words from his mouth: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

S E R M O N III.

On the DELIVERANCE and DESTINATION of MOSES.

EXODUS, ii. 6.

And she had compassion on him and said, this is one of the Hebrew children.

“**L**ORD,” saith the Psalmist, “what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?” at best no more than a poor, helpless, and indigent mortal, depending upon heaven and earth for life, the means of supporting and preserving life, and every thing necessary to his comfort and happiness. Though he stands indebted to providence for every temporal and spiritual blessing, yet how oft does he become vain, proud, and self-sufficient; how apt to live regardless of God, and averse from acknowledging

ledging his obligations to the Divine Goodness? Instead of eying the hand of God in the several events of life, he seldom looks higher than second causes, attributing his success to his own wisdom and sagacity, or to his skill and judgment in the management of his affairs, without considering from whom he received these natural gifts, or to whom he owes all the advantages resulting from them. When he observes some striking display of divine goodness, or meets with some extraordinary interposition of Providence in his behalf, he, perhaps, stands astonished for a while, admiring the power of the almighty and wonder-working Lord of the universe; but no sooner do wonders cease, and things return to their ordinary channel, than he loses sight of the hand of God, and neglects to ascribe to him that honour which is his due in his natural as well as his preternatural dispensations.

But, nevertheless, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth; and whether we perceive his hand or not, he is continually directing and over-ruling the great events of the world. Before him all things past, present, and future, are equally naked and open. All the
springs

springs of action are originally his gift, and in no instance can they be supposed to act independent of the Giver. Men speak profanely or ignorantly when they ascribe events to chance, fortune, or fate; for God ever sitteth in the army of heaven, and doeth among the inhabitants of the earth what seemeth good in his sight. He hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and turneth them as the rivers of water which way so ever he pleaseth. However many the rulers of the earth, God ruleth over all, and though the hearts of the sons of men may devise their way, and be fruitful of their little projects and designs, nevertheless the purpose of the Almighty that shall stand.

That God, therefore, who created the heavens and the earth, and all things visible and invisible, stands not as an unconcerned spectator of the works of his hands, nor indifferent to what passes among the inhabitants of this world; that innocence and virtue are the particular charge of his providence; and that he has many ways of protecting them from the hands of cruelty and violence, and from the plots and machinations of the proud and powerful, many proofs might be brought from

the records of past ages. But there is one signal instance in the life of Moses, that eminent character of antiquity, which merits particular notice ; and to it we are, at this time, to turn your serious attention.

Let us begin with taking a view of the circumstances attending his birth ; and we shall perceive that, from his earliest days, the hand of Providence was stretched out for his defence and preservation. Moses, you all know, was the son of Amram, and the grandson of Levi, and consequently a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He was born in Egypt, at that time one of the most fertile, flourishing, and populous countries in the world, but governed by Pharaoh, a prince of a very haughty, cruel, and arbitrary disposition. There the Hebrews had found a refuge in the days of Joseph ; and there, since that period, they had multiplied and increased so much, that at the birth of Moses they were become a great and mighty people. So strong and formidable had they waxed, that the king began to be jealous of their power, and to apprehend danger to his crown from their numbers. To prevent their future increase Pharaoh first reduced them to a state

E

of

of slavery, setting task-masters over them, who afflicted them with heavy burdens, and by oppression, made their lives bitter and grievous to them. Not contented with subjecting them to a heavy yoke, he next resolved to extirpate them from the earth, and not leave them so much as a name of distinction. To accomplish which end what measure was he pleased to adopt? Why a measure of a very bold and desperate kind, which none but the most cruel and diabolical spirit could have suggested. At once it was resolved to lay the axe to the root of the tree. The king issued an edict commanding his subjects to cast every male child born of Hebrew parents into the river. An edict this that could not come but from a heart hard as a rock, and steeled to every sentiment of humanity and compassion.

It was at this juncture, however, Moses happened to be born; and consequently was, with others, included in the king's edict, and doomed to suffer death. Never was there devised a plot more shocking to nature, or horrible in its consequence; and not against men guilty of the crimes of insurrection and rebellion, but against infants who had neither
given,

given, nor could be supposed capable of giving, the least offence or provocation. Nor does it appear that the horrid purpose of the king was the effect of sudden passion, but a measure of cool policy and deliberation. Come, says he to his officers and servants, let us deal wisely or craftily with this race of aliens, lest they should multiply in Egypt and become too powerful for us, or join with the enemies of Egyptians and fight against us. On such an occasion no wonder that the midwives equivocated, and that the heart of parents revolted, and studied every means of evading an ordinance of man, so repugnant to the law of God and every principle of virtue and morality.

In this critical situation what did the mother of Moses? nothing surely but what instinct suggests to every parent: for three months she hid her beloved son. But to keep him concealed was no easy matter; for the king's spies, informers, and persecutors were in every place going about and seeking to destroy. She saw plainly that her son, if he be kept at home, must die; if she exposed him in the open field, at a distance from herself, death was the worst that could

happen to him. Should he be found in her house it would at once be known that he was one of the Hebrew children; but if she should cast him out among wild birds and beasts of prey, who could tell whether he might not be deemed, when found, a son of some Egyptian woman? Who could say whether a child thus forlorn, whose parents were unknown, might not excite the pity even of enemies enured to cruel deeds. Or indeed, who could tell, whether Providence might not so order things that some humane traveller might pass that way, and her son escape as a bird out of the fowler's snare. Such an event she perceived was not impossible, though more to be wished for than expected by her. It was, indeed, a sore trial; but in her desperate circumstances the only resource left. Accordingly she resolved in her own mind privately to cast him out, as the sacred author speaks, and leave him under the charge of Providence.

But still, though it be the duty of every one to trust in God at all times, and never to despair of his goodness, yet none of us ought ever to neglect such means of safety as may be in our power to use. It belongs to us first

to do our best, and next to leave events to a superior power. Accordingly the distressed mother, before she exposed her son, constructed an ark of bulrushes, and to render it as secure a lodging-place as possible, whether it rested upon the land or floated upon the water, she daubed it over with slime and pitch. Into this ark she put her infant; and, between hope and despair, left him among the flags by the river side, but nigh the place where the king's daughter usually came to bathe. Then, having done all that a mother's sagacity could contrive for her son's safety, the rest must be left to the direction of Heaven. But, after all, as her son was the object of her love, and the hope of her family, while she herself, like the parent bird, kept hovering round her charge at no great distance, she stationed her daughter near the spot where he lay, charging her to watch diligently, and bring her early notice whatever might befall him. So powerful and so tender a principle is natural affection in the parent's breast.

Not long after this, we are told, came the king's daughter, with her attendants, to the river side, and spying the ark among the

E 3

flags,

flags, sent one of her maidens to fetch it. She opened it, and behold an infant alive and exceedingly fair ! At once she perceived that it could be none other but one of the unfortunate Hebrew children whom her father had doomed to be cast into the River Nile. Hence a struggle arose in her bosom between filial duty and the sentiments of humanity. For, on the one hand, should she spare the child she had reason to dread her father's displeasure, if not the penalty of his law ; and, on the other, should she leave it to perish, she must counteract the law of nature, and incur the anger of its Almighty Author. One thing was certain ; the child must be innocent, at least utterly incapable of any actual transgression. It had escaped the fury of the winds and the waves ; and every tender sentiment of the female heart pleaded in its behalf. Perhaps her maidens were touched with compassion, and expressed a wish for its preservation. During this struggle, and while her bowels of tenderness were yearning towards a helpless foundling, the babe wept, and the tears of innocence what heart could resist ? She could no longer halt between two opinions, and therefore determined,

mined, at all hazards, to save it. But a nurse was wanted; and, by this time, the child's sister having drawn near, said, shall I go and fetch one? The princess said go; and wonderful the events of Providence! his own mother is brought to nurse him.

Happy mother! She looked up to the God of her fathers, who never said to any of the seed of Jacob seek my face in vain. She trusted in him and was not confounded. He is the refuge of the distressed at all times, and in straits a present aid. In no extremity ought any one to doubt of his regard, or despair of his goodness. When clouds and darkness are gathering around us, and overwhelming us in fear and perplexity, He, who is a God at hand as well as a God afar off, is preparing some unexpected mercy. His hand is never shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear. While he reigns, destiny must always be supposed to operate in favour of the virtuous. They are the charge of his Providence, and here is a striking instance of his particular care. Never was there a happier concurrence of circumstances for the relief of a parent, and the deliverance of a son! The princess knew not

that she was the mother of the foundling. What pleasing emotions then, hard to be described, must have arisen in the parent's breast while the royal benefactress committed her son into her hands, saying, "Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Not all the treasures of Egypt, had they been offered, could have put so much joy into her heart. In every incident we perceive the hand of God stretched out for the defence of innocence, and the redress of grievances.

"Let not the mighty man therefore glory in his might, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord who exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord*." None can set his face against God, and go on adding sin to sin, and promise himself success. God may permit the wicked to prosper for a while, and, from appearances, to borrow false hope, but it is only that their downfall in the end may be the more striking and remarkable. Pharaoh, whose will was his only law, vainly imagined that he had

* Jerem. ix. 23.

made sure of all the male children of the Hebrews, and that the extinction of their nation was unavoidable. But Providence had otherwise ordained ; and instruments are never wanting to accomplish the purposes of the Most High. At one time, indeed, every circumstance seemed to favour the king's views, and to promise success to his measures. The infant Moses was no more than three months old ; and when cast out was exposed to death in a thousand forms. Besides the dangers always incident to non-age, he was left in the midst of perils from elements and reptiles, perils from wild birds and beasts, and perils from men more savage than the vulture or tyger. In this situation, speaking after the manner of men, all things were against him. Yet even in this forlorn and destitute condition he was not without a Friend and Protector, not only able but ready to help in time of need. Even the very methods devised for his destruction are, under the direction of Providence, made subservient to his safety. In the plot formed for his death is founded the counter-plot for his preferment. It was the king's edict that caused his exposure. It was the helpless state in which he

was

was found that excited the compassion of the princess. The father's cruelty proved the occasion of the daughter's sympathy. The remedy was found in the same house where the disease broke out. Hence the little child was not only delivered from the hands of death, but adopted and educated in the most excellent and liberal manner; not only prepared for filling a high office on earth, but for promoting the higher purposes of Heaven. "And the mother took the child and nursed it; and the child grew and was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and became mighty in word and deed. And the mother brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son, and she called his name *Moses*, because, said she, I drew him out of the water."

Now should it be asked why so much care and concern for a little child? Wherefore such signal and wonderful interpositions? To what issue tend all these great preparations? Surely this child must be destined by Heaven to be a light to enlighten the world, to bear some extraordinary office and character in his day and generation. The circumstances attending his birth are so remarkable, that they
afford

afford grounds of forming very high expectations from him. Let us, therefore, pursue this rising character to his age of maturity, and we shall perceive how the wise design of Providence respecting him gradually unfolds itself, and how one great event paves the way for a greater; and we shall, when we see the whole, cease to wonder that the hand of God should be so visible in the preservation of one whom he had destined to be the deliverer of his peculiar people. Of the conduct of Providence it behoves no man to judge prematurely. In order to form right notions of the Divine administration, it is always necessary to wait with patience the event of things, and the fulfilment of God's wise and gracious purposes towards the children of men.

In sacred scripture God is said to be a refuge for the oppressed, and his ears are ever open to their cry. All the sons of Adam were born free. Man was never intended to be the slave of man, much less one whole nation to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for another. To this grievous and galling yoke, however, were the people of Israel subjected in Egypt; and from this ignominious

ominious degrading state it was reasonable to hope that their merciful Heavenly Father would sooner or later work a deliverance for them. For effecting this purpose he has, indeed, many ways and means ; but his usual method of working deliverance from troubles and oppressions for men is by the mediation and instrumentality of one raised up from among their brethren, and highly endued for the important office. Hence the appointment of judges between man and man, of ambassadors between nation and nation. Hence also the function of physicians to the body in general ; and of the great Physician of souls in particular.

Thus Moses, from his earliest days, was destined to be a servant of God, and a chosen instrument in his hand for the deliverance of the oppressed Israelites. Accordingly, he not only gave an early presage of uncommon talents, but his education was such as prepared and qualified him for the purposes of his destination. When he was grown up he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter ; and choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of a corrupt court for a season,
he

he retired to the country, married, and joined his own nation and countrymen!

It was from this rural retirement, and from tending the flocks of his father-in-law, that he was called to be the minister of God's will, and to exhibit to the world striking proofs of the countenance of Heaven. And here we are led to contemplate a glorious and magnificent scene; I mean his interview with his Maker at the burning bush. "God called unto Moses out of the midst of the bush, saying, Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. For I have seen, saith the Most High, the afflictions of my people that are in Egypt, and the oppressions wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. I know their sorrows, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee to Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. And certainly I will be with thee, and will stretch forth my hand, and will smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof; and after that the king will let you go*."

* Exod. iii. 5. 7—10, &c.

In consequence of which commission, Moses undertakes the office, and without either fear or diffidence, repairs to the court of Pharaoh, both armed with authority, and endued with courage sufficient for the execution of the important trust. From the king's violent temper and extreme hardness of heart, he knew that he had nought to expect but opposition; yet it is said, "He was not afraid of the king's wrath, but endured, as seeing *Him* that is invisible." He knew also the prevalence of idolatry and superstition among the Egyptians, who, though they saw on one hand, rich harvests and large flocks, and on the other, poisonous and devouring reptiles in abundance, yet they could pass over the blessing in sullen silence, and neglect, and follow the curse with transport and adoration. With all their high attainments in learning and philosophy, they were a blind race of idolaters, and not only blind, but sunk into the lowest state of superstition. The true God they only knew, "as the God of the Hebrews." So true it is, that the world by wisdom, knew not God; and that it stood indebted for whatever portion of true religion ever existed in it, not to reason, but to revelation. It was high time, therefore,

therefore, to open the eyes of blinded nations, and shew them how much they had mistaken the true object of religious homage. It was high time to give the world such visible demonstrations of a Superior Power, as would convince men, that among all the gods whom they blindly worshipped, there was none else, but One, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

To work great wonders in the land of Egypt Moses was the chosen instrument ordained of God, and sent to humble the proud Egyptian monarch, and teach him that he was no more than man. Nor was he to be diverted from the object of his mission by the power of the prince or superstition of the people. So great was his zeal for the honour of God, and so ardent his love to his countrymen, that no consideration of earthly honour or riches could corrupt him. "He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, because he had respect to the recompence of reward *." He urged the king to let the people of Israel go free, and again and again repeated his importunities, testifying all the while, by his

* Heb. xi. 26.

marvellous

marvellous works, that the hand of God was with him. Nor did he cease from his labours of love until by patience, meekness, and perseverance, he had accomplished the end of his mission, in the overthrow of his enemies, and in the deliverance of his friends.

Moreover Moses was not only destined to be a deliverer but a law-giver; and "by his mouth God was next to shew his words to Jacob, and his statutes and judgments to Israel." Hitherto mankind had no law, no written law as a rule of conduct. They had reason for a guide, but reason was at best but a feeble and glimmering light, and in many ways liable to corruption. In order, therefore, to preserve the knowledge of the only living and true God in the world, and the manner in which he ought to be worshipped, Moses was employed by God to give mankind a code of written laws founded upon Divine authority, and containing the first principles of religion and morality. Of this system the Psalmist speaks in terms of high commendation. "The law of the Lord," says he, "is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord

Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes. More to be desired are they than gold, yea much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. Moreover they thy servant warn how he should frame his life ; and in keeping of them there is great reward*."

But, lastly, Moses was not only preserved and raised up to be a deliverer and legislator, but also a prophet. Yet to him the people hearkened not. Hence these words : " A prophet," says he, " shall the Lord thy God raise up unto thee of thy brethren like unto me, unto him shalt thou hearken." Which words point directly to the Son of God and Saviour of the world ; announcing his future appearance, and high office and character. He also, in the fulness of the time, shall be raised up to be a deliverer, a lawgiver, and a prophet ; and by his marvellous works prove his divine mission. He shall be the author of a new dispensation of religion still more excellent and perfect than the old. His religion shall be less encumbered with external ceremonies, but more productive of internal virtues. The law, indeed, was to be given by

* Pf. xix. 7.

Moses, but grace and truth were to come by Jesus Christ. Christ was to come, not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them; nay, more, he was to enforce them with the sanctions of eternal rewards and punishments. As the people of Israel were delivered from Egyptian bondage by the mediation and instrumentality of Moses, so Christ was to be the mediator of a new covenant, and to save his followers from the dominion of sin and slavery of Satan, from the fears of death and everlasting misery. So, that laying all these circumstances and proofs of likeness together, what are we to infer from them, but what Philip said to Nathaniel? "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the Prophets, did write, even Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world."

Here appears the great affinity subsisting between the old and new dispensation. Things are so ordered that they mutually explain, illustrate, and confirm one another. Indeed all the great lines of the ancient system point to Christ, the great Prophet like unto Moses, and terminate in him as their end. They not only direct the eye to him,
but

but they receive their fulfilment in his life, death, and resurrection from the dead. As the morning dawn in the natural world precedes the perfect day, so these types, figures, and prophecies in the moral serve to prepare the way of the Lord, and lead men to expect "the rise of the sun of righteousness with healing under his wings."

Upon the whole, let us learn to reverence and adore the wisdom of God, which is so conspicuously displayed in his providential administration, and in all his dealings with the children of men. How just and applicable is our Lord's reasoning with the unbelieving Jews of his days! "Had ye," saith he, "believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me: But if ye believe not his writings, which you acknowledge to be the great standard of your faith, how shall ye believe my words?" When St. Paul and the other apostles were employed in propagating the principles of the Christian religion, how frequently do they refer to what Moses had spoken, and what the prophets had written. When Christ was instructing his followers, and opening and expounding unto them the scriptures, did he

not begin at Moses and the prophets as the foundation of that building of which he himself was the chief Corner-Stone? In the gospels, in the acts of the apostles, and in the different epistles, do we not find the inspired writers all appealing to ancient records, in which the ground-work of the great plan of Providence was laid? So that, here, we may trace the great work of redemption from the beginning, through all its progressive stages, to the end. The Old Testament, we read, as it served as an introduction to the New. The former shadowed forth and foretold, the latter exemplified and fulfilled. The one announced to the world the coming of the Great Messiah, the other exhibited him already come, together with the various circumstances attending the wonderful event.

Now as all scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for our instruction, our comfort, and edification, let us be thankful for the inestimable blessing, and learn to value it according to its vast worth and importance. Moses foresaw and foretold the many miseries which would befall the Jewish nation for their unbelief and disobedience, and assigned the reason of them.

“ More-

“ Moreover,” says he, “ all these curses shall come upon thee, because thou hearkenedst not to the voice of the Lord thy God to keep his commandments and his statutes, and they shall be upon thee for a sign and a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever*.” In like manner Christ foresaw and foretold that mankind in general would be happy or miserable in proportion as they were righteous or wicked, obedient or disobedient. All these things, I say, are written for our warning and admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Let us, therefore, take heed how we hear. Hath Christ spoken unto you and revealed that good and acceptable and perfect will of God? See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if he that despised Moses’ law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, by which he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of Grace. Consider what has been said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

* Deut. xxviii. 45.

S E R M O N IV.

On the COMPASSIONATE and ROYAL BENEFACTRESS .

EXODUS, ii. 6.

And she had compassion on him, and said, this is one of the Hebrew children.

IN my former discourse from these words I endeavoured to give you a short account of the rise of Moses, that ancient servant of God, and of the remarkable circumstances attending his birth and education. I shewed you, first, that he was the object of God's providential care, and that he was preserved from the dangers of infancy; secondly, that he was destined to be an instrument in the hand of God for the deliverance of his nation, and a lawgiver and prophet for the instruction and reformation of the world; and, lastly, that his

his system of religion served to introduce and prepare mankind to receive a fuller and more perfect revelation of the divine will by Jesus Christ. I shewed you how, in the bush, God spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend, and how, by the mouth of his chosen servant, he was pleased to give his laws to Jacob, and his statutes and judgments to Israel. Now as all things which were written aforetime were written for our admonition, that we, through the patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope. Let us next see what lessons of instruction, useful and profitable to us, are deducible from this very singular passage of sacred history.

In the first place, From what is written in scripture relative to Moses we may learn, though God be good unto all, yet infants are objects of his peculiar care. Their innocence, their weakness, and their wants, not only require particular attention, but give us reason to trust that paternal goodness and love will be extended to them in proportion to their necessities. As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord hath compassion on the infirmities of his frail and helpless offspring,

for he knoweth their frame, he remembereth that they are but dust. In the days of fore distress, in situations the most forlorn and oppressive, God is represented in scripture as deeply interested in behalf of the helpless, and as giving his Providence charge to watch over the young, to preserve and keep them in all their ways. "He executeth judgment for the oppressed; he heareth the sighs of the needy, and setteth them in safety from him that puffeth at them*." "Whosoever toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye†." A remarkable instance of this we have in his deliverance of Moses, and in the means used for that purpose. Compassion he hath planted in every breast; but for many wise reasons this principle operates more strongly in the female sex than in the male. Women are noted for the tender affection which they bear to infants, and no wonder; for upon them Providence hath devolved the principal charge of little children in their most feeble and helpless state. Of this powerful affection, which God hath implanted in the female breast, he makes use, as the most likely means of accomplishing his secret pur-

* Pf. xii. 5.

† Zech. ii. 8.

pose with respect to his ancient servant. While the heart of Pharaoh, the father, was breathing nothing but fury and destruction, and plotting the extinction of the Hebrews, God was pleased to call forth the natural affection of his daughter, though unknown to herself, to counteract his wicked designs and machinations. By this mysterious and imperceptible manner are the counsels of the wicked often brought to nought by him who sitteth in Heaven, and whose eyes are ever upon the sons of men, beholding the evil and the good; and who can, at what time soever he pleaseth, restrain the unruly passions, and make them subservient to his praise.

Secondly, Another lesson deducible from this passage of sacred history is, that pride was not made for man; and that no station, however high, can warrant or justify acts of cruelty and oppression. Never was any character amiable or great without tenderness and compassion. Men are not raised to stations of power in order to be inflictors of wrongs, but protectors of rights; and the highest prince is amenable to divine justice as well as the lowest peasant. Surrounded by a crowd of flatterers, king Pharaoh's heart

heart was uplifted, and he believed that he was born not to obey but to command; and that he might persecute and oppress, even innocence itself, at pleasure, and with impunity. The haughty monarch had forgotten that he was a man, and that he owed homage and obedience to a Superior Power. So great were his pride and presumption that he neither feared God nor regarded man. His will was his only law; and to his will he claimed general submission, and admitted no resistance. When Moses signified to the king that it was the pleasure of the Lord God of Israel that he should let his people go, he arrogantly asked, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go*." Upon which Moses is commanded to speak unto the children of Israel, and in the name of the Most High to say: "I am the Lord, and I will bring you, O my people, from under the burdens of the Egyptians; and I will rid you of their bondage; and I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm and great judgments†." For executing the purposes of his will all the powers of nature are at God's command; and instruments are never wanting, whenever

* Exod. v. 2.

† Exod. vi. 6.

he

he pleaseth to employ them, whether for reproof or instruction, whether for correction or mercy. Under his righteous government how vain to pride ourselves of ill-gotten wealth, or boast the gains of oppression. "Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. For pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall *."

In the third place, From this remarkable passage of sacred history we may infer, that, as we are all born for society, it is the duty of every one to promote the common good by adding all in his power to the sum of social happiness. We are all subjects of the divine empire, and ought first to give glory to God by a devout acknowledgment of his supreme dominion, and of our dependence upon Providence. This is that rational act of religion which, by connecting all nature with its author, and all events with their wise Disposer, opens to man a never-failing spring of consolation amidst the many vicissitudes and suffering scenes of human

* Prov. xvi. 18, 19.

life. But there is a secondary part required of us; and that is to consult the happiness of our fellow creatures. When God is pleased to raise up from among their brethren rulers, they ought to be just, ruling in the fear of God, and with due regard to man. It is not by the rod of power and oppression, but by the exercise of justice and equity, of humanity and mercy, that the peace and happiness of society are secured and established on solid foundations. He that ruleth with a rod of iron hath reason to stand in awe and fear of *Him*, who is able, at all times, to break the rod of the oppressor, and to set his people free from the yoke of bondage. By instruments even the most feeble and unlikely, he can accomplish his purposes. From the same family and fountain whence the evil arose he can raise up the remedy. By means of the daughter's compassion he can give a check to the father's obdurate folly and cruelty. As Pharaoh had forgotten that men had a claim to offices of humanity from man, his daughter, though she meant it not, is employed to put him in remembrance of his moral and religious duty. When do kings appear in their highest lustre and glory? Is it

it when arrayed in robes of state, and when their thrones are surrounded with thousands of courtiers bowing before them, and doing them homage? No; but when engaged in acts of beneficence and compassion, and shewing themselves to be merciful as their Father who is in Heaven is merciful.

Though neither father nor daughter could be supposed to have any knowledge of revealed religion, yet they could not be strangers to the religion of nature, nor entirely incapable of distinguishing good from evil, right from wrong. So great is the analogy between natural and revealed religion, that justice and righteousness are equally approved, and violence and oppression equally condemned by both. In these and many other respects both coincide, and are perfectly consistent. But it appears, although a sense of moral good and evil might be impressed upon the father's heart, it had not sufficient influence upon his life. It was perverted by superstition, and overpowered by passion. Whereas the daughter's heart was more tender and delicate, more open to the impressions of natural religion. She felt the power of that law written on the human heart; of conscience
which

which bare witness for or against her, accusing or excusing, condemning or approving her, according to her conduct. She found a child exposed to danger, and could not leave it to perish. Her soul yielded to the dictates of natural religion, which suggests, no less than revealed, danger from doing wrong; and tells us that God is no respecter of persons, but that every one of every kindred and nation who feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

In the fourth place, another lesson suggested by this passage of sacred writ which we have under review, is, that acts of humanity and compassion ought not to be confined to persons of the same family, or country, or religion with ourselves, but extended to all men as their occasions require, and as we have opportunity and ability. Selfish principles and party attachments are but too common in the world. National prejudices, antipathies, and enmities prevail to the disgrace of human nature, not to say, of the Christian character. We are all too apt to forget and that we are men, and that nothing belonging to humanity can be foreign to the heart. To our families, friends,
15 and

and fellow citizens our first offices of kindness, beyond doubt, are due; but the love of our country does not require us to shut up our bowels of compassion against strangers in the land, and all manner of persecution on account of religion evinces great folly, and commonly defeats its own purposes. Pharaoh, if he had not the light of revelation, had the law of nature for a guide. His station in life afforded him many opportunities and advantages for doing good. But it is always with difficulty that truth finds access to the ears of kings, and when it does, the ears of kings are not always open to receive it. Instead of viewing the Israelites in the light of brethren sprung from the same parent, and entitled to common justice and equity, he considered them as aliens who had no right to the privileges of natives and Egyptian subjects. Instead of calling to mind what is always due to man from man, he regarded them as no better than slaves and beasts of burden; and gave his natural born subjects encouragement to oppress them. Being an idolater, the God of the Hebrews he despised. As tyrants are always jealous, he suspected the unfortunate strangers of hatching evil designs, and

was

was afraid of dangers to his throne from their union with his enemies. At length, so great was his enmity to the unhappy people, and so ready was he to give ear to every malicious report to their prejudice, that he became divested, not only of the common feelings of a man, but also of the generous virtues of a prince; and determined to be pacified with nothing short of the utter extinction of the Hebrew nation.

His daughter, we must suppose, educated in the same prejudices, and taught from her earliest days, to hate and despise the Israelites. In which case nothing could be expected from her, but to rejoice in every disaster and misfortune that befel them, and to lend a helping hand for doubling their distress. She knew that her father's hatred was great, so great that he had doomed every male child to death that belonged to their nation. She could not but know that she had much to fear from his stern temper, by any favour shewn them, and more from disobedience of his laws. Yet, notwithstanding every obstacle thrown in her way, all was surmounted by the sentiments of humanity; and as soon as she found the child, she had compassion on him,

him, and said this is one of the Hebrew children. She not only spared his life, which sympathy might have suggested to any person, but did more; she adopted, educated, and patronised the child. She became the mother, the friend, the noble, the generous benefactress. What a contrast is here between the two characters! How amiable the daughter, when compared with the father. She was a saving angel. He a stubborn, inflexible tyrant. Hence her memorial was blessed; and because she was merciful, even as her heavenly Father is merciful, she was afterwards, by reason of her goodness, styled by the Jews, *the daughter of God.*

Again, in the fifth place, From the sequel of this history we may learn that all subordinate and second causes are but agents in the hands of the first, and that God can, whenever he pleaseth, set bounds to human fury and malice, beyond which they cannot pass. While the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, no man can harden his heart against *Him* and expect to prosper. Sooner or later he will vindicate the honour of his government, and shew his power in the downfall and destruction of his enemies. Though

G

both

both the good and bad may be said to form a link in the chain of Providence, and answer different ends, yet all are the subjects of his government, and act under his supreme control. Thus saith the Lord unto Pharaoh: "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth*." The triumph of the ungodly is but short. Evil hunts the violent man to overthrow him. It is the prerogative of the King of Kings to protect the injured, to break in pieces the oppressor, and to be the avenger of those that suffer wrongfully and without cause. "If therefore, thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter, for he that is higher than the highest in earth regardeth, and will arise and judge the world in righteousness†."

But here it may be asked, Why is God said to harden Pharaoh's heart, and for that hardness of heart, afterwards to punish him? Does not this seem somewhat strange? How are we to understand this saying, and reconcile

* Exod. xix. 16.

† Eccl. v. 8.

this

this part of the Divine conduct with our ideas of justice and goodness? If we look around us, and attend seriously to what is passing before our eyes every day, we shall perceive that this saying, hard to be understood as it is, may be obviated; and that this part of the Divine conduct, so far from being inconsistent with reason, bears a strong analogy to what we observe daily in the common course of Providence.

For although God has promised to none, not even the best of men, an entire exemption from troubles, yet Providence hath prepared certain mitigations, remedies, and reliefs for all the evils, both natural and moral, incident to this life of trial and probation. We see, indeed, "all things here," as the son of Sirach expresses it, "set double, two and two, one against another; good against evil, and evil against good; life against death, and death against life; the godly against the sinner, and the sinner against the godly*." In the natural world, wherever the poisonous reptile exists, we find the antidote prepared, and wherever the pestilence rages, the remedy is provided, which it is the province of reason to investigate and apply. In the moral world

* Ecclus. xlii. 24.

we have the blessing and the curse both placed before our eyes, and set the one in opposition to the other; and even where sin the greatest of evils abounds, there grace does much more abound. Such is the appointment of Heaven, and thus things are set double, two and two, the one against the other; for God hath made nothing imperfect, but prepared every thing in the best manner for rendering this life what it was destined to be, a state of trial and moral discipline and improvement for a future.

Besides, let it not be forgotten, that in sacred scripture several things are said to be done by God, which he only permits to come to pass in the course of Providence. Thus he is said to harden Pharaoh's heart, when he leaves him to the government of his passions, and where he does not interpose with his mighty power to prevent the effects of their operation. This is a sufficient vindication of the divine ways.

But further, as God is the giver of every good and perfect gift, so he hath an unquestionable right to bestow his favours in what measures, at what seasons, and upon what persons soever it may seem good in his sight.

Nor

Nor has any one reason to murmur or complain; for whatever portion is allotted him, be it more or less, all is equally unmerited. Our humane, tender, and compassionate dispositions among others are all gifts of God, and given for use and improvement, though, at the same time, liable to abuse. When Pharaoh abused the principles of humanity and compassion given him for the best purposes to the very worst, had not the Giver a right to recal the abused favours, or transfer them to his daughter, or any other person more worthy of them, and better disposed to make a proper use of them? And what constitutes hardness of heart but the absence of these principles? yet it is not the exercise of the divine prerogative but the abuse of the divine gifts that is the cause of this hardness of heart. When a father's goodness answers no other end but to encourage a son in disobedience and rebellion, such goodness ought not only in justice but in mercy to be suspended, or superadded to another branch of his family. Hence the daughter of the king was found tender-hearted and merciful, in proportion to the father's uncommon cruelty and hardness of heart. Hence the blessing

of him that was ready to perish came upon her; whereas his memorial is cursed by every one in every succeeding generation.

It is in this sense we ought to understand the scripture where God is said to harden Pharaoh's heart; and in this manner is the divine conduct towards him justified and reconciled with our ideas of the divine perfections. Nor is this exercise of God's prerogative, in withdrawing his abused favours from one and conferring them upon another, any thing new or extraordinary. On the contrary, it is what happens every day in the common course of Providence. Power, for instance, is certainly the gift of God; but when power is perverted to the purposes of oppression, it naturally works its own subversion, and passes from one hand to another. Riches are also the gift of God; but when abused to the purposes of excess, luxury, and intemperance, they make to themselves wings and fly away to some more worthy possessor.

Such is the course of nature. Nor is the language of revelation different. They both agree and serve mutually to illustrate and explain each other, and to demonstrate that all human virtue must be either on the increase
or

or decrease, either improving or diminishing. Hence that remarkable inference drawn from the parable of the talents given for the purpose of improvement. "To one servant ten talents were given, to another two, and to another one. When the Lord came to reckon with them, and found some of his gifts improved and others abused, what was his command? Take, saith he, from the unprofitable servant the abused talent, and give it to him that hath ten talents. For, it is added, to every one that hath made a proper use of the divine gifts shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath*."

So that even in the present life, well is it for the world in general that there is a Supreme Governor and wise Disposer of all Events, and though many be the evils that afflict the just, many also are the mitigations, remedies, and reliefs provided against them, and the Lord can in his good time deliver us from them all. Under his watchful eye and paternal care, the good and faithful servant can never want a friend and protector, nor the wronged sufferer from the powers of op-

* Matth. xxv. 29.

pression a rock of refuge from the storm. He who is the giver of life, breath, and all things, has given his Providence the charge of the virtuous, so that no evil shall befall them from which he cannot deliver, no misfortune attend them which he cannot alleviate, and make it ultimately tend to their benefit and advantage.

In the sixth and last place, From this signal and memorable deliverance of Moses from danger in early life, let us all, as we have good reason, be thankful for similar favours, and mindful of our great obligations to a good Providence. Have you, men and brethren, been conducted in safety through the perils of infancy, childhood, and youth, to the age of maturity and discretion? Cast your eyes backward; and say if you have not escaped snares, accidents, and dangers innumerable, not through your own sagacity or foresight, but through the care and protection of your heavenly Father? Where is the man that takes a retrospective view of his past life but may perceive wonderful deliverances wrought for him not unlike those vouchsafed to Moses. While you ran heedless amidst the slippery paths of youth, Who
was

was it that watched over you, and directed your steps in the path of safety? To whom were you indebted for your preservation amidst surrounding hazards, and for provision and support in times of weakness and want? Who was it that kept your eyes from tears and your feet from falling? Have you not all received mercies, many of which were unexpected, and all unmerited, more in number than can be remembered? What man is he that needs more monitors to prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, than his own reflections furnish? In all past ages the wise and the good have recollected the narrow escapes made in their youthful years with joy and gratitude, and confessed their obligations to God's Providence for its kind interpositions in their behalf. "Thou, O my God," says David, "hast been my guide and my trust from my youth upwards; by Thee have I been holden up even from the womb. Thou hast been my refuge and strength, a present help in times of trouble. Thy goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life: therefore my praise shall be continually of thee."

Let us then not only habituate ourselves to eye the hand of God in the several incidents

dents and events of life, and give honour to whom honour is due; but let the recollection of past mercies inspire us with unbounded trust and confidence in the divine goodness through the remaining periods of time. Let us believe and rest satisfied that God is the Supreme Disposer of all events, and that under his government, sooner or later it shall be well with the righteous. From pains and troubles, none, not even the best of men, are exempted. In this world all must have trials, more or fewer, of their virtue. In every past age the wicked have plotted against the just, and the powers of darkness have leagued against the Lord and his anointed; and nothing else is to be expected in times to come. But he that sitteth in heaven shall laugh at their vain plots and combinations, and in the end frustrate all their best concerted schemes. Pharaoh presumed upon his power which he imagined none was able to resist, and, exulting in his might, set the vengeance of the Most High at defiance. "Who is the Lord," says he, "that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go*." But mark the result. One day we behold him at the head of a mighty army pursuing

* Exod. v. 2.

the Israelites on purpose to slay them, and the next we find him and his host overthrown, and swallowed up in the Red Sea. In patience therefore, let us learn to possess our souls, and in seasons of difficulty and distress, remain submissive and resigned to the will of heaven, not doubting but that God will in his good time and way, send us help and deliverance.

Especially as we know well and are assured that there remaineth a rest for the people of God. In this life indeed, virtue and godliness do not always meet their deserved reward, nor vice and oppression their condign punishment. But even in this case there are no grounds of doubt or distrust with respect to the final issue. The only inference that we are warranted to draw from this order of things, this seeming inequality, is, that God's moral government ends not with the present world. Nay, this seeming inequality is of itself a presumptive proof that there is another life in which a reward is prepared for the righteous, and for our comfort the Scriptures have confirmed the important truth, and expressly declared "that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." Here is encouragement

agement for every good and faithful servant, but matter of fearful apprehension to every worker of iniquity. By this declaration the terrors of the one, and the hopes of the other are all realized and confirmed. What though in this world ye must have tribulation? Tribulation, says the Apostle, worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope. Believe it, in a future state, that which now appears dark and mysterious in the divine administration, shall be made clear as the noon day; and all God's dealings towards the children of men shall be vindicated and demonstrated to have been wise, just, and good. Let us therefore never weary of well-doing, hoping, that in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not. Let not our hearts be troubled at the present triumphs of the ungodly, or the temporary prosperity of the wicked, but trust in God, and rest assured, that at the winding up of all accounts, under his just and unerring administration, the work of righteousness shall finally be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever.

S E R M O N V.

On FILIAL WISDOM and GRATITUDE.

 PROVERBS, x. i.
A wise son maketh a glad father.

THESE are the words of Solomon, a prince of great fame, well acquainted with human nature, and a preacher of more than common wisdom and understanding, to whose instructions much respect is due from persons of every rank and age, but especially from the rising generation. What circumstance it was that gave occasion to the words, we are not particularly informed, but if we may judge from the general strain and spirit of his writings, we may conclude, that they were occasioned by a decay of filial piety observable in his days. But whether they were suggested by the experience of filial love

love and gratitude, or by some striking instance of the contrary, it matters little to us; one thing is certain, that a disregard to parental happiness is but too common in the age in which we live; and a darker feature or a more alarming symptom no times can exhibit. Filial rebellion is not only a crime itself, but the parent of many crimes. It makes its appearance first in the family, and next spreads its influence through society, creating uneasiness, trouble, and misery in both the domestic and public world. So close and intimate is the relation subsisting between parents and children, that it is impossible for any father to be entirely disinterested in the conduct and behaviour of a son. From the tendencies which children discover in early years they commonly give indications what course of life they are likely to take, and what character they are afterwards to bear. Hence those hopes and fears which alternately arise in the parent's breast, and that happiness or misery derived from appearances in the season of youth. All parents can vouch for the truth of Solomon's proverb, where he says, "A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of

of his mother." From the first clause of which verse, it is now proposed to take a view of the life, character, and behaviour of the wise son, and recommend his example to the rising race, as a good pattern of imitation.

In general it may be observed, that the book of Proverbs is a collection of plain and useful rules of life, and that the chief design of the whole, is to exhort young men to the study and practice of wisdom. But the words wisdom and folly, according to Solomon, are of vast import, and commonly used by him in their most extensive sense, as equivalent to virtue and vice, to religion and irreligion. In this sense they are but seldom considered by the men of the world, who usually view them in a more narrow and limited light, and interpret them differently, according to their different views and purposes. One man is esteemed wise because he has a natural quickness of apprehension, and can perceive at once the means of accomplishing his ends. Another is reckoned wise because he possesses clearer views of things, and has more knowledge and learning than his neighbours. A third is deemed wise because of his uncommon prudence in managing the tempers of men, and

96. *On Filial Wisdom and Gratitude.*

and his secular affairs to such advantage, as to raise himself to stations of power, honour, and riches upon the ruins of others. But none of these comes up to the true sense of the word as it stands opposed to folly. For a man may have much sagacity and learning, much policy and knowledge of the world, and, after all, not be what is called in scripture, "wise unto salvation." There is a kind of wisdom "which is earthly, sensual, and devilish*;" and several kinds of craft, and fraudulent arts and devices, which, however much esteemed, and frequently practised by men, are foolishness with God. He taketh such wise men in their own craftiness, and they are turned backwards and disappointed in their cunning devices. "Behold," saith Job, "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding†." True wisdom consists in the knowledge and practice of virtue and religion. Indeed to be wise towards God is very different from the wisdom of the world. And with respect to men, "the wisdom which is from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, and full of good fruits."

* James, iii. 15.

† Job, xxviii. 28.

In

In order to evince this more particularly, let us next take a view of the wise son destined to make a glad father, and we shall perceive what good fruits spring from a heart smitten with the love of God and man, and alive to all the sentiments of filial piety and honour, justice and gratitude. Piety towards God must never be separated from humanity towards men. Nor must benevolence to mankind be permitted to extinguish in our bosoms that tender respect and partiality which we owe to our parents, friends, and relations. The one is nowise inconsistent with the other; and if the former ought to be cultivated, the latter ought not to be neglected. While we are acting the part of man, and shewing humanity to all mankind bearing the venerable image of God, we must not forget that the special duties of a son are incumbent upon us. Nor must the virtues of domestic life be sacrificed to liberality of mind, however highly admired, nor yet to universal benevolence, however justly and deservedly esteemed.

“There is a generation,” says Solomon, “that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother*.” Strange generation

* Prov. xxx. 2.

H ·

indeed

indeed ! a race dead to every principle of filial and natural affection ; reason, instead of being their glory, by this abuse of it, becomes their reproach. But this behaviour to parents indicates such extreme baseness and depravity, as, we hope, few of the children of men are capable of even in the worst of times. Yet there is a generation that are not ashamed of filial indifference and disrespect ; a stubborn and selfish race who, provided it be well with themselves, give themselves little concern about a father's ease, comfort, and happiness. The idle vagabond and dissolute prodigal are commonly strangers at home ; and the moment they leave their father's house, they forget that the duties of a son are incumbent upon them. Absalom, you know, instead of being the peace of his father, was the bane of his life, and the conspirator of his death. The dissipated wretch, and spendthrift heir, often thinks that the father lives too long who stands between him and his heritage. Such indications of early folly and dissoluteness of morals among the rising race, none, not even the most distant connexion, can behold without foreboding fears ; what then must a father feel, who is so deeply interested in the
conduct

conduct of a son, while he sees him devoted to idleness and profligacy, and promising nothing but to bring his family into shame, and himself into ruin.

On the contrary, the wise son destined to make a glad father begins his career in life by shewing due reverence to God, and respect and obedience to his parents. The family is an institution of Providence, and designed to be the seat of happiness, where the reciprocal duties of all parents and children arise out of their natural circumstances and condition. It is so reasonable for children to love their parents, to whom, under God, they stand indebted for life, and the means of preserving it, that there are but few who are willing to own their want of this affection. Nature teaches all her children that those who are rising ought to comfort those that are declining in life; and that it is the business of those who flourish to succour those who fade in the world. But as we draw from the more distant towards the closer relations of life, correspondent obligations necessarily arise, and consequently our calls to duty become more urgent and indispensable. Not only humanity but justice, not only justice but gratitude,

all unite in summoning sons to their duty ; and even after they have done all that they can for the benefit of their parents, to confess that they have done no more than their duty.

As a father is a proper object of respect, so filial piety is a virtue of the first rank, and ought to be cultivated with care in every age and nation. It is that warm attachment which children feel for those who brought them into life, and which nature hath planted in us all for the wisest ends and purposes, but especially those of domestic comfort and happiness. Even in the infant state the buds of filial piety are perceptible, and nature dictates the outlines of duty before we become sensible of any moral obligation, or acquainted with our relative situations. So that the son that early indicates a partial love to his parents is a child of promise, and affords the world a hopeful presage with respect to his future conduct and behaviour.

But, in proportion as he advances in years and knowledge, the son must feel his obligations to parents increasing in weight and importance. He must perceive how deeply they are concerned for his safety and welfare ;

how active and diligent they are in instilling good principles, and correcting wrong propensities; and how open their ears are to his cries, and their hands to supply his wants; and, in short, what pains, and expence it costs them to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and, when he considers all these things, surely he cannot but be sensible of the weight of his obligations. For if benefits received be a good foundation of love and gratitude, he must ever consider them as his best friends and benefactors, and love them who have given so many proofs of their regard for him. But supposing a father to have been careless and negligent about training up his children in the way they should go, and his example to have been neither blameless nor irreproachable, still we ought to remember that the duties of a son remain incumbent upon us, and that parental negligence and indiscretion exempt not sons from filial piety and respect. While our relation to him subsists, the duties arising from it are of unchangeable obligation. However scandalous his conduct, and unworthy his character, still we must not forget that obedience

is due to God ; and having done what is good, and what is required of us by our heavenly Father, with him events may be trusted. Besides, by cherishing the sweet and social affections, we consult our own interest, and our life from the beginning, through all its progressive stages, is filled up with internal comfort and self-satisfaction.

But in whatever follies and irregularities some parents may indulge themselves, all, without exception, rejoice to see their children virtuously disposed, doing good, and giving them every possible assurance that religion can bring with regard to happiness both in the present and future world. As virtue and religion then are so amiable and graceful in the eyes of mankind in general, how much more so must they be in the sight of godly and worthy parents whose delight it has been to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of God blameless ? To such characters what joy, and cause of rejoicing, must the wise son prove ! It is true man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward ; and from trials of one kind or another, none, not even the best of men, are exempted. But whatever changes are incident

dent to human affairs, and whatever be his circumstances in life, prosperous or adverse, the father that is blest with a wise son will not be without a rich source of comfort and consolation. This life at best, we all know, is a chequered scene ; and however clear and serene the sky may appear to-day, to-morrow it may be covered with clouds and darkness. Of health, that invaluable blessing, no man is secure ; nor can any one say how soon affliction may visit his habitation. The parent may now be rich, in this world's goods, but cannot tell how soon his riches may make to themselves wings and fly away ; and poverty come upon him like an armed man. For no person, be his station what it may, ever stands beyond the reach of misfortune. But whatever be the worthy father's condition in life, prosperous or adverse, comfortable or distressful, the wise son is no stranger to his duty, nor is he wanting in administering such consolation as circumstances require ; and, by calling to mind former favours received, makes it his business to repay his debts even to the last farthing.

But, in the second place, admitting that the father has not been unfortunate, and is

H 4

now

now blest with a plentiful, or at least a competent, portion of the good things of this life, and that there is no call for filial relief and assistance, yet the wise son knows that it is necessary to shew him proper attentions, because they are expected. Paternal affluence and ease exempt not sons from filial obligations; and there may be other circumstances which require the united exertion of every member of his house for the common benefit. Perhaps the family is become numerous; and the old Patriarch, like Jacob, has no less than twelve sons, for whom he is bound to provide. Perhaps his cares are become a burden too heavy for him to bear, and, like a venerable oak, he is bending under the weight of his branches. Perhaps old age approaches, and brings along with it its usual train of frailties and infirmities. In such circumstances, to whom is the parent to look for assistance but to those nourished by his care, and reared by his bounty. But though the rest should forsake him, and leave him to struggle amidst the hardships inseparable from age, the wise son cannot. He has a heart to feel, and a hand to help, in time of need. He knows not to eat the bread

bread of idleness, where there are many calls to answer, many wants to supply. He studies the proper means of alleviating the burden, every day rising early, and late taking rest. He neglects no opportunity that offers of doing good, and communicating to the common interest; in order to render a father's downward course as easy and comfortable as the circumstances of declining years will admit.

Few, at best, are the privileges of age; and cruel were it to rob men stricken in years of any blessing destined for them by kind Providence. Yet, alas! how often are the weaknesses of age made the subject of wanton sport and derision? How frequently does giddy and petulant youth treat old age with levity and contempt? Nay, how often do the aged meet with the greater abuse from the world the less they are able to bear it. For the infirmities of age too many, I say, have but little charity and less mercy. Insults, however, from abroad would be more tolerable were compassion found at home. But filial indifference, desertion, and ingratitude, who can bear? Of all vices disobedience to parents is, in scripture, ranked among the basest and most

most execrable, and no wonder; for to whom can a father go for help and compassion in the time of trouble and oppression, but to those of his household? Or, where shall he find a refuge from the storm, but under his own roof? Allow me then to ask, if there be children who can forsake a parent sinking under the pressure of years; when his eyes are become dim, and his ears heavy; when his head droops, and his heart fails; when infirmities of various kinds loudly call for compassion, I say, if there be children who can desert a parent in such circumstances, what has the world to expect from such wretches? For the honour of human nature charity obliges us to hope that such instances of cruelty and ingratitude are rare, even among the basest and most degenerate sons of men.

So abominable in its nature, and so big with evils to the family and the state, is ingratitude. But further, disobedience to parents is the mother of riots and rebellions, and the forerunner of public disorder, confusion and misery. So far are private vices from ever becoming public virtues, that an ungrateful man perverts all the purposes of
virtue,

virtue, generosity, and benevolence, and is unfit for the service either of God or man, either of his family or his country. In short, without a sense of gratitude no man can be amiable or pious, or social or religious; whereas he that fulfils the duties of a son is seldom found defective in those of any other relation.

How different from the children of impiety and disobedience is the wise and worthy son, who loves God with all his heart, and who is feelingly alive to every religious and moral obligation. Sensible of his heavenly origin and destination, he disdains to act in any respect inconsistent with his dignity as a son of God, and an heir of immortality. Sprung from a family of eminent piety and fair reputation, he scorns to lead a life unbecoming himself, and disgraceful to his house. Being brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, he cultivates the virtues and graces of the spirit, and advances in wisdom and goodness as he increases in years. Has kind Providence prolonged a father's life? he rejoices in the opportunity given him of shewing his gratitude, and cancelling his oldest debts. Do parental cares increase
with

with years? he doubles his attentions, and studies all lawful ways and means of alleviating the burden. Does age vex itself in vain, and become more and more anxious to heap up riches, in proportion as it loses the power of enjoying them? the wise son has compassion on its infirmities, and strives, by every healing art, to help and enable it to bear them. Has time chilled the heart, and abated the warmth of the kind affections? the son, by his dutiful behaviour, cherishes the remains of them. Amidst the decays of nature, and the dejection of spirits inseparable from old age; the wise son suggests faith, patience, hope, and other religious considerations, which are the best remedies for the wounds of time. In a word, whatever occurs to occasion pains or troubles the son improves to the purposes of instruction or relief, and is careful to remove out of the way every cause of uneasiness and distress. Happy father! by the virtues of the son he is taught to grow old not only with patience but pleasure. Infirmities of every kind are made to sit light upon him. He sees and rejoices, with joy unspeakable, to see in his son's face not only his own likeness renewed,
but

but the image of God impressed upon his heart. Well is it with him. While many are saying who shall shew them any good; while other parents are lamenting the follies of their beloved children, who, after all their care and culture, like degenerate plants, produce nothing but wild grapes, he has a son who watches day and night for opportunities of returning a father's blessing upon his own head, and of rendering the closing day of life like a calm and serene evening. Even decrepitude, leaning upon its staff, is happy in such circumstances; and the hoary head, by such returns of filial love and gratitude, wants not its crown of rejoicing.

Nor does this resigned and comfortable frame of spirit forsake the venerable patriarch, but goes along with him to the verge of a future world, cheering his spirit, and reconciling him to his great change with all its consequences. Even in that solemn hour when he is about to bid farewell to every earthly friend and connexion; what can be more comfortable to a parent than the thought of leaving behind him, a son of exemplary virtue to hand down his name with honour to future generations. Next to the

the reflection upon a well spent life, next to the peace of God which passeth understanding, and the hope of eternal life in the heavens through the merits and mediation of Christ, comes the delightful thought of leaving behind him a son, beloved of God and man, and prepared to follow him, and to inherit the promises. Now, says the Christian parent, I am ready to be offered up, and the hour of my departure is at hand; but I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth; and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

Such are the sweet fruits of that wisdom which is from above, the exceedingly great and precious promises made to faithful parents and their children, to encourage them to do well, and patiently continue in well doing. Suffer therefore the exhortation, ye children of men, before I conclude, and it is equally applicable to both sexes. Let me beseech you all to seek wisdom, that sound wisdom and understanding, which is productive of good fruits, such as filial piety, gratitude, and obedience. The promise is to you, ye faithful parents, and to your children taught

taught of God. The family is one of the earliest institutions of Providence, and designed to be the first school of piety, virtue, and religion. There, the elements of knowledge and wisdom ought to be learnt. There, benevolence and justice, humility and meekness, industry and temperance, charity, sincerity, and truth, ought to be diligently taught. There, scope is given for the exercise of every parental and filial affection, and the cultivation of those virtues which adorn human nature. In order to answer its original institution every family should be the seat of love and mutual offices of kindness; and when each member fulfils the duties of his station and relation, and all live together in harmony and peace, blessing and blest, scarcely is it possible to form an idea of a happier state of society. "Behold how good," says David, "how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*," all serving God with gladness, all respecting their parents in truth, and ministering to the common comfort and felicity.

Learn therefore, O ye young friends, to bless God, who has placed you in the nearest

* Pf. cxxxiii. 1.

and

and dearest relations of domestic life, and called you to attend to the duties of your station, and enjoy the comforts arising from mutual love and friendship, mutual tenderness and compassion. Next to God, be thankful to your father for the favours and benefits received, and see that ye shew honour at home to whom honour is due, reverence to whom reverence, and gratitude to whom gratitude. Cast your eyes backward to your earliest days, and consider what has been done for you, and you cannot but feel the weight of your natural and moral obligations. If love to God be the first and great commandment of morality and religion; love to parents is the primary and fundamental law of families and societies; and as long as the relation between God and man, and between parents and children subsists, these laws must remain in full force and obligation. In no age or nation in no soil or climate can they grow obsolete. By no changes of times, manners, or opinions, by no revolutions of states or kingdoms can they be in the least affected or rendered of none effect. They remain the same among people of every kindred, nation, and tongue. They are equally incumbent
upon

upon man in his rudest state, and in his most polished and refined. Whatever be the complexion of the sect or party which ye join, whatever be the form of religion which you profess, your obligations to love, gratitude, and obedience rest upon you, and no power on earth can grant you absolution or an acquittal from the penalty of transgressing these laws. Read therefore the divine laws by day, meditate upon them by night, until they be so thoroughly understood, and so perfectly digested, as to become the standing rules of life, and the great principles of active virtue and obedience. "O, how love I thy law!" says the Psalmist. "It is my meditation all the day*." "It is my meat and drink," says the Saviour of the World, "to do the will of my Heavenly Father†;" and where can ye find a pattern of life and manners so excellent and perfect in every respect, and so worthy of imitation?

Finally; do ye wish to prolong the term of your existence on earth; observe the first commandment with promise, and be thankful to God, not only for past mercies and present blessings, but for future hopes. "Honour

* Ps. cxix. 97.

† John, iv. 34.

114 *On Filial Wisdom and Gratitude.*

thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." It is upon condition of filial piety that it has pleased God to give you the promise of long life. Therefore, "O my son," says an Apocryphal writer, "help thy father in his age, and grieve him not as long as he liveth. If his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy full strength: for the relieving of a father shall not be forgotten; in the day of thine affliction it shall be remembered *." Yes, blessings innumerable shall descend upon the wise and dutiful son, and sooner or later he shall reap the reward of his piety and virtue. It may indeed lie concealed for a while in the womb of Providence, but it is not the less certain on that account. "Who so," says the son of Sirach, "honour-eth his father shall have joy in his own children †." So that you who are now conferring a blessing shall have another awaiting you in reversion, and the prospect of its descending from generation to generation. While you are living in the regular observance of God's laws and statutes,

* Ecclus. iv. 10—33.

† Ecclus. iii. 5.

ye are workers together with him, and entitled to the favour and countenance of his Providence. While you are fulfilling the several duties of your station and relation in life, you are at the same time contributing towards the carrying on of the gracious purposes of heaven, and towards the completion of the scriptures; especially that portion of them where it is written: "God hath established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to make known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children that should be born; that should arise and declare them to their children: to the end that they might set their hope in God, and not forget his works but keep his commandments. For God is nigh to them that fear and serve him, and sheweth mercy unto thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments *."

* Pf. lxxviii. 6. Deut. v. 10.

SERMON VI.

On FILIAL FOLLY and DISOBEDIENCE.

PROVERBS, x. 1.

But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

NOTHING is more subservient to the interests of virtue than characters drawn from life; nor is there perhaps a more powerful diffusive from vice than just views of its odious nature and pernicious consequence. Every appearance of vice, even when viewed at a distance from the family, is painful to behold; but when it comes home, and our beloved children exhibit nothing before us but examples of sin and folly, it cannot but occasion us double grief and sorrow of heart; for as sure as a wise son maketh a glad father, so sure is a foolish son the heaviness of his mother. I have
already

already given you a view of the conduct and character of the one, and considered the happiness resulting to a father from filial piety and gratitude. It is proposed now to reverse the scene, and consider also the misery brought upon a mother by a son's folly and misconduct. Though this part of the subject may be less pleasant and acceptable than that which has been already discussed, it may be equally useful and edifying. If the example of the foolish son cannot be recommended as a pattern for imitation, it may be profitable for warning and reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness.

But, before I proceed to point out the particular marks and characters by which the foolish son is distinguished, it may not be improper in general to remark the very close and intimate connexion subsisting between all parents and children. This is indeed so obvious, that it can escape the observation of none who pays attention either to the rational or irrational part of the creation. Natural affection is common to both; and is implanted in all living creatures for the wisest and best ends. Among the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, the principle of
I 3 instinct

118 *On Filial Folly and Disobedience.*

instinct displays itself in various ways, and works such wonders, as cannot but astonish every beholder, and evince the infinite wisdom of its adorable Author. With what tenderness and care do the animal race watch over their young offspring ! How deeply are they interested in their safety and preservation ! With what kind concern do the feathered tribes nourish their brood, by gathering them under their wings, and protecting them from their enemies ! How sagacious in conducting them to places of safety, and how ready to risk life in their defence in times of extreme danger ! How active and diligent in searching for food convenient for them, and in distributing it among them according to their respective necessities ! In short, with what astonishing patience and perseverance do the parental birds undergo toil and travail, hunger and thirst, in order to provide for their little ones the means of subsistence, to raise them to maturity, and prepare them for answering the end of their creation !

The same principle which actuates the irrational pervades also the rational race ; only with this difference, that in the latter, being combined with reason and reflection, it is of longer

longer duration. The brutal and feathered tribes retain this attachment to their offspring as long as it is necessary to their growth and nourishment, but no longer. For no sooner are the young ones able to provide for themselves, than this natural affection of the parent cools; and having performed the office assigned her by nature, the connexion then entirely ceases. But with the rational race the case is otherwise. In the tender mother's breast the spark of natural affection lives long; nor is it extinguished even when her children have reached their full growth and maturity. Being planted by the hand of nature, and nourished by the endearing charities of infancy, childhood, and youth, it still continues a strong principle of union, a lively incentive to acts of kindness, and forsakes her not until the end of her life. United to her children by the most endearing ties, she feels for them with a sensibility peculiar to her near relation; and as they remain during her whole life bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh, whatever others may do, she must rejoice with them when they rejoice, and weep with them when they weep.

This being premised, it will be no difficult matter to account for that uneasiness and grief which the follies and miscarriages of her offspring occasion the tender mother. So intimate the relation between mothers and children, that the latter must prove to the former either a blessing or a curse; and, according to their conduct, render home either a house of joy or of sorrow. It is in the family where scope is given for the exercise of every parental and filial affection; and when each member of it fulfils the duties of his relative state, and mutual love and mutual offices of kindness pervade the whole, it may justly be said to be the seat of true happiness. But, on the other hand, when children become refractory, ungrateful, and disobedient, and parents are unable to govern and restrain them within the bounds of reason, virtue, and moderation, scarcely is there any place of misery on earth equal or comparable to the domestic state.

To evince this, let us take a view of the foolish son, left to the freedom of his own will, and in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation; and mark those particular vices by which his character is tainted
and

and distinguished, and we shall perceive in how many ways he may prove the heaviness of his mother. We shall suppose him arrived at the age of reason and discretion, capable of distinguishing between good and evil, right and wrong, and of choosing the one in preference to the other. For before this period of life he cannot be called a moral agent, fit for self-government; nor can he, without the liberty of choosing and acting at will, be deemed responsible for his actions. But, after having advanced to that state of maturity and reflection in which his conduct becomes praise or blame-worthy, should he begin life by shewing a disposition to treat his parents with levity and disrespect; or should he lend a deaf ear to their counsels, cast their laws behind his back, and become self-conceited and proud of his own understanding, then he gives a sad presage with respect to futurity. These are buds of a corrupt tree which yields none but bitter fruit. "Seest thou," says Solomon, "a young man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of that man*." Such appearances in early life are alarming

* Prov. xxvi. 12.

indications to parents, and cannot but create in their heart foreboding fears and apprehensions; if they draw not from their mouth the words of Job: "Why died he not from the womb? Why was he not carried from the womb to the grave*?"

In the history of the prodigal son we have folly, in its progressive stages, well delineated, and its sad effects strongly marked. Weary of submission to parental authority and restraint, and panting after liberty to live as he listed, "the son first demanded his portion, then left his father's house, and took his journey unto a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." Nor did he come to himself, and become sensible of his folly, until he was reduced to suffer all the hardships of slavery and poverty. Then he began to think soberly as he ought, and to remember how many hired servants in his father's house had bread enough, and to spare, while he, a beloved son, was perishing with hunger! In the same manner, every foolish son destined to be the heaviness of his mother commonly begins his career, and seldom becomes sensible of his error until it be too

* Job, iii. 11-17. 19.

late.

late. Impatient of rule and reproof, he longs to take the reins of government into his own hands, and to act without any control. Under his parents' eye he finds he cannot enjoy the liberty of doing as he pleases, far less the liberty of running into ruin; and, therefore, he leaves the family and goes forth into the great world, where many ways open before him, and he has perfect freedom to choose that which suits his own fancy and inclination. At this critical juncture great is his danger; "for wide is the gate and broad the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat. Whereas strait is the gate and narrow the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." From without so many are the invitations to error; and from within, so clamorous the solicitations to sin, that it is difficult to avoid following the multitude to do evil, and maintain his integrity. Besides being deprived of the counsels of age, and the guidance of wisdom and experience, he is ill prepared for resisting temptations, and shunning the paths in which destroyers go.

In such circumstances every man's virtue is exposed to danger, but especially that of
unguarded

unguarded youth. Who is safe amidst the loose company and bad examples so common and contagious in the public world? Nothing is a more certain mark of folly than an attachment to dissipated and debauched companions. "I looked," says Solomon, "at the window of my house and through the casement, and I beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding *." He was the son, perhaps the only son, and dearly beloved of his mother; but had forgotten her instructions, and forsaken her laws, not choosing to keep sound wisdom and discretion. It seldom indeed happens that a young man, on leaving the paths of virtue, runs at once into the extremes of vice. Corruption of principle is commonly acquired by degrees; and time is requisite to overcome the scruples of conscience. But one step in the wrong way leads to another, and every indulgence in small sins is an introduction to greater, until a sense of shame is extinguished, and all regard to honour and reputation is lost. And moreover by yielding to temptations they increase in number, and wax stronger and

* Prov. vii. 7.

stronger,

stronger, until passion gains an entire dominion over us, and then we are led captive at will. Hence the foolish son becomes the slave of passion and wicked company, consenting to the enticing words of every sinner, and yielding an ignominious compliance with every vicious solicitation that comes in his way. While he shuns all communication with the sober, the wise, and the virtuous, he cannot learn prudence and discretion from example. While he continues to associate with none but the loose and abandoned, and such as love to run into the same excess of riot and intemperance with himself, there can be no hope of a reformation. The idle haunts of the taverns are preferred to the laudable employments of industry; the noisy scenes of laughter and dissipation, to the calm joys of reason and reflection; and the wild revels of unseasonable hours, to the sweet enjoyments of honourable marriage and domestic tranquillity. Having forgotten God, he forgets also that he has a soul to be saved, until pain, imbecility, and rottenness of bones, bring home to him the unwelcome intimations. These, these are followers of lawless indulgence. Miserable man that thou art,

art, what fruit hadst thou in these things whereof thou art now ashamed? For the end of those things is death; an untimely and unexpected death. Thou mayest go on for a while deceiving, being deceived; but believe it, sooner or later, as the scripture affirms, "thy sins will find thee out." Excess of all kinds engenders disease, and whosoever transgresses the laws of nature must do it at his peril. But supposing thou escapest the punishment due to thy folly through mere strength of nature, remember that there is a great Author of nature who will by no means clear the guilty. "Thou mayest rejoice, O young man," says the preacher, "in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; thou mayest walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes, glorying in thy shame, and in the ruins of innocence; but remember that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment *."

"Honour thy father and thy mother," saith the Most High, "that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee:" this is the first commandment with promise, and the violation of it is one

* Eccles. xi. 9.

of the first signs and indications of youthful folly. "For the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned of his danger, and taught how to frame his life; and in the keeping of them there is great reward *."

But let it not be forgotten at the same time, that to the breaking of them there is annexed a great penalty. Such breach is a mark of the most egregious folly, because it is not only against obvious duty, but against interest and happiness. What has the world to expect from a young man who sets out on principles of impiety, ingratitude, and disobedience to parents? If he can burst asunder the ties of nature, and cast her cords from him, is there any ground to hope that

* *Psalm* xix. 7—12.

he

he will be restrained within the bounds of reason and justice by any moral obligation? "If he has been the grief of his father, and bitterness to her that bare him," is it to be expected that he will act his part well in any of the more distant relations of life, or indeed be worthy of trust and confidence from any civil society? "If he has despised his mother," and loaded her family with shame and reprobach in the first part of his life, what reason is there to believe that he will not in the second betray his country, and fall a victim to her laws?

I put the case strongly, because it is impossible to tell what evils may come from a violation of this first law of morality. "I have seen," says Job, "the foolish son taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation *." To other indications of folly, we may add that strong attachment which the rising race have for the frivolous diversions of the stage. The theatre never was, and I am afraid never will be a school for virtue, and I am persuaded were all the evil and good resulting from it put in equal scales, and weighed, the latter would prove as nothing in the balance.

* Job, v. 3.

It is a school of fashion and folly, where thousands have learned to make a mock of sin, and a jest of things sacred and serious. It is a school for evil communications, and evil communications corrupt good manners. It is a school where prejudices are contracted against piety and religion, and where many of the noblest virtues, such as sobriety and chastity, purity and temperance, are made the subject of derision and ridicule. It is a house of idleness and dissipation, in which a son cannot be frequently seen without bringing his mother into sorrow, and himself into danger. That your lad has been a constant attendant of the stage, and learnt to be a wit, a freethinker, or libertine, will be a bad recommendation to men of business, honour, or honesty, and still a worse to a Being of perfect holiness, justice, and truth.

But so various are the marks and characters of folly, by which the youths of the present age stand distinguished, and which are the forerunners of ruin and misery, that time would fail me were I to give a particular detail of them. Permit me, therefore, only to ask : Is not he a foolish son who can blaspheme the name of God on the slightest occasions, and without any temptation of
K profit

130 *On Filial Folly and Disobedience.*

profit or pleasure? Is it not an indication of great folly to treat the sacred institutions of religion with levity and contempt, upon which the being and well-being of society depend? What is he but a fool who can make a mock of sin, as if it were a matter of trivial consequence; and turn religion into raillery to please the vitiated taste and temper of the times? Is he not exceedingly foolish who can stake not only his own property but that of his family, entrusted to his care, upon the cast of a single die; and lose in a moment what cost his forefathers years of industry, and ages of toil and trouble, to acquire? What can betray greater folly than to sell ourselves to commit iniquity, the voluntary slaves of sin and Satan, to glory in our shame, and in being lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; in being deliberate and presumptuous transgressors; given over to lasciviousness; and to work all manner of uncleanness with greediness? Nothing surely; yet how many are there who not only do such things, but take pleasure in those that do them?

Consider, I beseech thee, O young man, the woeful and pernicious consequences of such habits; consider how many amiable
dispositions

dispositions you destroy, how many flattering hopes of parents you frustrate, by such follies and vicious practices. Be wise in time; be admonished to pay attention to the things belonging to both your temporal and eternal interests before they be hid from thine eyes. Be advised, I say, to pause a little, and take warning. For in the course of nature there is, generally speaking, no safety for transgressors. It is decreed by Providence that danger of one kind or another awaits every man who steps aside from the line of his duty, and enters upon forbidden ground. Dost thou love to sit idle, or to waste time in vain and unprofitable pursuits? be assured that thou hast mistaken thy duty and interest; for time past can never be recalled. Hast thou squandered away thy fortune by gaming, profusion, or prodigality? believe it thou shalt find leisure enough to lament thy folly; for upon the ruins of fortune arise troubles and embarrassments innumerable. Hast thou impaired thy health by rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness? remember that, together with the loss of health, the best of earthly blessings, thou must bid farewell to every other temporal enjoyment. Hast thou

a soul to be saved, and dost thou remain careless and unconcerned about the favour of God, the one thing needful? Alas! what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or art thou saying with the sensualist of old, "Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant:" "Thou fool," replies a still voice behind thee, "this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

Here we behold the foolish son brought to a frightful pass; a pass indeed not common to every traveller through this wilderness, but which is prepared by young libertines and profligates for themselves, and inseparable from the paths in which they have chosen to walk. Though all men be indeed born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, yet a double portion of pain and trouble attends all manner of excess, riot, and intemperance. "Woe unto the foolish son," saith the Lord, "who takes counsel, but not of me; who covers himself with a covering, but not of my spirit, that he may add sin to sin. He may boast his health, his beauty, and his strength; but

his glorious beauty shall be a fading flower, or as the hasty fruit before the summer *." When this is the case, and he is arrested in the midst of life by the hand of affliction, and laid upon a bed of distress; when the fears of death encompass him, and the pains of hell take hold of him, then he finds grief and trouble; then, miserable man that he is, he wishes, but wishes in vain, for the consolations of religion which he despised; and, what is still more mortifying, is constrained to request the prayers of the godly, whom he had been accustomed only to vilify and ridicule.

Would to God that this were only an imaginary scene, a portrait that bears no resemblance to the life! But it is in vain to dissemble, or call in question facts proved and confirmed by daily observation and experience. No where can we turn our eyes without meeting instances of juvenile folly and indiscretion; and parents bitterly bewailing the miscarriages of their beloved children, and refusing to be comforted. The wages of sin is death. But the woeful effects of profligacy are not confined to the sinner alone. His friends and neighbours, and even

* Isaiah, xxx. 1.—xxviii. 4.

134 *On Filial Folly and Disobedience.*

his companions in iniquity, mourn over him, and regret his untimely fall. But he has a mother united to him by the ties of blood and natural affection; and whose life, like Jacob's, was bound up in the lad's life; a mother who nursed him with tenderness and care, and would often say, he will recompense me for all my labour and pains; he will be the stay and strength of my declining years. Alas, who can paint the mother's affliction? While she beheld her son, in whom her affections centered, she wept, and perhaps sometimes reproached herself. Now ruined and undone by folly and profligacy, he falls, and falls not alone; but, together with himself, brings down her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

But we must forbear enlarging upon this subject, lest there be some hearing me this day who can, from sad experience, bear witness to the truth of what has been said. Tenderness is due to the wounded in heart. Far be it from us, who are called to minister in the sanctuary, to add distress to the distressed. But exhort we must the young and unwary; and, with all long-suffering and patience, repeat the exhortation to filial piety
and

and obedience; "in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that we may recover them out of the snare of the devil who are unfortunately taken captive by him at his will *." It is our duty to warn them of their danger, because there is a time "when they shall seek repentance carefully, and with tears, but shall not find it †."

How beautifully is wisdom introduced by Solomon addressing young sinners, and expostulating with them on the consequences of their folly. "Wisdom," says he, "crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: In the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, O ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn 'ye at my reproof: behold I will pour out my spirit upon you, and will make known my words unto you." But when young sinners shut their ears against her instruction, and all her gentle calls and entreaties are of none effect, hear

* 2 Tim. ii. 20. 26.

† Heb. xii. 17.

136 *On Filial Folly and Disobedience.*

how she changeth her tone from soft expostulation to sharp rebuke, adding, "Because I have called and ye have refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: But ye have set at nought all my counsels, and would have none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as a desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me*."

To every foolish son how applicable, how alarming are these words? Ye who can treat a mother with scorn and contempt, shutting your ears against her counsels, and casting her law behind your back, we beseech you to look to the consequence. For if the keeping of the fifth commandment entitles you to the blessing of long life, the violation of it implies also a curse: "ye shall be cut off in the midst of your days." Besides, remember that the time is coming when ye shall seek and earnestly desire that filial respect which ye

* Prov. i. 20.

NOW

now refuse to pay. In the course of Providence things are so ordered that sinners are often requited evil for evil, and visited in the same way in which they themselves have transgressed. Justice, even-handed justice, often dispenses her punishments, as well as rewards, in kind, and according to men's deserts. You who are now the foolish son may, ere long, be the parent of another equally addicted to folly and disobedience; and then the bitter cup which you have filled to the brim, and administered to a parent, shall, in turn, be served up to your own lips, Or, to use the expressive language of scripture, "then shall be found the raven of the valley which shall pluck out the eye that mocketh at father, and despiseth to obey the law of a mother, and the young eagle that shall eat it *."

Listen, therefore, to the exhortation of the apostle: "Obey your parents," says he, "in all things, for this is right and well pleasing unto God †." They have learnt wisdom from experience; see that ye shew due respect to their counsels. They derive their authority from heaven, and therefore to it

* Prov. xxx. 17.

† Colos. iii. 20.

ye

138 *On Filial Folly and Disobedience.*

ye ought to yield a cheerful submission, Prior to all communities the family existed; and antecedent to all laws, those of the parent were in full force and obligation. Your mother's claim to filial piety and gratitude is unquestionably well-grounded; for upon her tender care you depended for the earliest blessings and comforts of life. Do not, therefore, forget to render honour to whom honour is due, and the best return that you can make is no more than her due, and your reasonable service. To requite evil for good is base and ungrateful in any relation of life, but especially in the nearest and dearest. For why has disobedience to parents been stigmatised in all ages, and amongst all nations marked as a crime of deepest dye? Why does it stand condemned by the spirit of all laws human and divine? Consult the annals of past ages, and the pages of all history, and observe what is written: "Whoso curseth father or mother," says Moses, "shall surely be put to death *." Or, as Solomon expresses it, "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness †." "Nay, cursed is he that

* Levit. xx. 9.

† Prov xx. 20.

only

only setteth light by his father or mother, and all the people shall say Amen *." So universally odious and execrable were filial impiety and ingratitude deemed under the old dispensation; and if we appeal to the new we shall find disobedience to parents arranged among the blackest and most atrocious crimes, marked as the "forerunner of perilous times, and pronounced worthy of death. He that curseth father or mother," saith Christ, "let him die the death †."

Nor is it at all matter of wonder that a penalty so severe should be annexed to this violation of the fundamental law of nature and nations. For as filial honour is the first commandment with promise, and the breach of this law the first step towards the violation of every other moral obligation; what reason has any one to augur well of a young man who begins life upon the principle of disobedience? If he can trample upon the laws of nature, is it likely that he will yield obedience or submission to the laws of his country? If he has proved a rebellious son, is it to be expected that he will become a good

* Deut. xxvii. 16. Rom. i. 30. 2 Tim. iii. 2.

† Matth. xv. 4.

citizen

citizen or a faithful subject? Is there not reason to fear that the early sinner will go on from bad to worse practices, and that the latter end of such a life will be more accursed than the beginning. Among the number of criminal delinquents who have fallen victims to the laws of justice, how many have begun their career with disobedience to parents? and how seldom, alas, do those persons, who have been long accustomed to do evil, learn to do well?

Beware then, O ye young friends, of all base and immoral principles, but especially of disobedience to parents. Remember that the rising flood of life brings along with it many comforts, which are drawn back by its ebbing tide. Remember that as life advances infirmities encrease; that it is the duty of the young to help, succour, and comfort the aged, and especially those to whom they are bound by the dear ties of blood and natural affection. Has kind Providence been pleased to spare a mother's life, be thankful to God for the favour which affords you an opportunity of discharging your earliest obligations. Remember with what care and tenderness she watched over you in
your

your helpless age of infancy and childhood ; guarding you against dangers, and supplying your wants ; and do not forget that gratitude is due for benefits received. If she has been the guide of your youth, “ and brought you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” see that you prove the staff of support of her declining age. By a full discharge of your first and oldest debts, you shall make the infirmities of age sit light upon her, cause her grey hairs to go down to the grave in peace, and her soul to rejoice, in the hope of meeting you again in the mansions of eternal rest and happiness. To which happy end, may God, of his infinite mercy, bring us all, through the merits and mediation of Jesus-Christ, and to his name be the praise.

S E R M O N VII.

ON BENEVOLENCE.

JOHN, xiii. 34.

*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye
love one another.*

IN passing through this vain and transient world, as much of the comfort and happiness of life depends upon a benevolent disposition, and a good correspondence with our fellow-travellers, so many of the evils and hardships which we suffer proceed from ill-nature, selfishness, and malevolence. Hence our blessed Lord, who came to spread peace on earth, and good-will among the children of men, and whose precepts were plainly intended to alleviate the burden of human misery, and add to the general stock of human happiness, made it one great object

object of his attention to unite the minds of his followers in the firmest bonds of friendship and love. He knew that mutual love was essential to the very being of society; and that without reciprocal offices of kindness there could be but little peace and concord in the world. He knew well that the obstinacy, depravity, and corruption of human nature were great; and that many would oppose the profession, and still more the practice, of the religion which he taught; and that his followers, besides the troubles common to all, would meet much ill-will, and not a little hatred and harsh usage for his sake; and therefore, to fortify their minds, and prepare them to recompense to no man evil for evil, but maintain a calm, meek, and benevolent disposition amidst the hardships of persecution, he enjoins mutual love among themselves, and charity towards all men. He warns them that offences must come, and that they must be prepared both to forget and forgive. He foresaw that enemies would arise, and that forbearance would be requisite to prevent a retaliation of injuries. He exhorted them to pray for all men, even for those that despitefully used
and

and persecuted them, and to entertain for their most bitter and inveterate enemies that warmth of affection which no provocations could cool, no injuries extinguish. For as they professed to be Christians, they must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him. They must suppress every malignant passion, and allow no envy nor malice, nor revenge to harbour in their bosoms; but walk in love like children of the same parent, partakers of the same frailties and infirmities, and travellers to the same happy land of promise.

But when we cast our eyes abroad in the world, even among those who call themselves Christians, how different is their behaviour one towards another? What do we perceive but enmity and ill-will, animosities and quarrels, wars and fightings, abounding among them, to the dishonour of human nature, as well as to the disgrace of the Christian character? How little does the practice of the great body of Christians correspond with their profession? Where is that amiable spirit of benevolence, patience, forbearance, and long-suffering to be found which was so strictly enjoined by Christ, and so essential to
public

public peace and happiness? Where is that charity out of a pure heart, that enlargement of soul, which comprehends men of every sect and persuasion, every rank and condition, every nation and language? Where are those bowels of tenderness and compassion which extend to every one bearing the venerable image of God; and disposing us to wish well and do good to all mankind, but especially to such as are of the household of faith, and come within the sphere of our knowledge and observation? Alas! such liberal sentiments and enlarged affections were not only in our Saviour's days, but are in our own, too great strangers in the earth. Hence the old question, "Can any thing good come out of Nazareth*?" as if goodness were limited to any place, and virtuous men were only to be found in Jerusalem, in Judea, or even in any one section or quarter of the globe. Such mean prejudices, such contracted and ungenerous opinions, are repugnant to the first principles of morality and religion. "A new commandment therefore give I unto you," saith our Lord to the Christian world, "that ye love one another." From which words it is now proposed, first,

* John, i. 46.

to explain the nature, and mark the extent of this new law of love ; and, secondly, recommend the observance of it as the indispensable duty of all men, but the distinguishing badge of those who call themselves Christians.

First, then, I am to consider the nature and extent of our Lord's new commandment. And the question here naturally enough arises : Why doth our Saviour call this a new commandment ? Is not the great law of love as old as the creation ? Hath not the Author of nature planted this affection in every heart ? Is not philanthropy a very ancient law, not only interwoven with our constitution, but written upon tables of stone, among others, and given in early ages by the mouth of Moses ? Is not benevolence natural to all men ; and the great principle of morality and active virtue in the world ? Is it possible that either Jew or Gentile could be ignorant of this law, or destitute of an affection so common to mankind ? In answer to which it is to be observed, that our Lord does not deny the early existence of this law, but only finds fault with the general neglect of it. He came not to destroy this ancient law

law but to fulfil it. He saw that it was fallen into disuse, and become little better than a dead letter. He saw such corrupt glosses affixed to it, such false interpretations put upon it, and such traditions mixed with it, that it was in reality almost superseded in the world, and become of none effect. He observed that the great body of mankind had lost sight of it, and were living as if no such law had ever existed. Therefore his object was to revive this law, and restore it to its original purity and force, to its primitive lustre and glory, and to open to the world its great utility and vast extent. Both the honour of God and the good of mankind required the renewal of this law of love, that all might know it, esteem it highly, and consider it of universal obligation.

Not only in these but in other respects our Saviour might call this a new commandment. For although it be admitted that the law of love was of ancient date, yet, until his days, it had not received the stamp of his authority, nor the additional sanction of eternal rewards and punishments. This is a circumstance of great weight and importance. It was always a reasonable law; but it had, in

L 2

process

process of time, grown obsolete, and sunk into very general neglect and contempt. It was so effaced from memory that it became necessary not only to reprint it upon the minds of men, but to enforce it by a greater and higher authority than that of reason. Prior to Christ's days it had never had a complete fulfilment in human nature. It was he alone who acted up to the perfection of the moral character, and fulfilled all righteousness; and who, by bringing along with him the credentials of heavenly mission and authority, furnished the best motives to the practice of morality. It was he, who came from the bosom of his father, and was perfectly acquainted with the counsels of heaven, that was able to reveal his father's will, and to speak like one having authority, and not like the scribes. In him we contemplate human nature in its highest dignity and perfection. In his temper and character we behold a transcript of all that is great and good. Like himself his religion breathes a spirit of universal good will. It is founded upon the broad basis of benevolence, requiring obedience to the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. It is calculated to kill the
feeds

seeds of envy, malice, and revenge, and to nourish the growth of every mild, gentle, and generous affection. "It hath been said of them of old time, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you," saith Christ, "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust *."

Such was the benevolent nature and vast extent of Christ's new commandment. It permits not the rising of any irregular desire or discordant affection. It strikes at the root of every corrupt inclination and noxious passion. While it enlarges and exalts the soul, it, at the same time, cleanses the springs whence flow the streams of life. It pulls down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and shews that both are the objects of God's love, who is the common Father of mankind, and has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth.

* Matth. v. 43, 44, 45.

It urges arguments and motives the most awful in their nature, and most powerful in their operation; arguments drawn from the certainty of a future state of eternal rewards and punishments, which cannot but touch every spring and action, and excite us to the practice of universal righteousness. In order to deter us from vice, and animate us to virtue, to engage us to abhor injustice and immorality, and to quicken and rouse us to the love and practice of integrity and truth, it brings to its aid all the weighty considerations of an eternal world. Indeed, of all the institutions which have been devised and established from time to time, from the beginning, for the benefit of man, none has served so much to enlighten and enlarge the mind, and to soften and civilize the manners, as the Christian system. It is a system of reformation formed and well adapted to the purpose of renewing us in the spirit of our minds, and transforming us into a resemblance of the divine nature. And whoever calmly reflects upon what is passing in the world, or upon what human nature is capable of when left to itself, and set free from the restraints of law and religion, will find good grounds

grounds of thankfulness for the inestimable blessing ; and much reason to rejoice in being delivered from the power of ancient darkness, idolatry, and superstition, and translated to the kingdom of light.

“ God is love,” saith St. John, and nowhere can we look around us in the world without meeting every day some fresh displays and proofs of his benevolence. He is not only good unto all men, but his tender mercies are over all his works. To this great fountain of goodness the first emotions of a benevolent heart will naturally and necessarily arise. “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment ; and the second is like unto it, “ inasmuch as it has love for its principle, and happiness for its end.” “ Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” *i. e.* thou shalt make your love for yourselves the great standard of your affection, and rule of your conduct towards your neighbour. Every good Christian will love God sincerely and fervently ; but as soon as he discovers that his goodness extendeth not unto God, and finds that he can add nothing to the

essential glory of the divine nature, so highly exalted and so perfect, he turns the stream of his affections towards his fellow-creatures, whose circumstances admit of great improvements, and to whom he can, in many respects, be serviceable and beneficial.

Should any one be disposed to ask why hath our blessed Lord made love the great principle of our religion? the answer is, because it is the fundamental law of society, without which it could not subsist. It is the bond by which man is united to man; and without which there could be no safety, peace, or happiness, nothing but universal discord, dissension, and misery in the world. Love is the image of God in the soul of man, and the source of all that is good, excellent, and praise-worthy in the human character; and though this image be much sullied and defaced, it still bears the marks and lineaments of high origin and descent. Allow this noble principle to lie dormant, uncultivated, and neglected, and what would man be but the greatest enemy to man? or what would the world be but a scene of strife and contention, of desolation and misery? Unless our selfish principles were in
12 some

some degree tempered with benevolence; unless our rapacious hands were in some measure restrained by the laws of justice and morality, the condition of the brutal creation would be preferable to that of the rational; and the solitary desert a place of habitation more desirable than the social state.

But blessed be God, who is love, that he hath not only formed man for society, but endued him with those benign affections which are necessary to sweeten the social life. Blessed be the Author of our holy religion, who hath both taught us to love one another, and exemplified this enlarged spirit of benevolence in its utmost extent and perfection. It was his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father. And what is Christian benevolence, but that disposition of mind which inclines us to wish well, and to do good to all men as we have opportunity and ability. All men are the object of Christian love, or benevolence, or good will, or charity, for the same word in the original language, answers to them all. This divine principle, like its Author, has no respect to persons. Its influence is diffusive as the light of day. It expands itself in proportion
as

as the blindness, frailties, and infirmities of human nature call for its friendly operation and assistance.

But while I am pointing out the amiable nature and vast extent of Christian benevolence, let me not be mistaken, as if I meant any thing derogatory from filial piety, patriotism, friendship, or any other relative virtue. No, that is not my aim. For although our benevolence may take a wide range, and have all mankind for its object; still it must be supposed to comprehend within it every private and social virtue, even as smaller circles are contained within the universal sphere. As for instance, when benevolence looks upward, it becomes piety to a parent, gratitude to a benefactor, loyalty to a prince, and patriotism to our country. When it looks downward, it becomes pity to the ignorant, sympathy to the distressed, and compassion to the unfortunate. When it looks towards equals it becomes affability, kindness, and civility, a general affection to the many, and a partial friendship for the few. But what are all these, but so many branches springing from the same root? or so many streams from the same fountain? So that in fact,

fact, benevolence is the ground-work of the great fabric of society, including our brethren of every age and rank, of every circumstance and condition, continually holding man to man by the cords of love, and making us, as St. Paul says of himself, all things to all men, in order that we be mutually useful in winning each other to the love of truth, and to the practice of virtue.

Still it may be asked, Why hath our Lord preferred philanthropy to sympathy and compassion, those natural and amiable affections? Is not sympathy a good principle of morality? and compassion a remedy against the evils of life? Are not both so congenial with the human frame and constitution, that even children, before they have reached the age of reason, or are capable of any selfish views, have a fellow feeling of each other's misfortunes? Do we not see them kindly sharing of each other's joys and griefs, spontaneously rejoicing with those that rejoice, and weeping with those that weep? But admitting that the young heart, as yet unspotted from the world, may naturally give into the soft attachments, and easily melt at the sight of neighbours in distress;
still

still sympathy, though nearly allied to it, is not so noble and generous a principle of virtue and morality as benevolence. For as our sympathy is excited only by objects of distress it is rather a painful than a pleasant emotion of soul. Whereas Christian benevolence is the pleasure we feel from a view of the welfare and happiness of all around us. It is the real satisfaction we derive from contemplating the general peace and prosperity of the world. So that it is a principle of higher dignity and more extensive influence than sympathy and compassion. Besides we may sympathize with a particular object of distress when our hearts are burning with malice, rancour, and resentment for one-half of the human race. Therefore there may be sympathy and compassion where there is little or no Christian love. But wherever benevolence exists, there will also be a fellow feeling of human woe; for it is not possible that a humane and tender heart can remain insensible and indifferent to the misfortunes or miseries of any person around it.

So much for the explication of our Saviour's new law of mutual love; and now it only remains to recommend it to your
obfervance

observance by arguments drawn from its excellence and utility, and from its happy influence upon men and manners; for beyond doubt, in the keeping of this law, there is great reward. Whoever considers the relation which he bears to God and man, cannot be a stranger to his duty, nor esteem any thing belonging to humanity as foreign to his heart. It is true the Christian in this world can only see God by rising from effects to their cause, can only behold a small portion of the vast universe in which the Divine perfections are gloriously displayed. It is true, the ways of Providence are in a great measure hid from his sight, and the marvellous plan of grace and redemption is unfolded to us only in part, so that the knowledge of the wisest must of consequence be limited and imperfect. No man can love God in exact proportion to the excellence and glory of his nature and perfections; this is beyond the power of the most exalted angels and archangels in heaven, and much more so of man, made a little lower than the angels, and whose habitation is in the dust. Enough however, may be seen and known of the divine ways and works to render God not only the object of

our

our love, reverence, and trust, but the principal object of these devout affections. And though we cannot arrive at perfect love here, which casteth out fear, we may nevertheless be making nearer and nearer approaches towards it, for there are no limits set to our progress in the love of God, and our improvement in every virtue.

Next, with respect to the love of our neighbour, it may be recommended, first, From its being the best expression of our love towards God, and the best proof that we belong to his family. "If any man," says St. John, "say he loveth God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen *?" Not that all men, whether friendly or unfriendly disposed towards us, whether merciful or unmerciful in their temper, whether virtuous or vicious in their character, are entitled to the same degree of affection. No, that is impossible. For there are two kinds of love, a love of preference and esteem, and a love of good-will and benevolence. Great and good qualities necessarily beget esteem, and extraordinary probity and virtue merit

* 1 John, iv. 20.

a peculiar

a peculiar warmth of affection. The righteous are more excellent than the wicked, and the approved friend we must prefer to the inveterate enemy. Such partiality is reasonable, and even unavoidable, being founded in the nature of things. But we are required at the same time, to distinguish between evil deeds and evil doers. All manner of profaneness and vice, of injustice and immorality we are commanded to hate, because these are proper objects of detestation and abhorrence. But sinners, even the chief of sinners, are objects of compassion, for whose recovery and reformation it is the Christian's duty to pray. If our brethren have injured us we may no doubt seek reparation, and guard against a repetition of injuries, but must not withhold our good-will from the injurious. In this life of weakness and imperfection, it is impossible but offences will come; but if every trivial offence were permitted to extinguish love, and Christians were allowed to recompence evil for evil, what would they do more than others? Do not even heathens the same? Hence you are exhorted to put away from you all envy and ill will, all anger and clamour, and evil speaking, with all malice

malice and revenge ; and to be kindly affectioned one to another, in brotherly love, preferring one another. And for what reason are Christians required to be thus patient and long-suffering and merciful to offenders but this, because no injuries and offences of others can justify your neglect of duty, or absolve you from your obligation to benevolence.

In this respect the Christian system has a manifest tendency to refine and improve human nature, and the disciples of Jesus stand distinguished from those of every other religious profession. But ye are required to owe no man any thing but love, and to cultivate the friendly and benevolent affections for another reason, that ye may prove yourselves to be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who is good unto all, not excepting the unthankful and unjust. In this view of matters God is no respecter of persons. All share of his benevolence, and the sons of God are bound to imitate their heavenly Father in all his imitable perfections. Not that any of you can be perfect in love, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect, or yet merciful in the same degree as *He* is merciful ; but only in humble imitation of
Him

Him who is all perfection and benevolence. God's goodness is indeed infinite, and his benevolence descends from universals to particulars; your philanthropy is limited, depending on circumstances, and can only rise from parts towards the whole. God is love itself, the inexhaustible fountain, whence flows every stream that revives and refreshes the universe. Your love, like the sun, must warm those objects near you more than those farther removed. Your families, your friends, your well-wishers and benefactors, being more closely connected with you, they of consequence must lie nearer your heart than strangers, and have a greater share of your affection. Your native land must also be more dear to you than distant countries, and your fellow citizens than foreigners. From local circumstances correspondent obligations necessarily arise, and aliens can have no title to the same degree of affection with your dear brethren, beloved neighbours, and companions. But while you attend to the special duties of your station and relation, you must not forget what is due to mankind in general. If your duty to the former ought to be done, to the latter, whenever opportunities offer, it ought

M

not

not be left undone. By no family or city, by no particular place or country, is benevolence circumscribed. The new law of love, which Christ gave to his followers, is of universal obligation; and to it obedience is due from persons of every tribe, and nation, and tongue. Oh, how noble and generous is the spirit of the Christian religion! What enlargement of mind, what liberality of sentiment, is it calculated to diffuse throughout the world! How well is it adapted to promote the glory of God, and common good of mankind!

Mark then the benevolent man; behold the sincere and genuine disciple of Jesus; how bright, how amiable his character! His study is to resemble the Deity in his moral perfections, and, as nearly too as the human nature is capable of approaching towards the divine, in sanctity and benevolence. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him *." In the Christian's heart is written holiness to the Lord. And where benevolence and sanctity live, there is true felicity. When the heart is purified from the dross of vile corruptions and malignant passions, and enlarged by the

* John, iv. 16.

spirit of Christianity, it becomes a fit habitation for the Most High. Is any man favoured with superior birth, rank, or riches? the benevolent soul envies him not his temporal advantages. Or is any one distinguished by high talents and endowments of mind, by uncommon virtues and accomplishments? the benevolent eye views these lights of the world with peculiar pleasure and complacency. Has, alas! thy brother trespassed against thee? If he repent thou shalt forgive him. Nay, says the natural man, but how often should I forgive him his trespasses? till seven times? "I said not," saith Christ, "till seven times, but until seventy times seven*." And moreover, so great is Christian benevolence, that if thine enemy hunger, thou art required to feed him; or if he thirst, to give him drink; and for what reason? because then your love will resemble the love of God and Christ; and then ye will do acts of kindness to the most undeserving of mortals, and return good in defiance of the greatest provocations to the contrary.

But, after all, some will perhaps be ready to ask, as offences do frequently come, what is to be done? Are we to cease to be men, in

* Matth. xviii. 21, 22.

order to become Christians? No; but you are to put off the old man, with his affections and lusts, and put on the new man, which, after Christ, is renewed in righteousness and true holiness. You are to love one another with a pure heart fervently, as Christ taught his disciples. If your neighbour be humane and virtuous, you are to esteem him highly, and love him in every instance in which you shew love to yourselves. If he be profane and vicious, you are not to hate him, but to endeavour by every means, however much you detest his sins, to reclaim the sinner. If he receive good at the hand of God, and flourish and prosper in the world, you are to rejoice with him. If he receive evil which ye cannot remove, and be subjected to heavy trials and misfortunes, ye are to pity him, and communicate to him such comfort and relief as may be in your power to administer. If his general conduct be fair and honest, you are to be open, candid, and liberal-minded in your dealings with him. If he injure you in your character or property, you are not to recompense evil with evil, but, if it be possible, to overcome evil with good, remembering always that if you for-
give

give not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses. For, as charity suffereth long and is kind, is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil; therefore, as much as in you lieth, you are to love and to live peaceably with all men.

In short, wherever benevolence reigns among you, it will be a standing proof that you are Christians, not in appearance only, but in sincerity and truth; and that you are actuated by the genuine spirit of that religion which you profess. Love was in the first ages of Christianity, and it ever will be, the distinguishing characteristic of the disciples of Christ. "By this," saith Christ, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*." It was said, with no small degree of astonishment and admiration, of his disciples in the earliest times, and not by their friends, but by their enemies: "Behold how these Christians, love one another!" Even the very Heathens, when they saw the good effects of Christianity, and beheld men, subject to the same failings and infirmities with themselves, living together in harmony and peace, and making their light shine before others, could not but honour and esteem

* John, xiii. 35.

them, and give glory to their heavenly Father. Let the same mind, therefore, be in you, ye professors of the religion of Jesus, which was in the primitive Christians; and “put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you, so also do ye *.” Let love be without dissimulation; abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

* Gal. iii. 12, 13,

S E R M O N VIII.

On BENEFICENCE.

JOHN, xiii. 34.

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.

“**BY** this,” saith Christ, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Love is the great fountain whence flow all the virtues and graces of the Spirit. Having already considered the amiable nature, the uncommon excellence, and vast extent of Christ’s new commandment to his disciples, it still remains to point out its happy influence and effect upon men and manners. From benevolence comes beneficence: The former is the blossom, the latter is the fruit. And as every tree is known by its fruits, so there is

M 4

no

no other rule of judging of the temper and character of Christians in general but by an appeal to their conduct, and the evidence of facts. Of the human heart it belongs to God alone to judge; for He only, who is the searcher of hearts, and trier of the reins of the children of men, and is perfectly acquainted with the inward thoughts and secret springs of action, is alone capable of forming a right judgment.

In the first place, In order to learn the peculiar excellence and divine origin of that religion which you profess, let me advise you to turn your eyes towards the natural circumstances and condition of man, overclouded with evils both of a temporal and spiritual kind. You are told "that man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward," and daily experience confirms the truth. "In this world," saith Christ to his followers, "ye must have tribulation*." You are all travellers to another country, all exposed to hardships, inconveniences, and dangers by the way. Not only the foolish and improvident, but the wise and the worthy, have their portion of worldly pains and misfortunes. Hence the necessity of mutual love and

* John, xvi. 33.

friendship,

friendship, of reciprocal offices of kindness and compassion. Infirmities of various kinds cleave to human nature; and every thing within and without us is subject to change. Nowhere can we look around us, but there some of the sons or daughters of affliction meet the eye, pining under the hardships of penury, and imploring comfort and relief. Of this nature how many sad scenes are we obliged to witness? and what numbers of distressed fellow-creatures does the world exhibit for the purposes of relief? While we are sojourning in a strange land, and travelling through the wilderness, it is certain that for no small portion of the pains and miseries, as well as of the pleasures and comforts of life, we are dependent upon our neighbours. They can occasion us many trials and troubles which belong not to our natural circumstances and condition; and they can alleviate many of the evils and afflictions inseparable from human life. They have it in their power to throw many snares, crosses, and dangers in our way; and they can also smooth many of the rugged paths over which we tread, and keep our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. Such being

being our indigent and dependent situation, how reasonable to consult our mutual interest and safety, and how indispensibly necessary to the common benefit is an union of heart and affection? One rule of equity our Lord hath prescribed for the common good, and a golden rule it is, and well adapted for universal practice, and that is, "To do to others what we would desire, on changing circumstances, they should do unto us." How benign, how salutary, and universally useful is this rule of practice! and how excellently is it calculated to subdue the selfish passions, to soften the hard and stony heart, to sweeten the asperity of man's natural temper, and consequently to promote the harmony and happiness of the world!

But however just and reasonable this mutual love, as hath been already observed, may now seem to us who are living amidst the blessings of light, it did not appear so from the beginning. Little of this milk of human kindness was found either among ancient Jews or Gentiles. On the contrary, the Jews were a selfish and narrow-minded race to a proverb; and not only cherished the most inveterate prejudices against those
who

who were not the descendants of Abraham, but cultivated a rooted antipathy to every other nation and people around them. They dreaded indeed the Romans, a bold and high-spirited nation ; but the Samaritans they detested, and would have no dealings with them. Hence that question which was put to our Lord on a memorable occasion, “ But who is my neighbour * ? ” And hence also his well-known answer in the parable of the good Samaritan, so applicable to the case, and so replete with useful instruction to all men.

Nor were the Gentiles much more liberal-minded than the Jews. They had their prejudices and partialities, and their low and contemptible opinions of their neighbours. A few, indeed, of the ancient Greeks and Romans were men of superior powers and high attainments in knowledge ; but the great body of the people was blind, ignorant, and illiterate, overrun with gross idolatry and superstition. Before the Christian æra, not only the bodies of the poor were neglected, but their souls were left to perish for lack of knowledge. They were often left destitute of the necessaries of life, and always of the

* Luke, x. 29.

means

means of instruction. Hence that distinguishing mark of the Messiah's reign ; " The poor have the gospel preached unto them." Charity, which till that time had been a narrow and lifeless principle of action, after the Sun of righteousness arose with healing under his wings, began to expand itself, enlightening and enlarging the heart, extending its blessings far and wide on all hands, and to all persons as their necessities required, without distinction of rank or nation, or kindred or language.

To awaken in the human heart a due sense of our relation to heaven and earth, and of our moral obligations to love God and our neighbour, and to set before us an example of benevolence and beneficence worthy of general imitation, the Son of God condescended to assume the nature of man, dwelt among us that he might shew us how to live, and died that he might deliver us from the fears of death, and open to us the gates of glory and immortality. His view was not to humour men's favourite prejudices and passions, but to rectify the temper, and regulate the conduct. His chief objects in view were renovation of spirit, and reformation

tion of life. His design was not to gratify vain curiosity, or amuse with useless and unprofitable speculations, but to prescribe plain and practical rules of conduct, suited to high and low, to the rich and poor. He, who knew what was in man, could not but know how deeply rooted self-love was in the human heart, and what injuries and mischiefs it produced in life. He perceived that there could be no peace in the world, unless this powerful and predominant principle were restrained within the bounds of reason, justice, and moderation. He saw how apt it was to make unjust claims, and to take every advantage of the weakness and ignorance of youth and inexperience; and how destructive of common equity and justice between man and man. He observed how quick-sighted it was in discerning its own interest, and blind to that of others; how it was ever seeking its own at the expence of its neighbours; how cold and indifferent it was to the sufferings and miseries of the world; and in short, how little it cared what hardships mankind underwent, provided it profited by their ruin, and accomplished its own ends.

To give a check to the violence and outrages of this all-grasping and greedy principle
of

of self-love, our Lord calls upon Christians not to forget that they were men, and that in all their commercial dealings and intercourses with their fellow-creatures they ought to remember that their neighbours were equally entitled to justice with themselves. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," saith he, "as thyself." The love of ourselves is nowhere forbidden. It is a natural affection implanted in us for the wisest ends; and when it excites us to take all lawful and honest means of avoiding misery, and promoting our interest and happiness, it is commendable. But when it grows covetous and exorbitant, and impels us to encroach upon the rights, liberties, and properties of our neighbour, or to injure him in his character and reputation, it ought to be restrained by the highest authority. "A new commandment therefore," saith our Lord; "I give unto you, that ye love one another." This is my law, grounded upon the broad bottom of universal benevolence and equity, and which requires Christians to learn what is due to their neighbours by the love which they bear to themselves. Only let it have free course, and be respected by the world, and it will greatly diminish the pains, and
increase

increase the pleasures of human life. Wherever it prevails, it will evince a heart under the influence of the Divine Spirit, and a character formed upon the precepts of the gospel. St. Paul was of the same mind where he says, "Owe no man any thing but love, for he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law of Christ *."

It is true Providence hath arranged the circumstances of human life in such a manner as was necessary to answer its wise ends. "There are diversities of gifts," says Paul the Apostle, "but the same Spirit. There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all in all. To one is given the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge; to another faith; to another the discerning of spirits: but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will †." As there is a variety of circumstances and situations which diversify the scene of human life, so there is a variety of talents and capacities given to mankind, which opens scope for the performance of active duties, and a mutual in-

* Rom. xiii. 8.

† 1 Cor. xii. 4—11.

tercourse of good offices. For without this diversity of stations and circumstances, the high enjoyments of liberality and benevolence would be lost. Were all men born equal, and placed upon a level in point of capacity, station, and possession, there would be no scope left for the exercise of the noblest virtues, such as charity, compassion, and beneficence. It is inferiority of station that furnishes grounds for the exercise of these virtues; and by the adverse turns of fortune that the prosperous have such frequent opportunities of doing good. It is this variety of ranks and orders which gives occasion to the exertions of benevolence and beneficence, and forms the chain of mutual dependence between the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, the learned and unlearned. It is this diversity of stations and circumstances which not only calls forth the noblest virtues into exercise, but affords them continual scope for improvement, and consequently lays a foundation of the most rational and delightful enjoyments in human life.

As all men are connected by their common wants and weaknesses, so there are certain general obligations incumbent upon them
in

in all circumstances, considered as reasonable beings and Christians. But, besides these, there are also duties of a more particular kind which arise out of the special relations and situations in which we stand one to another. Whatever be your station in life, whether high or low, it is a monitor to you, shewing you what is good, and what God requireth of you in your particular sphere. Are you clothed with power and authority? remember that God hath not raised you to that exalted station to gratify your ambition, or to oppress your fellow-creatures, but to maintain order and peace, to promote justice and equity, and the temporal and eternal happiness of those under your care. Are you placed in humble situations? remember the duties required of those in the lower walks of life, and the virtues becoming their station, such as respect and obedience to governors, judges, and magistrates; and industry in your callings, and contentment with your lots. Are you favoured with abundance of this world's wealth, living at your ease, and faring sumptuously every day? Consider the case of the poor and needy; and remember that the good things of this

N

life

life were intended by kind Providence for the benefit of all ; and that he who giveth to the poor lendeth unto the Lord. No man is the better for his having great possessions. It is only by the right use of them they become a blessing to those on whom they are conferred. When they serve no other purpose to their possessor but to feed his vanity and pride, or to cause him to lord it over his fellow-creatures, and treat them with superciliousness and contempt ; or when they are used as incentives to vice and intemperance, instead of a blessing they are a curse. A man may be clothed in purple and fine linen, wallowing in luxury, and dwelling in a stately palace, and yet be a stranger to the greatest of all luxuries, the luxury of doing good. Think not that they are the happiest of the human race, who know only to abound and riot in superfluities ; for if wealth has its pleasures and advantages, it has also its cares and anxieties. Of what value are the richest treasures to the sordid wretch who hoards them up in his chest, and would rather that they be left at the mercy of the thief or robber, than that any object of indigence and worth should reap benefit from

from them ? Man's happiness consisteth not in the abundance which he possesseth, but in the application of his superfluous riches to the good purposes for which they were bestowed, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to comfort the afflicted, and relieve the oppressed. Without this disposition to do good great riches often prove a snare ; and true happiness is more often found in the lower than in the higher walks of life. For the man who has learned to suit his mind to his station and circumstances is seldom miserable ; and he who has not learned this useful lesson is as seldom happy, however large and plentiful his estate.

Let the high therefore, religiously attend to the great and important duty of charitable distribution, and let not the low be pining under the miseries of indigence and grief, while Providence is kindly sending us rains from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and filling our granaries with plenty, and our hearts with gladness. Besides the great divisions of governors and governed, high and low, rich and poor, there is another division into which mankind may be thrown, and that is into the young and old, parents and
N 2 children.

children. The eyes of children wait upon parents, who, indeed seldom fail to open their hands and give them their daily food. To make provision for those of their household is praiseworthy. It is no doubt the primary and indispensable duty of all parents. But let not the opulent fathers of families plead this natural affection for children as an excuse for the violation of Christ's law of love, and the neglect of contributing to the necessitous and distressed part of their neighbours. Their natural love to their offspring ought not to divest them of all generous and moral feelings for the rest of mankind. It is their duty to set before the rising race an example of beneficence, and instil into the minds of the young such principles of benevolence and charity, as will prove right guides of conduct in the succeeding periods of life. Such early habits will render their children not only happy in themselves, but the means and instruments of happiness to others. They will also lay a good foundation of gratitude to parents, kindness to relations, and charity to all men. The noblest and most valuable inheritance which the aged and the wealthy can bequeath to the young, is an honest and liberal

liberal mind, ever disposed to do good and to communicate.

But again, while we are pointing out the proper objects of Christian beneficence, let not the unfortunate be forgotten. Another great division unto which mankind may be thrown, is into those who flourish in the world, and those who fade. As the whole bounty of Providence was unquestionably intended for all; so it follows, that they best answer the end of their creation, and second the design of Providence who use God's gifts to the purposes of diminishing the common miseries, and increasing the common happiness of mankind. Now it is certain that no man, in this fluctuating and changeable state is ever placed beyond the reach of misfortune. All have their dark and cloudy days. Even the wisest and most worthy are not exempted from losses and disasters. Trials and troubles of one kind or another await us all. But many there be, who, from plentiful circumstances, are, by inevitable accidents and misfortunes reduced to a state of indigence. To such the hand of beneficence ought to be opened wide, because their sufferings are uncommonly great, and grievously

embittered by reflection. They have not only seen brighter days, and known better things than their present allotments, but must feel their misfortunes with double force from their former habits and enjoyments. In such a case more ample beneficence than common is both required, and our friends must be bestowed in a more private and delicate manner. The sufferers are entitled to our assistance and relief, not only by reason of their present necessities, but also because of their known worth and amiable character, and because we ourselves are subject to the same reverses of fortune. Is the unknown, wandering, and common beggar an object of charity, and shall the unfortunate and honest labourer, ruined by accident be neglected? Do ye hold the unworthy in distress as objects of beneficence, and shall the worthy Christian, the heavier sufferer through unforeseen losses and disasters, be left to languish in a state of penury and misery? Surely not. You are required to do good to all men as ye have opportunity and ability, but especially to those that are of the household of faith. He who neglects the meritorious sufferers, and, through mistaken humanity and compassion,
relieves

relieves the clamorous and unknown beggar, not only violates the laws of God, but the laws of the land, and does a real injury both to the mistaken objects of his bounty, and to the more deserving and necessitous members of society. For by such means worthless vagabonds and lazy drones, who are a nuisance to the public, are encouraged to follow their unlawful occupation, and live in idleness and vice; while the industrious but unfortunate citizen, is robbed of that boon to which he has a just claim, and that ample relief to which he is entitled, both from his good name, and by every principle of humanity and religion.

Lastly, and what includes all that we have mentioned, mankind may be thrown into another great division, the givers and the receivers; and from these different situations certain obligations necessarily arise, and duties of a particular kind are naturally required. Although a man, who keeps reason at the head of his practice, and makes our Lord's law of love the guide of his conduct, may be happy in either of these situations; yet our Lord and St. Luke have both affirmed, "that it is more blessed to give than to receive."

receive*.” This to many may, no doubt at first sight, appear a paradox; but, upon closer inspection, the strong affirmation will be found well-grounded and just. For however happy the receiver may be in having a generous friend and benefactor, disposed on all occasions to relieve his wants, and minister to him as his necessities require, still he cannot but feel the weight of his obligations. He must remain ill at ease in having nothing to return for such repeated effusions of goodness but mere expressions of gratitude. Whereas the giver is more blessed by reason of the abundance vouchsafed him, and the heart of compassion infused into him, and also of the opportunity of indulging it, of scattering his favours with a liberal hand, in imitation of the Giver of all good. He enjoys the exalted pleasure and satisfaction of being a fellow-worker with Him who went about doing good, and whose delight it was to do the will of his heavenly Father, and finish the work given him to do.

Here then you see the rich and the poor, men of different characters and of different circumstances, meet together for the best of

* Acts, xx. 35.

purposes,

purposes, and the Lord is the maker of them all. They are destined to live together in society, that they may minister to each other's wants, and afford each other mutual assistance and relief. By means of benevolence and beneficence society is closely united; and, like the natural body, which has many members, though all have not the same office, yet being finely and compactly built together, each member is necessary and subservient to the good of the whole body. "The eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you*." The high cannot say to the low, society has no need of you; nor can the rich say to the poor, the world has no need of you. All are needed, and have their different parts to act; and while there is such a diversity of conditions, and a diversity of gifts, our Lord's law of love must remain in full force and obligation. It is the great bond by which society is holden together. By it superiors, inferiors, and equals are cemented closely, like different stones in the same building. To every one Providence hath assigned his rank and station. When each member of society keeps the station

* 1 Cor. xii. 21.

allotted

allotted him, and fulfils the duties of that station, when all work together for the good of the whole, then is the intention of Providence answered ; and the lowest, having done their duty, are equally entitled with the highest to their Lord's approbation. It is in this view of matters that God is said in scripture to be no respecter of persons. " He regardeth not the rich more than the poor ; for they are all the work of his hands *." Indeed nothing serves better to demonstrate the small value which the wise Disposer of our lot sets upon worldly rank and riches, than his scattering them so indifferently among men of all characters, worthy and unworthy, just and unjust. The meanest peasant is not less dear in God's sight than the highest prince, and the servant who had but two talents given him, and improved them, met with his Lord's approbation as well as he that had received ten.

Let each of us then mind his own business, and let all walk in love, and lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. Happiness flows, from Christ's law of love, through the social world as naturally as sweet

* Job, xxxiv. 19.

waters from a clear fountain. It is a law that shall never be abolished. It shall never grow obsolete or become of none effect. It is essential to man's felicity during the whole period of his existence. "Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away*." Even faith shall one day have its fulfilment in vision, and hope in fruition, but of love there is no end. Among the blessed above, where it casteth out all fear, it shall reign in perfect life and vigour, and prove a rich spring of harmony and happiness for ever and ever.

Thus plain, my friends, it appears, that the Christian religion is a dispensation not only of grace and mercy, but of relief and consolation to mankind of every rank and age, and in every circumstance and condition. I beseech you, therefore, Christians, to receive it as such, by faith, and study to walk worthy of your high vocation and character during the whole course of your life and conversation. Fair professions of religion any man may make; but it is by practice the world judges of the Christian's real disposition and cha-

* 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

rafter.

rafter. Faith is beyond doubt an excellent grace, and highly esteemed, and deservedly praised, in every part of sacred scripture; but all its excellence it derives from the good effects which it produces upon life. Without a correspondent practice, without good works, it is a dead principle, and can profit us nothing. The Christian professor, without a suitable practice, is, according to figurative language of inspiration, at best like a tree which bears a fair blossom, but yields no fruit. You may shew much love to your neighbour with your mouths, while your hearts are going after covetousness. You may profess much benevolence for men, and honour them with your lips, but what will such empty professions signify, unless they be, at the same time, accompanied with the substantial proofs of your regard? "If a brother or a sister," says the Apostle, "be naked, or destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them depart in peace, and be ye warmed or filled, notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit*?" If you refuse not only to supply their wants, but

* James, ii. 15.

treat them as suspicious characters, alleging, perhaps falsely, in excuse for your neglect, that they are unworthy persons, and owe their miseries to their folly, their idleness, or their guilt, you are then doubly criminal. You are not only uncharitable and unmerciful, but you rob them of their good name, load them with calumny and reproach, and do what in you lies to stop the current of kindness and compassion from others. And can there be a more flagrant violation of our Lord's new law of love? It is acting in direct opposition to his command and example. Though you have all faith, so that ye can remove mountains, without charity it profiteth you nothing. Your religion is vain.

Be it known, therefore, unto all men, that our Lord's new commandment is designed for the general good, to diminish the pains and sorrows, and multiply the joys and pleasures, of human life; and that for these purposes it is well adapted. Various, indeed, are the stations and relations in which you are placed by Providence; but whatever may be your age, or rank, or condition, you are loudly called to love one another. Placed as you all
are

are in the bosom of society, there is none that can be exempted from this duty, none that may not, some way or other, be useful and serviceable to his neighbour. Much of this world's wealth falls not indeed to every one's share, but there is no person living that may not be rich towards God, rich in good-will, in good words, and in good works, towards man; and contribute to the harmony and happiness of the world. If you be opulent, you have it in your power to anticipate the wishes of the poor and needy; and by offices of charity and mercy to draw down many blessings on your head, and make to yourselves friends of all around you. If you have but a scanty portion of the good things of this life, it is nevertheless in your power to wish well to those around you in plentiful circumstances, to pray to God to bless them, and give them hearts disposed to beneficence. If you have neither poverty nor riches, but a competent portion of the good things of this life, your condition is perhaps of all others the most eligible, not only because it exempts you from the calls and hardships of want, and from the snares and temptations of affluence; but because it
opens

opens on each hand abundant scope for doing good, and communicating to others according to their several necessities. In every station we are to do good to all men as God hath given us opportunity and ability; and in proportion as Providence has been liberal to us, we are bound, like faithful stewards of its gifts, to extend our liberality to others, especially to the needy and unfortunate, and to succour, help, and relieve them according to their respective wants.

Happy is the man whom God has blessed not only with affluence, but a generous and beneficent disposition, ever ready to do good, and ever willing to communicate. He is satisfied with himself. He rejoices in the testimony of his conscience. Should success attend his honest designs and undertakings, there is none to envy his good fortune. On the contrary, every one delights to see him in flourishing circumstances. Should misfortunes befall him, he is encompassed with friends and well-wishers, ready to sympathise with him in the day of distress, and to support him under the strokes of adversity. Amidst all the troubles that afflict the just, and all the

the

the vicissitudes of human affairs, society pours its consolations into his bosom, soothing the soul to rest, and rendering even crosses and disasters easy and tolerable. In the days of his sore distress and adversity Job found in society abundance of comforters, and a rich reward for his former offices of kindness and generosity. "When the ear heard me," says he, "it then blessed me; when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me, because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy*."

Nor are the blessings of a humane and beneficent disposition, and the happy effects of loving-kindness, confined to this earth only; they follow us beyond the grave, fitting and qualifying us for the society of just men made perfect in Heaven. The soul, conscious of virtue, is always in an easy and comfortable state, and stands prepared to meet the events of this fluctuating world with firmness and fortitude; but the Christian has yet more lively hopes and more precious

* Job, xxix. 12, 13.

promises

promises reserved for him, than even conscious rectitude can confer. At that day, when every one shall receive according to the deeds done in the body; at the great and solemn day of accounts, what hath not Christ, taught his benevolent and beneficent servants, to expect? He hath promised no less than that he will lay claim to those deeds of charity and mercy done to the members of that body, of which he is the head, as done to himself; and that he will introduce all those that have done well to their heavenly Father, and to their kindred society of angels in his Father's house, with these ravishing words: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit a kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*."

* Matth. xxv. 34—40.

O

Having,

Having, therefore, these promises dearly beloved, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, for this is the primary law of morality, the new commandment of Christ, and in the keeping of it there is great reward.

S E R M O N IX.

ON MAN'S FALL and RESTORATION.

ROMANS, v. 19.

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

IN the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, and all things visible and invisible, and after he had finished his great and marvellous work of creation, it is said, he reviewed every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good. He saw the celestial bodies moving, each in its proper sphere, and all in that order and harmony originally ordained for them, and shedding their glorious lustre and beneficial influences around them. He saw the sun going forth to rule by day, cheering the face of nature ;

O 2 and

196 *On Man's Fall and Restoration.*

and the moon and stars following to rule by night, according to his appointment. He beheld the earth stored with living creatures of different kinds, and adorned with a variety of herbs, flowers, and fruits, and promising food, and sustenance for man and beast in abundance. He beheld the eyes of the whole animal race, from the greatest to the most minute, waiting upon him to receive their meat in due season, and prepared to gather what that hand scattered among them, which was open to supply the wants of every living thing. Among the rest he saw man, whom he had made in his own image, and to whom he had given dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea, and all things that moved upon the face of the earth; and upon a review of the whole, he pronounced them all *very good*, and perfectly adapted to answer the end of their creation. And "when the morning stars sang together," it is said, "all the sons of God," all the angels that surrounded his throne in Heaven, "shouted for joy*."

Thus man, being at first formed in the likeness of God, must be supposed a holy and happy creature, with a mind clear and

* Job. xlviii. 7.

unclouded,

unclouded, a body pure and uncorrupted, and a conscience quiet and void of offence, and himself every way qualified for loving and serving his Maker. Being blest with eyes to see, and endued with reason to judge, he was capable of beholding and admiring the marvellous works of creation around him, and, from the visible things that were made, of inferring the invisible hand of their almighty Author; and of adoring the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness so conspicuously displayed in them all. While all creatures, animate and inanimate, were publishing the glory of their Creator, how much more was man bound to love him, to speak his praise, and ascribe unto him that honour which was due unto his name? Indeed to serve God with gladness being the first duty of man, this was the principal employment destined for him in his primæval state. Not only his duty but his felicity consisted in the exercise of love, gratitude, and obedience, until God should be pleased to translate him from an earthly to a heavenly paradise, and confer upon him still greater honour, and more perfect and unchangeable happiness.

But, alas! though man was made a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour, he did not long retain his primitive rectitude and integrity. Though he had no sin when he came from the hands of his Maker, yet impeccability belonged not to his nature, but, like all finite, free, and moral agents, he was neither perfectly secure, nor placed beyond the reach of temptation. Even in paradise, it should seem, he was upon a state of trial and probation; for there a law was given him as a test of his fidelity and obedience. But no finite being is infallible; for he that is capable of improvement is also liable to degradation. Being born free man was not only capable of obedience, but also of disobedience; and by voluntary transgression of incurring the divine displeasure, and involving both himself and his posterity in misery, the natural consequence of disobedience. Hence it is said, "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." From which words it is now proposed to consult the sacred oracles, that we may learn how the first man Adam fell from his primæval state
of

of innocence and integrity; and, secondly, how and by what means it pleased God to restore him to favour, and to grant him the promise of eternal life.

In treating on this serious and important subject, it will be necessary that we pay little regard to the inventions of human wisdom, and much respect to the sacred scripture, our best, nay I had almost said, our only source of right instruction. One thing is certain, that, from a Being of infinite justice, goodness, and truth, nothing that is morally evil can be supposed to proceed. God made man upright; that is, free from bad principles, and without the least taint of vice and corruption. On a review of his works of creation, and of man among the rest, he pronounced them all *very good*. For what, suppose ye, was it but this freedom from moral depravity and corruption that constituted the rectitude of man in his original state? In what consisted his excellency and glory after his creation, but in bearing the image of his heavenly Father in holiness and righteousness? For a while he was innocent and upright; and happy, no doubt, would he have been had he continued to maintain

his integrity, and voluntarily and cheerfully to obey the divine will in all things.

For this purpose he was sufficiently prepared and qualified in every respect. He was not only the last and noblest work of the visible creation, but was distinguished by many powers and faculties peculiar to himself, and superior to those of other living creatures. He had reason, judgment, and understanding bestowed on him, and dominion given him over every other creature that moved upon the face of the earth. He had not only the light of nature granted him as a guide of conduct, but, moreover, a positive injunction of the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth given him for a test of his virtue, fidelity, and allegiance. In paradise the use of all the trees of the garden was allowed him, one only excepted. "God said unto Adam, of all the trees of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat; for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die *." Here then, having life and death placed before him, and the connexion between duty and interest, disobedience and

* Gen. ii. 16, 17.

miserly,

misery, pointed out to him, what could have been done more for him? To himself he standeth or falleth. Having likewise freedom of will, that circumstance which renders man's conduct morally good or evil, without which neither his obedience nor disobedience could be deemed voluntary, nor yet his actions deserving of either rewards or punishments, he was then completely equipped for a state of probation. Indeed it was only this liberty of judging and choosing that could render him responsible for the choice made. For to what purpose were it to give a law to any being bound by the cords of necessity, or to prescribe rules of life to a creature utterly incapable of acting right or wrong, or yielding obedience or disobedience? Surely God was not a hard master, requiring impossibilities of his children; reaping where he hath not sown, or gathering where he hath not sowed. No; his law was a law of love; and as it proceeded from a Father invested with the highest authority, and was enforced with a heavy penalty, to it unlimited submission and obedience were unquestionably due from his rational and moral offspring,

Now

Now if we suppose man placed in a state of trial, and a law given him as a test of his virtue ; if we suppose him exposed to temptation, and capable of abusing his liberty, and disregarding the divine law, it will be no difficult matter to account for his fall from his original integrity. All virtue necessarily implies trial, and a possibility of resisting temptation. A forced and involuntary obedience destroys the very essence of moral virtue, and renders us mere machines, incapable of either good or evil, and consequently nowise responsible for our conduct. But stability of condition belongs not to a state of trial, nor is perfection expected, in such a state, from free and rational agents. All beings susceptible of elevation and preferment are also liable to falling and degradation. Hence we are told, that " certain angels, beings of an order superior to man, and placed in a state of probation, sinned, and kept not their first state *." Hence also man, who was made a little lower than the angels, transgressed ; and being overcome by temptation, fell from his first state, and subjected himself to the curse denounced against

* Jude, 6.

transgression and disobedience. It was not the use, however, but the abuse of the freedom given him that was the object of punishment. A conformity to the divine will was required, and whosoever transgressed must do it at his peril. Man had power of sinning, but no authority to sin from the law-giver. For the law given was clear, and the condition express. "Do this and thou shalt live;" but beware of sin, for the wages of sin is death.

Such were the circumstances in which our first parents stood, and the dangers to which they were exposed in their primitive state of probation, before they had incurred the divine displeasure, and subjected themselves to the penalty of a broken law. Should it be asked how much of the divine image has been defaced by the fall? the answer is plain; whatever depended upon the condition of man's obedience to the divine law by his violation of it was lost. His resemblance to God in holiness and righteousness is lost. The crown is fallen from his head, and from a station of honour he is sunk unto a miserable state of degradation. His dominion over the inferior orders of living creatures is greatly

greatly impaired. His body is subjected to frailty, disease, and dissolution; and the order, tranquillity, and happiness of his mind is in a great measure destroyed. His passions are not so much subject, as formerly, to the controul and government of reason, nor his general conduct to the restraint of conscience. The whole man, composed of soul, body, and spirit, is deranged. His understanding is darkened, and his will become perverse and corrupt. He feels a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and leading him into captivity. He has deviated from the sphere assigned him to move in at his creation, and forfeited the favour of his Maker by wilful and presumptuous transgression. Now, miserable man that he is, instead of regarding God as his almighty protector and friend, as his best guide and benefactor, and rejoicing in his constant presence, since his fall he can only view *Him* as the avenger of sin, and the punisher of the guilty. Accordingly, it is said, that our first parents no sooner heard the sound of their Maker's solemn and majestic voice calling upon them in the Garden of Eden than they were struck with terror, and

and in shame and confusion of face fled from, his presence, and hid themselves among the trees of the garden.

After our first parents had eaten the forbidden fruit, it is next said that their eyes were opened, but it was not to behold God's face in righteousness as heretofore, nor yet to behold themselves like unto him, as the tempter proudly suggested, but to see their own poor, naked, and wretched condition. Sad catastrophe! Now, in consequence of transgression, the fatal sentence is next to be put in execution against them. Accordingly they are expelled from paradise, and secluded from the tree of life. They are doomed to eat their bread in the sweat of their face, and to shift for themselves in the wide wilderness, overrun with briars and thorns. For it is said, "Curst is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field, and in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken*." Before the fall it should seem that the earth brought forth its fruit spontaneously, without

* Gen. iii. 17, 18, 19.

either toil or culture, and that neither thorns nor thistles infested the ground, nor choked the good seed thrown into it. But after that event all was changed; and not only much labour and pains were requisite to prepare the earth for yielding the common necessities of life, but the good seed was liable to be choked in its growth by briars and thorns. Antecedent to the fall, it should seem that the soil was not only genial and fertile, but the air was serene and healthy, and the seasons pleasant and temperate: But after that unhappy and eventful day, cold and heat, snow and vapour, wind and storm, arose at the call of the great Author of nature, and became part of the punishment due to the first transgression. Before the fall it should also seem, that pains and sorrows were unknown; but since that fatal catastrophe they are become common to all, both to the rational and irrational world, and not only is man liable to fruitless labour and industry, but women are not to bring forth children but with pangs and torments.

To close all, it is added, "Dust thou art and unto dust shall thou return*." This is the irreversible decree of heaven, the esta-

* Gen. iii. 19.

blished

blished law of nature since the fall, and to it the whole human race has been subjected. Before the fall it should seem that human nature was not afflicted with any diseases of body, or disorders of mind, and that nothing but health, joy, and happiness reigned in a state of innocence; but, since that period, to what a complication of calamities and troubles are mankind obnoxious? Prior to the fall death had not entered into the world; but since, what man is he that liveth and shall not see death? It is appointed for all once to die, not only for the aged but the young; not only for the weak, but the strong; not only for the low and the poor, but the rich and the high. Death has no respect of persons; and the grave is the place appointed for all living. There the small and the great are upon a level, and both return to the dust whence they were taken.

Such are the woeful consequences of man's disobedience. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all without exception. Even unto us, who, among others, were in the loins of our first parents, even unto us has the fatal infection descended. In them, as
our

our common parents, we all fell, and were subjected to the curse denounced against them, and entailed upon all their posterity. They were our representatives, and suffered death; and, like them we must all go and sleep with our fathers in the grave.

Hadst thou no prospect beyond the grave O man, thou living image of the immortal God, how deplorable would be thy condition! Were all our hopes confined to this short and transient life, we would be of all other creatures the most miserable. But blessed be God, who is merciful and gracious, and with whom there is plenteous redemption, that this is not our case. For ever blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath declared himself reconcileable to sinners, and published in our ears the terms of reconciliation and acceptance. Thanks be to the Author and Finisher of our faith, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by his gospel.

Here my subject takes a happy turn; and though the view which we have taken of man's fall be sad and mortifying enough, yet with that view the scene does not close;

THE

Though

Though the disorder introduced be indeed dreadful it is not incurable: Though Paradise be lost, still it is not irrecoverable. The breach made by transgression, is unquestionably great, but not irreparable. Sin, death, and the grave, are formidable enemies, but not unconquerable. If God did not think fit to interpose his mighty power and prevent man's fall, he hath been pleased, in process of time, to make ample provision for his restoration. Accordingly we are taught "that Adam was a figure of *Him* that was to come, and as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. As we have borne the image of the earthly Adam, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly; and as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all unto justification. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ *."

So much we are warranted to say concerning the fall and degradation of our first parents, and the sad inheritance bequeathed to the whole human race descended from

* Rom. v. 18.—vi. 23.

them. And although original sin be a phrase to be found nowhere throughout the sacred volume, yet whoever will take the pains to study human nature, and to read the causes in their effects, will be at no loss to find proofs in abundance of man's degeneracy and mortality. That moral evil exists, and is of man, that sin has entered into the world, and death by sin, are truths too obvious to be denied. That death reigns over all, even over the youngest of the human race, who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, as well as the oldest, is a fact so evident, that no room is left to call it in question. The world is exhibiting daily so many instances of man's proneness to evil, and aversion from good, and of the reigning power of sin and death, that every one has reason to exclaim with the Apostle; "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death *?"

Thus, we all know, that a curse has been entailed upon the human race by the fall; the whole history of the world, from that time, serves to demonstrate the truth. Hereditary evils are by no means strangers in the earth; no sooner had the first man eaten the

* Rom. vii. 4.

forbidden

forbidden fruit, than disease entered the world, as if this fruit had been of a poisonous nature, and possessed qualities destructive of life. But whatever was the cause of the first disease, it is well known that the sickness was a sickness unto death, and that in consequence of our father's crime, the sentence of death has passed upon all his posterity. Since that day how often have the diseases of fathers proved hereditary, and the contagion descended from generation to generation? How many children, even in the ordinary course of nature, are to be found in a feeble and diseased state, suffering for the crimes of their parents. Debauchery and intemperance are the parents of many disorders, which descend from them to their children. How often has the parent's rebellion, for instance, even under civil governments, reduced his children, and his children's children to a state of poverty and wretchedness? How much less reason have the children of sinners, under the divine government, to flatter themselves with safety, and to expect to escape with impunity? That depravity of nature, and a vitiated frame descended from Adam to his children, who were bone of his

bone, and flesh of his flesh; and that moral evil originated with him, not only the words of revelation but observation and experience bear ample testimony. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean," says Job, "not one*?" Alas! all the sons of Adam have reason to lament, with the prophet Jeremiah, their wretched condition; saying, "How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed†!" Human nature and all its desires, inclinations, and affections are changed, and being alienated from their proper object are become vitiated and corrupted. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. And when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death‡." Here we have the origin, progress, and end of man's fatal distemper well traced, and strongly marked. Man, by his defection from God, forfeited his title to the divine favour, and to eternal life, and became, as the Scripture tells us, spiritually dead,

* Job, xiv. 4. † Lam. iv. 1. ‡ James, i. 13, 14, 15.

and,

and, together with himself, all his posterity. Hence those remarkable words of the Apostle to the Gentiles, "You hath Christ quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins *, You hath he created anew, and transformed and saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost †." For as the chief glory of man after his creation, consisted in his likeness to his heavenly Father, so his renovation of nature and restoration to his primitive dignity consisted, according to Scripture, "In his being renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after the image of God, who created him ‡."

Upon the whole, should any one be disposed to object, (and what numbers in every age have sought out many inventions to cavil and find fault with this doctrine of original sin,) should any, I say, be disposed to object, saying, Why hath God annexed so heavy a penalty to the first transgression? Why should so many be involved in hardships and misery by the disobedience of one? Where is the proportion here between the offence committed, and the punishment inflicted? In answer to which it may be observed in ge-

* Ephes. ii. 1.

† Titus, iii. 5.

‡ Ephes. iv. 24. Colos. iii. 10.

214 *On Man's Fall and Restoration.*

neral, that of the Divine conduct, man is certainly a very incompetent judge. For God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts; but as far as the heavens are above the earth, so far are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. Here we see through a glass, darkly, and know but in part; and until God shall be pleased to open to us the whole plan of Providence, and give us a capacity to comprehend how one man stands related to another, and one event is connected with another in the progressive ages and generations of the world, however we may pretend to judge of his ways, it is plain, that we must want the necessary and essential materials whereupon to form a right judgment. Nevertheless, with the light vouchsafed us, several reasons may be assigned why so heavy a penalty hath been annexed to the first transgression. For as God is a Being of infinite knowledge and wisdom, and the Supreme Lawgiver of the universe, so it is his prerogative, not only to give laws to his rational creatures, but to claim unlimited submission and obedience. Besides, as his laws are perfect, they must be of indispensable obligation.

Now

Now as every transgression and disobedience betrays a rebellious spirit and a contempt of the divine authority, it must be a crime of the deepest die, and deserving of a proportional recompence of punishment. The transgression of Adam was an open rebellion against the majesty of the King of Kings, a voluntary renunciation of his allegiance, a preferring the slavery of Satan to the service of his Maker, and consequently a sin of the most heinous aggravation. It proceeded from a desire of being equal with God, and from a pride not made for man, and a total defection of heart and affection from his sovereign Lord, amounting to a declaration that he would not have God to reign over him. It was sinning with a high hand, setting God's prerogative at nought, and his power at defiance. It was not only a deliberate resolution of exalting himself above the law of God, of becoming a law to himself; but this sin being committed against the clearest light, and the most endearing tokens of love, rendered it, if not unpardonable, at least utterly inexcusable. Hence it pleased God to stamp such peculiar marks of his displeasure upon the first transgression, as should testify his

utter abhorrence of sin to all future generations, and make it serve for a warning to all men, of the fatal consequences attending transgression. To render mankind to the latest age of the world, without excuse, who should wilfully violate the divine law, this shewed them plainly, that God is just, and that he will by no means clear the guilty, and that his wrath is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men.

The disease then, it must be acknowledged, is obvious ; but where is the remedy ? Our danger is beyond doubt great, but our case is not desperate. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Here, then, are our grounds of hope and consolation ; here we have a fountain of life opened for the comfort and relief of fallen sinners ; a fountain of living waters for washing and cleansing the inhabitants of the earth from all sin. Admitting that by one man sin entered into the world, and disease and decay, death and misery by sin, " yet," saith Christ, " I am the way, the truth, and the life, and whosoever believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ;

live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die eternally." So that what was lost by the first Adam is recoverable by the second. Admitting that all have sinned, yet sin shall not have dominion over us : for we are not under the law but under grace. Admitting that we are subjected to the curse of a broken law, yet there is one who hath redeemed us, being made a curse for us ; one to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, and who is able to save, even to the uttermost, all that come to God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. It is true, since the fall, our bodies are frail, mortal, and corruptible ; but there is a time when this corruptible body shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality ; and then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy sting ? O grave where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ *.

" Blessed, for ever blessed, be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, accord-

* 1 Cor. xv. 53—57.

ing

ing to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead ; to the hope of an inheritance uncorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for all that believe and obey him." These are the promises made to our fathers. These are the hopes set before us in the gospel. In comparison with these, what are all the consolations of philosophy ? That God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself ; and that he hath by him expressly declared upon what conditions he will receive mankind into favour, and confer on them the blessings of eternal life, are discoveries for which we stand indebted to revelation alone. Admirable, therefore, is that system of religion of which Christ is the author, and which is so wisely accommodated to the condition of man, fallen and degraded by sin, doomed to struggle with the powers of corruption, and unable to deliver himself from the hands of death and the grave ! Admirable, I say, is that plan of restoration formed in heaven, and revealed on earth, which enables the Christian to join with the Apostle, and say, " I am persuaded that neither death, nor life,

nor

nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ our Lord*." Therefore let us comfort one another with these words.

* Rom. viii. 38, 39. 1. Thes. iv. 18.

S E R M O N X.

On the SUFFERINGS of CHRIST.

[Preached before our partaking of the Lord's Supper.]

ACTS, iii. 18.

But those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

“GOD so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son into it, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” This is the most wonderful event that we find recorded in the history of past ages; and “great beyond controversy is the mystery of godliness God manifested in the flesh.” But however marvellous it may appear to us, certain it is that this extraordinary messenger from Heaven
was

was not ushered into the world without previous notice, nor was his appearance among men an event entirely unexpected. On the contrary, it was foretold long before it happened, and many circumstances concurred in announcing to the world the rise of the Sun of righteousness. No sooner had man fallen from his primæval dignity than his restoration was planned in the councils of heaven. From that juncture, through a long series of ages previous to the coming of the Messiah, Providence seemed principally occupied in preparing the way of the Lord. For the great and wonderful design respecting the redemption of mankind we perceive gradually unfolding itself, until that mature state of things, called in scripture "the fulness of the time, was come," when "God, who had at sundry times, and in divers manners, spoken to the fathers by the prophets, was pleased to speak to us by his own Son, whom he had appointed heir of all things, and by whom also he had made the worlds*." But although this Son of God was made so much better than the angels, and had obtained, by inheritance, a more excellent name than they; although he was the brightness of his Fa-

* Heb. i. 12.

ther's

ther's glory, and express image of his person, a life of ease, pleasure, and happiness was not destined for him on earth. On the contrary, he was to be despised and rejected, oppressed and afflicted. He was to be numbered with transgressors, and to bear the sins of many. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one were many to be made righteous. Hence it is affirmed by St. Luke in the words of my text: "that those things which God before had shewn by the mouth of all his holy prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled."

In order to evince this truth it is now proposed to glance at those things which Christ was to suffer, according to the ancient prophets, and shew how minutely they have all been fulfilled by his life, sufferings, and death; and then conclude with an inference or two from the whole.

In the first place, it is proper, I say, to take a glance of those things which the ancient prophets foretold that Christ should suffer, because their fulfilment forms not only one of the strongest evidences of our holy religion, but serves to put to silence the
tongues

tongues of gainfayers and pretended infidels, and to establish fairs in their faith, hope, and obedience. In order to understand the Scriptures it is necessary to observe the connexion subsisting between their different parts; and if we view the events of early ages, in their relation to what was afterwards to come to pass, we shall perceive how things past and future mutually illustrate each other, and how all parts taken together, form one great and comprehensive whole. For as all scripture was given by the inspiration of the same author, so no prophecy could be of private interpretation; "for prophecy," as St. Peter affirms, "came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke to the world as they were moved by the Holy Ghost *."

Of the coming of the Messiah into the world, I say, you have some very early intimations given in sacred scripture. No sooner were you told that Paradise was lost, than you hear a promise made that it shall be regained. When you read of the deliverance wrought for the people of God by Moses in Egypt, you are, at the same time;

* Peter, i. 20, 21.

given to understand that this had a reference to some event of a similar nature which was afterwards to happen. The various sacrifices under the law prefigured and pointed to some great oblation afterwards to be offered up. It was with a view to some future king, who should sit upon his throne, that God promised to David "that he should give him the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession." From which period the vision of succeeding prophets became, by degrees, clearer and clearer, and as the period of Christ's appearance approached, they speak of his kingdom with greater certainty, and in more direct and positive terms. Hence that general expectation which prevailed at the time of Christ's birth, of some extraordinary prince who was to rise in the east, and sit upon the throne of David, and give law to the world.

Indeed, were any one to hear of the Son of God coming down from heaven, and entering this lower world, he would certainly be apt to think that he would appear in great pomp and splendour, such as became his high origin ; that he would come attended by a glorious company of angels ; and that all the
princes

princes of the earth would be summoned to receive him, and do him homage. But instead of this, we find the Son of God makes his humble appearance in the likeness of a man, and even in the form of a servant. Obscurity attended his birth, and poverty his condition. His errand was not to dazzle the world with the appearance of glory or majesty, but to seek and to save those that were lost. His design was not to triumph over the princes of the earth, but over the powers of darkness. In his life, from beginning to end, we discern nothing to encourage the natural vanity or pride of the human heart, or vain glorious thoughts of the Jews, but one continued series of humility, patience, self-denial, presented to us. As it was foretold that he would be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, so the whole tenor of his life, from the manger to the grave, served as a fulfilment of the prediction.

Indeed whether we view the life of Christ in its beginning, in its progress, or in its end, we find nothing exhibited before us but one uninterrupted tract of suffering virtue. I might tell you much of the obscurity of his birth, of the hardships and persecu-

Q

tions

tions to which he was subjected in his earliest days, and from which he was compelled to seek a refuge in a strange land. I might represent to you the many trials and inconveniences inseparable from a state of poverty and want, and the many frailties and infirmities incident to human nature in the state of infancy. I might describe to you his travails and troubles, his pains of circumcision, his fasting and temptations in the wilderness, who had taken upon him the nature of man, and was in all things like unto his brethren, sin only excepted. Long might I dwell upon the miseries to which he was exposed from being born in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation, and obliged to be a witness of the profaneness of some, of the hypocrisy of others, of the envy and malice of the low, of the injustice and oppression of the high, and of the wickedness and abounding iniquity of all. But we shall waive the consideration of these things, and pass over the sad passages which occur in the history of his youthful days, and only mention what good old Simeon foresaw when Christ was presented in the temple, and foretold concerning him. "Behold," says he, "this child

child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against * ;” that is, persecuted with the tongues of calumny and reproach, and with the hands of enmity and violence. My text leads me to consider him particularly in his more advanced years, when he assumes the public character of a teacher sent from heaven, and to recount the heavy sufferings which he then endured from the powers that be in earth.

When we attend to the very poor and wretched condition of the human race at that period, sunk in ignorance and darkness, and overrun with idolatry and superstition, might it not have been expected that men in general would have gladly opened their ears to a teacher from heaven, and received his message with peculiar joy and gratitude? Ought not such a messenger to have been exceedingly welcome to every one, and worthy of all acceptance? Were not his moral instructions, and his doctrines of grace and salvation, tidings of great joy to all people? At first, indeed, the lower sort of people, whose minds were less warped by the prejudices of

* Luke, ii. 34.

education, more free from pride of understanding, and less wise in their own conceit than the Scribes and Pharisees, received his words gladly. His piety, his modesty, and his superiority of knowledge and wisdom, appeared to them so far above any thing that they had been accustomed to observe in other religious instructors, that they were struck with admiration at his words, and confessed that "never man spake like this man." The purity of his precepts, the sanctity of his manners, and the excellency and authority of his doctrines, all conspired to make a deep impression upon their hearts; and forced them to declare openly one to another, saying: "This man teacheth like one having authority, and not like the Scribes."

But the more welcome our blessed Lord and his heavenly instructions seemed to men of humble stations, docile dispositions, and honest hearts, the less they were to the proud Scribes and Pharisees. They looked upon this rising character with an eye of envy and jealousy; and perceived that their influence must sink in proportion as his rose in the opinion of the people. They, therefore, from this time forward, combined together

in order to blast his character, and destroy his reputation. They considered themselves as the only doctors of the law, the only persons qualified to read and explain it to the people, and marvelled that the common people should pay attention to any other instructor. "How knoweth this man letters," say they, "having never learned from any of the doctors of the law*." Their study was the tradition of the ancients, and they affected to make a great shew of religion. They were numerous, powerful, and esteemed themselves the only men of learning; and the only persons worthy of credit from the people. They fasted often, made long prayers, paid tythes freely, and distributed their alms plentifully, but all to be seen of men. "They thanked God that they were not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, and even as the publican." Puffed up with pride and self-conceit they treated our Lord with derision and contempt, and took offence at every word that proceeded out of his mouth. His humble and mean appearance, his laws of universal love and benevolence, and his preaching the gospel to the poor, gave them great offence.

John, vii. 15.

Q 3

But

But when he told them how they imposed heavy and unsupportable yokes upon the people, corrupted the most important articles of religion ; and when he exposed to public view their ostentation, their hypocrisy, and self-righteousness ; when he pronounced a number of woes against them on account of their fraud and covetousness, and of their compassing sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he was made, of their making him two-fold more the child of hell than themselves * ; in short, when he told them that they shut the kingdom of Heaven against men, and would neither go in themselves, nor suffer others that were entering to go in, they were enraged beyond measure against him, and conspired his destruction by every method in their power.

From leading men of this character, no wonder that our blessed Lord met with every species of persecution that envy and malice could devise. They wilfully shut their eyes against the light. They hardened their hearts against the truth. They obstinately rejected the offers of life. They watched his conduct with an evil eye, and lay in wait to catch something from his mouth, in order

* Matth. xxiii. 15.

to render him odious to the common people. They harassed him with captious questions, and put his patience and fortitude to the severest trial. They used every art to ensnare him by his words, and render him obnoxious to the Roman government. When our Lord taught the multitude that his kingdom was not of this world, they pronounced him "a teacher of strange doctrines, and a perverter of the people." When they saw him going about doing the works of his Father, and fulfilling the prophets; when they saw him curing all manner of diseases, causing the blind to see, the lame to walk, the lepers to be cleansed, the deaf to hear, and even the dead to come forth before their eyes, they, after all, persisted in unbelief, and were determined against conviction. Nay, they did worse when they witnessed his casting out devils; though they could not deny the fact they said, "he casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils." Strange infatuation! Hence that sad exclamation: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you*?" Hence also those expressive

* Matth. xviii. 17.

words, borrowed from the spirit of ancient prophecy: "To Israel," he saith, "all day long have I stretched out my hands to a rebellious and gainsaying people, who walk in the way that is not good, and after their own thoughts*."

But, notwithstanding the contradiction of sinners, our Lord remained firm to his purpose, and went about doing good, especially to the sons and daughters of affliction. His superior wisdom he evinced by his answers to the curious and captious questions of his enemies. The several snares which they laid to entrap him he eludes with perfect ease; and with admirable address either turns the different incidents into means of instruction, or their wicked devices and stratagems against themselves, so as not only to silence but to cover them with shame and confusion. All which served to give the people still higher ideas of his wisdom, his rectitude and goodness. In his discourses he, indeed, discovered an uncommon share of knowledge, benevolence, and charity; but in the miracles which he wrought for the benefit of the distressed, all men beheld his

* Isaiah, lxxv. 2. Rom. ix. 21.

glory

glory shining forth as the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace, mercy, and compassion. After our Lord had given sight to blind Bartimeus, and raised up Lazarus from the dead, all the people who were spectators of these events, stood astonished, and went their way perfectly satisfied that he acted under the countenance of Heaven; and saying, "when Christ cometh shall he do more miracles than this man doeth? No man can do such works as he hath done, except God be with him. Since the world began, was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind? If this man were not of God he could do nothing*."

The more fully, however, the common people seemed satisfied that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World, the more bitterly were the scribes and pharisees incensed against him, and, therefore, having called a council of chief priests and rulers, they say what do we now? if we let this man alone all the people will believe in him; and the Romans, on pretence of rebellion, will come against our city, and deprive us of both civil and reli-

* John, ix. 32-38.

gious privileges. From that day it was resolved to put Jesus to death. But, notwithstanding their great power, they durst not do it openly for fear of the people; and therefore they gave private orders to their officers to watch diligently, and as soon as they should find Jesus in some retired place, to take hold of him. Still, however, they had another captious question to put to him, which they hoped, from his answer, would not fail to render him obnoxious to Cesar, and draw down upon his head the indignation of the Roman government. Approaching him, therefore, in a respectful manner, they ask him, saying, Master, is it lawful to give tribute to Cesar, or not? But Jesus, perceiving their insidious design through the cloke that covered it, answered, "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" and on their producing a Roman coin, he asked them, "Whose image is this?" they answered Cesar's. "Then," said he, "render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." And when they could not lay hold of his words, it is added, they marvelled, left him, and went their way*.

* Matth. xxii. 16—22.

When

When our Lord declared, "I and my Father are one. All our views and designs are one and the same, and we have the same great end to accomplish, the reformation of mankind; if I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; for the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." This declaration they interpreted blasphemy, and instantly took up stones to stone him, because, say they, being man, he made himself God. On which occasion our blessed Lord discovered an amazing degree of meekness and magnanimity. He upbraided the Jews, indeed, but it is with a sweet mixture of kindness and love. "Many good works," saith he, "have I shewn you, for which of these are ye going to stone me."

But as the hour drew nigh in which he was to be betrayed, other virtues are to be brought forth to light, and made to undergo a very severe trial. He foresaw what death he was to die; and therefore he, who was in all things like unto his brethren, sin only excepted, felt the pangs of nature at the prospect of ignominy, torture, and dissolution. On this occasion he retired into a garden, and

and being in agony, had recourse to prayer, the sweetest comfort of an afflicted spirit. Then said he unto his disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, tarry ye here till I go and pray yonder: and falling on his face he prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Never did virtue sustain such an arduous conflict. But, in the end, his piety, his patience and resignation to the will of Heaven, were triumphant: "Nevertheless," saith he, "not my will but thine be done."

By this time Judas had betrayed him; and knowing the place of his retirement, and while he was celebrating the Sacrament of the Supper with his disciples, was conducting a body of armed men to apprehend him. Hitherto the scribes, pharisees, and rulers of the Jews, his implacable enemies, though they had often and ardently sought his death, yet durst not publicly lay hands on him, being overawed by the people who revered and adored him. But now, having found him in a private place with his disciples, they laid hold of him, bound him, and led him away before the judgment-seat of Pilate. Then all resistance was vain. He even checked the interference

interference of his friends, and resigned himself to his fate with these words: "Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves. When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: But this is your hour, and the power of darkness *."

After this there occurs a remarkable event, which could not but add greatly to our Lord's sufferings, I mean the sudden and unexpected change which took place in the minds of the people. That the scribes and pharisees, whose hypocrisy he had on many occasions exposed in its true but odious colours, should continue to persecute him was not at all matter of wonder. That the Roman government should be hostile to one who was supposed to have pretensions to royal authority, and to set himself up in opposition to Cesar, was a thing that might naturally be expected. But that the great body of the people, who had hitherto followed him, fondly hanging upon his lips, and gladly receiving his heavenly instructions; that the same people who had hitherto adhered to him as steady friends, and who not many days before received him into their

* Luke, xxii. 53.

city

city with loud and joyful acclamations, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord to save us *;" that they should so suddenly turn their back upon him, and join his implacable enemies, was an event strange indeed, utterly unaccountable. But so it happened as it was foretold: "He was despised and rejected of men." Instead of boldly standing forth and demanding a release of one whom they believed to be so innocent, so harmless, so holy, just, and good, they remained silent spectators of the injuries done him; and even while they saw him basely arraigned before the judgment-seat, cruelly mocked and insulted, and heard him falsely accused of perverting the people, of forbidding to give tribute to Cesar, and of calling himself a king, they shewed not the least signs of anger or indignation. On the contrary, after Judas the traitor had confessed that he had sinned, in that he had betrayed innocent blood; after Pilate the judge had solemnly declared that he could find no fault in him, and washed his hands before them, saying, I am innocent from the blood of this just person, the people were

* Matth. xxi. 9.

instant,

instant, and required with one voice that he should be crucified. Still, however, the judge sought to release him ; and as it was a custom among the Jews to have one prisoner released at the feast of the Passover, he said unto them, “ will ye that I release unto you Jesus the king of the Jews ? ” “ Nay,” they exclaimed, “ away with that man, crucify him, crucify him, and release unto us Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber *.”

Thus was our Lord numbered with transgressors. But the end is not yet ; there still remains one scene more of suffering virtue, which was foretold by the prophets, and a sad and dismal scene it is. Being brought into judgment, and condemned by the voice of the blind and infatuated multitude, “ he must next be led as a lamb to the slaughter—bear the sins of many—be cut off out of the land of the living—make his grave with the wicked—and intercession for the transgressors †.” All which the prophets had predicted, and all was literally fulfilled. For after Pilate found that nothing could prevail on the people to release him, he commanded Jesus first to be scourged, and then delivered up to

* John, viii. 39, 40.

† Isaiah, liii. 7, &c.

be

be crucified. Already he had suffered much from the contradiction of sinners, from the envy and ill-will of the scribes, and the persecutions of the rulers.* But now that the common people had joined his enemies, and risen up against him, no bounds could be set to their fury and outrage. They treated him with every mark of scorn and indignity, and led him away to Golgotha to be crucified. Some smote him in the face, and then, as he claimed to be thought a prophet, they bade him prophecy who it was that smote him. Some declared "he saved others, pretending to be a priest, himself he cannot save." Others crowned him with thorns, and put a reed into his hand, as mock ensigns of royalty; and in scorn saluted him, saying, "*Hail king of the Jews.*" Blind and infatuated mortals! Little did they know the goodness of his heart, or the ardour of that love, which no waters could quench, no injuries abate. While he was enduring such ill-usage no complaints are heard from his mouth, no appeals are made to a future righteous judgment. On the contrary, you behold him lifting up his eyes to heaven, and praying for his persecutors, and pleading their ignorance

rance in extenuation of their crimes. "Father," saith he, "forgive them, for they know not what they do *."

Follow him one step farther, and you behold him not only making intercession for the transgressors, but nailed to a cross, and bearing the sins of many. How great, how inexpressibly great, must have been the anguish of his soul, and the weight of his sufferings, which drew these words from his mouth: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Never did patience or fortitude undergo so great a trial. For a while deserted by Heaven, and the countenance of his heavenly Father hid from him! Could faithfulness be put to a more severe trial? What could human nature endure more? Surely, it may be said, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. When thus stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, all other friends on earth must indeed prove but miserable comforters. Then, even, his disciples forsook him and fled. Now upon the cross the Saviour hung between two thieves, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, insulted and wounded

* Luke, xxiii. 34.

by his enemies, and forsaken by his friends. Now darkness covered the face of the earth; and those present, and those that passed by, mocked him, saying, if thou be the Son of God come down from the cross, and we will believe. At length Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, and the scriptures fulfilled, saith "I thirst." Then they gave him vinegar to drink; and when he had received the vinegar, the last mark of cruelty that the powers of darkness had to inflict, he closed a life of sorrow and suffering with these short but comprehensive words: "*it is finished.*" "The work which my Father gave me to do is completed; the great end for which I came into the world is now accomplished, and, bowing his head to his bosom, he gave up the ghost!"

During this last scene of trial and torment, considering the innocence, the greatness and dignity of the sufferer, no wonder that the sun in the firmament veiled his face, that all nature travailed in pain, and seemed ready to expire with the great Creator. No wonder that the earth did quake, that the grave opened its mouth, and that the bodies of sleeping saints awoke. Well might the Centurion,

turion, struck with fear and trembling, say, "truly this man was the Son of God! and the multitude, after beholding what was done, go their way, smiting upon their breasts."

Thus, my brethren, it behoved Christ to suffer and die, and afterwards to rise again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living. But, to come home, permit me now to ask, "Is it nothing to you ye children of Adam, conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, that Christ should suffer, the just for the unjust? Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto this sorrow *?" Are ye ready, when ye reflect on all that is past, to inveigh against the Jews, that faithless and perverse generation, for their harsh treatment to the Lord of Glory, whom they had thus taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain? Is it nothing to you, ye careless and miserable sinners, that Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles, and signs and wonders, which God did by him, should thus bear your sins in his body on the tree, should give his soul an offering for sin,

* Lam. i. 12.

and his life a ransom for many? Have you no interest depending, no concern in this matter, no part in him who thus suffered? Have you no benefits to reap, no hopes or expectations, from this marvellous display of goodness and mercy? Yes surely, more profit than heart can conceive, or words express. "His blood cleanseth from all sin *." "He gave himself for you that he might redeem you from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works †." "We beseech ye, therefore, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God. For he hath made him to be sin for you; who knew no sin, that ye might be made the righteousness of God in him ‡." The chastisements of your peace was upon him; and by his stripes ye are healed. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Here you behold the great work of redemption accomplished; the grand scheme of Providence completed, and all scripture given by ancient prophets, from Moses to Malachi, fulfilled. Here ye see Jesus, "the

* 1 John, i. 7. † Titus, ii. 14. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 21.

Mediator

Mediator of the new covenant, once offered to bear the sins of many, and by this once offering of himself, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified *." Upon the cross ye see that eternal redemption purchased, which the church of God had earnestly longed, and impatiently waited for, ever since the day paradise was lost. Upon the cross was offered up that all-atoning sacrifice anciently prefigured by the sacrifices under the law. There the hand-writing of ordinances, which was against us, was taken away, and nailed to the cross. "There ye behold the middle-wall of partition between Jew and Gentile broken down, and access equally opened for both to the church of Christ, and peace and reconciliation with God equally procured for both †." There, in short, ye behold Christ as a king for ever, spoiling principalities and powers, making a shew of them openly, and triumphing over them in his cross.

Thus have I given you a short and imperfect sketch of the life, sufferings, and death of Christ; a character the most glorious and perfect that ever appeared in this world in the form of a man; a character that united

* Heb. x. 14.

† Ephes. ii. 14.

every amiable virtue and divine grace which can beget esteem and admiration. In him we behold piety towards God, united with charity towards man, and shining in all their native beauty and perfection. In him we see mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace embracing each other. In him we behold benevolence and beneficence, compassion and forgiveness, meekness and patience, humility and fortitude, purity and temperance, exhibited in all their lustre; and an example of virtue set before us unparalleled in the annals of past ages of the world, but intended for the imitation of Christians to the latest generation. In displaying the character of Jesus, the Lord our righteousness, ye have no doubt observed how much I have availed myself of the language of sacred Scripture, and the reason is obvious; because, so great is its excellence, its simplicity, so powerful its energy and its majesty, and so well adapted to the purpose, that in none other words, but those of inspiration, was it possible to do justice to my subject.

Upon the whole, blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited and redeemed his people, and raised up a great salvation for them in the house of his servant David. Let

our souls magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour. Hath Christ declared, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me;" and do we need pardon, mercy, grace, and assistance, who labour and are heavy laden; or do we desire life and immortality, who, through fear of death, are all our life long subject to bondage? Unto whom can we go but unto Thee, O thou Saviour of the world, thou alone hast the words of eternal life? Let us, therefore, come with boldness, but at the same time with filial reverence, to a throne of grace, that we may find mercy and grace to help us in time of need. Are we conscious that, in many things, we have all offended, and come short of the glory of God? "Let us rejoice that we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous, who suffered for our offences, and rose again for our justification. He and he only is the Author of eternal life to all that believe and obey him. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be saved, but only by the name of Jesus *."

* Acts, iv. 12.

R 4

" Seeing,

“ Seeing, then, that we have this great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, even Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering *.”

“ Let us be looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, where he is making continual intercession for us †.”

Hath God, through Christ, promised to be our reconciled God and Father, and is he not faithful who hath promised? God is love; and if he spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, what may we not hope to receive from that love, which passeth all understanding? shall he deny his good and faithful servants any blessing of smaller value? If he withheld not his greatest, his unspeakable gift, shall he not with him also freely give us all things necessary to life and happiness? What greater encouragement to wait on him in all the ordinances and institutions of his appointment, for spiritual improvement and growth in grace, can Christians desire? Let us, therefore, draw near unto him this day with a true heart, in full

* Heb. iv. 14.

† Heb. xii. 2.

assurance

assurance of faith, and present unto him our souls and bodies, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. And while we are doing what he hath commanded us, and remembering him with joy and gratitude, let us unite together in singing the Christian song: "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; unto him be glory, and praise, and thanksgiving for ever and ever *." Amen.

* Revel. i. 5.

S E R M O N X I.

On the NECESSITY of HOLINESS under
the GOSPEL.

ROMANS, vi. 15.

*What then ? shall we sin because we are not
under the law, but under grace ? God
forbid.*

IN the early ages of the Christian church, among other false charges brought against our Lord by his enemies, we find himself accused of being the friend of publicans and sinners ; and his holy religion, of being favourable to the corruption of nature, by its offer of pardon to the chief of sinners. But the former was the reproach of scribes and pharisees, men whose religion consisted in ostentation, and in the strict observance of the ancient law, and who appeared outwardly
clean,

clean, but inwardly were corrupt, to a proverb; and the latter, the mere calumny of some Pagans, or Roman philosophers, men vain in their imaginations, and strangers to the covenant of promise. For although Christ preached repentance, and his religion countenanced humble and penitent offenders, yet neither gave, in fact, the smallest encouragement to stubborn, presumptuous, and incorrigible sinners. On the contrary, while our Lord, whose love to all men was great, invited sinners to come unto him, he urged, on every occasion, the necessity of purity of heart and holiness of life; and his gospel, which was a dispensation of grace, mercy, and truth, every where promised what the law could not, pardon and peace to believers and penitent and reformed sinners of every kindred, nation, and tribe. But this, instead of being a reproach to Christianity, serves rather to shew its peculiar excellence and superiority above all other institutions of religion. For, on the one hand, a religion which offered not the prospect of pardon to sinful and fallen mortals, nor pointed out to them some method of recovering the lost favour of God, would be a vague and com-
fortless

fortless system ; and, on the other, a religion that should pretend to abolish sin, without reforming the sinner, would be a partial remedy for the disorders of human nature, and so ineffectual, that it would appear neither worthy of God to give, nor of man to receive. Between these two extremes, therefore, Christianity holds its course. While it offers its votaries the pardon of past transgressions upon condition of faith and repentance, it, at the same time, promises grace and assistance sufficient to enable them not only to repent, but, in future, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. It first invites men to do well, and then incites and encourages them patiently to continue in well-doing. Hence that argument used by the apostle Paul to the Romans, some of whom, it should seem, imagined that Christians had the privilege of sinning boldly and presumptuously conferred on them, merely, because they were not under the old, but under the new dispensation of religion. "What then?" says the Apostle, "shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."

From which words it is now proposed to shew you that repentance towards God, and
faith

faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, being the great conditions of the new covenant, are absolutely necessary on the part of man for recovering the favour of God, lost by sin and disobedience ; secondly, that holiness of heart and life is not less requisite under the new than under the old dispensation of religion ; and, lastly, that sin of every kind being less excusable, is more dangerous under the greater than under the smaller light ; and then conclude with a short application.

In the first place, “ as the scriptures have concluded all under sin *,” and consequently in a miserable condition, without God, and without hope in the world, it becomes a very interesting question, What is man to believe, and what is he to do, in order to recover the Divine favour, and the hope of eternal life ? In every past age, the wiser and more considerate part of mankind have been sensible of the depravity and corruption of human nature, and made their unfortunate condition the subject of frequent lamentation. They easily observed the prevalence of evil in the world ; and though the effect was plain to every one, none could discover the cause.

* Gal. iii. 22.

They

They needed not to be told that human nature indicated a strong propensity to error and folly, and an aversion to rectitude and goodness. Man's perversity of will, and depravity of heart, were too visible to be denied; but they could not tell whence this general turpitude and declination proceeded, until the appeal was made to revelation, which obviated the difficulty, and unravelled the mystery. But both the disorder and the cause were well known to God; and therefore it was he, and he only, that was qualified to prescribe a remedy. Had human nature been perfectly sound and whole, where would have been the necessity for a physician? From what could the whole be delivered? From what could innocence be redeemed? But after man had become a sinner, and was exposed to the curse of the law, and the wrath of an offended Lawgiver, no justification could be expected from the law which he had transgressed; and, therefore, a new order of things, a new covenant of grace and mercy, became necessary to his restoration. This, then, is the groundwork upon which the Christian system rests, and through the whole New Testament man's fall
and

and degradation are taken for granted : And as all have more or less sinned, happy is it for the Christian world that we are not under the law, but under grace.

Grace is a word frequently found in holy Scripture, and you must observe, that it is there used in a variety of senses. Sometimes it means the love of God, whence flows, as from a great fountain, every temporal and spiritual blessing ; at other times the light peculiar to those who are favoured with the advantages of the Christian revelation. Sometimes it denotes God's free and unmerited goodness to fallen man in not leaving him to perish in his sins ; at other times his amazing wisdom in devising a scheme of redemption for sinners, through Christ, when there was no other eye to pity, or hand that could help them. Sometimes it signifies the gift of the Spirit, or the extraordinary supply of assistance granted to the first preachers and propagators of the gospel, by which they were enabled to face danger and persecution without dismay, and to execute their trust with honour and fidelity ; at other times it means the gospel itself. In all these, and many more different senses is the word Grace used
in

in the sacred Volume; but in my text, it seems to be put only for the last, I mean for the gospel itself, as it stands contrasted with the law, distinguished from the old Mosaic system. Hence that declaration of St. John; "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ: And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace *." In as much, therefore, as the gospel is a more clear and perfect revelation of the will of God, than the religion of nature or the Mosaic law, and a more admirable display of his marvellous love to sinners; inasmuch as the gospel opens nobler prospects, and contains more precious promises than the law; inasmuch as it has more closely connected the present with a future world, and brought life and immortality to light; inasmuch also are sinners, under the gospel, less excusable than the sinful Jews and Heathens who had no other guides but natural reason, or the Mosaic system.

This is the general scope of the Apostle's argument to the Romans, at that time one of the most enlightened, powerful, and high-spirited nations upon the globe. But to shew

* John, i. 16, 17.

that

that every doctrine is liable to perversion, and the best purposes of heaven, to abuse by men vain in their imaginations, and proud of their wisdom and knowledge, some Romans, it should seem, construed his doctrine of grace, into the very worst purpose, as nothing less than giving countenance and encouragement to sin. For as grace abounded, they concluded that sinners were safe, and that they might go on from day to day, adding sin to sin, and delay all thoughts of repentance to the end of life without any risk, and for this reason, because forsooth, they were not under the law, but under grace. Upon which the Apostle, to correct this mistaken notion of things, and false interpretation of the words, as well as of the merciful designs of God, with some degree of warmth and indignation, puts the question. "What then," says he, "shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." For what end came Christ into the world, but to call sinners to repentance? Why hath God declared himself merciful and gracious, long suffering, and reconcilable to sinners? not surely that we might take the liberty of despising the riches of his

S

goodness,

goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering. For what purpose hath the grace of God appeared unto all men? but to teach them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to lead sober, righteous, and godly lives in a present world. Wherefore is the gospel preached to all nations? but for general instruction and reformation. Let no man, therefore, presume to turn the grace of God unto wantonness, and obstinately persist in a course of iniquity, because he is not under the law, but under grace; for this were to act, not only repugnant to right reason, but to the whole design, tenour, and spirit of revealed religion.

Nor have some Christians in these latter days, been less apt to deceive themselves than the ancient Romans. For there are not a few weak, but well meaning men, who entertain strange and mistaken notions of the grace of God, as if it were to do all for us, and leave us neither freedom to will, nor power to do any thing for ourselves in matters of religion. They esteem men no better than mere instruments in the hands of a superior agent, totally incapable of moving until acted upon by an irresistible power. They think it derogatory from Divine grace to admit

such things as either a liberty of choosing, or a capacity of doing good in human nature. But here also they err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For although in all cases we be insufficient of ourselves and our sufficiency is of God, from whom we received all that we are, and all that we have; yet it ought not to be forgotten that we are made rational, moral, and accountable beings, and every way prepared and equipped for the service of our Maker. If we have ears to hear and will not hear, and eyes to see and shut them against the light; and if we should consequently run into error, our errors must be charged to our own account. To what purpose are Christ's calls and invitations to repentance, if we obstinately refuse to listen to them, and keep at a distance from every place of public instruction? To what end are the means of grace and reformation offered for helping our infirmities, and enabling us to work out the work of our salvation, if we wilfully reject them, and do despite to the spirit of grace? In short, of what use were it to beseech, exhort, or command men to attend to the things which belong to their everlasting

peace if they have no powers given them, to which these commands and exhortations come addressed. In vain is the gospel preached, or laws prescribed to creatures entirely passive, to stocks and stones incapable of action, until acted upon by some foreign power. Surely, if God hath shewn us what is good, and required the performance of duties, it must be taken for granted, that he has either given, or is ready to give, power sufficient to all the purposes of obedience. However weak and insufficient then we are of ourselves, we must beware of imagining that the grace of God is not sufficient to all the good purposes for which it was intended and bestowed by him.

But here, perhaps, we shall be told that we are justified by faith, and not by any works of righteousness that we have done, or can do; and that our best services can have no moral value or merit in them to render us acceptable in the sight of God. Be it so; nevertheless, if God hath shewn us our duty, and required obedience to his laws and submission to his authority, filial submission and obedience are his due, and our reasonable service. We have all
much

much dependance upon the meritorious sacrifice of Christ, but not so much as to preclude the necessity of good works. "Without holiness, we are assured, no man shall see the Lord *." Now the grace of God was intended as a principle of holiness; and to the Christian world it is mercifully given as a preventing and restraining, a quickening and assisting, principle of virtue. Faith in Christ's merits, and intercession with his Father, is, doubtless, of the first necessity; but as works of justice, charity, and mercy are its natural fruits, though of a secondary nature, they ought never to be disparaged, or deemed of little worth or importance. Christians must be blind indeed who see not the absurdity of putting asunder what God hath so closely joined together. Faith and good works ought never to be separated. The one is the cause, the other, the effect: "And as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also †." Every tree is known by its fruits; and therefore St. James very properly observes, "Thou hast faith and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith

* Heb. xii. 14.

† James, ii. 18. 26.

by my works. By works the real and unfeigned nature of faith is proved ; and by good works alone is our faith perfected."

When we cast our eyes around us, we cannot but perceive how very different the conduct and characters of many are, even of those who are made of one blood, and are professors of the same religion. In order to account for this difference, it must be remembered, that there is in every man two very opposite but governing principles, the spirit of grace, and the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience : or, as the apostle John styles them, " the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." Between these two the arduous conflict lies. Hence we find the Christian life in scripture denominated a warfare ; and it is a warfare in which all are engaged, and required to acquit themselves like men, if they desire to come off conquerors. It is also compared to a race in which every competitor who contends for the prize is required to lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset him, to exert his powers with vigour and perseverance, and so run, that in the end he may obtain. Now in a world where
there

there is such a mixture of good and evil, never did a soldier, surrounded by enemies, need more circumspection and vigilance than the Christian who wishes to maintain his integrity amidst the wiles and temptations of sin ; nor yet those that are running a race, more care to guard against error, and to keep the right course, than the Christian who is liable to so many errors and lapses, and who, without fainting or wearying of well-doing, contends for a crown of glory. For all, indeed, much previous preparation is necessary ; but all, in the end, are not equally successful and victorious. In order, however, to prepare Christians for doing well, and persevering in well-doing, all that can be done for them by any institution of religion is, first, so to instruct them that they may not err for want of knowledge ; and, secondly, so to assist them, that they may have it in their power to yield obedience at what time soever they are called to trial or to duty. Now both are done for us by the religion of Christ. No man who is not under the law, but under grace, can plead ignorance in excuse for error, or weakness of nature in justification of sin ; being favoured by the gospel with all the light and

assistance which infinite wisdom has judged expedient and necessary to fit and qualify him for the discharge of every duty required of him. And blessed is the man who, in the end, can say with the Apostle: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness *."

But, after all, as there is no man that liveth and sinneth not; and as God is a being of purer eyes than to behold iniquity but with the greatest detestation; and also as all, even the best Christians, have more or less offended, and come short of their duty, What is to be done in this case? Where is the sinner's ground of hope? not, I presume, in the religion of nature; nor yet from the law, and works of righteousness which he hath done; for it is written "curled is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them †;" but from the gospel, where pardon and remission of sins are preached to all upon condition of repentance towards God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. By the law every transgressor is liable to the wrath of God,

* 2 Tim. iv. 7.

† Gal. iii. 10.

and

and left without a remedy. But, under the gospel, "if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous: he is the propitiation for our sins. For it behoved him to suffer, and to rise again, that repentance and remission of sins might be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem *." He suffered for our offences, and rose again for our justification. What the law, therefore, could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh. Hence it is said to the Christian world, "through this man, Jesus Christ, is preached the forgiveness of sins; and by him believers are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses †."

"Is the law then against the promises of God," adds the Apostle, "God forbid: For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law: But by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified. The law was indeed our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ; and before faith came we were

* Luke, xxiv. 46, 47.

† Acts, xiii. 38, 39.

kept

kept under the law, and from it derived the knowledge of sin. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster, but are become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ*." It is by faith ye are justified, and not by works, lest any man should boast; but by that faith which worketh by love, which purifieth the heart, and is productive of obedience. The old dispensation supposes the weakness of human nature, and was appointed by God in compassion for the infirmities of his people, and on purpose to prepare mankind for receiving the new and the greater light. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his son made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons†." So that after Christ had offered up himself an all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, there was no need of offering up any more legal sacrifices. After the establishment of the second covenant, the first, as far as it consisted in ritual observances, must needs cease. But as to the moral part of the law, it remained in full force, and was of unalterable obligation. To fulfil the moral law was one great end of

* Gal. iii. 23, &c.

† Gal. iv. 4.

Christ's

Christ's coming into the world. Hence that question of the Apostle: "Do we, by the preaching of faith and repentance, make void the law? far from it; yea, we establish the law." No changes of times or states, no new fashions or modes of worship, no external forms of godliness, can in the least affect the moral law. Its essence consists in righteousness and true holiness, and in meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Its internal substance being founded upon the relation between God and man, remains the same for ever and ever: and consequently it is the duty of every Christian so to live and act as if he expected eternal life as the reward of his good actions.

Such is the doctrine of the church; of that church which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Having shewn the superior excellence and value of the new dispensation, when compared with the old, the question of the Apostle still recurs: "What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." He that is joined "unto Christ is one spirit*;" that is, the same vital principle of

* 1 Cor. vi. 17.

virtue and religion, which animated and guided the Great Master, animates and governs the faithful servant. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are done away, behold all things are become new. He is the vine, and ye are the branches, and as the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can ye," saith our Lord, "except ye abide in me." But whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; that is, he can no more knowingly and deliberately commit sin, than a good tree can bring forth bad fruit. He that abideth in Christ, and hath received such supplies of grace and strength from him as is needful at all times and in all circumstances, is constrained, as much as a rational and free agent can be constrained, to live no more to himself, but to him that loved us, and gave himself for us.

Happy then is it for you, O ye disciples of Jesus Christ, who have so much light, grace, and assistance provided to enable you to do well, and persevere in well-doing. But should there still remain some self-righteous men, who, like the ancient scribes and pharisees, make their boast of the law, and who
are

are ready to ask, why doth your Lord eat with publicans and sinners? The answer is the same that our Lord gave; "because the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick; and because the great end for which he came into the world was not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Or if there be any among us who wish to be thought professors of the religion of nature, seekers of wisdom, admirers of philosophy, and who, like the ancient Romans, cavil and find fault with the doctrine of grace, because it accords not with their pride, nor with the wisdom taught in the new school; if there be any vain mortals among us, I say, who, when told "by grace are ye saved; through faith, and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, and given on account of the all-sufficient merits of Christ," are ready to ask: How can these things be? where is the adequacy of the means for the end proposed? The answer is short. O ye of little faith, ye wise men after the flesh, have ye forgotten that you yourselves are the sinners who need pardon and mercy, the persons who have rebelled against the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth? and does it belong to you or your offended Master

Master to judge what are the proper means of reconciliation, and the terms of pardon and acceptance? If to him only, and surely this you must admit, what then remains for you but to accept the blessing freely offered with joy and thankfulness, not doubting but infinite wisdom has made use of the best means for accomplishing the gracious purposes of Providence? If the gospel be the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation; if its offers of pardon and mercy be made to Jew and Gentile, to penitent and reformed sinners of every kindred, nation, and tribe, then, whatever may be the religion of innocent and righteous men, surely the gospel is the true religion of sinners, of fallen, guilty, and miserable sinners, such as you are.

Let not the wise man, therefore, glory in his wisdom, nor the sinner trust to his righteousness, but rest contented with the doctrines of grace, and terms of salvation revealed to us in the gospel. Without faith it is impossible to please God by any religious service; for whosoever cometh unto him must come believing that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all that diligently seek him. We are saved
through

through faith, which is the vital principle of all religious obedience ; for genuine faith is ever fruitful of good works. Faith without works is, in fact, a dead principle, and can profit us nothing. It is the faith of devils, who are said to believe and tremble. Why are our modern infidels so desirous of recurring to the religion of nature, but for the sake of greater latitude and indulgence in sin than the gospel permits ? Why do sinners love the darkness rather than the light, but because their deeds are evil ? Every evil-doer hateth the light, and will not come to it, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. Light is exceedingly offensive to the workers of iniquity ; and hence the number of infidels and apostates. Now what can be a greater recommendation of the gospel of Christ, or a better proof of its heavenly origin, than its being of such a nature that none but evil-doers can disbelieve or dislike it ? Whoever presumes, however, to sin under the gospel dispensation must do it at his peril. Heathens and Jews, now that light shines upon us, are more excusable in sin than us Christians, who can neither plead ignorance nor infirmity in extenuation of our sins. We are deliberate, voluntary,

voluntary, and presumptuous transgressors. Let us therefore awake to righteousness, and sin not. "For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries of Christ. If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses, of how much forer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of grace *?"

Favoured, therefore, as we happily are, with the means of grace, and the hopes of glory, honour, and immortality, it lies with us to believe firmly, to value justly, and accept thankfully, that last and brightest revelation of God's will by Jesus Christ. Born, as we are, in a land of light, and growing up amidst the blessings of the gospel, we are all but too apt to become insensible to the divine goodness, and un-

* Heb. x. 26—28.

thankful

thankful for favours, the want of which we have not known. But however scornfully some may be disposed to regard the light of the gospel, and affect to be wiser above what is written, yet it may safely be affirmed, that, from this source, we derive not only the best comforts of the present life, but also all the noblest hopes of a future. Reason and philosophy are at best but miserable comforters to sinners; and after all their speculations upon the divine nature and perfections, leave them oppressed with doubts, fears, and perplexities with respect to reconciliation with God. Infidelity can suggest to her foolish votaries no peace or satisfaction; and as for the law given by Moses, it expressly affirms, "that the man that sinneth shall die." So that after turning our eyes to every quarter, and examining every ground of hope, it will be found that nothing can restore to the guilty peace of mind, and place them in a state of well-grounded hope, but an express declaration on the part of God upon what condition he will pardon sin, and receive the sinner into favour.

Seeing, then, that repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, are

T

the

the great conditions upon which God hath been pleased to grant remission of sin, and the promise of life eternal in the heavens, let us beware of taking encouragement to continue in sin because we are not under the law, but under grace. Seeing also that there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, let us rejoice in our Christian privileges as the sons of God, and the heirs of eternal life. Seeing that the gospel has given us not only the knowledge of salvation, but the promise of remission of all past sins, and the assurance of grace and assistance in future to enable us to work out the work of our salvation; let us beware of delays, and putting off this necessary business from day to day, upon the vain expectation of having hereafter a more convenient season. It is true God is good, and gracious, but let not the heart of the sons of men be set in them to do evil because sentence against their wicked works is not speedily executed. Believe it; now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation, in it let us all be wise, and mind the things that belong to our eternal peace before they be hid from our eyes.

eyes. Now we have the offer of God's grace, pardon, and mercy upon the most reasonable terms, let us beware of despising the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing, or pretending not to know, that the goodness of God is extended to us in order to lead us to repentance.

S E R M O N XII.

On the DESIGN, USE, and IMPROVEMENT
OF AFFLICTION.

PSALM cxix. 67.

*Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now
have I kept thy word.*

ALTHOUGH affliction cometh not forth
of the dust, neither doth trouble spring
out of the ground, “yet,” says Job, “man
is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.”
He comes into the world a weak, frail, and
fallible creature, exposed to many changes
and misfortunes which he cannot foresee,
and liable to various pains and troubles
which he cannot prevent. Such is his na-
tural condition. From personal sufferings,
and private and public calamities, none of
7 the

the sons of Adam is exempted; all are born heirs of trouble. Seeing, then, that our afflictions are not mere contingencies which happen by chance, nor evils which spring as thorns from the ground; seeing they are not always the fruits of folly and indiscretion, nor yet peculiar to wicked men and bad times, how are we to account for those natural evils? and how reconcile such sufferings of children with the goodness and tender affection of a parent? Can they be useful for warning or reproof, for correction or instruction in righteousness? Can they be anywise profitable to the children of men, or conducive to their temporal or eternal happiness? The Psalmist is of opinion that they may, and frankly confesses, that, when blessed by God, and rightly improved by men, they are productive of salutary and happy effects. He spoke from experience and conviction when he said, "It is good for me that I was afflicted. For before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word."

In order to satisfy ourselves, in like manner with the Psalmist, that such natural evils come not of blind fate, by chance, or of their own accord, but are, in fact, the ap-

T 3

pointments

pointments of wisdom, of that unerring wisdom by which all things are arranged and established, let us first enquire for what ends afflictions may have been designed by God? and, secondly, if they be the appointments of heaven, what may be the right use and improvement which men ought to make of them? and surely these are enquiries of such deep and interesting consequence to us all, that they cannot but command very serious and general attention.

Let us begin with shewing some of the many good and gracious ends which afflictions may have been designed by Providence to answer, seeing they are so common to men of all ages, characters, and conditions; and, in the first place, may we not ask you what other end could our heavenly Father have in view, in the first creation of his children, but their happiness? and what other end than this can he be supposed to keep in view in all his providential dispensations? God is love, and the inexhaustible fountain of all goodness. He is gracious and merciful; and can he, suppose ye, take any pleasure in the pains and miseries of his creatures? Surely not. He sends them no trials but for some good

good reason ; nor doth he ever correct but when he hath some kind purpose to answer by his paternal corrections. Though fallen from our primæval station of innocence, and excluded from paradise, our first delightful place of abode, still we are not forsaken by our Maker, nor hath he forgotten to be gracious. Though all have sinned, still we are the objects of his regard, and he is not willing that any sinner should perish, but that all should come to repentance. For this end a state of trial, discipline, and improvement is prepared for us, and the means of grace and reformation are vouchsafed us. Opportunities are afforded for correcting whatever is amiss in the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives. Assistance is offered for the cultivation and improvement of whatever is good in the disposition of our hearts, and in our general conduct and conversation. And all things being thus prepared, we are required to work out the work of our salvation while it is day, and to go on towards perfection until the whole man, consisting of soul, body, and spirit, be, by degrees, purified and sanctified, and, by means of religion, ripened and prepared for the inheritance of the saints in light.

This being man's destination, and this life being our state of probation and progressive improvement, for another, nothing can be conceived better adapted to the purpose. This world is our school of education for a higher station, and for entering the church of the first born, and the company of angels and spirits of just men made perfect. Here trials of various kinds are assigned us, and troubles of different sorts are permitted for the purposes of discipline and correction, and for the ends of improvement and instruction in righteousness; and how well they are calculated to answer these ends will appear from the following considerations.

The first good effect which trials and troubles seem to have been intended to produce, is serious consideration. "In the day of prosperity be joyful," says the Preacher, "but in the day of adversity consider*." Man, viewed in his moral and religious capacity, is a vain, thoughtless, and inconsiderate mortal, often walking in a vain shew, without enquiring either whence he came, or whither he is going. Even in his years of maturity he seldom thinks soberly as he ought, and still more seldom in the days of

* Ecclef. vii. 14.

his youth. Youth is indeed a promising season when rightly improved, but it is often devoted to sloth, giddiness, and dissipation. It is a time in which few remember their Creator, or pay that attention which they ought to the things belonging to their eternal peace. Little, alas! do many of us consider how much of the honour or disgrace, of the happiness or misery, of our future life depends upon this season of preparation. Little doth the gay and heedless wanderer, from the way he should go, think how much of the ease and comfort of the noon-day is connected with the right improvement of the morning of life; and far less, how many trials, troubles, and disappointments await him before the evening close. Having too much vanity to be governed by others, and too little wisdom to govern ourselves, we are all too apt, in the days of our youth, to run into wild and extravagant courses, and to engage in foolish and fruitless enterprizes. Being free from care, and averse from toil, we are often found pursuing what we ought to neglect, and neglecting what we ought to pursue. We are flattered by hope, bewitched and deceived by dazzling appearances.

ances. The counsels of wisdom we, perhaps, now and then hear, but we regard and retain them not. The company of the serious and the sober we shun, and promise ourselves in future a season more convenient for grave manners and religious employments. Being fond of liberty we love to range at large, and without control, entirely heedless as to the consequences of error or folly. In this age of giddiness and distraction how necessary is parental restraint, nay how useful is the rod of correction? How profitable that discipline which tames the wildness of nature, and reduces us to some degree of calmness and composure of mind. To chasten us, sometimes, and before we be hardened by habit and custom in sin and error, is a certain proof of paternal affection. Happy are they who have fathers of the flesh to correct them in season. To such parents much reverence is due. For if the first check of superior authority be timely given, and blest by God, the second is received with greater respect and submission. Hence these words of the Prophet of old times: "it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth*." For

* Lam. iii. 27.

although

although no chastening for the present seem joyous, but grievous, nevertheless it afterwards yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby *." How beautifully has the prophet stated a case of this timely correction: "I have surely heard Ephraim," says he, "bemoaning himself thus: Thou, Lord, hast chastened me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after I was chastised, I repented; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth †."

Secondly, Nor is affliction found more useful and necessary for correcting the errors and extravagances of sportive youth, than it also is for curing the follies and vices of riper years. For still we remain in the school for education, but as our earthly fathers often correct for their pleasure, our heavenly Father correcteth only for our profit. Affliction is is an efficacious remedy for many disorders, but especially for the prevailing diseases of

* Heb. xii. 11.

† Jerem. xxxi. 19-21.

pride,

pride, self-confidence, and presumption. Nothing is more unbecoming frail and fallible mortals than pride and self-sufficiency. We are a race of poor indigent and dependent beings, possessed of nothing that we can call our own, and yet self-confidence is one of the reigning follies of the age. It makes us blind to our weaknesses and infirmities, and proud of our superior abilities and extraordinary endowments. It betrays us into a thousand mistakes and miscarriages; for, while we are boasting our wisdom and wealth, we forget our dependance upon God, and become insensible to the hardships and misfortunes of our fellow-creatures. It conceals from our sight the troublesome view of our frailties and imperfections, and makes us look down with disdain upon the inferior orders of society, which have not been favoured with the same advantages of education and fortune with ourselves. Having never been afflicted we become deaf to the cries of affliction. He that knows not what it is to suffer, is usually found to regard the miseries of others with indifference. But he that has felt the wounds of misfortune, is taught to feel for his neighbours struggling under

under the pressure of adversity. Whoever has himself been a stranger in the land, will need few monitors to be kind and merciful to strangers. Trials teach us all many useful lessons. To acquire that excellent branch of knowledge, the knowledge of ourselves, experience, in many cases, is absolutely necessary. To form a just estimate of human life, we must turn our eyes to the vanities of time, and the vicissitudes of fortune. To learn sympathy and compassion, self-denial and mortification, we must not only go into the house of mourning, and visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, but we must feel experimentally the changes of human affairs, and the trials and troubles incident to human life.

But in the third place, afflictions are not more useful for wisdom and instruction, than profitable for reproof and correction. In many cases nothing will soften the hard and stony heart of men, and render it susceptible of religious impressions, but the heavy hand of affliction. When all the gentle means of persuasion and advice have proved vain and ineffectual, how many prodigal sons has adversity brought home to
their

their father's house. Whenever health is devoted to the purposes of sensuality, excess, and intemperance, affliction is a merciful visitation of heaven, especially if it be sanctified so as to rouse the sinner from his lethargy, and prevent his utter destruction. Whenever prosperity is abused to the purposes of vice and folly, adversity must be deemed a happy remedy when it serves to correct the abuse. Or whenever men exalt themselves above measure, how useful are trials and disappointments to reduce them to their proper level, and teach them humility and self-abasement. Cast your eyes abroad in the world, and say, why does pride compass so many about with a chain, is it not because they have seen no changes, and heard none but flatterers? What is the reason why so many lead careless and secure lives? Is it not because they have never been bound with the fetters, nor holden in the cords of affliction? Why do the rich trust to their riches, and the mighty to their might, and the luxurious to their banquet? Is it not because they have seen none but shining days, prosperous circumstances, and sumptuous entertainments, which served like so many opiates to the
body,

body, to stupify the soul and lull it to rest? "While the harp, and the viol, and the tabret, and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts, they neither regard God, nor consider the operations of his hands; but take their ease, eat, drink, and are merry, flattering themselves that to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." In all such cases, how necessary, are changes, trials, and afflictions for timely warning and correction? They call home the wandering thoughts, and prepare the way for calm and religious reflection, and calm and religious reflection is the first step towards repentance unto life. "I thought on my ways," says David, "and I turned my feet unto thy testimonies: I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments*."

But affliction is not only useful and salutary when it gives a check to the lusts of the eye, the lusts of the flesh, the pride of life, and the intoxications of mirth and intemperance; but also in the fourth place, when it awakes the conscience, operates as a timely warning of approaching danger, and disposes mankind in good earnest to flee from the

* Ps. cxix. 59, 60.

wrath to come. It is true, by a decree of heaven, suffering is connected with sin, as the effect with its cause. Men must be long accustomed to do evil, before they can deliberately commit acts of cruelty and injustice without remorse or compunction. While the remembrance of past transgression lasts, the guilty criminal seldom escapes self-condemnation. Even in the midst of prosperity he feels the pangs of remorse, but in the day of adversity, stung with a sense of guilt, he calls out with Cain: "My punishment is greater than I am able to bear*." Numbers, it is well known, are sometimes capable of acts of great violence and outrage; for as face hardens face, and multitudes divide both the danger and guilt, they will commit, without scruple or compunction, crimes, at the very thoughts of which the individual would start back with fear and trembling. The sons of Jacob first conspired to kill their brother, and afterwards sold him for twenty pieces of silver. While they and their affairs were in a flourishing condition, they discovered no symptoms of sorrow. No expressions of remorse escaped from their tongue. While they were at ease

* Gen. iv. 13.

In Zion, and rejoicing in affluence, it is said, "they did not grieve for the afflictions of Joseph." But when fortune changed, and affairs took a different turn; when they were visited with sore famine at home, and met with one calamity after another abroad; then they began to call to mind their past transgression, and the remembrance was bitter and grievous to them. "Surely," say they, one to another, "we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us*."

So useful and necessary are sufferings for the correction of injustice and inhumanity, and the preventing of the final ruin of bold and presumptuous sinners. But on the other hand, it may be asked, can they be of any profit or advantage to saints? We answer, in the fifth place, they certainly may, especially when sanctified by God, and properly improved by men. For admitting that all are born to trouble, even the wiser and worthier part of mankind not excepted; and that the loss of health, fortune, friends and relations is common to all, to the just as well as the unjust; admitting that there is none perfectly

* Gen. xlii. 21.

U

righteous,

righteous, and that all, even the people of God, need paternal reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, yet let it not be forgotten that when God visiteth the pious and religious with afflictive dispensations, he speaketh as a father to his children, teaching and exhorting them on this wise: "My sons despise not ye the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when ye are rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening it is not a proof of your being forsaken by your heavenly Father, but of his dealing with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not *?" Ye simple and short-sighted sons of men, when at school, perhaps, ye can see but little reason for attention and diligence, and much less for reproof and correction. Such chastening, beyond doubt, appears to you not joyous but grievous. But ye judge from present feeling, and without regard to your future destination. You consider not that your parent or preceptor, who knows that you are to be trained up for filling some high office in church or state, is a better judge than you

* Heb. xii. 5, 6, 7.

what

In the sixth and last place, afflictions may have been appointed to remind us of what many are too apt to forget, that here we have no continuing city, or lasting place of abode,

abode, but are strangers and sojourners in earth, as were all our fathers. In our journey through this world, had we nothing but perpetual sunshine, ease, and pleasure; had we no rugged or thorny paths to tread, no hardships or difficulties to surmount; were we to meet with no crosses or disappointments by the way, we would be apt to rest contented with our present lot, and desire nothing more than the little portion of pleasures and enjoyments which this world affords. In such circumstances it is probable that we would never raise our hearts or affections to things above, but say with St. Peter on the mount, "Lord, is it good for us to be here*?" To remind us, therefore, that we are destined for a hereafter, and that we ought not to lay up for ourselves treasures here, God is pleased now and then to mingle some pains with our present pleasures, and now and then some bitterness with our sweetest enjoyments. Such inconveniences, as we meet with by the way, serve to put us all in mind that we are only travellers, and as yet at some distance from our destined place of abode. To wean our hearts from all earthly friends, and loosen our affections from things

* Matth. xvii. 4.

temporal;

temporal; to turn our attention to other objects, and cause us to mind the things that belong to eternal peace, days of darkness, frowns of fortune, and disappointments of various kinds, are all requisite. Here the moth and the rust are employed to corrupt, and thieves to break through and steal, in order to teach us to look for security only beyond the grave, and lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven: For where our treasure is there will our hearts be also.

These, then, are some of the good purposes, perceivable by us, which afflictions might be intended by Providence to answer: and many more, no doubt, there are besides, which we, who know but in part, are unable to comprehend. One thing is certain, that moral evil is the great cause of all the natural evils in the world; or, in other words, that to sin must be imputed all the pains, sufferings, and miseries of human life. By the decree of heaven the latter flow as naturally from the former as streams from the fountain, or as effects from the cause; and the natural evils of life are ordained and sent for the correction or punishment of the moral. Nor are the vicious and corrupt, since the

day sin entered into the world, the only sharers of these pains and sufferings: For the more virtuous and worthy have also a portion of them: and for this reason, because none, not even the best of Christians, are free from the remains of sin and corruption. For what man is he that liveth and sinneth not? But how many are the diseases, the troubles, and disappointments which the vicious bring upon themselves, from which the virtuous are exempted? Now for the correction and punishment of these disorders afflictions are in an especial manner designed. If then it be acknowledged that sufferings may, in many respects, be good for sinners, and if we be asked, of what use or advantage are they to the righteous? We answer in a few words; they are designed and sent for their farther reformation and improvement; and in this case they ought to be regarded not as the punishments of an offended master, but rather as the chastisements of a merciful Father. They are permitted by God, and sent as salutary trials of our faith, piety, patience, and submission. For as some virtues can only be seen in prosperity, so others can only be proved by adversity.

Were

Were there no temptations to vice, how is the Christian's virtue to be tried? Were there no objects of distress to meet the eye, how are the kind emotions of charity and compassion to be roused, or cherished, or improved? Without losses and misfortunes among our fellow-creatures, how could our friendship and beneficence be brought to the proof? Were we ourselves visited with none but healthful days, sweet enjoyments, and continual success in all our designs and undertakings, what scope would be left for the exercise and improvement either of faith, or patience, either of fortitude or resignation to the will of God. So that some crosses and sufferings in this life are not only necessary to the improvement, but to the very existence of practical virtue.

But so many are the useful lessons that may be learned, and so great the improvements that may be made in the school of adversity or affliction, that time would fail me to recount them all. In the chearful days of health and ease, of prosperity and plenty, even the best of us are too apt to become forgetful of God, and unthankful for his benefits. Depending upon second

U 4

causes

causes we seldom raise our eyes to the first. We seldom pay due regard to the fountain of living waters, until our worldly cisterns begin to fail. We seldom begin to knock at the gates of heaven, until all resources in earth are exhausted. It is a sense of want that brings the wandering prodigal to his right mind, and makes him reflect on the many blessings which he formerly enjoyed in his father's house. It is the tempest that brings the stubborn mariner upon his knees, and convinces him of his own weakness, and the insufficiency of all sublunary power and assistance. How little do many of us value even the air which we breathe, the meat and drink which we use, and the raiment which we put on, until we know what it is to want these necessities of life? How little are health and strength of body, and peace and satisfaction of mind, prized by us thoughtless mortals, until we feel the loss of these invaluable blessings, and are left to languish on beds of sickness and distress? How little do we know the real worth of kind friends and generous benefactors, until they are snatched from our side by the hand of death? How dull and insensible are we,
in

in short, to divine favours and mercies both of a temporal and spiritual kind, until God is pleased to deprive us of his unmerited gifts? Then we begin to cry unto the Lord in the day of trouble and necessity, beseeching him to have compassion upon us, and send us succour and relief. Then, with the Israelites of old, we remember the days which are past, and confess that God was our rock, and the most high God, our preserver and redeemer.

Well then might the pious and penitent Psalmist say, "it is good for me that I have been afflicted. For before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Afflictions are the medicines of life, the prescriptions of an able and merciful physician, and though, for the present, they be not sweet but bitter draughts, yet they are of great utility to poor patients, and work out for them the most happy and salutary effects. Beware, then, of sinking under the pressure of affliction, or fainting when rebuked of God. For he never chasteneth any of the sons of men but when he hath some good purpose to answer by his paternal chastisements. They are not a proof of his
cruelty

cruelty or desertion, but of his tenderness and care. They are not designed to cause dejection of spirit, or despair of his goodness and mercy, but to lead men to repentance. Hence the Psalmist chides himself for his melancholy and downcast frame of spirit when the waves and billows of the Almighty were going over him, saying, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God *."

So that if true religion cannot prevent trouble, or ward off the strokes of adversity, it has provided materials of support and consolation in abundance for suffering virtue. If the integrity of Job could not prevent the rapine and violence of the Sabæans and Chaldeans, his wicked and wandering neighbours, who robbed him of his property, and destroyed his children and servants, it inspired him with such patience and fortitude as enabled him to bear these losses and calamities without murmur or complaint. If his piety did not prevent the coming of dark days, it suggested to him hope and trust in God, who could at any time dispel the

* Ps. xlii. 11.

darkness,

darkness, and restore the blessings of light. Hence Job, as an example of patience, stands unequalled by mere man. Hence also his afflictions were so blessed of the Lord, and so well improved by him, "that his latter end was greater and happier than his beginning."

I shall only mention one example more of piety and patience, of fortitude and resignation to the will of Heaven amidst sore trials and troubles, and that is the example of St. Paul. He confesses "that a thorn in the flesh was given him, and that a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him, lest," says he, "I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of revelations*." And elsewhere he tells us, with what firmness and resolution he endured all the hardships and sufferings allotted him in this mixed scene of grief and comfort, ascribing, however, the excellency of power to God, and not to himself. "Troubled," says he, "on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. For though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day†." So great is the power, and so

* 2 Cor. xii. 7.

† 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.

reviving

reviving the influence of true religion ! And if we follow this great man to the close of life, we shall see with what honour and triumph he quits the stage. He had represented the Christian life at one time as a warfare, in which all must engage ; and at another, as a race, that all must run. " Now," says he, " I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand ; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness *."

Seeing, then, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and that we are the objects of his providential care, and in better hands than our own ; seeing he hath placed us in this world as in a school of discipline and improvement, to educate and train us up for a better ; and seeing no evils can befall us here without his knowledge, no trials and troubles without his permission, let us learn to regard his arrangements with reverence, and submit to his will in all things. As all the dispensations of Providence, whether indulgent or severe, whether kindly or corrective, are equally intended for our benefit, equally

* 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

conducive to our happiness either in a present or future world, let us receive them with filial patience and resignation, ever maintaining a boundless confidence in God's goodness, and trusting that all shall work together for our eternal interest. Certainly he is the best judge what is good for his children upon the whole. If he, therefore, be pleased to send us prosperity, let us be thankful for the undeserved blessing; or if he find it expedient to correct us, let us not forget that they are the corrections of a father, and, by a proper improvement, profitable to us. Under all our sufferings and calamities he is able to support us, and out of them all he can and will, in his good time and way, deliver us. In this world Christ hath told us that we must have tribulation; but tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; which hope is the anchor of the soul, and keeps it stedfast and immoveable amidst the severest storms of this life; and though we walk through the vale of death it still supports us, and follows us to those mansions of bliss where there is neither pain, nor sorrow, nor crying, but joy, quietness, and assurance for ever.

S E R M O N XIII.

O N P A T E R N A L T E N D E R N E S S.

GENESIS, xlii. 36.

And Jacob their father said unto them, me ye have bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

THESE are the words of the Patriarch Jacob, and bespeak much paternal tenderness, but not so much resignation to the will of the supreme Governor of the world, and wise Disposer of all events, as might be expected from a pious man, and an approved servant of God. They serve to shew us that, however religiously inclined men may be in the general course of their life, they are not so on all occasions; and

and that there are certain circumstances when even the best of men betray some of the weakneffes which are inseparable from human nature in this fallen and imperfect state. Jacob, no doubt possessed many excellent qualities, and his conduct in general was exemplary and praise-worthy, but his piety was not equal to all the trying situations of life. He was not without patience; yet the voice of murmur sometimes escaped from his mouth. His virtue was unquestionably great; but when weighed in the balance it was sometimes found wanting.. This is evident from the words which I have read; and therefore the circumstances which gave occasion to them merit particular notice. “Me,” says he, “ye have bereaved of my children; *Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.*”

From which words it is now proposed to survey the life and character of Jacob, as delineated to us in sacred Scripture, in which, if we perceive somewhat to blame, we shall find much to praise, and many excellent qualities deserving of imitation. For as the characters of all, even the best of our forefathers,

fathers, are of a mixed kind, none altogether spotless, but many profitable for our instruction, so we ought to remember that the Scripture, like a faithful mirror, reflects them as they really are, without either concealing their faults, or exaggerating their excellencies. They are there exhibited to us in order to shew us to what exalted heights of virtue, men encumbered with the same frailties and infirmities with ourselves, have attained; and in how many respects their example, being practicable, may also be profitable to us for correction and instruction in righteousness.

In order to give you a short sketch of the character of Jacob, as it is represented in Scripture, it may not be improper to view him first in early life. He was the younger son of Isaac, and when compared with his brother Esau, a person of a more mild, harmless, and gentle disposition. Esau was a man of the field, cunning, adventurous, and fond of hunting the wild beasts of the forest; while Jacob, who is characterised "a plain man *," delighted in the more innocent, peaceful, and domestic employments

* Gen. xxv. 27.

of

of a pastoral life. Both lived in the Land of Canaan, which, in showery seasons, was a fruitful country ; but in dry and scorching years, subject to famine. Both dwelt in tents, and were fathers of families. Esau being the elder of the two was, on that account, first entitled to their father's blessing ; but Jacob being the mother's favourite, she found ways and means to have the elder deprived of his birthright, and to get it transferred to the younger son. At first, though Esau seemed to regard this blessing but slightly, yet afterwards, when lost, he certainly held it in higher estimation, and sought it carefully, and with tears. He complains " that Jacob was rightly named, for he had supplanted him two times : he had first taken away his birthright, and afterwards his blessing *."

If we look back to the call of Abraham, and the promises which attended it, we shall perceive that the promises to these Patriarchs were not to be accomplished in their persons but in their posterity. After God had enumerated the temporal blessings which were to descend to Abraham and his offspring, one blessing was added, in which all the world

* Gen. xxvii. 36.

was deeply intereſted, and this was to come down in a line through him and his poſterity : “ In thee,” ſaith God, “ ſhall all the families of the earth be bleſſed *.” When the bleſſing was renewed to Iſaac, what was it ? but a recital of the ſame promiſe, temporal proſperity, the grant of the Land of Canaan, and the confirmation of the oath made to Abraham ; and then follows the particular and diſtinguiſhed promiſe to Iſaac : “ in thy ſeed ſhall all the nations of the earth be bleſſed †.” From Iſaac the great and ſolemn bleſſing deſcended next to Jacob, and though given in terms which ſeem to denote worldly advantages only, ſuch as a fruitful land, a numerous family, and great power ; yet the promiſe had a reference ultimately to Chriſt, in whom all the families of the earth were to be bleſſed. Nor could Eſau afterwards prevail with Iſaac to change his mind, and repent of his having given the bleſſing to Jacob ; no “ I have bleſſed him,” ſays he, “ yea, and he ſhall be bleſſed.”

Accordingly in proceſs of time we find Jacob the father of twelve ſons, and ſtill following the peaceful occupations of a country life, tending his flocks and herds, and leading

* Gen. xxvi. 14.

† Gen. xxvii. 23.

them

them to green pastures by the still waters. Nor does he seem to have profited sufficiently from the example of his mother, or from the difficulties to which he had been exposed from the preferring of him to his brother. For he also, like many other parents, had his favourite sons, to whom he shewed such invidious marks of distinction as created envy and ill-will among the rest of his children. His son Joseph was such a promising youth, and gave in early years such indications of personal beauty and mental accomplishments, as engrossed the father's heart and affection. So great was his love also to Benjamin that "his very life was bound up in the lad's life*." While his eldest ten sons found it necessary to procure for themselves, by their sword and bow, a distant settlement, the two youngest were kept at home, caressed with all the tenderness of a parent, and brought up as the heirs of his domestic fortune. But the more their father loved Joseph, the more his brethren hated him. Having dreamed some dreams, which seemed to portend his rise in the world, and advancement above them, and having inno-

* Gen. xlv. 30.

cently told them to his brethren, it is said they hated him the more on account of his dreams. The fond parent, as a mark of his peculiar love, thought proper, at the same time, to adorn his son Joseph with richer robes than the rest, and, among others, with a coat of divers colours, singularly beautiful, and in these days accounted a nobleman's dress. But this served the more to exasperate his brethren against him. At length their enmity and resentment arose to such a pitch that they could not endure the sight of him, and even resolved to put him to death, and only waited a convenient opportunity for that purpose.

Not long afterwards, and while their hatred was not in the least abated, this opportunity offered. It happened while they were at some distance from their father's house, feeding their flocks at Dothan, that Jacob had heard nothing from his sons for some time. Being, however, anxious for their welfare, and probably ignorant of their hatred to their brother, he arrayed Joseph in his coat of many colours, and sent him to see whether it were well with them and with their flocks, and bring him word, not doubting but that they would

would receive him well, and treat him kindly. But instead of this, they no sooner saw the lad than they said one to another here comes the dreamer, and immediately conspired to kill him. Being dissuaded by their eldest brother from shedding blood, they next stripped him of his splendid coat, and cast him into a pit, and then sat down to eat, drink, and regale themselves, wholly unconcerned for what they had done. While thus employed they lift up their eyes and behold a company of Ismaelite merchants coming from Gilead with loaden camels, and bound for Egypt. Upon which they lifted their brother from the pit, and sold him to the traveling merchants for a slave, but resolved to keep his coat, dip it in the blood of a kid, and send it their father, giving him to understand that his beloved son had been devoured by wild beasts.

Thus early began that traffic in the human species, which since that time has been carried on to such extent to the disgrace of human nature, and in opposition to every principle of morality and religion. But instead of being consigned to a state of slavery and misery, we are told “that the Lord was with

X 3

Joseph,

Joseph, and he was a prosperous man *; and by a series of wonderful interpositions of Providence raised to a station of high honour and preferment in Egypt. Being blessed by God with a wise and understanding heart, and with greater sagacity and foresight than any man in those days; in seasons of plenty, he made such ample provision in Egypt against the years of scarcity and famine, that application was made to him for supplies from all quarters. Among others, his own brethren were obliged to have recourse to him for corn; so great was the famine in the Land of Canaan. They had money enough, but they wanted the necessaries of life. Little did they think that they should ever see that brother's face again, whom they had sold for twenty pieces of silver, and far less did they dream that he could ever rise to be governor over that rich and plentiful land. His coat they had sent to their father, who instantly knew it, and supposing that his son Joseph had been torn to pieces, determined to mourn for him until the day of his death.

On the first appearance of his brethren in Egypt, Joseph knew them well, but they

* Gen. xxxix. 2.

know

knew him not, and therefore bowed themſelves to the earth before him. Affecting a roughneſs of behaviour, and a pride of rank, his firſt queſtion was, “ Whence come ye ? ” They replied, from the Land of Canaan to buy food. “ Nay,” ſaid he, “ ye are ſpies ; to ſee the nakedneſs of the land, ye are come.” No, my Lord, answered they, but to buy food, are thy ſervants come, for the famine is great in the Land of Canaan. Thy ſervants are no ſpies, we are all one man’s ſons, we are all true men. But in order to draw more from them, he ſtill inſiſted that they were ſpies. Upon which, they go on, ſaying, thy ſervants are twelve brethren, the ſons of one man in the Land of Canaan, and behold the youngeſt is this day with his father, *and one is not*. “ That is the reaſon,” ſaid Joſeph, “ why I ſaid unto you, ye are ſpies. But hereby ye ſhall be proved. By the life of Pharaoh ye ſhall not go forth hence, except your youngeſt brother come hither. If ye be true men let one of you, be bound before your face, and kept in cuſtody as a pledge ; and go ye, and carry corn home to your family, but bring your youngeſt brother unto me ; ſo ſhall your words be verified, and ye ſhall not die.”

Such was the reception that Jacob's sons met with in Egypt when they went to buy corn ; and on their arrival at home, they told their father all that had happened, and particularly, that no farther supplies were to be expected, unless Benjamin be brought along with them to the governor of Egypt. Upon which the venerable father, blamed them much and was grieved exceedingly that they had told him they had a brother. " No," says he, " Benjamin my son, shall not go down to Egypt with you, for *his brother is dead*, and should mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." Hard, however, as the terms were, no alternative was left, and imperious necessity required his compliance ; for on no other condition could farther supplies of corn be expected ; and besides, Simeon's life depended on their return, and on Benjamin's appearance along with them ; so that their father was obliged to yield to their earnest entreaties, and at length was prevailed on to let Benjamin go, but not without extreme grief and reluctance. " Well," says he, " since it must be so, take your youngest brother, and arise and go again unto the man,

man, and God Almighty give you mercy before him, that he may fend away both your other brother and Benjamin : If I ~~be~~ bereaved of my children I am bereaved." Still, however, the father's heart failed him ; and, as the time of their departure drew nigh, was filled with misgiving fears and apprehensions. But when his fons urged him, faying the man who is the governor of Egypt faid unto us before we were permitted to leave him, " ye fhall not fee my face again, return when ye will, except the lad be with you." Then it was that the father's piety, patience, and refignation forfook him, if we may judge from thefe folemn, fad, and melting words, that fell from his lips : " Me" fays he, " ye have bereaved of my children : *Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away : all thefe things are againft me.*"

Such were the circumftances which gave occafion to the words of my text ; and as the incidents are narrated by the f acred hiftorian with much plainnefs and fimplicity, the whole ftory is indeed admirable, interefting, and impreflive. Let us next confider what leffons of ufeul inftitution are fuggested to us by the conduct of the Patriarch

on

on this occasion ; and what reflections naturally arife from this paffage of facred writ.

From a review of the whole, the firft circumftance that is remarkable is the partial affection of the parent. Jacob, though he poffeffed many great and good qualities, yet, like other men, he had his infirmities. However praiseworthy in many parts of his conduct, he is not to be juftified in all. Being the father of many children, all bone of his bone and flefh of his flefh, he had his favourite fons, on whom he beftowed particular love, and to whom he fhewed fuch invidious marks of diftinction as caufed envy and ill-will among the reft of his family. It is however no eafy matter for parents to command their likings and averfions in fuch cafes, efpecially where there is fuch a variety in the tempers of children, and fo great a difference in their conduct and behaviour toward their parents. Yet there is a moderation in all things, and open partiality in parents towards any one branch of their family is feldom reasonable or prudent. It is unnatural and unjuft. It is a radical error in education ; and betrays weaknefs and want of judgment. For all children are naturally en-
vious,

vious, tenacious of their rights and privileges, and not only nice in their feelings, but quick in their resentments. As soon as they are capable of observation, they are sure to take offence at the smallest appearance of partiality in parental attachments. The father's love to his son Joseph was too glaring to escape the observation of the rest of the family. It was not only injurious to its object, but productive of woeful effects to himself. Nay farther, his heart was so much bound up in the young lad that it was withdrawn not merely from his brethren, but even from God, the proper and principal object of all men's affection. Hence it should seem that Providence had prepared its trials for Jacob in this tender part. To teach him that no earthly idol whatever should be permitted to come in competition with God his Heavenly Father, things were so ordered that the son whom he had made the object of his sweetest affection should become the innocent occasion of his bitterest sorrow. Of that jewel, on which he had set too high a price, he was robbed, at least for a while; and by such means taught the vanity of sublunary attachments, and re-
minded

mindèd that he ought to be leſs prone to ſet his affections on objects below, and more careful in raiſing them to things above.

In the ſecond place; From this part of Jacob's conduct, parents in general may take warning, and beware not only of ſhewing a marked preference of any one ſon to the reſt, however amiable his diſpoſition and obliging his manners, but alſo of judging raſhly with reſpect to the ways of Providence. "*Joſeph is not,*" ſays the father, "*and Simeon is not,* and ye will take Benjamin away : *all theſe things are againſt me.*" So he thought ; but how often are men miſtaken, when they judge from preſent appearances ? The loſs, or even the ſuppoſed loſs of beloved children, it is no doubt hard for parents to bear. On ſuch occaſions it is natural to grieve ; and to ſay with Jacob, " all theſe things are againſt me." But when we conſider, that the Lord Gôd Omnipotent reigneth, and that he is the Supreme Diſpoſer of all events, we ought to lay our hands on our mouths, and beware of ſpeaking unadviſedly with our lips. Jacob ſpoke the language of nature, but his words were not the dictates of piety and religion. Parental ſorrow for the
loſs

lofs of children is nowhere prohibited, but true religion permits no man to sorrow like thofe who have no hope. The good old patriarch had piety ; but it is plain his piety was not equal to all the fiery trials of life. His prefent evils were fo great, and made fo deep an impreffion upon his mind, that they had blotted out the remembrance of paft favours from God. Every incident appeared to him in the darkeft light ; and under the preffure of prefent fufferings the voice of murmur efcap'd from his tongue, before he found leifure for calm and religious recollection. For had the worthy father taken time to call to mind former bleffings, and confidered how often he had tafted and feen that God was gracious ; had he remembered the days of former years, when the candle of the Lord fhone upon him, and plenty and profperity were defcending from heaven upon his houfe ; or had he made a proper eftimate of human life, and confidered how little reafon he had to expect that days of joy and pleafure would laft for ever ; had he, I fay, given himfelf time to reflect upon thefe things, he would certainly have difcovered more patience and fortitude under

under prefent afflictions. But alas ! how few are there among the fons of men, who, at all times, and in all circumftances, poffefs that prefence of mind, which ferves to fortify them againft the feveral furprizes and unforefeent difficulties of life ! Even the wifeft are liable to errors, and the worthieft to mifcarriages, in this ftate of frailty and imperfection.

In the third place, if time be found, a flow, but a fure remedy for many of the hardships and fufferings of life ; if it can foften the afperity of grief, and reconcile us by degrees to trials and misfortunes, how neceffary are faith and patience to the comfort and happinefs of human life. Uninterrupted joy and prosperity it were vain for any man to expect. Nor are they always good for us. It is in the foil of adverfity where feveral of the nobleft virtues can only grow and flourish. But many of the evils, efpecially thofe that come by the appointment of Providence, are more frightful in appearance than in reality, and give us more uneafinefs by anticipation, than by actual experience.

Befides, if the remembrance of paft benefits ferve to alleviate prefent troubles, how much more does the hope of future bleffings contribute

to

to the same happy purpose. Calamities, it is well known, oftentimes befall the best of men in this life; and unavoidable calamities form a part of those evils which all are doomed to suffer. Whoever then considers not the present life as connected with a future, in the day of sore distress, when visited with cross events and heavy misfortunes, will be apt to say with Jacob, "*all these things are against me.*" But the good old patriarch had to endure not only those troubles which were common to all men, but also those which arose from domestic discord and disappointed hopes. One part of his family had conspired both against their brother's life and their father's happiness. They had sold Joseph, and, as if that were not enough, they had dyed his coat of many colours in blood, and sent it to their father, giving him to understand that he had been devoured by wild beasts of prey. This was done on purpose to aggravate their father's grief, and exculpate themselves by removing all suspicion of their crime. This additional distress however was of their own creation, and could not be charged to the account of Providence. But the unhappy father had to endure

endure all; and the trial was greater than he was able to bear. No ſooner was the coat preſented to him than he knew it, and ſuſpecting the worſt, loſt all hope, and reſuſed to be comforted. He rent his clothes, put on ſackcloth, and determined to mourn for his ſon all the remaining days of his life.

Heavy as this affliction fell upon the father, ſtill another trial of his faith and patience awaited him. For afterward, the famine being very great in the land of Canaan all his ſons, except Benjamin, he was obliged to ſend down to Egypt to buy corn. There they were firſt treated as ſpies, and not ſuffered to depart until they promiſed to bring down Benjamin with them; and Simeon was bound before their face and kept as a pledge for the performance of their promiſe. When they had told their father all that had befallen them in Egypt, then he was grieved beyond meaſure, and not only blamed his ſons as being the cauſe of his ſufferings, but fretted againſt the Lord for permitting them to come upon him. “Me,” ſays he, “ye have bereaved of my children; *Joſeph is not, and Simeon is not,* and

But in the fourth place, from this passage of sacred history we may observe how incompetent men commonly are to judge of the conduct of Providence; and how often those events, which we weak and short-sighted mortals pronounce evil, are intended for our good. How many are there in the world, who may date the beginning of their greatest joy from the day in which they were overwhelmed in the deepest sorrow; and the happy dawn of light from the moment in which they were involved in the thickest darkness. In no situation ought any man ever to despair of God's goodness, or doubt his providential care, but when he is acting in opposition to the divine will. Jacob, notwithstanding all the hardships which he suffered was, nevertheless, still an object of God's love, and consequently abundant provision was made for his future comfort and happiness. Joseph was not dead but sent beforehand to be ruler of Egypt, to preserve life and fulfil the good purposes of heaven respecting his distressed father and his family. Simeon was not only safe but kindly and hospitably treated by the governor of Egypt. And Benjamin was in-

Y

deed

deed demanded, but it was only to be a witness of the happy discovery which Joseph designed to make of himself to his brethren. So that instead of all things being against him, Jacob • found that all things in the issue were under the direction of heaven, working together for his good, and to crown his latter days with the blessings of peace, plenty, and prosperity. On hearing these glad tidings the father's heart, therefore from the lowest state of despondence was elevated to the highest pitch of joy and hope. "It is enough," says he, "that my son Joseph is alive, I will go down to Egypt to see him, before I die."

Here then we have both an excellent example of parental tenderness, and a fine pattern of filial affection presented to our view. Jacob to the common infirmities of a man, unites the good qualities, natural feelings and virtues of the father. Joseph in the midst of worldly prosperity and grandeur forgets not himself, nor yet that he has a father, and that all the obligations of a son are incumbent upon him. "I am Joseph your brother," says he to his brethren whom he had gathered around him; "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt; doth my father yet live? Be not grieved therefore, nor angry with
your-

yourfelves, that ye fold me; for it was God that fent me before you agreeable to the promife which he made to our fathers, to preferve you a pofterity in earth, and to fave your lives by a great deliverance. Haffe ye, and go up to my father, and fay unto him, that thus faith Jofeph thy fon who is alive and whom God hath made lord of all Egypt; Come down unto me and tarry not, thou and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks and thy herds, and all that thou haft; and I will nourifh thee, and repay thee for all thy paternal tendernefs and love to me." Here is a pattern of filial refpect and gratitude worthy of general imitation; and of fuch brotherly love, as is highly commendable, and adds luftre and dignity to that natural relation. No fooner had Jacob come down to Egypt with his children and grand children in all threefcore and fix *, than Jofeph took his chariot and went to congratulate him on his arrival in a land of plenty, and where he was able to render his latter days eafy and comfortable. What expreffions of filial duty and paternal affection paffed between them at this happy meeting, may be more eafily ima-

* Gen. xlv. 26.

gined than expressed. It was a joyful interview on both fides. "Now let me die, O my fon," fays the aged father, "fince thou art alive, and I have again feen thy face."

Upon the whole let us all learn to beware of rash judgments and impious complaints of the conduct of Providence. God is the beft judge what is good for man all the days of his life. "Go down to Egypt," fays the Moft High to Jacob, "fortherel will make of thee a great nation *." It was God that prepared the way for his kind admiffion into Egypt. It was God that provided for him there a life of peace and happinefs in the land of Goshen, during the remainder of his days. It was by the bleffing of God that his pofterity flourifhed there, and in procefs of time multiplied and increafed till they became a great nation. So that it is not for man to form his judgment of God's moral adminiftration by parts, by the events of a day, of a year, or even of a whole life in this world; but from the general fcope and iffue of the whole. His government comprehends both the prefent and the future world. Suppofing then the worft, that fome of you have been

* Gen. xlv. 3.

bereaved of your beloved children by death, still it were neither wise nor warrantable to say with Jacob, *all these things are against me*. But rather with Job, "The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." In God's eye this state stands connected with a future, and death is only a removal from this world to another and a better. Your loss, however great, is therefore no more than a temporary one, and God can make the heaviest temporary loss, work out for your eternal profit in the end. If you have piety, you will believe it; if ye have patience ye shall see it. In your darkest days true religion teaches you to look up to the Great Governor and Wise Disposer of all things, and commit yourselves, your families, and fortunes to his care with boundless confidence. Yea, though ye even walk through the dark valley of the shadow of death, ye need fear no evil while he is with ye: his rod and staff will support you. Trust in the Lord therefore at all times, who is ever present with you and who can conduct you in safety through every difficulty and distress here, and hereafter bring you to his kingdom and glory.

S E R M O N XIV.

On LOYALTY and FIDELITY.

[Preached on the First General Fast Day, on account of the War with France.]

PROV. xxiv. 21.

*My son, fear thou the Lord, and the King,
and meddle not with them that are given to
change.*

IN these words we have a serious admonition to a son, from a King famed for good sense, and knowledge of human nature. His dominions were extensive, and for the government of them, God had given him not only “exceeding much wisdom and understanding, but uncommon enlargement of heart.” So happy and glorious was his reign, that it is impossible to view the state of affairs during his life, without a mixture of pleasure and admiration. “From Dan even to Bethsheba,” it is said, “Judah and Israel dwelt in safety;

safety ; every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, all the days of Solomon*." What a delightful picture of national peace and happiness ! Yet, notwithstanding this very general order and tranquillity, it would seem that the wise King could discern symptoms of discontent, and persons dissatisfied with their condition, however calm and settled, and with the civil government, however mild and indulgent. Hence the caution subjoined, " meddle not with them that are given to change."

Indeed every nation that has long known the benefits of a free government, and the advantages of a stable and flourishing condition, should certainly be cautious of changes and innovations. They always prove either a blessing or a curse ; and men given to strange doctrines in religion, and fond of revolutions in civil government, have been justly marked as the common pests of society. . Admitting that some may have entertained too great a reverence for the opinions of their forefathers, and placed too implicit confidence in ancient systems and venerable establishments in church and state ; are we therefore warranted to set at nought the wisdom of past ages, and turn

* 1 Kings, iv. 25.

the world upside down? Because the fear of God may, in some parts of the earth, have degenerated into superstition, and respect for the king into servility and non-resistance; are we therefore justifiable in running blindfolded into the contrary extreme, and saying, Who is the Lord, that we should fear him? or the king, that we should regard him? These questions merit at least serious consideration; and no time can be more proper than the present, solemnly set apart for that important purpose.

It is no uncommon thing for persons, in avoiding one extreme, to rush headlong into the contrary; but by such transitions, we exhibit to the world an example of folly. If superstition be an error, as must be allowed, surely every well-wisher to reformation, before any change be attempted, ought to consider, whether irreligion be the proper means of correcting it, and of retrieving the lost privileges of rational beings. Supposing that all regal governments were tyranny, as some bold projectors of the present age have confidently asserted, surely all friends of liberty would do well before they engage in revolutions, to think whether anarchy be the best remedy

remedy for the evil. By violent means we are almost sure of defeating our end, however just and desirable. Even in the most hopeless state poison is a dreadful cure ; what then shall we think of the physician, who prescribes this remedy to persons in a sound and healthful condition ? Solomon who had studied the nature of man, and was well acquainted with social life, could foresee the dangerous consequences from innovations, especially those of irreligion and rebellion ; and therefore gives this wholesome advice and caution to his son, “ Fear thou the Lord, and King, and meddle not with them that are given to change.”

In these words, three virtues are suggested, as necessary to form a good subject, Piety, Loyalty and Fidelity ; which we propose to illustrate and recommend, as essential ornaments of a fair and irreproachable character. They are nearly allied one to another, and in common life often found inseparable companions. If we view the history of man since the first transgression, of what do we find it in general composed, but of breaches of faith and allegiance to heaven and earth ? What are all the errors into which we are betrayed by the
pro-

propensities of corrupt nature, but deviations from the sphere assigned us in which we were destined to move? Indeed they who can, on any occasion, renounce their faith in God, will not have much scruple in abjuring fidelity to their Prince: and persons of such convenient consciences, as can with changing times and circumstances break loose from sacred and civil obligations, will not hesitate long in the days of temptation to remove their integrity from them, and lead vicious and disorderly lives.

I. With respect to the fear of God, the great and fundamental principle of religion, little need be said in the way of illustration. All acknowledge the extensive influence which this principle hath upon life. Fear, in general, is a passion implanted in the human heart, which excites men to be upon their guard against the dangers, and to make provision for the many evils and wants incident from our natural condition. The fear of God is a mixture of filial love and reverence, arising from our relation to him as our creator, preserver, and benefactor, and from a sense of the glorious excellencies and perfections of his nature. All the divine attributes,
taken

taken in one connected view, are the object of this affection. Not only the paternal love, goodness, and mercy, but the infinite power, holiness, and justice of the Supreme Governor of the universe, all unite in constituting God the proper object of devout homage and veneration. He who first said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" and who can say, Let there be darkness, and universal darkness shall return; he who first called the vast system of nature into existence, and who can by a word reduce it to non-existence, he who commands the celestial bodies to move, each in its order, and who is the preserver of that general harmony and perfect arrangement subsisting among the whole; he is the God whom all ought to fear and adore. It is impossible that any man can have right notions of this great Sovereign Lord, and not stand in awe of his Majesty. A being of perfect knowledge, of almighty power, of unerring wisdom, and of impartial justice, who is ever present with us, the constant witness of our conduct, and who will be our judge, what man can contemplate without silent reverence and profound humility. Holy and reverend is his name. Great and marvellous are his works.

works. Just and righteous is he in all his ways. From him we derived life, breath, and all things, upon him we depend for every blessing. As he is the former of our bodies and the father of spirits, so at what time soever he withdraweth his hand, in which our breath is, we fall again to the dust whence we were taken. Honour and majesty are before him, who sitteth in the army of heaven, superintending the affairs of the world, and disposing of all events according to the purpose of his will. Of him therefore ought all mankind to stand in awe, and sin not. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil, a never failing proof of a sound understanding.

But, doth this sovereign Lord and Governor of the world always receive that filial homage, submission, and obedience from his offspring, to which he is so justly entitled? Do none of the nations of the world turn aside, and instead of serving God make to themselves idols, some of one kind, some of another, before which they blindly bow the knee, and ignorantly worship? At different times the perverseness and corruption of human nature may indeed assume different shapes,

shapes, and discover themselves in new ways ; but always prompt men to acts of rebellion against God, and deviations from the path of duty. It matters little whether our idols be the “ images of gold, of silver, or stone, of ancient ages graven by art and man’s device *,” or the word Nature, vain philosophy, trees of liberty, or shadows of equality and independence of modern times ; undue honour shewn to any creature is disrespect to the Creator, and a tacit declaration that we will not have him to reign over us. But are the nations safe in this state of rebellion ? While they are going astray, “ revolting more and more, building them high places, and images, and groves, and serving strange gods on every high hill, and under every green tree † ;” they ought to remember, however determined they may be to follow the devices and desires of their hearts, that nevertheless the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth ; that he is a jealous God, and that justice and judgment, as well as clemency and mercy, minister to the purposes of his will. He hath various ways of humbling the proud, correcting the stubborn, and recalling the wicked from the error of their ways. When

* Acts, xvii. 29. † 1 Kings, xiv. 23.

Israel of old would go after strange gods, God said that he would leave him to himself, and let "his own wickedness reprove him, and his backslidings correct him *." When Ephraim was joined to his idols, the command of Heaven was, "Let him alone †," and by and by troubles and misfortunes will convince him of his folly. Should the inhabitants of the earth at any time forsake their Heavenly Father, and their beneficent friend and protector, forgetting their dependence upon his providence, and disowning their obligations to his goodness; the Most High can suspend the genial influences of the sun, or the refreshing showers of heaven, and the earth shall soon become a parched desert; or he can let loose "the locust, the palmer-worm, the caterpillar," or some other minister of justice, and reduce the people to a sense of their duty and dependence. Should any nation grow wanton, self-sufficient, and ungovernable, God either can suffer the passions to domineer; the demons of war, "these destroying angels," to go forth to scourge them for their iniquity; or leave them to smart under the correcting hand of guilt and misfortune. Should

* Jerem. ii. 19. † Hosea, iv. 17.

any of the sons of men become cool and indifferent to the divine pleasure or displeasure, saying, in the day of their fulness and prosperity, "our mountain standeth strong, we shall never be moved;" then adversity of some sort or other stands at no great distance. God hideth his face and the nations are troubled. All the elements are at his command, and stand ready to execute the purposes of his will. Fire and hail, snow and vapour, wind and storm, fulfil his word. While the Lord of Hosts hath so many ministers of justice for the punishment of the workers of iniquity, shall any individual or nation remain fearless, or, presumptuously persisting in rebellion, promise themselves success? Nay, rather let them awake to righteousness, and to order. Before God's throne, let the rulers of the earth bow the knee. His kingdom ruleth over all, and endureth from generation to generation; therefore return unto the Lord, ye men of unclean and violent hands, "and of a revolting and rebellious heart*." Learn to fear and adore him, all ye inhabitants of the earth.

* Jerem. v. 23.

II. The second duty recommended is respect to the King. Submission to lawful authority, is a duty which is clearly enjoined and strongly enforced in scripture, and from which no citizen or Christian can claim an exemption. The sacred volume makes provision for the happiness of mankind, both in a present and future life. The highest powers are of God ; the higher powers are of men, but ordained of God ; and those who are sincere and conscientious in the observance of their sacred and primary duties, are seldom defective in those of a civil and secondary nature. To the divine authority all men owe unlimited submission ; but to human authority, only that measure of obedience, which may be proportioned to the justice of rulers, and to the excellence of that constitution under which we live. Hence that exhortation, “ render unto all their dues, fear to whom fear is due, and honour to whom honour *.” Hence also the command of our Saviour in answer to the question, Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not ? “ Render,” saith he, “ unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and unto God, the things which are God’s †.”

* Rom. xiii. 7.

† Math. xxii. 21.

Whoever pays due reverence to the Supreme Governor of Heaven and Earth, will not be apt to treat subordinate rulers with disrespect and contempt. Though all are under the highest obligations to God, for the many blessings which we enjoy under the divine government, it follows not, that man is under no obligations to the King and constitution of his country; whence he derives protection to both person and property. Happy indeed is that nation in which few evil-doers are to be found. But while there is a mixture of virtuous and vicious members in the community, not only the well-being, but the very existence of society, requires government and the impartial administration of justice. In every nation, whether smaller or greater, where the good and bad meet together, there must be a power lodged somewhere for the encouragement of virtue and the punishment of vice: and to that person, it matters not what his title be, in whose hands the constitution has lodged this power, great respect is due from the community. Protection and allegiance are always reciprocal duties; and if some draw the cords of allegiance too tight, others may suffer them to hang too loose upon them.

Z

To

To the virtuous prince who is just, ruling in the fear of God, and rejoicing in the happiness of the people, suitable returns of duty and affection are no more than his due and our reasonable service. To look for perfection, either in a prince or people, were equally absurd. This is what belongs not to human nature or the present state; and all that can be expected by the people from the best of rulers is, to keep the summit of perfection always in view, and strive to advance towards it as nearly as possible.

Of power usurped, as well as of power abused, this nation has had its trial; and both were such yokes, as our illustrious forefathers were unable to bear. Indeed oppression under every shape is fierce and odious; and to human nature, both extremes of tyranny and anarchy are grievous and repulsive. But between the two there is a mild, just, and paternal authority, to which the wise and virtuous in all ages have yielded a voluntary and cheerful obedience. Of this kind is the authority conferred on rulers by our excellent constitution, which has long been the object of very universal admiration. To a part indeed it gives power to frame and execute laws, but it gives

gives this power only for the good of the whole; and whenever this power happens to be abused, or employed to other purposes than those for which it was originally delegated, then the constitution interposes with restraints and corrections, such as are friendly to the interests of the people. "Monarchy limited like ours," says an English writer, "may, for ought I know, be placed in the middle point, whence a deviation leads, on the one hand, to tyranny, and on the other, to anarchy." Towards one or other of these two extremes affairs are always apt to take a turn; but to which of them the current at present runs, every one may easily perceive, and from which of them our greatest dangers are likely to arise, no wise judge can be at a loss to determine.

When Solomon enjoined the fear of God and of the King, he had doubtless a royal government in view; but as the common safety and happiness are the ends of all kinds of government, resistance of law and rebellion can be tolerated under none. If the chief magistrate be a person of exemplary virtue, making religion the object of his care, and the public good the study of his life, then such a character ought to be counted worthy of

double honour. Of this respect and submission to rulers we have a remarkable instance, in the little community of bees. They have their governor, whose presence gives union, life, and energy to the whole society ; to whose person the inferior members pay particular deference, and to whose authority all yield a voluntary obedience. The idle and consuming drone is punished ; the active and provident labourer encouraged. Among the whole, what order, what harmony reigns ! It is dangerous to approach their place of habitation in a hostile manner. None can provoke or injure them with impunity. All unite against the common enemy, and, as if animated with one soul, all are in arms, and ready to risk life in the public defence. Though instinct be the director of all their councils and operations, yet reason cannot contemplate their œconomy, good government, and wonderful works without admiration.—Hence let the nation derive a useful lesson, especially in times of public danger. A free, industrious, and public spirited people, under a good ruler, and firmly united in interest and affection, are strong and respectable in the eyes of their neighbours ; but, when divided, become an easy prey to their enemies. Do bees shew such

such submission and obedience to ruling authority, such union, courage, and even a contempt of life in defence of the common interest? and shall the rational race treat civil governors with levity and disrespect, divide against themselves, become indifferent to public virtue and dead to the love of their country. Even the very insects would upbraid us with folly and error. "Let every soul," saith St. Paul *, "be subject to the higher power;" "whether it be," adds St. Peter †, "to the King as Supreme, or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him :—for so is the will of God."

Solomon, having recommended piety and loyalty to his son, as steady and excellent principles of conduct, to render the character yet more complete, to them, in the third place, adds fidelity. During his peaceful and glorious reign, this caution is subjoined with peculiar propriety, "meddle not with them that are given to change." Nor is it unnecessary or improper in our own days. There may be circumstances when a change, from confusion to order, from adversity to prosperity, may

* Rom. xiii. 1.

† 1 Peter, ii. 13.

be for others ; but well may we say with Job, " changes and wars are against us *." It is common with the wise men of the world, before they begin to build, to count the cost, and, ere they engage in any new project, to calculate the profit and loss. In other concerns he is most likely to attain his end, and secure a happy issue, who acts upon some prudential grounds. By changes of many kinds in our present free and flourishing state, but especially in religion and civil government, there is reason to fear that in the end we shall be losers. Having so many invaluable privileges both sacred and civil, and being under no fear of oppression from rulers, or persecution for conscience sake, we should pray for wisdom to preserve them, and peace to enjoy them. Blest with religion in its purity and perfection, equally free from the errors of idolatry and the dross of superstition, who but fools would meditate changes big at least with hazardous, if not with bad consequences? Favoured with every advantage which can be desired, every opportunity, by means of revelation, of coming to the knowledge of God and Christ, who but evil-doers would wish to recur to a state of nature, or prefer the

* Job, x. 17.

darkness

darkness to the light? After Christ hath come to seek and to save those that were lost, after his religion has so long had many friends and votaries among us, and shewn by its fruits how well it deserved them, who but the unstable and corrupt would meddle with a race of overweening philosophers, bent on nothing less than the abolishment of Christianity? We are taught that there have been fractious spirits, angels of darkness, who were so much given to change, that they could not rest contented, but must excite rebellion even in heaven. On earth we all know that there have been men, whom nothing could please, neither the best of benefactors, nor the best of blessings. Of this perverse spirit, which undervalues the greatest advantages, and neglects to improve them, we have a remarkable instance in the ancient Jews. After God by a mighty hand had delivered them from Egyptian bondage, led them through the wilderness like a flock, driven out the Amorites from Judea, and seated his peculiar people in that land of promise flowing with milk and honey; might it not be expected that they would have rested perfectly satisfied, and served God in sincerity all their lives? But, instead of this, so prone

Z 4

were

were they to error and idolatry, that, notwithstanding all he had done for them, they forsook the Lord, the rock of their salvation, and hankered after strange Gods. Upon which Joshua their leader was grieved, and, assembling all the tribes, declared his abhorrence of such changes and backslidings, and his firm purpose of soul to cleave unto the Lord with all his family. "If," says he, "it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served in Egypt, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord *."

Nor is a revolution in our civil government more devoutly to be deprecated than a change in our religion. Times were, we confess, when the circumstances of this country rendered a reformation of religion, and a change in civil government, no less just than desirable; and good cause have we to be thankful to Heaven for such invaluable and unmerited blessings. These, indeed, were changes which necessity required, and utility warranted; changes to which time, as well as experience, has long since fixed its seal of approbation. But surely, it is not every circumstance that

* Joshua, xxiv. 15.

can

can warrant our having recourse to revolutions, far less to such as are effected by means of violence. It is not every bold and visionary projector that is qualified to judge of their usefulness and expediency. It is not every state of body sound or unsound that renders amputations necessary, especially by rough and unskilful hands. Nor in any case is it prudent and advisable to cut off the head in order to save the body. To remove grievances, reform errors, and correct abuses, is certainly the business of the rational world, but not by cruel and unjustifiable means; and horrible is that reform or revolution, purchased for one half of the nation by the destruction of the other. Though oppressed nations, groaning under the weight of arbitrary power, may, beyond doubt, seek relief, yet no end can justify such barbarous and bloody means. After all, it may be asked, what has the free state, the rich and prosperous people to expect from changes? They have nothing to add to liberty and prosperity, but the wanton abuse of them; and when changes cannot be of any advantage, they are sure to be prejudicial. It is true, free states are more liable to innovations than others, because in them, partly
through

through the the lenity of government, and partly through our freedom of discussion, more opportunities are given to persons disposed to turn liberty unto licentiousness, and licentiousness unto crimes. But certainly, of all others, such states ought to be most vigilant against revolutions ; every change with them is not for the better, but the worse. No person in good health should be tampering with his constitution, by idly dabbling in medicines, and trying needless experiments ; for when they cannot create better health, they are sure to occasion sickness and trouble.

To prevent popular clamour and complaints, much always depends upon a good administration of public affairs. Great is the trust reposed in the ministers of the crown, and other high officers of state. The honour of the King, the stability of government, and the prosperity of the nation, in a great measure depend upon their diligent and faithful discharge of their duty. Nothing evinces the wisdom of a prince, more than his selecting for public servants, men of principle, talents, and virtue. In vicious and profligate characters no confidence can be placed. They seldom fail to render government weak and unstable,

unstable, and to bring governors into disrepute and contempt. With persons devoid of integrity, words, promises, and oaths all go for nothing. To-day they swear fidelity and allegiance; to-morrow they violate their sacred obligations. Gold is the idol of every traitor, and he that proves faithful to his King and country for a great reward only, will betray them both for a greater. What was the method which Constantius Chlorus took to try the souls of his public servants, both civil and military? Being friendly disposed towards the Christian religion, and sensible how hard it was to know the human heart; we are told, that he assembled his officers and judges, and proposed to them this condition, either to sacrifice to demons, or leave the court and their places to others, giving each liberty of choice. By this device, he divided his servants into two parties, into men of principle, and men of the world. Some accordingly, rather than abjure the faith of God and Christ, immediately resigned their places: while others of more convenient principles, in order to retain their posts of honour and profit, renounced their religion. In consequence of such discovery, what did the sagacious emperor? He dismissed

missed the base idolators, and time-serving apostates, but retained the men of principle and probity ; judging, that such men as had proved profidious to their God and Saviour, could not be expected to prove steady and faithful friends to their emperor. Whereas, those who refused to part with God, and relinquish their religion for any earthly consideration, were men that might be depended on, trusted as the confidential servants of their prince, and considered by him as the fittest persons, in all emergencies, to be protectors of his person and guardians of the empire *.

To be yet more particular, let the nation be upon its guard against three evils of great consequence, which seem to be gradually creeping into society ; I mean perfidy, under the mask of liberality of mind ; licentiousness, under the cloke of liberty ; and irreligion, under the form of universal toleration. Upon such enemies, clothed in the specious garb of friends, let all firm adherents to the King and constitution keep a vigilant eye. Such intruders as augur little security to the national interest, and less tranquillity to the world, deserve general discountenance. That

* Euseb. Life of Constantine, Chapter xvj.

spirit of fraternal friendship, which has gone abroad in the world, and which makes no distinction between those that are for us, and those who are against us, appears in such a questionable shape, that it is impossible to be too watchful against its insinuations. Even charity, which thinketh no evil, pronounces such friendship with all mankind, to be enmity against our King and country. Such liberal minded men, as strive to loosen the ties of natural affection, to dissolve the reciprocal obligations of parents and children, of sovereigns and subjects, cannot be deemed good members of the community, even in times of peace. But, in time of war, they are the enemy's best counsellors, the stars which shine but to enable him the more unerringly to shape his course. That liberality of mind, which is constantly dwelling upon the weak side of our country, until it is exposed fully to the view of her enemies; that liberality of mind, which extols the valour of military foes, and damps the courage of our armed protectors; that liberality of mind which studies to give countenance to discontents and tumults, and to weaken the hands of those who hold the reins of government; renders the
most

most essential services to our enemies. Detested be that liberality of mind, where the love of our native land lies farthest from the heart. It has laboured long, and but too successfully, in breeding distraction in one of the happiest of empires. Virtue and truth are always agreeable to men of real honour and public spirit; and no prince ever lost the affections of his people by discouraging treachery and vice, and rewarding fidelity and steadfastness.

In truth, though humanity be due to all mankind, yet friendship necessarily implies preference, and the friend of all nations cannot be the friend of his country. Nay, the Apostle has affirmed, "that whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God *." Nor does any man of licentious principles and corrupt morals deserve to be styled the friend of the people. To every nation good morals are of more consequence, than just laws or great riches. The virtue of the people is always the strongest bulwark of the state; such virtue as rests upon the grounds of true religion, its only solid and durable foundation. The people, left to themselves, have seldom wavering and unstable minds. They are in general sensible of their religious, moral, and civil

* Jam. iv. 4.

obliga-

obligations. Whenever they err, the error is commonly owing to crafty changlings and deceivers. Factious spirits always style rulers tyrants, but with what justice we presume not to say, unless to govern the nation according to law be tyranny. Outrageous tongues can easily pronounce any man a despot, whom a lawless combination wills to destroy. Whenever the wicked mean to sap the foundation of the altar, or the throne, they always address the people on the subject of rights and liberties, and persuade them, that because they have the power therefore they have the right to do what seemeth good in their own eyes. Hence come popular riots, daring and desperate undertakings, so destructive of public order and national security. The people, no doubt, have their natural rights; but, though the Author of nature may have given the power, he never gave any man a right to destroy himself, nor any body of men a right to spread destruction through society. The people have also their constitutional rights, but under no kind of government have they a right to substitute their will in place of law; and to cut off their rulers, because they happened to be born

to fortune, and titles of distinction. Their civil and religious liberties, it is scarcely possible the people can too highly prize; but it is possible to have recourse to such violent means of preserving them, as will most effectually destroy them. Besides, to be constantly talking of rights and privileges to the people, as if they had never known what it was to be free, or had no constitutional guardians of their liberty, and in language too, which evinces the enjoyment of freedom, in the most extensive sense of the word, betrays a design to seduce the unwary, and plot changes and criminal projects. Happy were it for the sober and active, but simple and honest-hearted people, were they less apt to give ear to crafty and interested demagogues, who go about seeking by enticing words to draw them aside from the way of duty and allegiance. Thrice happy were it for the great multitude of busy and industrious people, who have always so much to do, and who are ever so well employed, in making provision for themselves and families, if, instead of *liberty*, a term so undefined, which the designing always use as the watch-word to acts of violence, they would substitute the word *duty*,

duty, which admits of no wrong ; or *law*, which is a terror to evil doers, and a protection to those that do well ; or *religion*, which, when men have art enough to elude the obligation, and escape the penalty of all human laws, subjects them to those of divine authority, and the unavoidable punishment of crimes in a future world. Because, in such a case, busy bodies, and popular agitators, would receive less encouragement, and the world would enjoy more tranquillity and happiness.

There is still another source of public danger, on which all ought to keep a jealous eye, and national guardians to double their vigilant circumspection ; that is, irreligion, which, like a serpent, creeps in among us under the appearance of universal toleration. Ecclesiastical zealots, bigots, and persecutors have had their day. Now all are reprobated as objects of abhorrence, and justly condemned as a reproach to former ages, and as a disgrace alike to humanity and Christianity. But, the world has seen that philosophers can persecute as well as priests, and that it is possible in leaving one extreme to run into another ; and while we tolerate all kinds of religion, to give countenance to none. Allow me to ask, whence

A a

comes

comes this spirit of universal toleration? Is it because we are become more warm and more hearty friends to the cause of God and the interests of religion, than our ancestors? Is it because the principles of religion are now better understood, and its precepts more generally practised, than in former ages? Or is it because religion is now esteemed a matter of little or no consequence, and that the sooner it is abolished, the better for the world? Certain it is, that the love of many waxeth cold. Individuals and nations grow careless, lukewarm, and indifferent. In the scale of public opinion, religion daily loses weight. The profane have declined the service of God, and give no attendance at any places of public worship. The dissipated, "like Gallio deputy of Achaia, care for none of these things *." To the indolent such acts of duty are burdensome. The ignorant know not God, and therefore have no fear of him before their eyes. The proud philosopher scorns all religious offices, deeming them an occupation for the vulgar, but below his notice. The lovers of pleasure, and the men of the world, when summoned to serious duties, are always other-

* Acts, xviii. 12—17.

wife engaged; and the farther God is removed from their thoughts, the less interruption they meet with in their sordid and criminal practices. Hence arises universal toleration. In idea, heaven and earth are separated. We lose sight of our relation to God, and our connexion with a future world. We shut our eyes to the distinction between religious and irreligious men, and treat all with equal civility and complaisance. Our indignation of vice gradually abates, and in a good cause we become "less zealously affected." When men claim the privilege either to fear God, or to fear him not, either to serve him in sincerity, or not to serve him at all, to break down all fences and trample upon all laws, and establishments, civil and ecclesiastical, little knowledge of human nature is requisite to foresee that society approaches towards a state of dissolution.

At present it is the business of all ranks and conditions to turn their attention to a reformation of manners. Here is much room for improvement. Nothing is more to be dreaded than that increasing relaxation of principles and morals, which makes mankind fearless towards God, faithless to their King and country,

try, and indifferent to the cause of virtue and religion. He that is insensible to personal honour and shame, and regardless of what is blameable or praise-worthy in moral conduct, changeable as the winds, and assuming any form that suits present interest and convenience, though in the shape of a man, is a base and hollow-hearted wretch, and can never be trusted. Though eloquent as Apollo, without principle and probity, his eloquence avails nothing. Fluctuating between good and evil, right and wrong, he may be the idol of to-day, but to-morrow he is forgotten and neglected. Like the double minded man, "he is unstable in all his ways," and ready to turn to the right-hand, or to the left, as the tide of folly and corruption happens to run. Whereas the man of integrity changeth not; he cleaveth to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and abhorreth every false and crooked way. Whatever others do, he is inflexible from the direct path of honour and rectitude. He is faithful to his King and country; and, with the revolting multitude, swerves not from his duty and allegiance. His invariable rule of life, is to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

He

He walketh uprightly, worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth. His conduct in general being open, uniform, and consistent; every one knows upon what ground he stands, and consequently, as a father, a friend, a patriot, and a Christian, he is beloved of God and man, and his memorial is blessed.

Thus have we endeavoured to recommend three cardinal virtues, Piety, Loyalty, and Fidelity, as essential ingredients of a complete character; and when united in the same person, commonly render him an object of universal esteem. If we suppose any one of the three absent, we leave a deep defect in the character. It ought to be remembered, that God the Supreme Governor of Heaven and Earth, "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without any variableness or shadow of turning;" that the nature of things is his appointment, that the course of providence is subject to his direction: and that under his righteous moral government there is no safety for impiety, perfidy, and profligacy. It is impossible to say what misfortunes men may prepare for themselves, or what dangers subjects may incur by apostacy and

rebellion. "When the wicked of old did not like to retain God in their knowledge; is it not said that he gave them over to a reprobate mind*?" When philosophy, falsely so called, presumes to exclude the Creator from his works of creation and providence; is it not just with God to smite its professors with the greatest infatuations? When sceptics believe not the truth that they may be saved, is it not written, "God shall send them a strong delusion, so strong, that they shall even believe a lie †?"

Great indeed is God's goodness, patience, and forbearance towards offenders; but woe unto them that turn his grace unto wantonness, and take encouragement to do evil because he is good. Sinners always walk in a vain show. They may for a while prosper, and in the end their prosperity may destroy them. Now the ways of God to man may appear mysterious; but "whenever we hear of wars and rumours of wars, let not the upright be troubled, for all these things must come to pass; but the end is not yet ‡." "Here we know only in part;" hereafter the divine counsels and plans shall be complete, and the wisdom, justice, and

* Rom. i. 28. † 2 Thess. ii. 11. ‡ Math. xxiv. 6.

good-

goodness of all God's ways displayed in perfection. Say not, therefore, in thine heart that all things come alike unto all, and that there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked, to them that fear God, and them that fear him not; but in patience possess your souls until the season of harvest, which is the time of making an entire separation of the tares from the wheat. Continue faithful unto death, and ye shall receive a crown of life. God hath promised, "that he will judge the world in righteousness; and he is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance *."

* 2 Peter, iii. 9.

S E R M O N X V .

O N F R I E N D S H I P .

P R O V . x v i i . 17 .

A friend loveth at all times,——

OF all the relations which we bear one to another, there is none, except those of kindred and consanguinity, more sacred and binding, none more generally useful and beneficial, than that of Friendship. It is a virtue which has been highly valued in every age, and among the wise and the virtuous universally esteemed. Orators and poets have vied with one another in extolling friendship, and seemed as if they were at a loss for language sufficient to speak its praise. Historians and moralists sensible of its vast importance,

tance, have not failed to exhibit many noble and illustrious examples of this virtue in order to attract the attention, and influence the life and practice of mankind. The most intelligent writers among the heathens have recommended friendship, as a virtue productive of the sweetest fruits; because nothing can be more agreeable to human nature, than to dwell among those whom we love, and by whom we are beloved. Nor have Christians been insensible to the great usefulness of this relation, or blind to the advantages of a friendly intercourse among men in a world where all need the countenance and counsel of neighbours and the daily aids, and comforts of mutual love and kindness.

But notwithstanding all that has been said in praise of friendship, and the many beautiful theories that have been written setting forth its vast value and utility; still considered as a practical virtue, it must be confessed that it is too great a stranger in earth. Solomon asserts, "that a friend loveth at all times," in prosperity and in adversity. But the question is, where is that faithful friend to be found? Among the sons of men how

few are there who are at all times disposed to act the part of a friend, and prove that they deserve the honourable appellation? How few are to be found that are every way qualified to support the amiable character, and preserve unbroken and uninterrupted the happy connexion? Many there are, it is true, that profess friendship; but does their practice always correspond with their profession? Far from it. "Some are friendly for their own occasion; but abide not in the day of trouble*." Others shew much love with their mouths, while their hearts are going after their covetousness. The wealthy and hospitable have many friends, but they are only the friends of the table and continue to rejoice with you while the tide of prosperity flows, and the blessings of plenty, like the rains of heaven, are descending upon your house. But no sooner does the tide take a different turn, and adversity attack you like an armed foe, than the tribes of false flatterers forsake you, and leave you to lament with Job, "that even his most familiar friends had forgotten him†," if not with David, "that his most

* Eccclus. vi. 8.

† Job, xix. 14.

intimate friends had lifted up their heel against him *."

Such no doubt is the way of the world, especially among the more selfish and corrupt and the more smooth and polished part of it. All are seeking their own, few or none, the good of their neighbours. Hence the complaint that friendship is on the decay, that sons grow more mercenary than their fathers, and that each succeeding generation seems less given to generous offices of kindness than its predecessors. But however hard it be to find a faithful friend, every one will acknowledge his inestimable value; and however rare the practice of friendship in the world, all will confess the many pleasures and advantages attending it. It may not, therefore, be an unprofitable employment of your time, first to explain the nature, and mark out the province of friendship; secondly, to suggest some motives and arguments to recommend it to your esteem and practice; and lastly, conclude with a few cautions and admonitions to the young respecting the choice of friends.

* Psalm xli. 9.

I. In

I. In order to explain the nature of friendship and define its proper sphere of action and re-action; it is necessary to observe that there are three general relations in which man stands to man; first, in a state of amity; secondly in a state of enmity; and lastly in a state of neutrality; in one or other of which situations every nation, every family, and every individual may be said to stand relatively one to another. Hence it is obvious that every one ought to study carefully the relation which he bears to his neighbour, because in the conscientious fulfilment of the obligations resulting from it, consists the whole duty of man, considered as a moral and social creature.

It must however be admitted, that the claims of consanguinity are prior to those of friendship; the former being derived from nature, deserve the preference; the latter being the effects of free and deliberate choice, are of secondary obligation. We are united to our brother by necessary ties, to our friend by voluntary engagements. Should it be asked, what is friendship? we answer, it is a strong and prevailing attachment between two persons or parties, inclining both to promote

mote by all good and lawful means, each other's interest and happiness, not only in this world, but that which is to come. Or rather it is the state of two or more persons already united in the bands of mutual love and confidence, and disposed to shew each other nothing but mutual offices of kindness. Nor is it requisite that such offices should always be free, generous, and disinterested, and that selfish motives should be entirely excluded; for that is not possible in our present state of frailty and imperfection. Although we cannot but love our friends for the good which they do us; yet it is plain that they regard us not, if they do not do us good, when our occasions call for it, and they have both opportunity and ability.

All friendship between man and man in order to be stable and lasting must be founded upon virtue and religion. Without love to God and man no friendship can be well-grounded and sure. Immorality and irreligion give occasion to jealousy and distrust, and these poison the fountain of all good faith and fellowship among mankind. But perfect love casteth out fear, and the true lover of God, is also the real friend to man. The wicked

wicked and flagitious, it is true, may combine together and plot against the righteous; but such combinations cannot in the nature of things be durable and secure. They are conspiracies which are liable to be interrupted and broken by the least untoward accident or misfortune. To all the workers of iniquity light is offensive. They cannot bear the light which covers them with infamy and disgrace: nor will they come to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd. Hence the frequent ruptures between evil-doers and vicious characters. Where there is neither good faith nor religious principle, neither honour nor honesty, neither justice nor truth, there can be no friendship. Faithless and profligate men may league together, for wicked purposes, and become companions in iniquity; but can never form a society of friends. Dangers hang over their heads, and no sooner are secrets revealed, than the combination is dissolved; and all inherit an ill name, shame and reproach. "But whosoever feareth the Lord," saith an apocryphal writer, "shall direct his friendship aright, for as he is, so shall his neighbour be also *." Among mankind,

* Ecclus. vi. 17.

he

he that is highly esteemed, must have those good qualities which render him amiable in their sight and worthy of their particular notice and regard.

So that without virtue and religion there can be no good fellowship, no firm and durable friendship between man and man. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel*." The man that pays no regard to equity and justice, sincerity and truth, will never have friends; and the reason is obvious, because he is no friend to himself. To some this may seem a paradox; but to others who have looked abroad in the world and viewed human nature in different shapes and situations, there will be little need of demonstrations of the fact. There is a peevish and perverse temper which can thwart us in our best purposes of service and ascribe our most generous actions to the worst motives. There is a fretful and fractious spirit, which, being ill at ease in itself, is seldom or never contented with its station and lot.

* 2 Cor. vi. 14; 15.

There

There is an unfeeling and ungrateful heart, that can disoblige its benefactor, while it is feasting upon his benefits. No wonder then if men of such tempers and characters complain that a faithful friend is not to be found. For who can long befriend persons of malevolent and thankless dispositions? Is not a reciprocation of kind affections necessary to an amicable intercourse with neighbours? Does not every favour conferred deserve a suitable recompence either in word or in deed? Where is the man that will long continue to oblige those who scorn to acknowledge obligations? It is only by a regular exchange of good words and good offices, that the sweet and social affections are nourished and kept alive. It is only by the punctual payment of debts that our interest with generous creditors is maintained and increased. No man can be deemed a friend to himself who reviles and abuses his benefactor. By reiterated acts of ingratitude the most benevolent and liberal-minded are made cold and indifferent. What can be expected but that charitable friends and bountiful givers should turn callous, and deaf to the cries of indigence when their bounties are no sooner bestowed than forgot, and their best gifts received

ceived with sullen silence and base ingratitude? Or why complain that friendship is fallen into decay in the world when its favours thus fall, like the dews of heaven, upon such hard and stony grounds, as yield no fruit?

Whosoever therefore desires to preserve the countenance of friends and the continuance of favours, must shew himself friendly. But perhaps you have heard benevolence extolled, and friendship decried as a mark of a narrow and illiberal mind, such as is consistent neither with the principles of reason, nor precepts of revelation. With some modern philosophers, this is indeed the fashion. But surely such men do err, either not knowing the scriptures, or not regarding the natural distinctions of things. Benevolence beyond doubt is a noble virtue, indicating an enlightened mind and an enlarged heart. Far be it from me to depreciate philanthropy, or detract from its great value and usefulness. Let it have its due estimation in the world, but nothing more than its due. Real friendship is an active virtue, and as Providence hath limited our capacities of doing good, and made it impossible to be equally serviceable to all men,

B b

some

some preference must necessarily take place; and no duty is required of us but what is practicable. We are indeed commanded to wish well to all men, and to do good to them as we have opportunity and ability; but to cherish an equal warmth of affection for all, is not expected from us, being utterly incompatible with our nature, and circumstances in life. Though God be good unto all, yet some, such as Abraham and Moses, were objects of his special regard, and styled in scripture his friends; because they distinguished themselves by their fidelity and obedience*. Though Christ came to spread peace on earth and good-will among all men; yet he also had a few whom he was pleased to call to his service, and to distinguish by the honourable appellation of friends, because they did what he commanded, and were to be employed as chosen instruments in his hand for the instruction and reformation of the world. Hence it appears that friendship is not merely a heathen but a Christian virtue, and ought to be highly esteemed, and carefully cultivated by all who call themselves Christ's disciples. If it be not universal benevolence, it is an

* 2 Chron. xx. 7. Exod. xxxii. 11.

emanation from the same source. If it shine not, like the sun, upon all the world ; it is a ray of light which sheds its beneficial influence through the smaller sphere, upon our neighbours, our kindred, and families. That is the province in which friendship was destined to act, and where as an active virtue its peculiar usefulness is known. Where it is impossible for man to be serviceable to his fellow creatures, either by counsel or zeal, either by precept or example, of what use is friendship ? In such circumstances there may indeed be philanthropy, but there can be no offices of kindness. In such distant circumstances the virtue of friendship must cease to be obligatory. Even among subjects of the same kingdom, though all, when united and well governed, may work together for the common good, yet it is not in the power of any individual to be equally serviceable to all. Friendships therefore can only be formed and cultivated where men meet with men in social intercourse, and where the circumstances of time and place, of opportunity and ability, concur to render mutual love, and mutual offices of kindness, both possible and practicable.

Such then appears to be the province of friendship, the proper sphere of its action and re-action; and he that desires to cherish and cultivate the Christian virtue, must contract his views within the boundaries limited and circumscribed by Providence for its operation. Universal friendship is a contradiction in terms; for its very essence consists in mutual knowledge of good qualities, and mutual esteem occasioned by them. First, we all have a natural love of society, and this love prompts us to seek and select associates. Having found them, we then cultivate a more than common familiarity with them; and from familiarity comes intimacy, and from intimacy, friendship. This seems to be the natural progress from a state of neutrality towards that of friendship; and all is matter of free, voluntary, and deliberate choice. The great obstacles to an intimate friendship seem to be inequality of fortune, and disparity of age. Those devoid of integrity also, however splendid their talents, and high their accomplishments, we cannot esteem. Those of a cheerful temper and of agreeable manners ingratiate themselves at first sight, but often upon better acquaintance

quaintance become objects rather of our dislike than esteem. But wherever there is some equality of fortune and age, some similarity of taste and sentiment ; and wherever we find the excellent qualities of the head united with the noble and generous dispositions of the heart ; we cannot but esteem such characters ; and if they be objects of our cordial esteem, we will naturally live on terms of great amity and good correspondence with them.

What though friendships are contracted between man and man for mutual benefit, this is no disparagement to a relation so agreeable to human nature, and manifestly designed by Providence to alleviate the hardships and sufferings and double the pleasures and comforts of life. Among beings incumbered with frailties and infirmities, and subject to weakness and imperfection, after explaining the nature of amity, little need be added in recommendation of the Christian virtue. If you esteem your friend for his good qualities previous to any prospect of benefit from him ; if ye be conscious of a full purpose of soul to adhere to him at all times and in all circumstances, and determined to render him all possible offices of kindness ; let me ask

B b 3

why

why may ye not expect the same in return from him ? If you have chosen him for your counsellor and guide, and disclosed to him your secret wants and wishes, why may not ye expect in your turn from him the same openness, candour and confidence, at what time soever ye stand in need of his advice or assistance ? Mutual friendship admits of no reserve. Its peculiar property is freely to give advice, and patiently to receive it. It is however a tender plant ; and to keep it alive it must be nursed and cultivated with care, and guarded and protected against every noxious blast. The secrets of a friend must not be revealed. His confidence must not be abused. Upon your probity and discretion, upon your fidelity and prudence, your friend must be able to depend, on all occasions. To the tongue given to spread false reports, your ears must never be open. Integrity and truth must have the entire possession of your heart. And how pleasing and comfortable to have a neighbour of a social disposition and sound judgment, of an even temper and irreproachable character, to whom we can have recourse in times of difficulty, for good counsel or gentle reproof, as the case may require ! He gives the best
evi-

evidence of his friendship who tells us the naked truth, however unwelcome it may at certain times be to our ears. "Faithful," says the wise man, "are the wounds of a friend ; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful *." "Let the righteous smite me," says the Psalmist, "it shall be a kindness : Let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head †."

In order to avoid a rupture with friends and to maintain a good understanding with them, two rules are prescribed in scripture, which ought to be carefully observed. The first is given by Solomon, where he says : "He that hath friends, must shew himself friendly :" and the second, by a greater than Solomon, who hath taught and commanded us; saying : "All things whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even so to them. †" Upon these two golden rules of conduct depend the life and preservation of all friendship between men and men. They are the dictates of right reason and revelation ; and if you are careful to observe them in the general course of your deportment towards

* Prov. xxvii. 6.

† Psalm cxli. 5. Prov. xviii. 24. † Matth. vii. 12.

your neighbour, surely you have good grounds to expect the same in return from him.

But perhaps you have formed your notions of friendship, not from reason or revelation, but from the visionary and romantic tales which abound in the age, the fruits of a wild and over-heated imagination. Such fictions and tales are better calculated to deceive than instruct, to mislead than guide and reform unwary youth. They may charm the fancy, and please the taste; but they injure the cause of truth, and poison and corrupt the heart. Generally speaking, they are false pictures of life, and he that expects such extraordinary fidelity and constancy, such wonders of disinterested friendship from any one, as are there represented, has no reason to complain if he meet with frequent disappointments. We dwell not now in Paradise. Nor is man that upright creature he was, when he came from the hands of his Creator; but what the sacred scripture has characterized him, a fallen, degraded and imperfect mortal. "There is none righteous, no not one;" and he that expects nothing in the journey of life from fellow-travellers but pure and disinterested virtue,
looks

looks for angels and not men, and has therefore, I say, no reason to be surprised if he meet with unexpected crosses and sad mortifications.

To sum up all, let the example of Christ be ever before your eyes, and nothing more will remain to be added in recommendation of this Christian virtue. He was the faithful Friend that loveth at all times ; “ for greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends *.” “ Henceforth,” saith he to his apostles, “ I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends, and all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you, As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you ; continue ye in my love.” And oh, how delightful to the Christian world to have such a friend and benefactor upon whose goodness we can at all times place unlimited trust and confidence, and to whom we can apply for wisdom, grace, and strength in time of need. How reviving and comfortable to believers, to have such a mediator between God and man as is every way qualified to reconcile us to our offended

* John, xv. 13, 14, 15.

Maker,

Maker, and able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. How encouraging and satisfactory to have such a powerful advocate with the Father, as Jesus Christ the righteous, who died for our offences, and rose again for our justification, and who lives for ever to make intercession for us! If he thought proper to abolish the ceremonial part of the ancient law, he hath declared the moral, consisting of love to God and man, indissoluble, and even more permanent than heaven and earth. If he hath not expressly enjoined the cultivation of private friendship; he hath every where in his gospel inculcated those virtues, which include that generous attachment, which is found so conducive to the happiness of individuals, and to the interests of society. He tells his disciples, "ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." And what are we to infer from his strict injunctions of love, meekness, humility, forgiveness, charity, and mercy? but that Christians are bound to live in harmony and peace with one another, and that friendship is a virtue not only recommended, but consecrated by the general spirit of his doctrine as

well as by his amiable and matchless example.

Thus have I pointed out to you the nature, the office, and province of friendship; and recommended the Christian virtue as a becoming ornament to every character. It were superfluous to insist longer upon its usefulness and advantage to persons of mature years and experience. It is an affection so sweet and pleasant, and so productive of good fruits, that there are few that can be insensible to its inestimable value and importance. But after all ye must know that without virtue and religion, without sincerity, probity, and truth, no friendship between man and man can be well grounded and permanent. It is but a shadow without the substance. It is a cloke put on to cover a false and deceitful heart, and to save appearances with the world. Without mutual faith and confidence, it is a species of hypocrisy and dissimulation, a sort of traffic in empty words and civil promises in which the men of fashion and the men of the world deal, on purpose to derive profit at the expence of all around them. "Such friendship with the world is enmity with God."

God *.”—It remains therefore before I conclude, to suggest a few cautions and admonitions to the younger part of my hearers respecting the choice of friends.

Have ye, my young friends, been trained up in the way ye should go, and acquired in your father’s house, virtuous habits and dispositions? This is a good preparation for entering into the great world, where many hazards and dangers await ye. Now as ye value your fortune and reputation in the present life, and as ye regard your interest and happiness in a future, be cautious, we beseech ye, in the choice of your friends. Watch, and pray God to keep you in all your ways, lest ye enter into temptation, and fall into circumstances that are dangerous to virtue. “If,” says the wise son of Sirach, “thou wouldst get a friend, prove him first, and be not hasty to credit him †.” Be assured that evil communications corrupt good manners. The characters of all men are of a mixed kind. None are altogether spotless and perfect. All are good only by comparison, and many are the degrees between the basest and the best; between the most pro-

* Jam. iv. 4.

† Ecclus. vi. 7.

fane,

fane, idle, and profligate, and the most prudent, virtuous, and worthy sons of men. From this mixed multitude, and not from beings adorned with every moral and Christian virtue, your choice must be made. Beware then of setting your earliest and best affections upon improper objects. Turn your eyes to the word of God, and there you will find many useful admonitions for your direction, and to which ye will do well to take heed. Amidst the loose scenes and idle haunts of pleasure and dissipation, a faithful friend is rarely to be found. In places of public resort, and in the midst of the busy crowd, it is no easy matter to distinguish the faithful from the false friend, and previous opportunities of trial may not always offer. The men of the world are usually fickle, inconstant, and variable; but the man of virtue and religion loveth at all times, in adversity as well as in prosperity. For adversity never yet banished a real friend. It only disperses such as have falsely assumed the name. It serves indeed to put friendship to the proof; and the loss of false friends ye ought to regret no more than the loss of so much counterfeit coin. Being
of

of no value, instead of a loss ye ought rather to regard their dispersion as so much real gain.

Be wise therefore and be instructed, ye young and simple ones; lest ye be led into ruin. "Make no friendship," says Solomon, "with an angry man, and with the furious man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his way, and get a snare to thy soul *." For he that is easily provoked is a dangerous companion. He that is seeking causes of offence is sure to find them; and how often have quarrels arisen between two familiar friends, which have terminated in crimes of the deepest die. Make no friendship with tattlers, whisperers, and busy-bodies, who go about from house to house, speaking things which they ought not; "for such persons take pleasure in sowing the seeds of discord among brethren, and separating the best friends †." Make no friendship with foolish talkers and jesters; for it is hard to restrain the loose and unbridled tongue; and such as glory in their humour and wit make little scruple to sacrifice all, even their best friend to their joke. Contract no friendship with flatterers and tale-bearers, lest they

* Prov. xxii. 24.

† Prov. xvi. 28.

spread

spread a net for your feet, in which ye will be entangled before you are aware of your danger. Court no friendship with vile profligates and rakes ; for their favour is only to be purchased at the expence of a good conscience, and you may be assured that the calls of vice and corruption will be answered before those of honour and virtue. Avoid all intimacy with the sordid and selfish ; for such men regard none longer than he can be subservient to their interest. In short, have no familiarity with profane infidels and apostates who vilify religion and make a mock of sin ; for those who are devoid of faith and principle, and who neither fear God nor regard man, are never to be trusted. Indeed all kinds of hypocrisy, dissimulation, and treachery, are so base and detestable, and so unfriendly to society, that they destroy in a moment that agreeable intercourse between man and man, which we fondly believed to be so well grounded and sure, that it would have lasted for ever.

But let me not be misunderstood : while I am warning you of hazard from profane and vicious associates, I am far from recommending the gloom of solitude to which nature has

an

an invincible aversion, or yet an exclusion from the abodes of men of business honesty, and industry. For although there be many in the world with whom it would be very imprudent and even dangerous to form a strong attachment and close correspondence; yet it is to be hoped there are also not a few who are worthy of your cordial esteem, and with whom ye may safely contract a firm friendship. Without friendship what would the world be, but a barren waste, a dreary and inhospitable desert, yielding scarcely any thing to give a relish to existence? But what hath not Providence prepared by means of love and friendship to render it a sweet and comfortable habitation? "A faithful friend," says the son of Sirach, "is the medicine of life, and he that feareth the Lord shall find him." And, elsewhere, the same author affirms, "a faithful friend is a strong defence, and he that hath found such an one, hath found a treasure *."

To conclude. Solomon adds, "thine own friend, and thy father's friend forsake not †." His fidelity and constancy have been proved by the experience of one

* Ecclus. vi. 16.

† Ecclus. vi. 14.

whole

whose love to you was unquestionable and whose memory must ever be dear to you. Your father's friend has been weighed in the balance, and found not wanting. His virtue is not the growth of a day, it is deep rooted and matured by time ; and if ye build upon this foundation, you build upon a rock that is not to be shaken by the changeable winds of fortune, nor by the violent storms of adversity. Above all keep yourselves in the love of God. "He is the friend that sticketh closer than a brother." He is the best guide and guardian of youth, and never-failing staff and support of age. Walk with him and he will crown you with his blessing here and with everlasting glory hereafter.

S E R M O N XVI.

On the LOVE of our COUNTRY.

[Preached at KELSO, where the Author received his grammatical Education, on a Day of General Thanksgiving for a great Naval Victory.]

PSALM CXXXVII. 5, 6.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

THESE words are expressive of much concern and affection, and as they manifestly proceed from a temper of mind somewhat ruffled and incensed, the circumstances which gave occasion to them merit particular notice. They are transmitted to us as the words of some ancient Jew, at a time when his nation was in a state of captivity at Babylon; and to the manner how he and his country-

countrymen had been brought into that unhappy situation, none of you can be supposed to be strangers, that have the sacred volume in your hands. The ancient Jews, you must know, were a people highly favoured of Heaven, yet, notwithstanding the frequent interpositions of Providence in their behalf, and the signal deliverances from time to time wrought for them, they remained after all an inconsiderate and thankless race, so fond of changes, and so much addicted to impiety and idolatry, that, in the midst of his benefits, they could forget their Creator and Benefactor, and lightly esteem the Rock of their Salvation. Their country, however, being a pleasant and fertile land, was an invitation to envious and powerful neighbours, and bold and ambitious invaders. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, who was a prince of this description, had, it appears, previous to the time when this psalm was composed, besieged, taken, and burnt Jerusalem, the capital of Judea, then one of the richest and most magnificent cities in the world. Not contented with plundering and destroying the city, and laying waste the country, he had carried off the princes, nobles,

C c 2

and

and principal inhabitants, who had escaped slaughter at home, captive to Babylon. Now, it was there the Jews learned to raise to heaven the voice of lamentation, and this sad song, with many others, flowed spontaneously from their tongues. There they found time for recollection, and leisure to mourn the loss of all that was dear to them in their native land. There they called to mind the days of former years, when the tribes could go up to their temple, and worship the God of their Fathers, and none to make them afraid. There they remembered how joyfully they were wont to tune their harps to their Maker's praise, and sing the songs of Zion in perfect freedom and peace. But now, when deprived of their laws, their liberties, and their religion, subjected to a foreign yoke, and numbered with pagans and oppressors, whose manners they disliked, and whose worship they detested, they became sensible to their irreparable loss, and began to feel the workings of natural affection for their beloved country.

Such were the circumstances which gave rise to this psalm ; and how natural in such a state was the voice of lamentation ! But farther,

ther, to add distress to the distressed, it should seem, while these poor captives were sitting by the streams of Babylon, and with downcast countenances and disconsolate hearts ruminating upon their hard fate ; and while the harps, on which they formerly delighted to play, were hanging upon the willow-trees, up came some Babylonians, and, like cruel conquerors, demanded a song of Zion, such as they were wont to sing at Jerusalem. But the demand was considered by the captives as unseasonable at least, if not as an insult in the days of their misfortune. How can we, replied they, whose hearts are out of tune, and whose hands are consequently unskilful, sing the Lord's song in a strange land? Think no more, said the Babylonians, of your city, your temple, or your palaces, now a heap of ruins, and let the remembrance of your former glory and greatness be blotted out of your memory for ever. Babylon is a fine city ; she is henceforth your place of abode ; therefore take down your harps, and sing, play, and rejoice. Music will soothe your sorrows to rest, and make you forget your beloved city, and all past troubles and misfortunes. Nay, says one of the captives, in the name of

the rest, exasperated by such language, and probably casting his eyes towards his native land; Nay, "if I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

This being the general scope of the psalm, in which there is a rehearsal of what passed or was supposed to pass between the Babylonians and the captive Jews; and such being the main purport of the words which I have selected out of it, let us next enquire what lessons of instruction they suggest to us. And, in the first place, the words plainly imply that the love of our country is a natural and strong passion implanted in us by the Author of our frame, for wise and excellent ends; and, consequently, that it is the duty of every one to cherish and cultivate this virtuous principle, this amiable and noble affection.

That every man ought to be well acquainted with his duty to God, his king, and his country, all will readily acknowledge; but, at the same time, that there are certain seasons when we are all too apt to lose sight of this duty, and forget our relative obligations, experience daily

daily testifies. To put you and myself therefore in remembrance of our natural, civil, and religious duties, and to impress our minds with a serious and deep sense of these moral obligations, shall be the chief purport of the following discourse.—We must all acknowledge that reverence, love, submission, and obedience are due to God, in whom we live and move, and from whom we derived our existence. All men without exception, high and low, rich and poor, of every nation, kindred, and tongue, considered as his offspring, stand in the same relation to God, and therefore the duties of religion are of universal and indispensable obligation. But as the relations which we bear to one another, from the closest to the most distant, are various, our obligations to duty must of course vary according to the several degrees removed from consanguinity. We are indeed to wish well and to do good to all men as we have opportunity and ability ; but where the relation is so remote, that it admits of no reciprocal acts of kindness, the moral obligation must cease. We are to love our enemies, but not with the same warmth of affection as our friends and families. We are also required to pray for those that despitefully use and persecute

cute us, but not to place in them as great a share of confidence as in our approved well-wishers and benefactors. These are duties which, under proper limitations, both humanity requires and christianity enjoins. But still some distinction is natural, necessary, and even unavoidable; because no person can be under equal obligations to all men; and therefore it is justly added, "Render unto all their dues; fear, to whom fear is due; honour, to whom honour; custom, to whom custom; tribute, to whom tribute*."

Admitting then that there is a general love due to all mankind bearing the venerable image of God, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, this universal benevolence cannot be supposed to supersede or come in competition with that love of preference due to our country, our friends, and families. For in proportion as we draw from the more distant towards the closer relations of life, correspondent obligations necessarily arise, and every secondary consideration must give way to our primary duties. All men may be said to have two mothers, the woman that brought them into the world, and the country which

* Rom. xiii 7.

received

received them the moment of their birth, and furnished them with the necessities and conveniences of life. No person surely, will pretend to say that we are under as great obligations to a strange woman as to a tender mother, who has given us birth, nourishment, and education. She has a special right to filial honour, love and respect. Nor will any man presume to affirm that we are under as many obligations to a foreign land, which perhaps we never saw, as to our native country which received us the moment of our birth, and from our youth upwards furnished us with food, raiment, and protection to both persons and properties. To our mother country we all stand deeply indebted. It has an unquestionable claim to our tender concern, partial love, and friendship. It has a good right to expect that we should prefer it to all other lands, and embrace every opportunity of promoting its glory and prosperity. This is no more than what common justice requires, and natural gratitude suggests. What then shall we think of that person who makes high pretences to liberality of mind, and pleads his universal benevolence, while he is a cruel neighbour,

an

an undutiful son, a faithless friend, a rebellious subject, and a dangerous citizen ?

God is not the author of confusion, but of order and peace. Cast your eyes upon the system of nature, and there you find each of the great luminaries in the celestial world moving in its proper sphere, without either clashing or interruption. When you contemplate the firmament, and consider the sun, moon, and stars, what order, what beauty, what harmony reigns throughout the whole ! Nor was this order destined for the natural world only by the great Creator and supreme Governor of the universe, but also for the moral. All creatures, man only excepted, maintain their rank and station, and answer the ends of their creation. It is he alone that deviates from the sphere assigned him, disfiguring the face of nature, reversing the order and disturbing the peace of the world. He was made a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and dignity ; but man being in honour, abode not. Being tempted, he turned apostate, and for apostacy was expelled paradise.

But as God hath ever since been pleased to fix the place of our birth, and to appoint us our lot

lot in one country rather than in another, surely he hath, by this appointment, taught us to regard our native land as the object of our particular concern and affection. By our native country, I mean not only that spot of ground where we first drew the breath of life, not only these hills and plains whence we derived the means of subsistence, but also that political body of which we became members the moment we were born ; that particular society which is subject to the same laws, which is governed by the same sovereign, speaks the same language, and enjoys the same civil and religious privileges. Though those natural ideas may be often associated with the moral, and, like external signs, help to kindle our zeal and, urge to action as occasions require ; yet the love of our native country imports a partiality to that kingdom of which we are a part, and to which we belong ; a preference to that community united under one head, and whose parts are so closely connected, that the head cannot suffer without its members suffering together with it. That is our Jerusalem, to use the language of Scripture, our city compactly built together, whose good we ought always to seek, and for whose prosperity we ought
particu-

particularly to pray. Although all members of the community cannot have the same office, nor bear the same rank, yet all are literally brethren, friends, and companions, connected together by the common ties of consanguinity, duty, or interest, bound to consult the common good, and to dwell together in harmony and peace. Especially in times of public danger all ought to stand by one another; and, as if animated by one heart and one soul, appear at every risk in defence of their country. For, wherever this love of our native land lives, and exerts its natural energy and vigour, it supercedes all sordid and selfish considerations, conquers the love of ease, pleasure and profit, and even every filial and conjugal affection. The only emulation among men inspired with this principle is, who shall distinguish himself most in deeds of valour and virtue. Who shall appear most zealously attached to the cause of the king, and render his country the most useful and important services. He that has the good fortune to be born in these realms, and bred under our free and happy constitution, cannot too chearfully contribute to its support, nor do too much in its defence and preservation. His private interest he is at liberty

liberty to seek ; but must seek it only in subordination to the public good ; and, if need be, must not scruple to sacrifice fortune, and even life itself, in order to secure the rights, support the honour, and promote the happiness of the community to which he belongs.

These are some of the many duties which a man owes his king and his country. Nor are such local predilections to be deemed vulgar and narrow prejudices, the effects of weakness of intellect, or an ill-directed education ; but natural, virtuous and commendable attachments. Philosophers may boast their liberality of mind, and glory in calling themselves citizens of the world at large, above all local prepossessions and mean partialities. But universal good is an object too extensive and remote sufficiently to interest the human heart. In a field so wide and boundless, the combining principle of virtue loses itself for want of direction. Among relatives so distant, so little known, no firm bonds of union, no strong attachments, no useful and durable alliances can be formed. In the universal lover no confidence is placed. The friend of all nations is, in fact, the friend of none. Before

we

we can feel the glowing of genuine love, or evince the energy of true friendship, we must contract our views, and dwell nearer home.— It is absurd to talk of universal benevolence, and to live among men whose faculties of doing good are limited and circumscribed by Providence. Though related in some sense to the whole human race, we are certainly more nearly related to that nation, city, and family where we are born and brought up, than to any other in the immense universe. In all cases of competition, to these therefore, a love of preference is certainly due. Having entered into a closer intercourse with our brethren and countrymen, and engaged in more frequent communication of benefits, for them we must also feel a stronger sympathy of affections, than for aliens, of whom not one of ten thousand, perhaps, has ever come within the compass of our knowledge. Away then with that false and frigid philosophy, which tempts men to withdraw their hearts and affections from their proper objects, and sends them to wander abroad throughout the world. Where mutual offices of kindness are impracticable, we can have no moral obligations to perform them.

them. We may wish well to all men, and yet reserve our warmest regards for those that best deserve them. We may extend our commercial dealings throughout the globe, and yet retain a predilection for our native land, and save our most passionate and tender attentions for our brethren, our friends and companions.

This appears to be the rational and proper exercise of love and friendship, those social affections implanted in us for wise and excellent ends, those lively and powerful principles of active virtue. This patriotism, or love of our country, has, in all ages and by all nations, been deemed one of the noblest passions that can warm and animate the breast of man. No person is born to be a mere cumberer of the ground, far less a solitary creature, detached from the rest of mankind, without any capacity of discerning a public good, or without any calls and motives prompting its advancement. We are all born social beings, members of a community, capable of comprehending its interests, of taking a share in its dearest concerns, and are stimulated by the strongest motives to pursue its security with redoubled zeal and ardour. Let us therefore beware of
following

following these strange and erratic lights which now and then appear in the world ; but especially let us guard against that laxity of principle, which, by loosening our affections from their proper objects, and alienating our minds from our mother country, tears asunder the firmest bands of society, and separates the nearest connexions of life. To be without natural affection is a mark of deep depravity and corruption. It is monstrous, and betrays either the rebel or the traitor lurking in our bosom. Or rather it is mere affectation ; for it is not possible for any son to be so void of filial affection, as to prefer a stranger to the fond parent that brought him into the world ; or a foreign land, to the country by which he has been fed and nourished from his youth upwards. It is not possible, I say, for any one to be so destitute of principle, or so dead to the feelings natural to every heart, as seriously to fancy himself in the bosom of society raised to a state of such absolute independence, as exempts him from those duties which the common condition of humanity necessarily requires.

Further, if it be true that we are not only born part of the great society of mankind, but
members

members of a particular state, which recognises us as its children the moment of our birth, adopts us into its family, and takes us under its special care and protection; surely, for the many benefits bestowed upon us in early years, that state has a just claim to our future fidelity and public services. Protection and allegiance are reciprocal; and so are the duties of princes and people, governors and governed. Believe it, you have as much to apprehend from flatterers of the people, as from the flatterers of your prince. "Know this also," says the apostle, "that in these last days perilous times shall come. Men shall be without natural affection, truce-breakers, blasphemers, traitors, heady, and high-minded." Whenever characters, marked by such traits as these appear, they are, among others, certain signs and symptoms of the approach of evil days. Let us beware of seducing spirits and vain talkers about the sovereignty of the people. They are agents of the prince of darkness; who promise you all the kingdoms of the world, but at the expence of public order and peace, and private safety and happiness. They are emissaries of Satan, who thus flatter your pride, and who, by infusing into your minds principles of disaffection, and

D d tempting

tempting you to riots and insurrections, seek to lead you into a snare. Trust not to their lying words and specious pretences of friendship. Whenever the devil and his agents mean to ensnare and betray, they usually assume the appearance of angels of light. Beware of reviling your rulers, and of resisting legal authority. "Take heed also lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit *." Be assured that the interests of prince and people in these realms are inseparable; and remember that you have a ruler famed for justice and a love of liberty, but he knows no liberties except such as are warranted by the laws. "Rulers," says the apostle, "are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power; do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; For 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 doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake †."

Besides, let it not be forgotten, that the king-

* Col. ii. 8.

† Rom. xiii. 3, 4, 5.

dom which has taken you under its care, and afforded you security to your persons, your properties, and your religion, has an unquestionable right to expect from you the sacrifice of your pleasure and ease, your talents and time, for its benefit. It is not enough that you pursue such studies and employments as are agreeable to yourselves, but you must remember your prior obligations, minding each the proper duties of his station, and all working together for the public good. No subject has any right to desert the country to which he is deeply indebted; far less, in times of peril, to league with its enemies, and plot its destruction. He is a base and unworthy son who can rise in arms against his mother country; who, for sordid interest, or any other consideration whatever, can betray his nearest friends and relatives into the hands of their enemies. Well may such a mother exclaim, in the words of the prophet, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

But it is needless to enlarge on a subject so plain to every man of common sense and understanding. Consult the lives and characters of the greatest and best of men recorded in

D d 2

history,

history, of those sages, legislators, and heroes who have shone as the lights of the world. Were they not all eminent for love to their country? Did they not rejoice in every opportunity of promoting its honour, its interest, and security? What did they not do and suffer in its defence, when difficulty and danger called for their services? and, after having done all that they could, were they not ready to confess that they had done no more than their duty? Being connected with the soil by the most endearing ties, the ties of nature, too strong and too complicated to be broken, they felt themselves deeply interested in the fate of their native land. Every recollection of what passed in their youthful days, when their minds were void of care, and their hearts unspotted from the world, seemed dear to them. Every scene, after long absence, which the eyes of innocence had been accustomed to behold, on their return to their country, had its peculiar beauties, its irresistible charms. The intimate friends and companions of their youth they recognized with joy, as the objects of their earliest and warmest affection. The ground upon which their infant-steps had trodden, and where they had been trained up in the way they should go, they

they reviewed with inexpressible pleasure. The temple in which their tongue first learned to sing praise to God, and in which their ears first heard the glad tidings of the gospel, they regarded with more than common veneration. Even among the sepulchres of their fathers, distinguished for piety and famed for virtue, they could not walk but with thoughtful silence, and while they mused, the fire burned; and this remembrance of worthy characters had a moral influence upon the heart.

Of this ardent love to his country, and readiness to risk life in its defence, we have a remarkable instance in David, king of Israel. On all occasions of danger, how forward was he to appear in its defence, and to be a champion in its cause? How forcibly did he recommend the virtue of patriotism to his people? "O pray," says he, "for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls: and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sake, I will now say, peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord, I will seek to do thee good. Thither the tribes go up to give thanks to his name."

Of the same patriotic spirit we have another

D d 3

noble

noble example in our Saviour's lamentation over Jerusalem. History informs us, that, after Cyrus, king of Persia, had conquered Babylon, the Jewish captives there obtained permission to return to their native country, to rebuild their city and temple, and to restore their worship; and that during the æra of the second temple, it was graced with the presence of the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Such, however, was the character of the Jews, a stiffnecked, factious, and revolting race, that their domestic peace and prosperity could not be of long duration. Still they continued insensible to the divine goodness, persecuting the prophets, and rejecting all Christ's calls and invitations to repentance. Hence our Lord foresaw and foretold the second destruction of their beautiful city, and the final dispersion of its unbelieving, thankless, and impenitent inhabitants. As he drew nigh the city, he lamented its impending fate, and his words are expressive of much concern, tenderness, and sensibility: "O Jerusalem Jerusalem," saith he, "which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her
her

her wings, and ye would not ! Behold your house is left unto you desolate *."

So much for that love of preference due to our country, a passion so natural to the human heart, so pleasant and productive of great and generous actions. It marks the man of honour, and swallows up all selfish and sordid regards, whenever they come in competition with that predominant passion.—Now, whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning ; and the history of past ages is, in many respects, useful to the present, and may, by proper application, be profitable for warning, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness.

Turn your eyes then to your present circumstances, and consider the many blessings and advantages which you enjoy as a nation, and are the grounds of thanksgiving this day to God. That your lot has been cast in a pleasant land, a land of liberty and light, none of you need be told. That God hath not dealt so with every nation and people around you as with you ; and that he hath hitherto charged his providence concerning you, and protected you against the hands of violent men, every one must confess. While other

* Matth. xxiii. 37.

lands have felt the storms of war, and been agitated with strong convulsions, you have hitherto sat in safety under the shadow of God's wings, harassed neither by the arrow that flyeth by day, nor the pestilence that wasteth at noon. While many of your unfortunate neighbours are groaning under the yoke of usurpers, bewailing their wretched state, and enduring all the hardships of penury, discord, and confusion, of which they see no end; you have hitherto enjoyed the smiles of fortune, being blessed with a mild government, a fertile soil, freedom to improve it, and to enjoy the fruits of your labours in quietness and security. While others seem to be given up to a reprobate mind, and are living without God, and without hope in the world, laughing at religion, and making every thing serious and sacred the subject of wanton derision; you are yet rejoicing amidst the blessings of light, the means of grace and salvation, and the hopes and promises of the gospel. In a word, while thousands are lamenting the loss of all that is dear to them in life, and ten thousands are passing their wearisome days and restless nights without safety to either persons or properties, you have yet manufactures thriving, trade flourishing, and commerce

commerce secure; and, comparatively speaking, are suffering nothing, except from that general sympathy which every humane person must feel for the calamities of his fellow creatures. Indeed, in whatever light we view the goodness of Providence extended towards us, we must this day perceive much ground of praise and thanksgiving. If we consider the loving kindnesses of the Lord, we have good cause of rejoicing; if we consider the manners of our people, thus favoured of heaven and earth, we must, perhaps, rejoice with trembling.

When it is well with us, how unreasonable is the voice of murmur and discontent? When we and our affairs prosper, at least as much as circumstances will admit, how ungrateful to fret against the Lord, and outrage heaven with impious complaints? Need I recal to your remembrance the signal interpositions of Providence in your behalf in former ages, or the great deliverances wrought for you at sundry times and in divers manners? Need I tell you of recent victories gained through the blessing of the Great Governor and Supreme Disposer of all events on the arms of our country? victories so wonderful, so unparalleled in the annals of past ages, that they cannot but fill every heart with surprise and astonishment, and call
forth

forth the voice of gratitude from every tongue in these realms. Never did we know more perilous nor yet more glorious times. Never had the nation better reason than on this day to magnify the Lord, and to rejoice in the God of its salvation. Believe it, Great Britain, at this moment, stands in a high but amiable point of light among the nations of the earth. You behold, indeed, her sword of justice drawn, but it is justice tempered with mercy, the peculiar characteristic of our royal government. You see her with one hand chastising the proud and insolent part of her neighbours, and with the other receiving the persecuted and oppressed, and nourishing them in her bosom. You behold her triumphing over her enemies, yet even in the midst of her triumphs, tendering them terms of peace and reconciliation. You see her prepared for self-defence, at the same time making her moderation known unto all men, and both willing and wishing to sheath the destructive sword, and spare mankind. This also is a just cause of thanksgiving to God, from whom all good counsels, generous dispositions, and humane purposes proceed.

But time would fail me to reckon the number of God's benefits, and to display all the riches of his goodness, patience, and forbearance towards

wards us. His mercies are indeed more than can be numbered. Great, beyond doubt, and inestimable are our natural, civil, and religious privileges. But, alas! we often lightly esteem our best blessings, merely because they are common, and because we know not what it is to want them. We seldom learn their real value until they be lost. We too often persist in folly till wisdom, if she come at all, come too late to be of any advantage. The ancient Jews know not how to appreciate God's favours and their domestic blessings until they sat by Babel's streams, pensive and sad, bewailing the loss of all that was dear to them in their native land. From their misfortunes let us take timely warning, and beware of provoking God by our follies and factions, by our ingratitude and impenitence, lest he visit our transgressions likewise with a rod, and our country with a scourge.

At present the eyes of Europe are upon you as a nation, and great are the expectations of the wiser and worthier part of mankind from your firmness, fortitude, and good sense. Much depends on the wisdom of your public senators, and on the vigilance, courage, and conduct of your fleets and armies. If then you have any love for your country, or any concern for its honour

honour and safety ; if you have any fear of God before your eyes, or any regard for those in authority over you ; if you wish well to your posterity, or desire the preservation of your laws, your liberties, and religion ; now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation ; see that ye mind the things that belong to your temporal and eternal peace, before they be hid from your eyes. The threats, insults, and indignities offered to the nation, the free and independent nation, to which we belong, you cannot but feel with indignation. Surely you are not yet lost to every sense of honour, or ripe for becoming a province of France ! Beware then of trusting to the humanity and clemency of men who have made themselves your enemies. By their actions, not by their words, let them be proved. Wherever they have yet carried their arms, has not their progress been marked with rapine and bloodshed, misery and desolation ? Have not their fraternal friendships and their tender mercies hitherto been great cruelties ? Your resources are great ; your cause is good ; your situation by nature favourable for defence ; and notwithstanding the power and policy of your foes, by a firm union of force and affection, you have but little to apprehend, and every thing to

to hope.—“Only fear God, honour the king, and love the brotherhood,” especially men of probity and justice. Mark those among you, if any such there be, that are movers of sedition, propagators of disaffection; those whisperers and busy bodies, that love to go about, sowing the seeds of discord and confusion, as the common pests of society, and have no communication with them. Remember the virtues of your ancestors, many of whom were eminent for their wisdom and valour, their fidelity and patriotism, and renowned for great and glorious achievements. Take heed, I beseech you, lest by your conduct in a day of trial, you evince yourselves to be a feeble, effeminate, luxurious, and degenerate race; tarnishing the national character, and covering it with marks of indelible infamy and disgrace. We are but too apt to find fault with our rulers, and to forget the duties incumbent upon ourselves. To give energy to the great counsels of the nation, and strength to the hands of governors and magistrates, we ought to remember that unanimity and fidelity, firmness and constancy, on our part, are indispensibly requisite. Let each of us, therefore, study the proper duties of his station, and be careful to fulfil them; and let all learn to be zealous for the public good, and to lead quiet
and

and peaceable lives, in godliness and honesty. It is only by voluntary associations of individuals, and by the united efforts of a great and independent nation, together with the blessing of Heaven, that we can expect to baffle the power of vain-glorious and arrogant adversaries, and frustrate all their wicked designs and desperate attempts to invade us. They seem indeed to have no expectations, no prospects of success, but from our domestic dissension, our folly, or misconduct. Let us shew them that they have mistaken our temper and character, and fed themselves with false hopes. In a day of trial, should that day ever come, we trust that they shall find ready hands and determined hearts able enough to oppose them; and, notwithstanding some private feuds, a nation united, and prepared to assert its rights, to convince its foes of their rashness and presumption, and teach them that none shall approach its dominions in a hostile manner with impunity.

Above all things, let us beware of infidelity and profligacy, and of drawing back unto perdition, after we are come to the knowledge of the truth. In times of pagan darkness, perhaps, God might wink at the involuntary errors of his children, and not be strict to mark their iniquity;

quity ; but now, that light shines upon us, we can have no cloke for our unbelief and impenitence. Let us beware of giving ear to flagitious apostates, who are striving to rob us of the best comforts of life, I mean the precious promises of the gospel, and the blessed hopes of glory, honour, and immortality. Do you wish to be esteemed wise? study the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation. Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled in the yoke of heathenish bondage *. Walk worthy of the vocation to which ye are called ; and may he who hath loved you, and given you everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work †.

Finally, men and brethren, farewell. " Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering."—Remember the warning given you : " that the time will come, when men will not endure sound doctrine ; but after their own lusts shall they heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears ; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables *."—You desire peace and

* Gal. v. 1. † 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.

prosperity, and that your peace and prosperity may continue to abound is the worst wish of my heart towards you. If any be otherwise disposed, and seek to seduce you from your allegiance to God, your king, and your country, great beyond expression is their guilt. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Beware of false brethren, and of blind leaders of the blind, who seek to compass your ruin by domestic divisions and civil distractions. Ye believe in God, and you do well; "but these things I must affirm constantly; that they who believe in God, must be careful to maintain good works. Therefore, whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*, whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *good report*; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things: Be of good comfort, be of one mind; live in peace among yourselves, and the God of peace shall be with you *."

* Philip. iv. 8, 9. 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

FINIS.



Printed by A. Strahan,
Printers-Street.