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~~ANNEX IIB.~~

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Library of  
Princeton University.

From the Library of  
Samuel Miller, D.D.

In Memory of

Judge Samuel Mill

Pres.

Samuel Miller Jr.

Wm. Miller

S E L E C T  
S E R M O N S

O N *Sam<sup>l</sup>. Miller's.*

I N T E R E S T I N G  
S U B J E C T S.

12/

B Y

H U G H K N O X, D. D.

MINISTER OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
IN ST. CROIX.

To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. ST. PAUL.

MOREOVER, I will endeavour that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance. ST. PETER.

V O L. I.

G L A S G O W:

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M. DCC. LXXVI.



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T O T H E  
R I G H T H O N O U R A B L E  
B O L L E W I L L I A M L U X D O R P H,  
K N I G H T O F T H E O R D E R O F D A N N E B R O G,  
C O U N S E L L O R O F C O N F E R E N C E S,  
A N D  
F I R S T D E P U T Y O F T H E R O Y A L C H A N C E R Y,  
A T C O P E N H A G E N.

R I G H T H O N O U R A B L E S I R,  
V O L T A I R E, the celebrated historian  
and panegyrist of L O U I S X I V. some-  
where observes that that monarch exhib-  
ited an example of the *true sublime* in  
royalty; and it has been allowed by his  
greatest admirers, that nothing so much  
aggrandized his character, or so truly  
intituled him to the surname of G R E A T,  
as his exquisite taste for the arts and  
sciences, and his generous patronage of  
learning and learned men, not only in  
his own kingdom, but in almost all the  
nations of *Europe*.

JUN 26 1901

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WHAT an addition is real learning to grandeur? What lustre does it reflect on high birth and station? It causes the diadem to beam with double effulgence upon the brow of majesty. It ennobles nobility itself, and exalts it even almost to regal splendour and usefulness, especially when it becomes the patron and encourager of the arts and sciences in others.

IT will scarce be denied that *Mecenas* the noble patron of *Virgil*, *Horace*, *Livy*, *Varro*, *Vitruvius* and *Ovid* (that bright constellation of geniuses who illuminated and adorned the court of *Augustus*, and marked and distinguished the age in which they lived with the brightest characters of literary glory)—it will scarce be denied, I say, that the amiable *Mecenas* deserved as well of the world, and reflected as great an honour on the *Roman Empire*, by drawing these incomparable geniuses out of obscurity, and cherishing and developing their parts, as *Julius Caesar* by all his conquests in *Gaul*, *Germany* and *Britain*. The arts and sciences thrive and flourish

## DEDICATION ▼

best in a genial and friendly soil: they need encouragement and protection, and because of their unspeakable advantages to human society, they deserve to be cherished and fostered by the kindly condescending hand of majesty itself. The patronage of the *prince* and of the *patriot* is due to them, and they claim it by a just title. The most important service which can be rendered to any state, is to propagate and disseminate among its inhabitants the principles of virtue and sound philosophy, to enlighten their understandings, inspire their hearts with right sentiments, and prompt them to a worthy conduct. But if we consult the history of the human mind, we will find that this important end was never effectually attained in any state where the culture of the arts and sciences was not countenanced and patronized by the *great*. The favour of the good and great is that *sun* which by its benign influences warms and fertilizes the human mind, and elicits those blossoms and fruits of genius which adorn and enrich a people: it naturally

prompts to emulation, and sets a people upon those studies and pursuits which would otherwise have lain neglected for want of the proper encouragement.

THE amiable character you sustain by all who have the honour of your acquaintance, not only as the *Mecenas* of the learned, and the friend and patron of *learning, virtue and religion*, but also as one of the most competent judges of every thing that is curious and excellent in the whole circle of the sciences; — and that philosophical curiosity which prompts you to collect, by your learned correspondents, every thing that is new in the history of knowledge from all parts of the world, not excepting even this infant colony, late the dreary haunt of savages, where the necessary labour and fatigue of new settlements have scarce as yet permitted us to reflect that we are rational beings, and have immortal souls; but where, thro' the lenity and indulgence of government, we hope to be soon more at leisure for the cultivation of our minds—as they speak your ardent thirst of knowledge,

and how much attention you pay to its state and interests in the world, even at your advanced period in life — so I confess they have inspired me with an earnest desire of being made known to YOUR EXCELLENCY, as a respectful admirer of your character, and an humble friend to your most favourite attachments and pursuits.

BUT I little hoped so quick and easy an access to this honour as happened, almost without my knowledge, to be procured for me by my honourable friend *Lansdommer Subr*; who was pleased to mention me and some of my trifling productions to YOUR EXCELLENCY in such terms as are very flattering for me.

THRO' this means, and By your own permission, I am emboldened to lay the following plain discourses before YOUR EXCELLENCY:—A survey of the world of nature in its appearances here, might doubtless more highly gratify your curiosity. It is a wide and almost uncultivated field, and would yield an

ample harvest to the skilful husbandman. What pity that my most ingenious friend *Julius Von Robr*, Esq. director of his Majesty's buildings, and surveyor of this island, was not wholly at leisure to cultivate this field, for which he is so excellently adapted by his taste, talents and penetration?—But every man in his own way. Divinity is my favourite study; and perhaps YOUR EXCELLENCY may not be wholly uncurious to know what species of this is inculcated on his Majesty's *presbyterian* subjects in ST. CROIX.

THE *divinity* and *morality* contained in these discourses will, I make no doubt, meet with YOUR EXCELLENCY'S approbation, as they are agreeable to the doctrines of the reformation, and have nothing in them *narrow* or *local*: but the *manner* and *style* claim your candour and indulgence, as wanting much of that accuracy, polish and energy which might entitle them to the approbation of so able a critic, even in a language which is not *vernacular* to you.

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and which has not yet acquired the honour of being deemed *classical, learned* or *universal*.

SUCH as they are, I beg leave to commit them to your patronage, and to solicit your acceptance of them as a testimony of my respect for your character, talents and merit. Permit me to add my sincerest and most ardent wishes, that the tranquillity of true philosophy, the conscious pleasures of a well-spent life, and those exalted joys, hopes and comforts which genuine Christianity can alone inspire, may soften and brighten the evening of your life, and render it all peace, serenity and happiness. I have the honour to be,

May it please YOUR EXCELLENCY,

YOUR EXCELLENCY'S

Most obedient

And devoted servant,

HUGH KNOX.



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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 311

LECTURE 1

1.1

1.2

1.3

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# S E R M O N I.

The reverence due to God's name, and  
the guilt of profaning it, in two Ser-  
mons, from

DEUTERON. xxviii. 58.

—*That thou mayest fear this glorious and  
fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD.*

## S E R M O N I.

**M**Y hearers may easily conjecture what I principally design from these words: 'Tis to inculcate a proper reverence for that adorable name, which is the joy of heaven, and the terror of hell: 'Tis to lead you and myself to *think* and *speak* in a just and becoming manner of that Almighty and glorious Being, whose name we are at all times, even in our prayers and praises, unworthy to take into our polluted lips;—that Being who is exalted above all adoration and praise, and before whom the blessed angels dare not approach but with veiled faces, and in postures of the lowest humility and prostration.

It is doubtless, *my Brethren*, a disagreeable office for a gospel minister, to be obliged in a Christian as-

sembly to declaim against vices and immoralities too shocking for the practice of a sober intelligent heathen:—That while he should be employed in the pleasing business of breaking the bread of life to his people; opening and applying the promises; holding up to their view the charms of virtue and beauties of holiness, and displaying before them the ineffable glories of *Immanuel's* land, and those rivers of pure, permanent, and high-relished pleasures, which for ever flow from the throne of GOD, and fill the souls who bear his image with a satisfying, undecaying, and ever-improving felicity—he is obliged to descend to combat such *low, unmanly, irreligious* practices, the very imputation of which is sufficient to give a rational creature the blush, and which ought not once to be named among *Christians*:—That while he should be breaking the childrens bread, he must take up arms against the *enemies* of GOD;—for so *such* are emphatically termed by the inspired Psalmist, who take GOD's name in vain (a).

“Thine *enemies* take thy name in vain!” Dreadful word! Contemptible worms of the dust, who are but of yesterday, who are crushed before the moth, who are but as clay in the hands of the potter, employ the very powers they have received from GOD, as rebellious arms against him!—With their tongues, the glory of their frame, they provoke their Maker, as it were, to open combat; enter the lists with Omnipotence, and rush upon the thick bosses of Ja-

(a) Psa. cxxxix. 20.

MOSES'S buckler!—They dare impiously to attempt his throne, to trample his honour in the dust, and to defy him to his face;—to challenge that Almighty Being who has the whole artillery of *heaven, earth, and hell* at his absolute command, and who has told them with a voice of thunder and lightning from *Sinai's* burning summit, “That he will not hold him guiltless, who taketh his name in vain (b).”

To be obliged to combat such sins as this, in a Christian assembly, where they ought to be utterly unknown in practice, is a *dire necessity*; yet it is such a necessity as is laid upon the faithful ministers of Christ, rather than hear that holy name, by which they are called, blasphemed;—rather than see the eternal laws of God violated and broken—the fundamental laws of society weakened and enfeebled, and the souls of men hastening in the broad way to destruction.

In the chapter where our text stands, *Moses* lays down the *temporal* penalties and rewards annexed to the violation and obedience of the divine laws; as, under that *Theocratical* dispensation, they were, in truth, the laws of the *state* as well as of the *church*, or of *religion*. And in the words of our text, he seems to sum up the *temper* and *disposition* necessary in order to keeping the divine law, in this one article, namely, A REVERENCE FOR THE NAME OF GOD: “If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest

(b) Exod. xx. 7.

fear this glorious and fearful name the LORD thy GOD, then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, &c.”—And, indeed, with great reason; seeing a reverence for the lawgiver is the foundation of all true obedience, and this is most effectually secured by *thinking and speaking respectfully of his name.*

IN the farther illustration of this subject, I shall endeavour, by the divine assistance, to shew you

1st. WHAT we are to understand by the *name of GOD.*

2dly. MAKE it appear that JEHOVAH's name is truly *glorious and fearful* in itself.

3dly. SHEW you *how* and in *what instances*, this glorious and fearful name, claims our reverence and respect. And

4thly. I shall endeavour to apply this important subject to practical uses, by shewing the aggravated guilt of the profanation and abuse of GOD's holy name, and exposing the vain and frivolous pretences which are alledged by the guilty in extenuation and excuse of their crime.

AND O! that, while we are considering and attending to these particulars, GOD would be pleased to shine upon our hearts by his spirit, and reveal himself in such majesty and glory to our souls, as to impress them with the deepest veneration for his name, and for ever preserve us from the guilt of profaning it!  
*Amen.*

1st. THEN, By the *name of GOD*, GOD himself is often understood; as in all those passages of scripture where we are commanded to believe in *his name*,

to trust in *his name*, to call upon *his name*, and the like. But most commonly it is used to signify every thing whereby God maketh himself known to his creatures, whether it be his *names*, properly so called;—or his *attributes*, such as his *power*, *wisdom*, *holiness*, *justice*, *goodness* and *truth*;—or his *word*; and therefore he is said to *magnify his word above all his name*;—or his *works*, which are said to *praise him* and *declare his glory*, even his *eternal power* and *God-head*;—or his *judgments*, seeing the LORD is known by the *judgments* which he executes;—or his *mercies*; “for he hath not left himself without a witness, in that he doeth us good, giving us rain and fruitful seasons, and filling our hearts with joy and gladness (c).”

A NAME is an *arbitrary sign* which, by expressing or representing some *thing* to which it is affixed by custom and the consent of men, calls up the idea of it into our mind. Thus when the words *man*, *tree*, *house*, *city*, *water*, are pronounced within our hearing, the *ideas* or *conceptions* of these things, together with their *nature* and *qualities*, so far as we have formerly known them, are immediately awakened in our *minds*, and become *present* and *visible* as it were to our *memories* or *imaginations*. Whatever therefore has a *natural* or *established* tendency to *discover* or *reveal* the nature or perfections of GOD, or to awaken the *idea* of him in our minds, may be properly called *his name*. But by his *name* here, I would be

(c) Psal. cxxxviii. 2. xix. 1. ix. 16. Acts xiv. 17.

understood principally to mean “ Those *names* and *titles* by which he has been pleased to make himself known unto us in his word.” I am now

Idly, To make it appear that the *name* of the great JEHOVAH, by whatever word it is expressed, is indeed exceedingly *glorious* and *fearful* in itself, and should never be uttered by any of his creatures but upon the most important occasions, and with the most profound awe and reverence of soul. And this I shall endeavour to prove—from the nature and reason of the thing—from the positive declarations of scripture—and from the universal sentiments and practice of good and virtuous men in all ages.

1. FROM the nature and reason of the thing.

GOD, my brethren, is an incomprehensively great and glorious being: he is the *fountain of existence*, and may be said, in one sense, to be the *only REALITY* in the universe; as all things else which exist, are only the *creatures of his will*, and have no real existence but what they have in *that*: so that if he did but cease to *will* that they should *be*, they would absolutely fall into *that nothing or non-entity*, from whence his will at first produced them. All the great and glorious things we see and know, are the effects and evidences of his ineffable perfections, his *power*, *wisdom* and *goodness*. The countless shining host of heaven, the sun, moon and stars: the earth and sea together with their numberless inhabitants, and thousands of worlds to us unknown, stand the indisputable monuments of the greatness of the divine perfections, and the indisputable motives and reasons of our most

## S E R M O N I.



profound homage and veneration to the *great and glorious* NAME who *made, sustains and rules* them all.

NAY these perfections extend farther yet, to an ability of producing every thing *possible*, and which implies not a *contradiction*: so that had the ALMIGHTY so pleased, he might have created *ten thousand* worlds for every *one* he has actually created, and communicated life and happiness to *ten thousand* creatures for every *one* which he has so endowed: for there is no limiting his perfections otherwise than by the *possibilities* of things. How *awful*, how *sacred*, how *venerable* therefore ought the name of this *glorious* and *Almighty* BEING to be in the esteem of us his rational creatures?

IT is no arbitrary claim in the great GOD to demand a peculiar reverence to his *name* from his creatures. It proceeds not from a fondness of being thought *great*, or a secret *uneasiness* arising from a sense of the contempt cast upon him by the works of his hands. No; far be it from JEHOVAH to be vexed with such tormenting and wrathful passions as arise in proud and haughty human spirits, when they meet not with that honour and respect from their fellow men which they think is due to them. GOD was, from eternity, *perfectly happy* without us. His happiness does not in the least degree depend on any of the creatures he has made; but results solely from the enjoyment of his own perfections; but there is a perfect *fitness* and *rightness* in this honour and reverence which the CREATOR demands to his *great*

*name.* As his *name* is infinitely *holy* and *reverend* in itself, so he, whose judgment is always according to truth, cannot but have an infinite regard and respect for it himself, and command all his creatures to reverence and respect it accordingly. I say, he *cannot but* do so; for to *do* otherwise, would be to violate the eternal laws of truth and reason. *Selfishness* and *vanity* always suppose that the being influenced by them *over-rates* himself, and has an *unjust, over-weening* opinion of his own perfections and merits; but these vices cannot possibly have place in a *necessary, self-existent* being of *infinite perfection*: because *such* a being cannot possibly think *too highly* of himself; nor can any claim of respect and reverence from his creatures, be *arrogant*, or exceed what the nature of things strictly requires. All those *eulogiums* therefore which G O D passes upon himself in his word, and all those claims of reverence and homage from his creatures with which the scriptures every where abound, are so far from favouring of *vain-glory*, that they are only a tribute justly due to infinite excellence and perfection, and which the rational creature cannot withhold from it without the most criminal sacrilege! Accordingly

2. THE scriptures of truth every where mention *this name* in terms denoting the highest solemnity and respect, and lay the strongest injunctions on men to *fear* it and use it *reverently*, and not to blaspheme it, or take it in vain, on penalty of incurring the divine displeasure. *There* his name is said to be *excel-*

lent in all the earth (d):—to be *holy* and *reverend* (e). Men are commanded to *praise his great and terrible name, for it is holy* (f); and to *fear this glorious and fearful name, the LORD our GOD* (g). GOD's people are *there* said to *sanctify his name*; i. e. to *set it apart* from *common* and *profane* uses;—to *sanctify the holy one of Jacob*, and *fear the GOD of Israel* (h). “I am a great king, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful (i).” “I will sanctify my great name (k).” To the same purpose is the first petition of our Lord's excellent and comprehensive prayer; “Hallowed be thy name;” i. e. let it be esteemed *sacred, -holy*, and *reverend* by all thy rational creatures.

THIS will still farther appear from the prohibitions against profaning it with which the scriptures abound. “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,” is the third commandment of GOD, delivered from *Sinai's* burning mount, and guarded by a clause of dreadful import to the transgressors of it, “For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain (l).” “Thou shalt not profane the name of thy GOD: I am the LORD:—neither shall ye profane my holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of *Israel* (m).”—Our blessed Saviour, and after him his apostle *James*, repeat and (agreeable to the greater *clearness*, *spiritua-*

(d) Pf. viii. 1. cxlviii. 13. (e) Pf. cxi. 9. (f) Pf. xcix. 3. (g) Deut. xxviii. 58. (h) Is. xxix. 23. (i) Mal. i. 14. (k) Ez. xxvi. 23. (l) Ex. xx. 7. (m) Lev. xviii. 21. xxii. 32.

lity, extent, and perfection of the gospel dispensation) even extend the same law, not only to a prohibition of swearing by God's name, or using it irreverently in the common conversation of Christians; but also of all such forms of *asseveration* or *imprecation*, in which the divine name is even implicatively suggested;—and by limiting our modes of speaking to a simple *affirmation* and *negation*;—a *yea, yea*, and a *may, nay*: “But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: neither by *Jerusalem*, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head;—but let your communication be *yea, yea*; *nay, nay*: for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil (n).” Agreeable to this we find

3. THAT holy beings, and wise and good men of all ages, have had a most profound reverence and veneration for this glorious and fearful name, the LORD our God.

WHEN the angels of light mention it, they veil their faces and worship, and all heaven resounds with the acclamations of “*Holy, holy, holy LORD GOD Almighty*;” and the very mention of it makes the inhabitants of hell to tremble, and spreads an additional gloom of horror over their wretched abodes. There are no wanton oaths or droll blasphemies there: if the miserable inhabitants *blaspheme* and *look up*, it is from the bottomless abyss of despair, and under the agonies of inexpressible torment.

(n) Mat. v. 34, &c. Jam. v. 12.

THE *Jews*, in their better days, were so scrupulous in this matter, that they would not use the word **JEHOVAH** (the most *peculiar* and *appropriate* name of **GOD**) even in their common devotions; and never suffered it to be mentioned, but only once a year, by the high priest, in the holy of holies, on the great day of atonement, while he blessed the people; lest a more common use of it should take off from that solemnity, with which they thought it should always be uttered. It was the most ardent desire of good *Nebemiah*, to fear this glorious and fearful name (o). To have the inheritance of them who fear his name, was pious *David's* highest ambition (p). His holy indignation arises to the highest pitch against those enemies of his **GOD** who take his name in vain: "O **God**, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? Why withdrawest thou thine hand, even thy right hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom. Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O **LORD**, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.—Arise, O **LORD**; plead thine own cause; remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee, increaseth continually.—For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain (q)."

It was the importunate prayer of good *Agur*, that **GOD** would preserve him from *poverty*; and the

(o) *Nehem.* i. 11. (p) *Pf.* lxi. 5. (q) *Pf.* lxxiv. 20, &c. *Pf.* cxxxix. 20.

reason he assigns, is, "Lest he should be tempted to steal, or take the name of his GOD in vain," either by mercenary perjuries, or a fretful repining against the disposals of Divine Providence. And in the book of Revelations, where the grand scene of the final judgment is opened, it is remarkable that the reward is given by the Judge *only* to "the saints, and them that fear GOD's name, small and great (r)."

HENCE it evidently appears from the nature of things, the word of GOD, and the opinion and practice of the best men in all ages, that whatever foolish and heedless sinners may think of the matter, the name of GOD is indeed a *glorious and fearful name*, and ought so to be accounted of by all his rational creatures. I am now to shew you,

III<sup>dly</sup>, How, and in *what instances*, this glorious and fearful name, claims our reverence and respect.

BUT before I enter directly upon the consideration of this particular, it will be proper a little to ascertain the nature of that *fear of GOD's name* which makes an essential part of true religion. There is a *dread of the ALMIGHTY*, arising from false and injurious notions of him as a *hard master*, a *cruel and merciless* tyrant; imposing unjust laws upon his creatures, the observance of which is impossible to them; taking every advantage against the frailties and infirmities of their nature; marking all their faults with a merciless and enviously pleasurable severity, and wantonly sporting himself with the misery and do-

(r) Prov. xxx. Rev. xi. 18.

struction of his creatures. Such a fear as this, tends to drive us away from GOD with *disgust* and *aversion*; and is utterly inconsistent with that *supreme love of him*, which is the genuine and essential characteristic of true religion.

BUT there is another fear of GOD, arising from quite different motives, and producing quite contrary effects, which is the *beginning* and *first principle* of all true wisdom, and, in one form or other, makes a constant concomitant of it through every stage and period of the Christian life. I cannot now stop fully to state and explain this important branch of the Christian temper. Suffice it at present just to observe, that it affects the minds of men differently in a *state of sin* and impenitence, and in a *state of grace*, or conscious hope of the divine favour.

IN sinners, this fear of GOD is the *beginning*, or *first principle* of true repentance. Thus the wise man repeatedly declares, that "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." The dread of the LORD falls upon them, and his excellency makes them afraid, and fills their souls with the most pungent and distressing terrors; not because they believe GOD to be *unjust*, *cruel*, or *tyrannical*, but because they feel themselves *justly* exposed to his displeasure, by reason of their exceeding *guiltiness* and *pollution*, and fear their can be no mercy or pardon for such wretches as they are. This is a *just* and *salutary* fear in *impenitent sinners*. It stops them in the mad career of their sins; causes them to consider whether the way they are in, is leading them, and what the end of

these things is like to be. It arrests them, as it were, by a kind of holy violence; forces them to *stand in awe, and not sin*; to *consider their latter end*; to make a pause, and look backward and forward; to fear him, who after he hath destroyed the body, can cast both soul and body into hell; and often ends in a *sound conversion and genuine repentance*. With regard to *this kind of fear*, the ALMIGHTY complains of the wicked, that *they have no fear of GOD before their eyes*; that they *cast off fear*, and restrain prayer before him; and expostulates with them thus: “Hear this, O foolish people, and without understanding, Will ye not fear me, saith the LORD? Will ye not tremble at my presence? If I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?—But this people hath a revolting and rebellious heart: they are revolted and gone: neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our GOD, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter rain in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest (s).”

BUT in persons who, through grace, have obtained a comfortable hope of the pardoning mercy and favour of GOD, this principle of holy fear operates in a *less painful and distressing* manner, and nearly resembles that *respectful reverence* which a dutiful child feels in the presence of a *wise, venerable, and affectionate* father, for whom he has the most perfect esteem, and the most cordial love and filial attach-

(s) Jer. v. 21, — 25. Mal. i. 6,

ment. I can think of no similitude which can better explain the affection of *godly fear*, to those who never felt it, than *this*. The *child of God* who *truly fears him*, loves, esteems, venerates and adores him. The study and purpose of his life is to please him, and to keep himself in his love and friendship, and therefore he dreads his displeasure more than hell. He stands in awe, and sins not. He joins trembling with his mirth; spends the time of his sojourning here in fear, and studies to walk in the fear of the LORD all the day long. He had rather forfeit his title to ten thousand worlds, than forfeit his interest in the divine favour; and dreads the frowns of him whom he supremely loves, more than death. He thinks he can never render enough to the LORD for all his benefits; nor do enough in the way of duty and obedience to ascertain his title to the divine loving-kindness, which he esteems infinitely preferable to all that this world can *promise* or *offer* to his acceptance.

1st. THEN, when we are commanded to fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD OUR GOD, it supposes that we have *just* and *worthy* conceptions of the divine Being and perfections habitually on our minds.

EITHER GOD is not at all in the thoughts of the wicked, and therefore they are said to be without GOD in the world: or they form false and unworthy ideas of him, and imagine that "he is altogether such an one as themselves (*t*)."

(*t*) Pf. l. 21.

they must act and behave as *atheists*, or just as though there were no GOD in the universe to observe and call them to an account: for it is not the *mere existence* of a GOD which influences the lives of men; but *right notions of him*, and a *practical believe* of him kept habitually alive on their minds. A just and lively consideration of the divine Being and perfections, together with the relations we stand in to him and the concerns we have with him, as our *maker, lawgiver, observer, and judge*, must needs beget a proper reverence for him, and secure a proper conduct towards him. *Thus circumstanced*, his dread would fall upon us, and his excellency make us afraid; we would fear before him, and stand in awe of his judgments. “When I consider, says *Job*, I am afraid of him,”—not as of an *enemy*, but of a *holy and equitable judge*, whose laws I have transgressed; and a *merciful and indulgent father*, whose kindness I have abused (*u*). When *Abraham* addresses him in behalf of *Sodom*, he beautifully expresses this *reverential fear*. “Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes; O let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak (*w*).” The more that we *learn and know* of GOD, the more will we thus reverence and fear him. Angels and saints in heaven, who know GOD infinitely better than we, venerate and fear him in a way suitable to his excellent majesty. “Great and marvellous, say they, are thy works, LORD GOD Almighty; just and true are thy

(*u*) Job xxiii. 15.

(*w*) Gen. xviii. 27.

ways, O thou King of saints; who shall not fear thee, O LORD, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy (x).”

2. IT supposes proper *outward expressions* of that inward reverence we have of GOD upon our minds. Our *words* and *actions* are the *outward* and *visible signs* of our thoughts; the *indexes* of our minds. Therefore our Saviour directs us to judge of men by their words. “By their fruits, says he, shall ye know them:—for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh: a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, evil things (y).” A man whose mind is habitually possessed of just and adoring thoughts of the *majesty, holiness, omniscience, and omnipresence* of GOD, cannot use his glorious and fearful name irreverently on any occasion; or if, by the sudden assault of passion or temptation, he is hurried, as it were, by *surprize*, into such an enormity, it will cost him bitter repentance.

I SHALL point out *three* particular occasions, upon which good men will maintain a peculiar awe and reverence for that glorious and fearful name the LORD their GOD, and in which the abuse and profanation of it is exceedingly criminal.

(1.) In divine worship. It is the black character of hypocrites, that “they come before him as his people come, and sit before him as his people sit, and worship him with their mouth, while their hearts are

(x) Rev. xv. 3.

(y) Mat. vii. 16. xii. 34, &c.

far from him :” And therefore the wise man gives that important caution ; “ Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of GOD, and be more ready to hear, than to offer the sacrifice of fools ; be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before GOD : for GOD is in heaven, and thou upon earth : therefore let thy words be few (z).” “ GOD, says the Psalmist, is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints ; and to be had in reverence of them that are about him (a) :” “ *In his fear*, therefore, we should worship towards his holy temple (b).” When *Jacob* was favoured with a vision of the divine glory at *Bethel*, he was struck with solemn and adoring awe, and said, in a kind of extatic transport, “ Surely the LORD is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was *afraid*, and said, How *dreadful* is this place ! this is none other but the house of GOD, and this is the gate of heaven (c).” It is surely a very solemn thing at all times to address the great GOD, and to receive the intimations of his will : to trifle therefore with the name of GOD in his worship, is the rudest and most provoking insult. It becomes us, therefore, before we approach the ALMIGHTY in the solemnities of divine worship, to reflect for a few minutes, on the *glories* of that tremendous name we are about to invoke, and to have our souls, and all that is within us, composed to attend upon him without distraction, and stirred up to worship him in the beauties of holiness.

(z) Eccl. v. 1, &c. (a) Ps. lxxxix. 7. (b) Ps. v. 9.  
(c) Gen. xxviii.

(2dly.) IN the solemnity of an oath, when lawfully called to it before the *civil magistrate*, which is a very important act of religious worship.—But the full consideration of the use of GOD'S name in this particular, together with the guilt of *perjury*, which is the abuse of it, must be left to some future occasion. I proceed therefore,

(3dly.) To consider the profanation of this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD OUR GOD, in common conversation, which is perhaps the *commonest*, and *least excusable* abuse of it among men, and that which most fully demonstrates, that the wicked have, indeed, no fear of GOD before their eyes. I say then,

(1st. IN common conversation, a good man will not use this VENERABLE NAME as a mere empty *expletive* to fill up a sentence in discourse;—as a mere *by-word*, a mere *unmeaning sound*, which can have no other tendency than to *vilify* and *debase* it, and render it *mean* and *contemptible* in the esteem of himself and others. It is a common adage, “That too much familiarity breeds contempt.” And perhaps it is verified in nothing more, and in nothing which can be of more disservice to the interests of religion, and the good of human society, than in the *vain* and *trifling* use of GOD'S name in the common conversation of Christians. A wise and good man will not utter this GREAT and GLORIOUS NAME upon every little surprize and admiration, with an O LORD! O GOD! O sweet JESUS! LORD bless me! CHRIST bless me! and the like, merely as *words of course*. Such a common use

of the GREAT NAME makes it too familiar with us;—takes off much of the awe and reverence which is due to it;—betrays us into a habit of mentioning it frequently without any actual sense of GOD upon our minds,—and is indeed that *identical sin* which is most *expressly* and *literally* forbidden in the *third commandment*; “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy GOD *in vain* ;” i. e. to *no worthy* and *valuable purpose*. This, I think, may be laid down as an incontrovertible truth, that GOD’S name is ever taken *in vain*, when the mention of it answers *no worthy* or *valuable* purpose, or is unaccompanied with *worthy* and *reverend* apprehensions of the DEITY on our minds :—consequently, that there can be no *lawful* use of it, but in *prayer, praise, lawful oaths, divine soliloquies, or religious conversation*. Whatever other uses we may make of the GREAT NAME, are, therefore, *vain* and *unlawful*; either *come of evil*, or *lead to it*, and manifestly betray a want of that *awful respect* and *veneration* for the SUPREME BEING which we should always cherish in our hearts.

I HAVE the charity, indeed, to believe that many good sort of people, who have insensibly contracted a habit of thus using the GREAT AND TERRIBLE NAME of GOD *in vain*, without thinking there is any harm in it, would, nevertheless be shocked and tremble to mouth the more rude sort of oaths and blasphemies : and to *such*, I hope, this observation will not be without its use : to *such*, therefore, I would beg leave to observe,

FIRST; That *long custom* cannot possibly alter

the nature of things, or make that to be *innocent* and *harmless*, which is in itself *sinful*. The abuse of God's name is still an *abuse*, and a heinous sin, although the prescription of *long habit* and *universal example* could be plead in its favour. No dignified fellow-mortal would brook it to have his name lightly and irreverently bandied about in the mouth of every profligate; and shall Christians presume to take the same unmannerly freedoms with the glorious name of GOD! It is a violation of the divine law, and a sin to be broken off by a speedy repentance, as we value the honour of GOD, and our own salvation.

SECONDLY, I would observe that this *light, vain* and *frequent* use of GOD's name, even on supposition that it were *harmless in itself*, naturally paves the way for *profane swearing*. He who is habituated to decorate every sentence of discourse with the words GOD, LORD and CHRIST, will easily be betrayed by the smallest provocation or heightening of temper, to preface these glorious and venerable names with the little particle *by*, and swear roundly *by the ALMIGHTY!* *Such, my brethren*, is the natural progress of impiety and profanity. From *such* beginnings are often produced, in time, the greatest enormities in human life.

I TRUST my hearers will excuse this great *plainness of speech*, on a subject of such singular importance, and which so loudly demands their particular attention. And I humbly pray GOD my labour may not be in *vain*, in the inculcation of it! The name of GOD is an *adorable name* in itself, and ought especially so to be esteemed among *Christians*, who pro-

self to put their trust in it, and who believe that "God will not hold such guiltless, who take his name in vain." But I pass on to a

(2d. ABUSE or profanation of the name of GOD in conversation, which is *common* or *profane swearing*.

THIS is a sin so amazingly common, and at the same time so dreadfully heinous and aggravated, that one is at a loss to find words expressive enough to *display* and *reprove* it, as it deserves. It is saying *nothing*, to say that it is a gross violation of the divine law. Every one who practises it, knows this well, and therefore can have no plea from ignorance. The practice of it is, indeed, a profound mystery to *sense* and *reason*, and can be no other way accounted for, than as arising from an *impious, hellish* temper, which is disposed to mock and insult the Almighty for no reason under the sun!

IT is truly amazing that men who profess to believe the scriptures, and a judgment to come, should dare to violate those plain rules of our Saviour and his apostles;—should dare to call GOD and his SON JESUS CHRIST to attest and bear witness to such trifles, as they would be ashamed to call any serious neighbour to witness;—or, that they should dare to imprecate the heaviest curses and damnations upon themselves and others, as though the great GOD were obliged to answer their impious calls, and dispense his judgments at their pleasure—and all this often thro' mere wantonness, or upon the *slightest provocation*, and without any conceivable inducement, either from

*profit or pleasure!* There is something so *horrid* and *shocking* to the ears in this sort of language, that I have often wondered how any thing on this side of hell could venture to utter it—and often stood amazed at the patience of God, who bore with such indignities, and did not pour down his judgments from heaven against such audacious transgressors, or cause his earth to open her mouth and swallow them quick to the center of her polluted orb.

IF, therefore, the *good man* dreads to use this glorious and fearful name, the LORD his GOD merely *in vain*, or to *no worthy and valuable purpose*, need I ask if he will not much more dread to use it in the shockingly profane manner above mentioned;—in setting off every sentence he speaks with an oath at the beginning or end of it;—in making it a vehicle, as it were, to convey his own hellish and accursed passions of *malice, envy and revenge* to his fellow creatures—and in praying down vengeance and damnation on himself and others? I could even venture to appeal to the wicked themselves, whether this is a becoming manner of treating that *glorious and fearful* name, THE LORD OUR GOD;—or whether such a horrid abuse of it can be at all consistent with the fear of God, or even with a real practical belief of his being and perfections;—or whether the *Psalmist* is at all guilty of exaggeration, when he has declared “those to be GOD’S ENEMIES, who *thus* take his name in vain?”—

OUR Saviour has told us that “every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give an account of

it on the day of judgment (*d*).” O then how *black*, how *awful*, must the account of those thoughtless and unhappy creatures be, who have *ten thousand* unrepented *oaths*, and *imprecations*, and *wanton blasphemies* to account for on that day?—who have ten thousand times prayed GOD and CHRIST, and the *devil*, and every thing they could think of, to *damn*, *sink*, *confound* and *destroy* themselves and others?—O, *my friends*, can any thing but the blood of CHRIST, and a deep and bitter repentance, wash away the stain of such black and crying sins as these!—Can any thing but the patience and mercy of a GOD, *bear with* and *forgive*, such audacious and heaven-provoking transgressors?—And can the *good man*, think you, so far cast off the fear of this glorious and fearful name, as to allow himself in such a *base*, *vile*, *irreverend* and *hellish* abuse of it?—Shall he not *tremble* and *fear* before him “who, after he hath destroyed the body, can cast both soul and body into hell (*e*)?” Shall he not stand in awe of that dreadful threatening pronounced against this sin, by the inspired Psalmist; “As he loved cursing, so shall it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so shall it be far from him; as he clothed himself with cursing as with his garments, so shall it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones: it shall be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and as a girdle about his loins continually (*f*).”

(*d*) Mat. xii. 36.  
 cix. 17, &c.

(*e*) Luke xii. 5.

(*f*) Ps.

So much then for the doctrinal part of this subject: the practical improvement, is referred to a future discourse. May God make deep impressions of what has been at this time delivered, upon our minds, and to his name shall be the praise. Amen.

Vol. I.

C

## S E R M O N II.

The reverence due to GOD's name, and  
the guilt of profaning it, in two Ser-  
mons, from

DEUTERON. xxviii. 58.

—*That thou mayest fear this glorious and  
fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD.*

## S E R M O N II.

*BISHOP Burnet*, who was intimately acquainted  
with *Sir Robert Boyle*, one of the greatest phi-  
losophers and most amiable characters of the age he  
lived in—who prosecuted his philosophical studies,  
and indefatigably investigated the great secrets of *na-  
ture's laws*, with a principal view the more effectual-  
ly to discover the *GOD of nature*, and the more ad-  
vantageously to display his adorable perfections to  
his fellow creatures, and to recommend him to their  
admiration and esteem (which are indeed the only noble  
and valuable ends of philosophical studies)—Informs  
the world, in a funeral sermon preached on the occasion  
of that great man's death, that he had such a pro-  
found veneration for the great GOD of heaven and

earth, in the knowledge of whose works he was so great an adept, that HIS NAME was never mentioned by him without a *solemn pause* and *visible stop* in his discourse;—expressive marks of the inward homage and veneration of his soul towards the SUPREME BEING.

IN a former discourse from these words, after having ascertained what we were principally to understand by the name of GOD—and shewed,—from the nature and reason of the thing—the positive declarations of scripture—and the sentiments and practice of wise and good men in all ages, that this name, by whatever word expressed, is indeed inconceivably *glorious* and *fearful* in itself, and ought so to be esteemed and accounted of by the whole rational creation—I proceeded to shew, upon *what occasions*, and in *what instances*, this glorious and fearful name principally demands our reverence and respect—namely,

1st, IN *divine worship*, in opposition to *hypocrisy* and *formality*.

2dly, IN the *solemnity of an oath*, when lawfully called to it before the civil magistrate, in opposition to *rashness* and *perjury*.—And,

3dly, IN our *common conversation*, in opposition (1st) To a *loose, vain, trifling* and *customary* manner of using it, in the way of expressing our admiration or surprise, without a serious and solemn sense of GOD upon our minds.—And, (2dly) In opposition to *common* and *profane swearing*, wherein the GREAT and TREMENDOUS NAME OF GOD is used as a vehicle to

convey our accursed and malignant passions of *wrath*, *malice* and *revenge* to our fellow creatures, and to pray down *vengeance* and *damnation* upon ourselves and others.—I am now come to the

IVth. THING proposed, namely, to apply the doctrine to some practical uses, by shewing the aggravated guilt of the profanation and abuse of GOD's holy name, and exposing those vain and frivolous pretences which are alledged by the guilty in excuse and extenuation of their crime.—The

1st USE I would make of the doctrine, is a use of *examination*. Let us examine and try ourselves, *my brethren*, whether we are possessed of a just fear and reverence of this glorious and fearful name THE LORD OUR GOD. We have heard that it is the name of a Being infinitely glorious, original and self-existent, surrounded with the splendors of ineffable majesty, and possessed of every possible excellency and perfection:—a NAME at the mention of which heaven rejoices in prostrate adoration, and hell trembles with terror unutterable at its very centre:—the NAME of our *Maker*, our *Father*, our *Friend*, our *Redeemer*, our *Lawgiver*, our *Judge*, and our daily *Benefactor*! O 'tis a *dear*, as well as a *glorious* name, and ought to be esteemed very *precious* and *honourable* by us! “How precious, says *David*, are all the thoughts of thee unto me, O GOD? If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee (a).” The nature:

(a) Ps. cxxxix. 18, 19.

and reason of things, the scriptures of truth, and the wisest and best of men, all conspire in advancing the honours of this glorious name, and representing it as worthy the highest veneration of reasonable creatures. 'Tis glorified in heaven; 'tis excellent in all the earth; 'tis very terrible in hell; all his works praise it, and his saints bless it.

IF WE do indeed fear his name, it must proceed from a radicated and habitual sense of his glorious perfections upon our souls; of his infinite greatness, almighty power, boundless wisdom, spotless purity, and every where presence: it must proceed from a practical belief, and habitual consideration of the dependence we have upon him, the relations we stand in to him, and the unalienable title he has, in consequence of these, to the whole homage of our hearts, and service of our lives. Such impressions of the DEITY as these, would fill our souls, at all times and in all places, with the most prostrate humility and reverential awe, and effectually engage us to fear that glorious and fearful name, THE LORD OUR GOD. Whereas, on the other hand, nothing more certainly betrays the want of *this reverence*, (which is the grand characteristic of *true piety*) than the *common, irreverent and profane* use of THIS GREAT NAME. If, therefore, any of us, *my brethren*, should be unfortunately under this predicament, let us tremble at the danger of our state, lest we should finally rank among those enemies of his who take his name in vain, whom he hath declared that he will not hold guiltless.

2. THE subject we have been insisting on, serves to reprove a variety of abuses of this *adorable* NAME.

(1st.) OUGHT we to fear this glorious and fearful name? Then *hypocrites* and mere *formalists* in religion rank amongst the most aggravated transgressors. To worship GOD *only* that we may quiet our consciences in a course of known sin—as either thinking that we may compound for immoralities by performing the outward duties of religion—or that we may securely go on in some secret sin, under the mask and veil of religious appearances—or that we may thereby conciliate the good opinion of men, and promote our worldly interests—while, at the same time, we have no fear of GOD upon our minds, no inward reverence of his glorious perfections, no practical belief of his present majesty, nor correspondent affections towards him—is *hypocrisy* in the grossest sense of the word—'tis such a profanation of the name of GOD; such a base perversion and prostitution of his worship; such a gross and flagrant insult upon the *all-seeing* and *heart-searching* JEHOVAH, as cannot pass unpunished, without a speedy repentance.

Or even to draw near to GOD in the duties of religion, in a *careless*, *formal* manner, without advert- ing to what we are about, or without any sincere and cordial endeavours to approve our hearts to his pure and omniscient eye;—“To draw near to him with our mouths, and seemingly to honour him with our lips, while our hearts are far from him, and perhaps going after our covetousness, or wandering with the fools eyes to the ends of the earth,” is such a *stupid*

*abuse* of the glorious and fearful name of GOD, as should make a rational creature blush, when he considers, that the GOD whom he pretends to worship, is a *Spirit* who requires those who worship him, to do it in *spirit* and in *truth*;—who cannot possibly be imposed upon by any external appearances, and who cannot but demand truth in the heart, and sincerity in the inward part.

(2dly.) OUGHT we to fear this glorious and fearful name? How does this serve to reproach such thoughtless creatures as would dare to give their oath in matters of evidence, without the fullest and clearest certainty of the matters about which they swear—and more especially those monsters of iniquity who presume to call the GOD of truth to witness what they know to be *false*, or what they know not certainly to be *true*! O to dare the Almighty to pour down his vengeance upon us, is an *awful*, O 'tis a dreadful thing! May GOD for ever preserve every soul of us from such an astonishing excess of wickedness—from such a *heaven-daring*, *heaven-provoking* abuse of that glorious and fearful name, THE LORD OUR GOD!

(3dly.) OUGHT we to fear this adorable name? Then what must we think of those who, without any manner of provocation, profane it from day to day, by hideous oaths and imprecations—against the plainest laws of GOD—against all decency and good breeding—against the dictates of reason and common sense—to the destruction of their own souls—to the corruption and pollution of human society—to the

eternal scandal of religion—to the infection of the morals of the rising generation—to the grief of all good men, and to the rooting the fear of GOD, and the solemnity of an oath out of the world?—I need not surely ask, Do such fear that glorious and fearful name, THE LORD OUR GOD?—The case is plain, they do not.

I WOULD now beg leave a little to examine the validity of those pretences which men sometimes plead in extenuation of this crime; and indeed some of these are so exceedingly *futile* and *frivolous*, that I fear it may be deemed a trespass upon the good sense of my hearers to *mention* or *refute* them.

1st, THEN, some may perhaps plead that they *mean no harm* by this practice; have no *malicious, envious, rebellious* thoughts or designs against the ALMIGHTY:—that *oaths* are, with them, mere *words of course*—modes of expression contracted by example, and confirmed by habit; used inadvertently, and without any intention of affronting or offending GOD:—that with the same mouth which utters them, they often utter *prayers, praises, confessions* and *supplications* to GOD, and that very sincerely and fervently, and therefore cannot, with any propriety, be called *his enemies*, because of this *habitual, inadvertent and undesigning* use of his name. To this I answer,

(1st. 'TIS not a sufficient apology for immoral actions that they are done *without design*, or with *no evil* or *malicious* design. This deducts nothing from the *evil nature* or *tendency* of such actions. At best it only denominates them somewhat less aggravated,

than they would have been, had the *motives* of them been more malignant. A man who debauches his neighbour's wife or daughter, and thereby brings disgrace and ruin upon a reputable family, will be deemed little the less criminal for having perpetrated this crime, merely to gratify his lust, and not from any malicious design against his neighbour. A *foot-pad* who shoots a traveller, and rishes him of his money, will have little attention or commiseration either from *justice* or the *impartial public* while he pleads, "That in committing this murder and robbery, he had no *malice prepense* either against the traveller or his family, but was instigated merely by his own wants, and an irresistible inclination of supplying them in this manner. These actions are not the less *criminal* in their nature, or *destructive* in their consequences, because men commit them *inconsiderately*, by *habit* and *inclination*, and without actual malice in the intention. They are violations of laws both divine and human; infringements upon the moral order of the universe, and fraught with the most pernicious consequences to human society. Man has the great out-lines of this law written on his heart, and his reasoning faculties appear to be given him chiefly with this *design*, that he may weigh and judge of the *nature* and *tendency* of moral actions, and *act* or *forbear acting* accordingly. The law is before him: the power of judging and drawing right inferences for the regulation of his conduct, is in his possession; and a principal part of the *criminality* and *guilt* of our morally evil actions, lies in our inattention to the law,

and a neglect of employing our mental powers about it, as the supreme rule of our actions. The grand complaint of the prophets, is, "Israel doth not *know*, my people doth not *consider*.—O that they were wise, that they *understood* this, that they would *consider* (b)."

IN this point of light should we view *profane swearing*. Be it so that those who practise it have no malice against GOD, and have formed no actual design of affronting and insulting him: yet the law against it is promulgated by the eternal King, and put into the hands of his moral subjects: he has forbidden his rational creatures, under the severest penalty, "to take his name in vain." In its *nature*, therefore, this practice is a flagrant violation of an express law of GOD; in its *consequences*, it has an evident tendency to vilify and dishonour GOD; to impair the fear of him in the world; to corrupt the morals of mankind, and to encrease impiety, and even perjury, among men, by lessening the solemnity of a religious oath. Men therefore cannot plead ignorance of the law, or of the guilt and danger of transgressing it. It is therefore *their guilt*, that they will not *consider* of these matters, but run thoughtlessly and blindfold into the most *guilty* and *pernicious* practices, with a presumptuous and groundless hope of impunity.

(2dly. AN inveterate and radicated habit of sinning is so far from extenuating its guilt, that it proves the subject of it to be in the most *desperate*, and al-

(b) If. i. 2. Deut. xxxii. 29.

most *hopeless* and *remediless* circumstances: for “easier may the Ethiopian change his colour, or the leopard his spot, than those who are thus accustomed to do evil, learn to do well (c).” Can it be any extenuation of a man’s crimes, that he sins as naturally as he breathes, and with as little remorse and compunction too?—That he multiplies his trespasses without adverting to them, and is so *fear’d, harden’d, and past all feeling*, as to commit wickedness with greediness, as it were, and without any sensibility of conscience, or contrition of soul?—Is not this one of the surest and blackest marks of reprobacy? And yet shall it be plead in extenuation of the guilt of common swearing?

(3dly. THAT profane swearers do sometimes *pray*, and *praise*, and *make confession* to GOD, renders their characters and conduct but the more *ridiculous, inconsistent*, and, I had almost said, *guilty*. What a shocking contrast! *prayers* and *curses!* *praises* and *blasphemies!*—“Out of the same mouth proceedeth *blessing* and *cursing!* My brethren, says the apostle, these things ought not so to be (d).” The scriptures are clear in declaring, “That the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: and that if we regard iniquity in our hearts, the LORD will not hear us (e).” And indeed with what confidence can we address our prayers to that GOD, whose name we are daily vilifying and blaspheming?—Or what blessings can we expect in an-

(c) Jerem. xlii. 23. (d) James iii. 10. (e) Prov. xv. 8. Pf. lxxvi. 18.

swer to these prayers? Or, indeed, which of the contrary petitions is it that such persons hope God should hear or grant in preference? Is it that God *may damn them*, which they utter perhaps an hundred times in a day? or that he *may save and bless them*, which perhaps they do not utter once in a week?—But the truth is, the practices of *praying* and *profane swearing* are not like long to subsist together in the same subject: the one will soon prevail and expel the other, just as *darkness* does *light*: for no proverb is more consonant to experience than this, “That either praying will make us cease sinning, or sinning will make us cease praying.”

2dly. SOME may perhaps plead, that it would be uncharitable to condemn all who are guilty of this practice; many *good* and *respectable* persons being of the number.

HERE it ought to be observed, that the words *good*, *respectable* and *uncharitable* are very *ambiguous*. The words *good* and *respectable*, when applied to a man in a *political*, *social* or *domestic* sense, signify something materially different, from what they do, when applied to him in a *moral* or *religious* sense. A man may, in many respects, be a *good* and *respectable* citizen, neighbour, friend, parent, or husband, who is by no means a *good Christian*. There are a thousand different degrees of *goodness* and *respectableness* among men, and perhaps there is no man so *vile* and *abandoned*, as not to have something *good* and *respectable* in his character. The young man in the gospel had a thousand amiable qualities, for which

JESUS loved and respected him, and yet he lacked the *one thing* needful; the essential quality of a good Christian. Granting then that a customary profane swearer had a thousand good and respectable qualities in a *civil, social, political, or domestic sense*, yet it is no *uncharitableness* to pronounce him a *bad man* in a *moral or religious sense*; seeing GOD, the only infallible judge of moral and religious goodness, hath declared him *such* in his word.

BESIDES: a *Christian* or a *good man*, in the scripture sense of the word, is a *uniform and consistent* character; one who is sincerely good in *all respects*; one who sincerely hates *every false way*, and has an *equal* respect to the authority of *all* GOD's *commandments*: and therefore the apostle declares, "That he who offendeth in one point of the law, is guilty of the whole (*f*)."—But *profane swearing* being a wilful and customary breach of one point of the divine law, breaks in upon and violates this *uniformity and consistency of character*, and therefore, by this apostolical decision, deprives the profane swearer of any just pretensions to the character of a *good and respectable* person, in the scripture sense of the word.

3dly. MANY are at much pains to mince the matter, and seem to think that when GOD's name is not roundly mentioned, the most horrid asseverations and imprecations by any other words, have little of guilt in them, and are not, in just construction, a violation of the *third commandment*.

(*f*) James ii. 10.

It would have a ridiculous appearance to run over all those forms of swearing and cursing which seem to have been carefully framed and devised with a design to evade the express mention of GOD's name, and thereby to get clear of the guilt of profane swearing. Thus some assume the prerogative of *damning* and *sinking* themselves and others, while the name of GOD, to whom alone this prerogative belongs, is carefully suppressed. But this is so far from extenuating the crime, that it seems greatly to aggravate it, by assuming that power and prerogative to ourselves which can only belong to the MOST HIGH, whose sole and unalienable right it is to pass judgment upon his creatures, and to save or destroy them. If such should deny that they assume any such prerogative, and confess that GOD's name is understood and implied in these forms of imprecation: then I would ask, How does the mere suppression of the name at all mend the matter, or lessen the guilt of such horrid imprecations?

OTHERS seem to think they pay a mighty compliment to the *third commandment*, when they do not mention the name of the MOST HIGH in their oaths, but swear by some of his creatures, or by some attribute or property of his creatures. Thus, while they think it highly iniquitous to swear by GOD, they make no scruple of swearing by *heaven*, their *souls*, *faith*, *conscience*, or the like. But if they considered that an oath is an *act of religious worship* which none but the ALMIGHTY is intitled to, they would see a peculiar guilt in these forms of swearing above all others;

—as to swear by any creature, is actually to *deify* that creature, and pay it a worship and honour which is only due to GOD. “Unto me, says GOD, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear. He that blesteth himself, shall blest himself in the GOD of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the GOD of truth (g).”

BESIDES: our Saviour has pointed out the *impiety* and *absurdity* of such kinds of asseveration in so full, plain, and clear a manner, that nothing can well be added to what he has said on the subject. The relation which every *creature* in the universe has to the great CREATOR and SUSTAINER of all, is so close and dependent, that he who swears by the one, swears by the other also: he who swears by the altar, swears by him to whom that altar is erected, and he who swears by heaven, swears by him who governs therein;—and therefore he lays down this *express prohibition*, “I say unto you, swear not at all: neither by heaven, for it is GOD’S throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by any other creature, for they are all the work of his hands: but let your communication be *yea yea, nay nay*; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (b).” To imagine therefore that we are not guilty of profane swearing, either while we do not mention the sacred name of GOD in our oaths, or while we swear by any of the creatures, is the most idle distinction and absurd pretence, which can be well conceived.

(g) If. xlv. 23. lxxv. 16. (b) Mat. v. 34—37.

4thly. OTHERS are so far from mincing the matter, that they seem to think *oaths* are very *beautiful* and *ornamental parts of speech*, by that pride they seem to take in uttering them, and in devising new and uncommon ones, as singularly graceful embellishments of discourse. A certain class of profane swearers sometimes put on such visible airs of importance in the act of swearing, that it seems evident they value themselves not a little on so graceful an accomplishment. Every sentence which is not embellished with one of these blustering flowers of eloquence, seems to them insipid and flat: nay sometimes whole strings of them are tacked together, like *Sancho Panza's* proverbs, to supply the deficiency of common sense, and to fill up a chasm in conversation.

GOD be thanked, indeed, that this *ambition of profanity*, this *glorying in our shame*, this *pride of swearing*, is, for the most part, confined to the very dregs of our species; the vilest and most abandoned part of our race; and banished, by the laws of good-breeding, from every reputable society of men: for it betrays such a monstrous perversion of taste, and such a total deficiency in decency and good-breeding, as cannot be tolerated in the haunts of civilized social life. And indeed it is remarkable that those most addicted to this kind of swearing, are generally persons of such *sterility of genius* and *poverty of expression*, that, without these aids from impiety, they could not well furnish their quota in common conversation. 'Tis pity, however, that any should so far mistake the world, wicked as it is, as to believe they can recom-

mend themselves to mankind, by such profane forms of speech as cannot but be extremely disgusting and displeasing to some individuals of every mixed company.

5thly, AND to conclude this branch: this practice is often pretended to be *necessary*, either to confirm the truth of a declaration, or to enforce obedience to a command. As to the

(1st OF these it is an idle pretence, seeing, in justice, every man is the less to be believed, in proportion to the proofs of his wickedness. What security have we that the man who, without scruple, breaks the *third* commandment, will not as readily violate the *ninth*; especially when he may serve some real interest by doing so? Hence the old proverb, "He that will *swear*, will *lie*."—Besides; to how low an ebb must a man's *credit* and *veracity* be reduced in the estimation of the world, if he cannot be believed in relating the commonest facts, without confirming the truth of his testimony by an oath? What an affront should an honest man deem it to be told by his neighbour, that unless he swore to the truth of a fact he had related, he would not believe him?—And yet the common swearer acts as tho' his veracity was liable to such a suspicion by every body that hears him. He seems to have such a doubt of his own credit with mankind, that he thinks himself obliged to swear to the truth of every thing he says, as though he were unworthy of being believed upon his simple affirmation.

PYTHAGORAS commanded his scholars to shew

themselves worthy of being believed without an oath, by the integrity of their lives. How well were it for this class of men, who plead for the necessity of swearing to confirm the truth of what they say, if they did but avail themselves of the remark of *Hierocles*, that honest and sensible old *Pagan*; "You may expect to find the most credit, says he, by living in such a manner as to convince the world, that you esteem nothing under heaven more sacred than truth, whether you swear to it, or not."

(2dly, THE necessity of swearing to *over-awe inferiours*, and *enforce obedience* to authority, is seldom I believe seriously pleaded, unless it be by a kind of inferior commanders, who have so accustomed those under them to this kind of language, that they never believe them to be truly in earnest till they employ it. Indeed to pretend that common profane swearing is *necessary* upon any occasion, or in any sense of the word, is an outrage on *common sense*, and such a shameless absurd pretence, as I am persuaded no person of a sound understanding would venture seriously to advance.

I now proceed to lay before my hearers a few considerations which ought for ever to prevent us from falling into this dangerous and disgraceful practice. Consider therefore,

(1st.) How displeasing it is to GOD; that GOD who is your father and friend; that GOD whom you ought to love, and whom it ought to be the very purpose of your life constantly to please and obey. That which GOD has expressly and repeatedly forbidden in

His word—that which degrades his honour, vilifies and debases his name, and renders it cheap and contemptible among men—that which corrupts and poisons the morals of our fellow-creatures, and promotes impiety, profanity, and perjury amongst men, must needs be highly displeasing to GOD: but *such*, as we have seen, is the practice of profane swearers. Let us therefore, from this consideration, resolve against and for ever abandon this detestable and destructive vice.

(2dly.) CONSIDER how highly it must gratify the *devil*, that malicious, insidious, vigilant and indefatigable enemy of GOD's glory and the salvation of men. Must it not afford a hellish pleasure to that malignant spirit, that grand head of the apostacy, to hear GOD's rational human creatures, who are in a state of grace and probation for an immortal crown and unfading inheritance, and who are encompassed with ten thousand engaging and endearing mercies from the indulgent hand of heaven, forfeiting all their precious heavenly hopes; blaspheming that holy name by which they are called; trampling upon the honour and authority of their Maker and Redeemer; openly going over to the side of the apostacy themselves, and leading their fellow-creatures with them in that broad way which terminates in perdition? By no vice, perhaps, is his kingdom and interest more promoted among men—as by no vice, men do more oppose the glory of GOD, and express their enmity against him. “Thine enemies, says *David*, take thy name in vain.”

INDEED, profane swearing seems to be the proper

language of *hell*, of that region of *torture* and *despair*, unto which a single ray of mercy, a single gleam of hope, cannot penetrate; where the *miserable* and *desperate* inhabitants, “*scorched with great heat, blaspheme the GOD of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repent not of their deeds (i).*” The infernal regions probably resound with this diabolical language, and if any thing can extenuate this crime in *devils* and *damned spirits*, it must be their *unsufferable torment* and *utter despair*: but that the *children of hope* in this world, the *heirs of grace*, and the *candidates* for seats in the mansions of heavenly glory should dip their tongues in this *poison of asps*, and pollute their lips with this *infernal dialect*, is strange beyond all astonishment!

(3dly.) CONSIDER that this is a vice to which, properly speaking, there can be no temptation. With regard to many of our other vices, we can plead, *want, pleasure, profit, ambition*, or some *strong propensity of our corrupt nature*, in extenuation of their guilt. The robber and shop-lifter may, in some cases, plead *want*; the avaricious and dishonest man is instigated by a *desire of gain*; the ambitious are goaded on to iniquitous actions by a *thirst for honour and glory*; the proud and vain are tempted by the *love of admiration and applause*; the cruel, the wrathful, the waspish and splenetic may plead the sharpness of their juices, and an irascible temperament; the drunkard is led away by the muddy plea-

(i) Rev. xvi. 9, 11, 21.

fare of intoxication, and the epicure and sensualist, complain that they are hurried into excesses by the headstrong violence of their appetites and lusts:— but no man could ever yet plead, that he was born with a *swearing constitution*—or that he was urged to this vice by any inbred propensity of his nature;— nor can he plead the motives of *pleasure, profit, or honour*, in extenuation of his guilt. Other sinners have some reasons to give, such as they are, for the crimes they commit; but the profane swearer must stand wholly speechless, and without the least pretext of an apology. Will it be said that profane swearing is the natural fruit of *anger, revenge, envy and malice*, which are natural passions of the human mind?

FIRST, I deny that *revenge, envy or malice* are native passions of the human soul. They are exotics, ingrafted by the *devil* on the stock of our nature, and make the strongest features of his image in man. We should never have experienced what *envy, malice or revenge* were, had it not been for our apostacy from GOD. Whatever therefore proceeds from these passions of our corrupt nature, is truly and entirely *diabolical*.

SECONDLY, I deny that there is any natural or necessary connexion between *these passions* and *profane swearing*, so that where these passions are excited, profane swearing must necessarily follow. If this were the case, then the *Hottentots* of the Cape, and the *Florida Indians*, would use the same oaths and imprecations which we do when under the influ-

ence of these passions; which is not true. *Anger*, indeed, naturally expresses itself by *boisterous language* and *violent actions*, but can never mechanically move the tongue to the words *GOD, CHRIST, heaven, hell, and damnation*:—unless the tongue (which is always the case) has been accustomed to the irreverent and profane use of these words;—and then they serve naturally enough as vehicles to convey these hellish passions to our fellow-creatures, and to vent our *anger, malice* and *revenge* against them. And this is what we call the *habit of profane swearing*, which it is the purport of this discourse, by *GOD'S* assistance, to *eradicate* and *destroy*.

(4thly.) CONSIDER that the *frequency* of this crime greatly increases the guilt of it. Happily some crimes, though very atrocious, can be but seldom committed; and thereby their guilt to the committers, and their mischief to the public, is the less:—but those who are unhappily infected with the habit of profane swearing, multiply their transgressions without number. The sins of many of them, in this kind, are almost literally “as the hairs of their head, and as the sands upon the sea shore, which cannot be reckoned (*k*).” How impossible would it be for many of these *heroes in iniquity*, to *recount* and *sum up* at night, how often he had offended with his tongue through the day, to the dishonouring of his *GOD*, to the poisoning the minds of his fellow-creatures, and to the amazing aggravation of his own guilt?

(*k*) Pf. xl. 12.

LET all these considerations therefore conspire to arm us against the inroads of this detestable and destructive vice, and to inspire us with an awful reverence and veneration for that *glorious* and *fearful* name, THE LORD OUR GOD. In order to which the following directions may, by the divine grace, be still farther conducive.

1st. LET us not only labour to obtain just and worthy conceptions of the majesty and glory of the divine Being, and the grandeur of those perfections which should render him so *dear* and *amiable*, as well as so *majestic* and *respectable*, in the esteem of all his rational creatures—but let us also pray that God would, by his renewing and illuminating grace, set home this knowledge upon our hearts, in such a manner that it may prove powerfully and effectually influential and operative *there*. Unless God is pleased thus to *put his fear in our hearts*, and *write his laws with the finger of his spirit on our inward parts*, we shall never have that *deep, constant* and *habitual* respect for his authority, nor veneration for his name, which will effectually preserve us from the violation of *this* or *any other* of his commandments.

2dly. LET us *watch* as well as *pray* against this sin. Such as have contracted habits of profanity, will find it next to impossible to break them, without setting a continual watch over the doors of their lips. As *habits* are contracted by *repeated acts*, so they must be undone and destroyed by a persevering vigilance in restraining these acts. And indeed it may be *observed*, for the encouragement of those concerned,

that there are very few vicious habits which may not be eradicated by this means.

IF OUR prayers and wishes for reformation are *sincere*, they will make us watchful against the evil to be reformed; if they do not, we may certainly conclude that they are not sincere. Hence some people continue to *pray* and *wish*, and yet *persevere* in their wicked habits; because their prayers and wishes are *insincere*, and therefore have no influence on their practice. What we *earnestly* and *sincerely* wish for, we will certainly obtain, provided it is within the reach of our power. It needs only *sincerity* and *resolution* to break through the most perverse and radical habits of vice, and to surmount every obstacle which stands in the way of our salvation. But while men continue *blind* or *inattentive* to the *evil* and *danger* which there is in their wicked practices—for instance, while they continue to think that profane swearing is a *harmless thing*,—they will seldom *pray*, and never sincerely either *watch* or *strive* against it.

3dly. LET us diligently shun those tempers and circumstances which prove temptations to this vice. *Inflamed passions* are generally plead as an irresistible temptation to profane swearing; let us therefore labour to obtain a mastery over these turbulent passions of our nature, and shun those *heats of temper* and *ferments of spirit*, which prove incentives to this diabolical vice. Happy is the man also who shuns the allurements of bad company, and the snares of ebriety and intoxication; he will be mercifully delivered

from two of the most powerful and prevalent temptations to profanity.

4thly. LET us take every opportunity, which prudence may point out and dictate, of reproving this vice in our friends and acquaintances. This practice would answer two noble purposes.

FIRST, In so doing we fulfil the noble law of charity to our neighbour. "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him (e)." If we do this, at the proper time, in a spirit of love and meekness, we not only bear an honourable testimony against vice, but take the most effectual method of reclaiming our brother, and saving a soul from death. It is the most important service we can render our neighbour, if taken in good part; and if not, still we have the happiness of being conscious that we have done our Christian duty.

SECONDLY, It will make us doubly watchful that we commit not the same crime ourselves, which we take the liberty of reproving in our neighbour.

To conclude; let us form and cultivate our social connexions with such, who (altho' we may not be sure that they sincerely fear God, yet) by their civility and good-breeding, observe that decency of conversation which is at the remotest distance from blasphemy and profanity.

EVERY man who forms pretensions to the character of a *gentleman*, a man of *taste* and *refined manners*, ought to be deterred from the practice of profane swearing, when he considers that it is a *vulgar*

(e) Lev. xix. 17.

*vice*; that the present established laws of politeness have banished it out of all good company, and relinquished it as the sole property of *porters*, and the lowest class among the *army* and *navy*. A *true, fine gentleman* would suffer as deep a blush from the escape of an oath, as from any other species of rudeness and indecency unbecoming his character. A *correct, refined taste* alone would quickly cure us of this *low, vulgar and ignoble vice*, and would cause us to shun it as carefully, as we would the mean company where it prevails. Nor is there any more effectual method of *obtaining* and *cultivating* this taste than by frequenting the society of virtuous and polite persons, whose purity of manners and decency of behaviour, will prove a perpetual check upon every outbreaking of rudeness and indecency.

MAY GOD himself make this feeble attempt to vindicate the honour of his name conducive to his own glory, and the good of his human creatures, and to his name will be the eternal praise. Amen.

## S E R M O N III.

The destructive nature and tendency of  
sinful pleasures, from

I TIM. v. 6.

*But she that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she  
liveth.*

**S**T. PAUL is here instructing *Timothy* in the choice of such widows as it was proper for the church to chuse and maintain as *deaconesses*; (a kind of aged matrons employed by the primitive church, and entrusted with the care of entertaining strangers, educating poor children, and taking care of the necessitous sick; for which purposes they were furnished by the church's treasury). And he lays down five necessary qualifications in such widows as should be chosen to this office.

1st. THAT they should be such widows as were *destitute*, and therefore themselves proper objects of charity; having no children or grand-children of their own, who were able to maintain them. Verses 3, 4, 16.

2dly. THAT they should not be *wanton* or *luxurious*, but *truly pious*, trusting in God, and engaged in the duty of constant fervent prayer. Ver. 5, 6.

3dly. THAT they should be at least sixty years old, and consequently of a *stayed, settled* temper of mind and purpose of life. Ver. 9.

4thly. THAT they should be such as had chaste-ly confined themselves to one husband, in the married estate, and were free from all scandal, in this particular. Ver. 9. And,

5thly. THAT they should be such as were in all respects *blameless* and of *good character* in point of virtue, piety, hospitality, humility, compassion, tender-heartedness, and the like. "That they be blameless, says the apostle, well reported of for good works. If she have brought up children; if she have lodged strangers; if she have washed the saints feet; if she have relieved the afflicted; if she have diligently followed every good work." Ver. 7, 10.

AND whilst the apostle is thus delineating the character of such matrons as ought to be chosen by the church for *deaconesses*, he occasionally points out some very great blemishes in female characters, which not only unfitted them for the office of *deaconesses*, but rendered them extremely unworthy the appellation of Christians—such as *wantonness, idleness, levity, a habit of gadding, tattling, whispering and strife-making*; intermeddling in matters which do not concern them, and speaking things which do not become them. And, especially in our text, he shews that the *love of pleasure* in general, and a pursuit of particular sensual gratifications, is a most detestable and dangerous character in women. "But, says the apostle, she that liveth in pleasure (as some Christian

widows and other women, to the great scandal of their profession, do) is dead while she liveth," as to all the noble and valuable purposes of life.

Now this apostolical assertion, altho' here particularly applied to women, the apostle's subject immediately leading him that way, is yet equally applicable to all mankind, and will well bear to run in these general terms, and to constitute this general doctrine, viz.

" A VOLUPTUOUS life; a life devoted to the  
 " pursuit and indulgence of sensual pleasures, is a  
 " vain and unprofitable life; nay, it is actually the  
 " death of the soul."

In farther opening and improving this doctrine, I shall

1st, By the divine assistance, make some observations on the nature of *pleasure* in general, and more especially of those pleasures, which are here mentioned as the death of the soul.

2dly. I SHALL represent some of the fatal consequences of *living in pleasure*.

3dly. I SHALL briefly attempt the proof and establishment of the doctrine; namely, that those who thus *live in pleasures*, are *dead* while they live.  
 And,

4thly, MAKE some practical improvement of the subject. As to the

1st. OF these particulars: the general meaning of the word *pleasure*, is that *content, delight, joy or satisfaction* which we experience in any object or enjoyment. But then our pleasures are almost infinitely

various and diversified, according to the different objects we enjoy, or the different powers or faculties of our nature which are *satisfied, pleased or delighted* by the enjoyment of this endless variety of objects. Hence it appears that the capacity of man for pleasure is very extensive. Every *sense*, whether *external* or *internal*, is an avenue by which pleasure may be admitted into the soul, and that in an endless variety of sensations, according to the countless variety of objects which, thro' these senses, are capable of pleasurable affecting it.

MAN is a compound being, consisting of *soul* and *body*, of *matter* and *spirit*; and these two constituent parts of his nature divide his pleasures into two grand classes, which are commonly termed *sensual* and *intellectual*, the *pleasures of reason*, and the *pleasures of sense*:—to which we may perhaps add a *third class* of pleasures, arising from the union of the soul and body, called the *pleasures of imagination*.

OUR *rational* and *intellectual* pleasures are undoubtedly the noblest of which we are capable, as they arise from the exercise and improvement of the powers and faculties of our souls, and therefore bear some resemblance to the pleasures of angels, and even of God himself.

THESE pleasures also divide themselves into two classes; *natural* and *moral* or *religious*.

I TERM those *natural pleasures of the mind*, or *natural intellectual pleasures*, which arise merely from the discovery of truth, by *reasoning, contemplation, or philosophical investigation*. Knowledge and

*truth* are the nourishment of the mind, as food and drink are of the body; and the mind is as much pleased and delighted by the discoveries of knowledge and truth, as the body is with animal refreshments and gratifications. An *ignorant, erroneous* soul is a *poor, starved, emaciated* soul, and seems to bear some analogical resemblance to a *meagre, consumptive, decayed* body—a body half-famished by being deprived of the means of nutrition. A mind which is not either wholly petrified by ignorance, or stupified and carnalized by a long course of sensual pleasures, feels a delicious and sublime pleasure in the discovery of truth and acquisition of knowledge—in contemplating the stupendous works of creation—in discovering the natures, properties and causes of things—in the knowledge of arts and sciences—in historical, mathematical, philosophical and mechanical discoveries—in comparing abstract ideas together, and finding out their agreement or disagreement with each other—in drawing inferences and conclusions, and forming discourse:—and more especially, in considering and contemplating its own nature, powers and faculties, and its relations to, and connexions with, other beings around it—in searching out the GREAT FIRST CAUSE of all things; discovering his attributes and perfections; the grandeur and multiplicity of his works; the tenour of his laws; the method of his supporting, upholding and governing the natural and moral worlds; the plan of his providence, and the wonderful scheme which his infinite wisdom and mercy has laid and contrived for the redemption of sin-

ful men by Jesus Christ; together with the nature, ingredients and duration of that eternal happiness and glory which he has caused us to hope for in the coming world. In a word; the discovery of truth of every kind is one of the highest and noblest pleasures of a human soul;—and this is a pleasure which is always *rational, manly and innocent*, except in the following cases—As

(1st.) WHEN the search of intellectual pleasures, and the real acquisition of knowledge, puff men up with *pride*, and render them *vain, haughty and supercilious*. Such generally were the ancient *Sophists* and wranglers about words. And indeed the most *trifling, useless and uncertain* kinds of science, *falsely so called*; that false and sceptical philosophy and metaphysics, now so much in vogue, has the most direct tendency thus to leaven the mind with pride, and bloat and puff it up with vanity and self-sufficiency; the only effectual remedy for which is true *self-knowledge*, and deeper draughts of *real science* from the pure and salutary fountains of *reason and revelation*. It is of the above pernicious knowledge the apostle speaks, when he tells us that “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth (a);” and when he warns Christians “to avoid profane and vain janglings and babblings, and oppositions of sciences, falsely so called, which some professing, have erred concerning the faith—lest they should be spoiled, thro’ philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of this world (b).” Or,

(a) 1 Cor. viii. 1.  
20, &c.

(b) Eph. v. 6. 1 Tim. i. 6. vi.

(2dly.) WHEN the search of intellectual pleasures, leads us, by a vain or sinful curiosity to pry either into unlawful branches of science, or into hidden and inscrutable mysteries, which are wholly inadequate to our capacities. Such, for instance, is the knowledge of those future events which GOD hath thought proper, for wise and good reasons, to conceal from us, and many of the mysteries of our holy religion. "Secret things belong to the LORD (c)." — "We ought not to be wise above that which is written (d)." We ought to keep within our sphere; be contented with such knowledge as is within our reach, and not "exercise ourselves in great matters, or in things that are too high for us (e)." Or,

(3dly.) WHEN our eagerness in pursuit of natural intellectual pleasures is intemperate, and leads us to spend too much of our important time in the acquisition of *useless, speculative* knowledge, to the neglect either of our social relative duties, or of the nobler pleasures of morality and religion.

BUT as to *moral and religious pleasures*; the pleasures arising from faith, love, joy, hope and spiritual comfort; from the evidence of the integrity and sincerity of our own hearts; the innocence and usefulness of our lives;—from a well-grounded hope of our interest in GOD's reconciled favour, and of our title to his everlasting enjoyment;—from our exercise of the humane and Christian graces of charity, mercy, humility, justice, honesty, fortitude, be-

(c) Deut. xxix. 29. (d) 1 Cor. iv. 6. (e) Pf.

cxvxi. 5.

nevolence, patience, meekness, resignation and the like, which are properly the pleasures of *religion* and of a *good conscience*—these are, beyond all peradventure, the most *delicious, noble, god-like, and divine* of all human pleasures, and can admit of no *criminal excess* in our pursuit after them, or indulgence of them.—These are, indeed, the peculiar and distinguishing pleasures of *men* and *Christians*; and our holy religion is so far from debarring us of them, that it is the whole design of the gospel to invite and allure men to them, and to urge and beseech them to delight and solace themselves in them.

THE uniform voice of religion is; “Come, taste and see how good the LORD is, and how gracious are his ways. Acquaint thyself now with the *Almighty*, and be at peace with him, and verily good shall come unto thee: delight thyself in him, and he will give thee the desires of thine heart. Great peace have all they that keep his laws, and nothing shall offend them: for all his ways are pleasantness, and his paths peace. Come, prove the divine pleasures of religion, the joys of a good, quiet and unrepublishing conscience, that thou mayest loath and despise all others in comparison. Come eat thou honey because it is good, and the honey-comb which is sweet unto the taste: so shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul. Wherefore spendest thou thy money for that which is not bread, and thy labour for that which doth not profit; hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and let thy soul delight itself in fatness: incline thine ear, and come unto me, hear,

and thy soul shall live : for the work of righteousness, shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever (f).”

ON the other hand, *bodily* or *sensual* pleasures have their seat in our *bodies*, and arise from the gratification of our corporeal senses and appetites. And altho' *these* are incontestibly the *meanest*, *vilest* and *lowest* of all our pleasures ;—such as we have in common with the *brutes*, and often not in the same degree of perfection with them : yet as we live in *bodies*, and in a *material world* where we are surrounded with sensual objects and enjoyments, these pleasures are not always *unlawful* or *forbidden*, but *may* and *ought* to be pursued, enjoyed and indulged in their place, and under certain restrictions and limitations, of which *right reason* and *religion* are the proper judges. We must eat and drink for the support of our bodies and preservation of our lives, and it would be extravagantly absurd to imagine that it were sinful in us to *taste*, *relish* and *indulge* those sensual pleasures which arise from eating and drinking. Indeed we have *no natural appetite* which GOD hath not provided for in the things which are around us : and as GOD hath both implanted these appetites in our natures, and given us abundantly the means of gratifying them, there is no doubt at all but that he intends we should gratify them in a *lawful* and *regular* manner, and taste and enjoy all that pleasure which this gratification can afford us. We may un-

(f) Prov. iii. 17. xxiv. 13, 14. If. lv. 2, 3. 1 Tim. iv. 8. If. xxxii. 17. *Plalms passim.*

doubtedly *use* this world which GOD hath given unto us the children of men; yea, we *may* and *ought* to take pleasure in its use and enjoyment—but nevertheless still with that important apostolic caution—“*So as not to abuse it*; because the fashion thereof passeth away, and we with it (g).”—It cannot therefore be even *all sensual pleasures* which the apostle here condemns as the *death of the soul*.

THAT I may therefore mark out those guilty and polluting pleasures which are here branded with eternal infamy by the inspired apostle, take them as follows.

IN general then, all those sensual pleasures which *conscience*, *right reason* and *religion* condemn, are certainly destructive to the soul. But that I may be a little more explicit and particular.

1st. THAT pleasure which obscures, bedims, or extinguishes a man's understanding; puts him below the level of the brute creation; renders him unfit for any proper exercises of reason or religion, and makes him capable of, and inclinable to, almost all manner of folly and wickedness, and incapable of defending himself against any danger or temptation, is certainly a *guilty, criminal pleasure*—And such is the pleasure of *drunkenness*.

2dly. THAT pleasure which would prompt us causelessly to take away our neighbour's good name, or hurt *his* or *her* credit and reputation in the world; —or injure his estate—or maim his person—or take

(g) 1 Cor. vii. 31.

away his life, is certainly a *guilty* and *criminal* pleasure: and yet such is the pleasure which wicked persons take in *envy, malice, revenge, calumny, detraction, avarice, robbery, murder,* and such like crimes. *These, I confess, do by no means class with sensual pleasures,* and it may seem absurd to term them *pleasures,* in any sense of the word. Yet it cannot be denied that they are *propensities* and *appetites* of our corrupt nature, the gratification of which affords a kind of *diabolical pleasure:* hence that hacknied phrase; “Revenge is sweet!”

3dly. THAT pleasure which would rob a poor innocent girl of her honour and reputation; load her with shame; entail infamy and disgrace upon her posterity; fill the hearts of her parents and friends with sorrow and grief; destroy all her prospects of reputable or advantageous connexions in life—and perhaps either reduce her to want and wretchedness, or to a shameful and abandoned course of life, is certainly a *guilty* and *criminal pleasure:* but such is the pleasure of *fornication* and *unbridled lust!*

4thly. THAT pleasure which would rob an honest and inoffensive man, perhaps our friend, of his wife’s heart, love, duty and affections;—which would destroy his peace; defraud him of his substance, by imposing a spurious breed upon him for his care and maintenance;—which would induce a woman to break the vows of her marriage, the covenant of her GOD; to forsake the way of life, of honour, and of peace; to bring guilt and perjury upon her soul; shame and contempt upon her person; ruin, disgrace and de-

struction into her family, is certainly a *vile and criminal pleasure*:—And yet such is the pleasure of *adultery*!

5thly. THAT pleasure which wastes a man's substance; leaves him no leisure for the duties of religion, or the cares of his family; renders him useless, unprofitable, and even burdensome, both to himself and society; reduces his children to hunger, nakedness and beggary; inflames his passions; destroys his credit; infeebls his constitution; impairs his health; brings disease upon his body and guilt upon his soul, is beyond all peradventure, a *guilty and criminal pleasure*:—But such are the pleasures which arise from *sloth, intemperance, idleness, gaming, luxury, rioting, and a soft, effeminate, prodigal, voluptuous course of life*!

IN a word, all those pleasures which *reason forbids*, which *conscience disapproves*, and which the *gospel* marks with the characters of infamy and perdition—those sensual pleasures which engage the uppermost room in our hearts, which deprive us of the divine pleasures of religion, and take us off from our duty to God, to our neighbours and to ourselves—those brutish, short-liv'd, momentary pleasures, which involve the soul in guilt; exclude it from the kingdom of heaven, and bring upon it eternal pains and sufferings—are such, on which the apostle here justly charges the *death of the soul*.

OF these St. Peter speaks under the name of *fleshly lusts which war against the soul*, and admonishes Christians to abstain from them, as it becomes *stran-*

gers and pilgrims in this world (b). Such also are those works of unrighteousness, and those works of the flesh, which, St. Paul expressly declares, exclude from the kingdom of heaven. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of GOD? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of GOD: for the works of the flesh are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you beforehand, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of GOD (i)." From such pleasures also would he restrain us by that admonition to the *Romans* (k), "Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying."—And that other to the *Ephesians*: "But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becomes saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of CHRIST, or of GOD. Let no man deceive you with vain words:

(b) 1 Pet. ii. 11. (i) 1 Cor. vi. 10, 11. Gal. v. 19, &c.  
 (k) Rom. xiii. 13.

for because of these things cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience (l).”

Now, to *live in these pleasures* is, as the apostle terms it, to *live after the flesh*; to *mind the things of the flesh*; to be *carnally minded, which is death*; and to love the world, and the things which are *in, and of, the world*, namely, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life (m).”

So much therefore for the *first* thing proposed, namely, “The nature of pleasure in general, and especially of those pleasures, which are here mentioned as the *death of the soul*.” Proceed we now

Idly. To consider some of the fatal consequences of living in those pleasures.

**THIS, my brethren,** is always, at all times, and in all places, a seasonable subject; and perhaps never needed more to be insisted on than in *the present age*, which may be justly characterized “An age of dissipation, luxury and sensual indulgences.” Of the multitudes who are travelling in the broad way of vice, which leadeth to, and endeth in, destruction; by far the greater numbers are straying thither in the soft and flowery paths of pleasure: and never, perhaps, were there more votaries of sinful pleasures, or more martyrs to them, than in the present age. The present prevailing taste for *mean, low, sensual* pleasures, is, not only degrading our nature, and sinking us below the character of men and Christians, but is ruining the interests of society, and destroying multitudes

(l) Eph. v. 3,—12.

(m) Rom. viii. 1. John 2.

of precious souls: and perhaps the history of the present times will be handed down to wondering and indignant posterity, infamously distinguished by the *venality* and *corruption* of its generation, the *dissoluteness* of its manners, and a prevailing taste for *low, sensual* gratifications. The young and rising generation are, alas! too, too generally beguiled and drawn away by the *syren* songs of unmanly pleasures, and ingulphed in the destructive whirlpool of polluting lusts:—and many whose years, stations, and connexions in life should insure a better conduct, are guilty of such levities and excesses, as disgrace their characters, and render their examples peculiarly hurtful. And as this is the case in almost all places, we can never sufficiently arm ourselves or our fellow-creatures against such a monster as *sensual pleasure*, which is daily making such havoc and carnage amongst the sons of men. I proceed therefore briefly to point out a few of its present fatal consequences. And

1st, It tends to the ruin of states, kingdoms and common-wealths.

WE have many *fatal* and *instructive* instances of this on record, both in *sacred* and *profane* history. The inhabitants of the ancient world fell a dreadful sacrifice to their sensual pleasures. A mad career in a dissolute course of life, joined with that infidelity which generally accompanies it, rendered them inattentive to, and regardless of, the warnings of *Noah*, and brought them under the exterminating stroke of God's just vengeance. They were totally immers'd

in animal pleasures; eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day of *Noah's* embarking, with his family, in the ark, when GOD brought the *flood upon the world of the ungodly*, and swept them away in their sins (*n*).

SUCH also were the crimes of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*: "Wantonness, idleness, and abundance of bread were in them." They wallowed in the most brutish lusts and abominations; and therefore GOD turned these wicked cities into ashes, thus punishing them with a remarkable overthrow, and making them an example to all who, in after ages, should live in the like ungodliness (*o*).

SUCH were also probably the most prevailing sins of the *Canaanites*, which filled up the measure of their iniquities, and finally brought the heavy judgments of GOD upon them.

THE character of ancient *Babylon*, and the nature of her destruction, is a most striking proof, and should be a perpetual warning to all states and kingdoms, of the danger and destructive tendency of sensual gratifications. The prophet *Isaiab* gives us the character of *Babylon* in strong and glaring colours: "She was *tender and delicate, given to pleasures, and dwelt carelessly* (*p*)." Her effeminate king *Belshazzar*, and her luxurious nobles, were drowned in wine, and spending the night in revellings and amorous banquettings and dalliances with their concubines, and the

(*n*) Gen. vii. 1, &c. compared with Mat. xxiv. 38. and 2 Pet. ii. 5.

(*o*) Gen. xix. 24. 2 Pet. ii. 6—8.

(*p*) Is. xlvi. 1, 8.

whole city engaged in debauch, when *Cyrus* came upon them, and totally defeated and destroyed them. “ Evil came upon them, as the prophet had foretold, and they knew not from whence it came; and mischief fell upon them, and they were not able to put it off; and desolation came upon them suddenly and unexpectedly, which they knew not (q).”

NEVER, perhaps, would *Alexander* have obtained the name of *Great*, or extended his conquests so far in the east, had he not had to do with the *luxurious Persians*, and with the *Indians*, a dastardly effeminate people, who were wholly devoted to sensual indulgences.

AND it is well known to all the world, that the declension of the *Roman* empire, after the reign of *Augustus Caesar*, and the total ruin and destruction of that once *virtuous, frugal, powerful and flourishing* empire, was chiefly owing to *luxury*, arising from its immense opulence;—to an expensive refinement in the gratification of the senses and appetites, and a mad pursuit of sensual pleasures;—which, prevailing to an uncommon degree among all ranks of men, the *nobles*, the *soldiers*, and the *citizens*, at length so inflam'd their passions and appetites, that they lost all sense of *honour, virtue, courage and public spirit*; became wholly *mercenary and venal*, and so sunk under the weight of their own corruptions\*.

(q) If. xlviij 11.

\* We need only look into the *Roman* historians and satyrists to be convinced that *luxury*, and an unbounded indulgence in sensual pleasures, were the destruction of the

2dly. As the immoderate love and pursuit of sensual pleasures tend to the destruction of societies of men, so also of particular persons—and this in point Roman empire; as indeed they must ever produce the same effects in every state and kingdom where they prevail to a certain degree.

“ Suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit  
 Quam neque finitimi valuerunt perdere marfi,  
 Minacis aut Etrusca Porfenae manus,  
 Emula nec virtus Capuae, nec Spartacus acer,  
 Novisque rebus infidelis Allobrax,  
 Nec fera coerulea domuit Germania pube,  
 Parentibusque abominatus Hannibal:  
 Impia perdemus devoti *luxuriae* aetas,  
 Ferisque rursus occupabitur solum.”

Hor.

——inde adspice late

Florentes quondam luxus quas verterit urbes.  
 Quippe nec ira Deum tantum, nec tela, nec hostes,  
 Quantum sola nocet animis illapsa voluptas.  
 Ebrietas tibi fida comes, tibi fida luxus, et attris  
 Circa te semper volitans infamia pennis.

SILIUS.

Proloquar, atque utinam patriae sim verus auruspex,  
 Frangitur ipsa suis Roma superba bonis.

PROPERT.

——nam cetera regna.

Luxuries vitiiis odiisque superbia vertit.  
 Sic male sublimes fregit Spartanus Athenas,  
 Atque idem Thebis cecidit; sic Medus ademit  
 Assyrio, Medoque tulit moderamina Perses.  
 Subjecit Persen Macedo, cessurus et ipse  
 Romanis. Haec auguriis firmata sbyllae.

CLAUD.

Sevior armis, incubat luxuria.

HOR.

of reputation—wordly interest—bodily health—and the noble powers and faculties of the mind.

(1st.) In point of *reputation*. Character and reputation which are, and ought to be, so dear and precious to every wise and good person, and without which, persons of *true delicacy* and *fine feelings* would deem present life itself a burden and a curse, suffer by nothing more than a life spent in the pursuit and gratification of sensual pleasures.—

THERE goes a sot! a drunkard! a glutton! a rake! a spendthrift! a prodigal! a prostitute! a woman of infamous character! a man who spends his substance in riotous living, and with harlots! What *offensive, putrid, stinking* words! what terms of reproach in the ear of reason! what a *mean, low, despicable* opinion do we form of such persons, as soon as we hear them mentioned! How would we dread to *deserve* one of these characters, or to be *called* by one of these names? What pain and uneasiness would it give us to think that we had a *father* or a *mother*, a *wife* or a *husband*, a *sister* or a *brother*, a *son*, a *daughter*, or a *friend*, who deserved to be put into this black and disgraceful list? How does *reason* and the *common sense* of mankind rise up with indignation against persons of such odious and deformed characters? We cannot help inwardly despising them, and looking upon them as a disgrace to the rational nature, and sunk to the level of the *brutes*!

(2dly.) In point of *worldly credit* and *interest*, nothing is more pernicious to mankind, than a life de-

voted to sensual pleasure. What man in his senses would chuse a woman who lived in pleasure; a creature of the stews; a female of infamous character for his wife? Or what woman of reason would chuse a man of like character for her husband?—Who that consulted his own interest, would entrust the care of his estate, or the management of his affairs, to a *fool*, a *spendthrift*, a *prodigal*, a person addicted to *slott*, *gaming*, or *wanton* and *lascivious* practices.

BESIDES; as persons of such character have no credit or interest with others;—as all the world despise and shun them; think them unworthy of any trust or confidence, and are averse to having any dealings or close connexions with them:—so an ample interest or property of their own, can stand them in little stead. A life devoted to carnal lusts and sensual pleasures, must soon waste the clearest estate, and reduce them to a state of wretchedness infinitely more intolerable and distressing than *original poverty*;—with raging appetites, inflamed passions, tyrannizing lusts, all bereaved of their former gratifications, and tearing the soul to pieces with fruitless and vexatious desires—miseries which the *born beggar* never can experience! Hear what the wisdom of *Solomon*, under the unerring guidance of inspiration, pronounces in this case: “The drunkard and glutton shall come to poverty. “They who follow after vain persons shall have poverty enough. “He that loveth pleasure, shall be a poor man; and he that loveth wine and oil, shall not be rich. “By means of a whorish woman, a man is brought to a morsel of

bread; and a companion of fools shall be destroyed (r).” We have a striking example of this in the young prodigal in the gospel, who quickly spent his substance in riotous living, and with harlots (s); and it were happy if modern times did not furnish us numberless proofs of the truth of this doctrine.

(3dly.) IN point of *health*, it is beyond all doubt that nothing is more pernicious and destructive to mankind, than a life devoted to sensual pleasure.

IT ought to be a powerful argument in favour of *virtue* and *temperance*, that they conduce above all things to *long life* and *good health*; to that *mens sana in corpore sano*, that vigour of body and peace and tranquillity of mind, which make the two grand constituents of all our earthly felicity. Our bodies are formed *but for moderate and temperate* enjoyments and pleasures, and nothing contributes more powerfully to the destruction of our health, than an excess in the use of sensual gratifications. The very necessary means of our nourishment and pleasure, when used to excess, become *mortal poisons*. Sloth and idleness, gluttony and drunkenness, late hours, sleepless nights, lust, debauchery and excess of riot, are all of them so many *poisons* to the human constitution, which bring on *weaknesses, mortal diseases and untimely deaths*. Hence *colds, surfeits, indigestions, pleurisies, consumptions, dropsies, rheumatisms, apoplexies*, and a train of other painful and mortal disorders.—Hence so many poor unhappy rakes and debauchees, not liv-

(r) Prov. vi. 26. xxi. 17. xxiii. 21. xxviii. 19.

(s) Luke xv.

ing out half their days; falling untimely and unpitied martyrs to their follies; pining, languishing and rotting away under the sad effects of their dissolute living.—Hence so many poor widows, and helpless, fatherless, diseased children, living in want and wretchedness, thro' the extravagance and sensuality of their parents. Such are some of the common and obvious fruits of living in sensual pleasure.

(4thly.) NOTHING is more pernicious to the *noble powers and faculties of the soul*, than a life of sensual pleasure.

THE prophet *Hosea* has not only the infallible testimony of *inspiration*, but also the concurring testimony of *observation and universal experience*, on his side, when he affirms “That *whoredom and wine, and new wine, take away the heart of man (t).*” When men and women once give themselves over to a life of sinful pleasures and sensual gratifications, they not only lose all *principles of virtue* and all *sense of shame and honour*—they are not only abandoned by all the *finer and more delicate* moral feelings of the soul,—but they actually lose the *right use* of their *reason and understanding*. They appear to be actually under the magical power of a kind of incantment, infatuation and delusion. The unbounded indulgence of sensual pleasures, dims the eye of reason, and brings a kind of *stupor, paralysis or lethargy* upon all the mental faculties; so that men, while they continue in this magic circle, are insensible to

(t) Hof. iv. 11.

all things, but their pleasures—are *past all feeling*, as the apostle strongly expresses it; having their *understandings darkened*, and their *hearts blinded*, and give themselves over to lasciviousness, to *work all manner of uncleanness with greediness* (a). As St. Peter emphatically words it, “They grow presumptuous, self-willed, not ashamed to speak evil; and, as natural brute beasts, they count it pleasure to riot in the day time, having their eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, and are in danger of utterly perishing in their own corruption (w).”—They become so *besotted* and *bewitched* by their lusts, that they lose all sense of *shame* and *decency*, and become *blind* both to their *disease* and *remedy*. They forget *what* they are, *where* they are, and *for what* purposes they have been sent into this world; the true dignity of their natures, and the proper destination of their lives. And their case is the more desperate and hopeless, in that they have, as it were, lost the use of their understanding, and the sensibility of their conscience, so that they have no principle left whereon reproof or admonition may take hold. As the prophet observes, full to our present purpose; “They feed on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned them aside, that they cannot deliver their souls, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand (x)?” So that of all sinners, the *sensual sinner*, the  *sot*, the *debauchee*, the *adulterer*, is the most unlikely to be reclaimed or reformed. I now proceed

(a) Eph. iv. 18, 19.

(w) 2 Pet. ii. 10—14.

(x) Is. xliv. 20.

IIIly. To prove and establish the truth of the doctrine; namely, that those who thus live in pleasures, are dead while they live.

THIS seems a *contradiction*, or a *solecism in terms*—"living in pleasure, and yet *dead* while *living*! How can these things be?—I answer; man is capable of a two-fold life—an *animal*, and a *rational* or *religious* life. Our animal life resembles that of the brutes: it performs the same functions, is supported by the same means, and enjoys the same pleasures. Our animal life consists in breathing and moving; eating, drinking and sleeping; propagating our kind, and enjoying the pleasures of our various bodily senses and appetites. In these respects we have no pre-eminence above the beasts that perish; so that, in this view of human nature, the wise man might well affirm, "That that which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them both: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea they have all one breath:—so that a man (with regard to the *functions, enjoyments and events* of his *animal life*) hath no pre-eminence above a beast (y)."—Nay, I think I have farther proved, that, in point of animal pleasures and enjoyments, the beast hath generally the pre-eminence.—But our *rational, spiritual and religious* life is quite *another and a different* thing. It performs quite different functions, is supported by quite different means, and enjoys quite different pleasures. It consists in living and acting according to the

(y) Eccl. iii, 19.

rules of right reason and the dictates of religion; in worshipping and serving GOD and keeping his commandments; in mortifying our unruly lusts; governing our unbridled passions; forming our hearts and squaring our lives by the precepts of the gospel; and preparing ourselves for death, judgment, and a happy immortality. *This life*, in its highest and purest state, is generated and produced in our souls by the Spirit of GOD, creating in us a new heart, and renewing a right frame of spirit within us:—for “that which is born of the flesh is, and only can be, *flesh* ;” mere *animal* and *corrupt* nature; as nothing can possibly transcend its generating cause in dignity or excellence.—That life therefore which is *spiritual*, must be *born of the spirit*; must have a *spiritual* and *divine* cause to produce it (z).” *This life* is supported and nourished, not by meat and drink and sleep, as the animal life is, but by reflection, consideration, meditation, self-denial and self-government; by reading, hearing and meditating on GOD’S word; receiving the sacraments; increasing in knowledge and virtue; correcting our faults and reforming our lives.—The pleasures and enjoyments of this life, so far as they are merely *rational*, have been considered already;—so far as they are *moral*, *spiritual* and *divine*, they consist in an un-reproaching heart; the testimony of a good conscience; joy in the Holy Ghost; a comfortable assurance of GOD’S love and friendship, and a lively and well-grounded hope of immortal happiness in the di-

(z) John iii. 6.

vine presence and enjoyment. *Such is the rational and spiritual life.*

HENCE it plainly appears from the different nature of these two lives, that we may *live as animals*, live in *sensual pleasures*, whilst we are *dead* as to all the *feelings, principles and pleasures* of a *rational, spiritual, and religious* life.—But the apostle goes still farther, and affirms more: he affirms, that to live *animally and sensually*, is actually to be *dead* in a *spiritual and religious* sense: he insinuates that these two lives are so incompatible with each other, that the *growth and increase* of the one, naturally tends to the *diminution and destruction* of the other; or, to express it in scripture language, “that the flesh warreth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh,” as two contrary discordant principles, mutually tending to each other’s destruction: he affirms that a life of sensual pleasure, is actually the *spiritual death* of the soul; inasmuch that all they who thus live in sinful, sensual pleasures; whose course of life and habitual practice runs in this channel, are, in fact, *spiritually and religiously* dead, while they *thus live after the flesh*.

AND need I take the pains, *my brethren*; to prove this truth from the word of GOD? Does not the apostle tell us, in so many plain words, “That to be *carnally minded*, is *death*; that if we *live after the flesh*, we shall *die*; and that those who thus *live in the flesh*, in a course of sensual gratifications, *cannot please GOD* (a).”—What says Christ, our Lord, to

(a) Rom. viii. 6—13.

the sensual church of *Sardis*? “I know thy works, that thou hast *a name to live*, and art *dead* ;”—*alive* in sensual pleasures, but *dead* unto GOD (*b*). What says the father of the prodigal?—“This my son, says he, was *dead*, and is *alive* again; he was *lost*, and is *found* ;” i. e. he was morally and spiritually *dead* while in a course of sensual pleasure, while spending his substance in rioting and with harlots, at a distance from his father’s house; but is *alive again* by a true repentance, and a return to his father’s family and obedience (*c*). And need I shew you, from the New Testament, that *a life of sensual pleasure* will assuredly end in the *eternal death* and *destruction of the soul*? I refer you to the scriptures quoted at large under the first head of discourse, for the proof of this *awful* and *alarming*, but alas! *too little considered*, truth; and conclude by observing, that if there is any truth at all in the *most express* and *repeated* declaration of the gospel, the votaries of sensual pleasure, cannot entertain the most glimmering hope of having any inheritance in the kingdom of GOD or of CHRIST (*d*).—To be more particular.

1st. THOSE who live in sinful pleasures, are *dead* to all the noble and worthy purposes of the present life. They are *dead* to *virtue* and *honour* and *usefulness* in the world. They are *dead* to their virtuous friends and relations, who had rather see them *actually* and *physically* dead, than to live in *sin* and *shame*, in

(*b*) Rev. iii. 1.      (*c*) Luke xv.      (*d*) 1 Pet. ii. 12.  
1 Cor. vi. 10, 11. Gal. v. 19. Eph. v. 3—12. Col. iii. 5,  
6. Rev. xxi. 8. xxii. 15.

*disgrace and wretchedness.*—They are *dead*, and perhaps *worse than dead*, to *their families*, consuming their substance, and bringing shame, sorrow, misery and disgrace upon them. In this respect, those who live in pleasure, are *dead* while they *live*.

2dly. THEY are *dead* to all the noble and exalted joys and comforts of virtue and religion. Sensual persons have no *taste* or *relish* for the pleasures of the mind, or for the comforts of religion. Their souls are too *dirty*, too *little*, too *narrow* and *contracted* to let in those *pure, refined* and *sublime* pleasures. Give them but the pleasures and enjoyments of the beast, and they are satisfied: they have no higher aim or ambition: they know not what are the pleasures of a *pure heart*, a *good conscience*, an *innocent, useful life*, a *sense of God's favour*, the *hope of heaven*, or the *joy of the Holy Ghost*: they know not *these pleasures*; nor *can* they know them; and, what is worst, they *desire not* to know them.

3dly. THOSE who thus live in sensual pleasures are *dead* to the rational hopes and expectations of heaven. They may have *presumption*, but they can have no *hopes*;—they may have *security*, but they can have no *true peace*. They can have nothing but *gloomy doubts, painful uncertainties*, and, in the end, *black despair*. For he who hath this heavenly hope in himself, must *purify himself, as God is pure* (e).

4thly. THEY are *dead* in the sight of GOD. Their souls are loathsome to him as a dead and putrid carcass. In the day that *Adam* eat the forbidden.

(e) 1 John iii. 3.

guilt, he *died* this *spiritual death*. That *spiritual nexus* which united his innocent soul to his Creator, who was the fountain of his *spiritual and divine life*, was dissolved by guilt, and he became a *dead soul* in the sight of God;—like his corrupt guilty posterity, *dead in trespasses and sins* (f). A *sensual, carnal life*, if I may so speak, stinks in the nostrils of God; is the abominable thing which his soul hates, and which his pure and holy eyes cannot behold but with abhorrence and detestation. “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world, is enmity with God, &c. (g).”

5thly, AND to conclude: those who live in sinful pleasures, are *dead* in the eye of God's law, being under the sentence of *eternal death*. As a malefactor, upon whom the sentence of death is passed, is actually dead in the eye of the law, even before execution; so sensual sinners are dead men in the eye of God's law; sentence of condemnation standing in full force against them. “If ye live after the flesh, says the apostle, ye shall die. All impenitent sinners shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (b).”

WE now proceed to some practical improvement of the subject.—And

1st. PLEASURE, or (which is but perhaps another word for the same idea) *happiness* is the grand and universal pursuit of mankind, and it is doubtless a *lawful and commendable* pursuit. The love of plea-

(f) Eph. ii. 1. (g) James iv. 4. (b) Rom. viii. 13. Rev. xxi. 8.

sure or happiness, seems to be a law impressed on all sensitive, animal and rational nature, by the Author of nature, and therefore cannot be wrong in itself. The brute creation are unerringly pushed on by *instinct*, which is also a law of GOD, to seek their own good and happiness and satisfaction in all cases without exception.—To this instinct in man, reason is aiding, consenting and approving. Reason itself allows *self-love* to be a lawful principle, and approves of that instinct which urges mankind to seek their own good.

As *instinct* is supposed to be the *only* principle in the brutes, to direct them in the pursuit and enjoyment of the chief good of their natures, we find that it generally conducts them *wisely* and *securely* to that end. They seldom mistake those objects which are calculated to give them true pleasure and happiness, and seldom pursue their pleasures to an immoderate, hurtful or destructive degree. They seem well to know the capacity of their nature for happiness; the objects which will afford this happiness, and that degree of enjoyment in which happiness consists, and beyond which it must degenerate into *satiety*, *pain* and *misery*. But as man is endued with a superior principle to direct him in the pursuit of happiness, even *reason*, so his instincts are less perfect than those of the brute creation; as are probably also his bodily senses and appetites, and his sensations of pleasure from animal gratifications.—This is indeed, so far as we know, the only sphere and *ultimatum* of the brute creation. Their supreme happiness, their *summum*

*bonum*, lies in animal gratifications and sensual pleasures. Their nature seems capable of no higher species of happiness: and therefore a gracious God, who intends the happiness of all his creatures, has given them, in general, keener appetites, more perfect bodily senses, a higher gust of pleasure in sensual enjoyments, and instincts which direct them more certainly and unerringly to that sensual pleasure which is the *chief good* of their nature, than to man. Altho' they are supposed to have no reason, yet they know the line which separates pleasure from pain, so well, that they seldom exceed it by *surfeits, debauches or excesses* of any kind. Whereas man, when he abandons reason, which is his *highest instinct*, if I may so call it; the *νημωνιμον*, or governing principle of his nature; when he suffers the *brute* to run away with the *man*, and pursues animal gratifications, as the chief good of his nature, is perpetually blundering in his pursuit of happiness; perpetually mistaking the proper objects of it, and exceeding in the measures of his enjoyments; turning *pleasure* into *pain*, and the mistaken means of *happiness* into *misery and destruction*. Aiming at the pleasures of a *brute*, he loses those of a *man*; and while he pursues and grasps at a shadow which is ever eluding his embraces, he actually loses the *substance*, and incurs the just forfeiture of GOD'S approbation, for preferring *death to life*, and *misery to happiness*.

THE truth is; man can never taste or enjoy the higher and nobler pleasures of his nature; the intellectual and moral pleasures; the pleasures of reason.

and religion, while, mistaking his true happiness, the *summum bonum* of his nature, he pursues a *mean, sensual, brutal* happiness, in the gratification of the passions and appetites of his *animal nature*. In these pursuits, he must ever fall short of the *brute* in real happiness; while at the same time the little reason which is left him, can only render him the more emphatically miserable and wretched, by reproaching him with having abandoned the true happiness of his nature, and thereby incurred the just displeasure of his Creator, in committing the *two great evils*, “of forsaking the fountain of living water, and hewing out unto himself broken cisterns, which can hold no water (i).”

BUT would men act like *rational* creatures; would they attend ever so little to the dictates of that reason by which they are distinguished from, and exalted above, the brutes, and which God hath given them as the ruling principle of their actions and pursuits (for I do not here speak of *conscience*, or the *moral sense*, which is still a higher principle of action) they could never possibly mistake in their pursuits of *true pleasure* and *real happiness*;—they would quickly perceive that intellectual and moral pleasures, are the highest and noblest pleasures of their nature; that in these they can never exceed; of these they can never repent—that animal pleasures, however lawful and innocent, are *mean* in their nature, and *hurtful* in their excess—and that those guilty and criminal pleasures, which conscience disapproves and religion con-

(i) Jer. ii. 12, 13.

demns; are *hateful* in their nature, and *ruinous* in their consequences; and that if there is a just and holy moral Ruler, who governs the world, and takes cognizance of the moral actions of men, they cannot escape his righteous displeasure.

YET it is evident, *my brethren*, from the common course of this world, and from the perpetual blunders of mankind in the pursuit of happiness, that neither *reason*, *conscience*, nor the *moral sense* govern them—but that these noble governing powers of the soul are *blinded*, *bribed*, and rendered *feeble* and *faithless*; insomuch that mankind, generally speaking, seem to have lost the knowledge of *true happiness*, and all *taste* and *relish* for the nobler pleasures of their nature—and to have entered wholly into the province of the *brute creation*, in the pursuit of their pleasures and enjoyments:—a *striking*, *experimental* proof this of our apostacy from GOD; the total degeneracy and corruption of our nature; and of the absolute necessity there is that our natures should be *regenerated* and *renewed* by divine grace;—that the eyes of our understanding should be opened to discern what is right and fit, and that a taste for intellectual, moral and religious pleasures should be awakened in our souls, as our sure and unerring guide to the chief happiness of our nature. This change GOD alone can produce in us, by his Holy Spirit, and to him we should earnestly apply for it, by constant fervent prayer.

2dly. If such is the *nature* and such the *consequences* of sensual pleasures and indulgences—if they

are in their own nature *mean, low and degrading*—if, in many cases, they sink their votaries down to the level, and even below the level, of the brute creation—if even in their highest state of refinement, they are only the *lowest and meanest* pleasures of our nature, vastly inferior to the *intellectual pleasures* of the mind, and much more still beneath the pleasures of *conscience and religion*—nay, they are directly *opposite and contrary* to our *highest and noblest pleasures and enjoyments*, and *destructive of them*; inasmuch, that all who live in the indulgence and gratification of those sensual appetites, are dead to all the refined pleasures of reason and conscience, and all the sublime enjoyments of the divine life—if sensual pleasures have a direct tendency to deceive our hopes; to disappoint our most sanguine expectations; to darken our understandings; to stupify and sear our consciences; to inflame our appetites and passions; to set the *beast* above the *man* within us; to ruin our character, our credit, our health, our substance and our peace and tranquillity of mind; to render us *useless and wretched, hated and despised* in this life, and eternally and inconceivably miserable in the life to come—if this is the *true nature*, and these the *certain consequences*, of a life of sensual pleasure; as has been the business of this discourse to make appear and demonstrate—then how just is that exhortation of the apostle; “Flee fornication: every sin that a man doth, is without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body (k).”—And

(k) 1 Cor. vi. 18.

that other—"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity and peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart (f)."—And that other—"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as pilgrims and strangers, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul (m)?"

WHAT *Solomon* says of the *adulteress's house*, may be justly affirmed of *sensual pleasures* in general: "They are the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death (n)!" A life of sensual pleasure, is the *way of death*: few that go in it, return again; neither take they hold of the path of life. If I had therefore but *one advice* to give to young persons, perhaps it would be this: "Enter not into the path of sensual pleasures; go not in the way of carnal indulgences; avoid it; pass not by it; turn from it and pass away."

YOUTH is the common season of sensual pleasure. 'Tis then, in this gay and blooming morning of life, while the animal spirits abound, the pulse of life beats high, and vigour braces the frame, that the human heart is commonly seduced and deluded into that flowery path, where death lies in ambush, and which ends in bitterness and ruin!—O that young persons had their eyes opened to see the danger, and shun the fatal snare, ere it be too late! O that their hearts

(f) 2 Tim. ii. 22.

(m) 1 Pet. ii. 11.

(n) Prov. vii. 27.

were timeously tinged with that fear of GOD, which is the beginning of true wisdom; and that they were brought to chuse the way of *virtue, chastity, temperance and sobriety*, which is indeed the way of *life, honour and peace!*

AND as to those who have been unhappily corrupted and deluded by the specious sophistry of carnal reasonings and head-strong passions, and long held within the enchanted circle of sensual pleasures, surely it is high time they should now at length consider the danger of their way, and the end to which it leads;—'tis high time they should turn around, and flee from impending destruction;—'tis high time they should provide for a nobler and more durable happiness. "Awake therefore, thou that sleepest—thou that art lulled and entranced by the syren songs of pleasure, and the intoxicating draughts of sensual indulgences—thou that art dead in trespasses and sins—awake from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee life!—Why lingerest thou? Thy feet stand on slippery places, and a few steps more may bring thee into desolation, as in a moment, and utterly consume thee with terrors! May the Spirit of GOD cause all such as are in this dangerous situation to make the reflections, and take the resolutions, of the *returning prodigal*. "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, while I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father,

and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."—Amen.

H 2

## S E R M O N IV.

The duty of obeying and submitting to  
the preceptive and providential will  
of GOD, in two sermons, from

PSAL. xlvi. 10.

*Be still, and know that I AM GOD!*

### S E R M O N I.

**T**HE great root and cause of all our sin and all our misery, lies in this, that we are of a rebellious temper against GOD. Our carnal mind is enmity against GOD, and is not subject to the law of GOD; neither indeed can be, while it continues *carnal* and *unrenewed* (a). We set up our own thoughts against the thoughts of GOD, our own will against the will of GOD, and our own purposes and designs against the purposes and designs of GOD. Thus we endeavour to rob GOD of his sovereignty over us, and his propriety in us. We vainly and wickedly attempt to dispossess him of his throne, and of his right

(a) Rom. viii. 7.

of governing the world in general, and ourselves in particular; and we presumptuously set up *self*—our own wills, desires and purposes as the idol gods which we obey and worship. We set up our own perverse inclinations, blind passions, and corrupt affections, as our lawgivers and the *gods* whom we serve; and say, by our practice, that we *will not have GOD to rule over us*; for what is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him; and hence we are tempted and inclined to say, in our wicked and deceitful hearts, concerning the blessed GOD; “Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; for thou art an hard and austere master, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed (b).”

Now, from this hidden *atheism* and *rebellion* of the heart, there proceeds, in sinners, a habitual reluctance against the will of GOD, whether *preceptive* or *penal*:—hence those monstrous, blasphemous heart-risings against the *pure, holy, just* and *good* laws of GOD, as hard and grievous restraints and impositions upon our carnal appetites and desires, which we call our natural liberty:—hence those murmurings and repinings against the providence of GOD under losses, afflictions, crosses and disappointments:—hence that otherwise unaccountable averseness in sinners against either *doing, suffering*, or quietly *submitting* and *resigning* to the will of GOD; in so much

(b) Luke xix. 14. Job xxi. 14, 15. Mat. xxv. 24.

that altho' they often feignedly and hypocritically pray with their lips "Let thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," yet their heart meaneth no such thing; but whenever their own selfish will and desires come to be crossed and disappointed, they desire nothing less than that the *will of God* should be done either *in them, by them, or upon them*; but when they are tried or chastised, they are like "a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke (c)."

Now, it is the great business of religion to cure this *rebellion* and *atheism* of the heart; to reduce and humble the haughty imaginations of the sinner, and to subject his stubborn and refractory will to the sovereign, holy and wise will of his Maker. When the heart of the sinner is once impressed with the true reverential fear of GOD, and with a sense of the glory of his majesty, then "the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day (d)."

TRUE religion sets GOD on the throne,—allows him to have *power, and right, and wisdom and goodness* enough to govern the world;—endeavours to submit quietly and cheerfully to his wise and sovereign disposals, and not only to be *satisfied and contented*, but even *joyful and thankful*, that the LORD reigneth, and that all the affairs of this world are under the conduct, and at the disposal, of so wise and gracious a Ruler. So that this is the very language of

(c) Jerem. xxxi. 18.

(d) Is. ii. 12.

true piety: "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad thereat. The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord (e)."

OUR text contains one of these *sovereign* and *powerful* words of the LORD GOD Omnipotent, whereby he imposes silence upon all the rebellious thoughts and murmuring undutiful expressions of his creatures, and would inspire them with reverent, submissive and adoring thoughts of his supreme majesty, and the wisdom of his laws and providence. "*Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen: I will be exalted in the earth!*"

SOLOMON tells us, that "where the word of a king is, there is power (f)." Here then behold! the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the sovereign and adorable Monarch of the universe, by whom kings rule and princes decree justice; before whom angels and archangels bow themselves; whom all the heavenly hosts obey; who doth according to his sacred pleasure in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth—Behold! I say, this universal King takes *state* and *majesty* unto himself, and speaks, as it were, from his throne of glory high and lifted up, to a world of depending creatures—and the words which he utters, are every way becoming so great a Potentate, and every way worthy the observance and obedience of such mean and guilty worms of the dust as we are. "Be still, and know that I am God!"

(e) Pf. xcvii. 1. Job i. 21. (f) Eccl. viii. 4.

THIS psalm was probably composed when the *children of Israel* laboured under some very distressing and alarming fears from the hostile invasion of their heathen neighbours. In the former part of the psalm, the Psalmist describes, in a very lively and emphatical manner, the church's refuge and confidence in GOD, who is a very present help in the time of trouble. And it is likely, from the general scope of the psalm, that the church did, at that time, entertain some unbelieving doubts as to the wisdom and equity of GOD's proceedings with her;—that she was inclined to murmur and repine against the sovereign disposals of his providence, and to distrust his power and goodness in the matter of her deliverance from the malice and ambitious designs of her enemies.

THEREFORE the person is changed in our text, and GOD himself speaks in order to silence all the doubts and objections of his people, and to engage them to a steady reliance upon him; and a humble submission to his will. "Be still, and know that I am GOD!" As if he had said: "It is not your business to cavil at my proceedings, or to relucate under my dispensations. Your present fears and doubts arise from an unbelieving, undutiful, rebellious temper. Your present duty lies in submission and resignation to my will; a humble trust and confidence in my power, and a holy complacency in all my providential dealings with you. You are neither to prescribe to me, nor to doubt of my goodness; but to cast all your cares and concerns upon me in the way of your

duty. Be still therefore, and know that I am God ! Learn and know that it is my high prerogative to govern the world, and to do my sacred pleasure both in heaven and on earth. Know that I have infinite *right* and *perfection*, as well as infinite power, to order and dispose of all things in this lower world, and therefore that it is right and fit I should have the entire management and disposal of all *your* concerns, and that you should pay an implicit and cordial submission to my will in every instance of it, and be perfectly satisfied and pleased with every disposal of my providence."—Accordingly, in the last verse, we have a profession of the church's faith in God and submission to him: "The LORD of hosts is with us; the GOD of Jacob is our refuge, Selah!"

THE words clearly suppose and imply two things:

1st. THAT mankind in general, yea even the best of men, GOD'S own church and people, are too often troubled with an evil heart of unbelief in rebelling against the sovereign will of GOD, and murmuring at the disposals of his providence. Their hearts are ready to rise up in rebellion, not only against the *strictness* and *purity* of his laws, but also against the *wisdom* of his providential dealings. And

2dly. We learn from the words, that this is a most wicked and impious temper of mind, which arises from the *corruption*, *infidelity* and *atheism* of the heart: a temper which practically denies the wisdom, justice and goodness of GOD in all his laws, and in all his providential dealings: a temper which, if indulged, has a direct tendency to put GOD out of his

throne, and to rob him of the glory of his sovereignty, and of all his other perfections;—and therefore a temper which should be watched and guarded against with the utmost care and diligence, as being destructive of all true religion. Wherefore God is pleased to take upon him all the state of celestial royalty, and to rebuke it in our text, as with a voice from heaven: “Be still, and know that I am God!”

I SHALL endeavour, by the divine assistance

1st. A LITTLE to illustrate the injunction in the text, and to shew in what manner we should apply and improve it, when the will of GOD, either *preceptive* or *penal*, crosses our corrupt, proud and perverse inclinations.

2dly. I SHALL endeavour to shew the reasons and motives which should impose silence on every such undutiful and rebellious thought in our hearts, and induce us to a ready, chearful and complacential submission and obedience to the divine will in every instance of it.—As to the

1st OF these heads. We must distinguish between the *preceptive* and *providential* will of GOD.

1st. IT is our duty to obey the *commanding* or *preceptive* will of GOD. And

2dly. IT is equally our duty to submit and resign to his disposing or providential will.

ALL GOD'S precepts, ordinances and commandments demand our ready acceptance and chearful obedience, not only in virtue of the *power* and *character* of him who enjoins them, but also from *their own intrinsic equity* and *goodness*, and consequent tenden-

cy to promote our perfection and happiness. In like manner, all his providences and disposals of us and our concerns, whether *merciful* or *afflictive*, demand our most humble and chearful submission, for the same reasons.—In these two things consists the whole of our duty and obedience to GOD; and yet our corrupt hearts are equally averse to both. We are equally disinclined to obey his commandments, and to submit to his pleasure, when it crosses our natural inclinations. As to the

1st OF these, namely, GOD's *preceptive will*, the very worst of men seem ready to obey it, so far as it does not cross or thwart their own humours, lusts, interests or inclinations. They readily avoid these sins to which they have neither inclination nor temptation; and perform those duties to which they have no natural reluctance, or which do not cross their carnal pleasures or interests. Yea, like *Herod*, "they will do many things, and perhaps hear the word and frequent the ordinances of GOD gladly (g)." Thus far they will submit to the authority of GOD and the yoke of CHRIST, but no farther. As soon as GOD calls them to deny themselves and part with their *Herodias's*; their beloved lusts and darling pleasures—as soon as he commands them to perform duties which clash and interfere with their *sloth*, their *indolence*, their *avarice*, *ambition* or *sensual propensities*, immediately they are offended; their corrupt hearts rise up in a rebellious opposition to the preceptive will of

(g) Mark vi. 20.

GOD, and they are ready to cry out, "These are hard sayings, who can hear them (b)?"—They begin to cavil at the precepts of religion which require them to cut off these right hands and pluck out these right eyes, as *hard* and *unreasonable* commands, which they cannot (i. e. *will not*) obey; and to impeach GOD himself of iniquity, alledging him to be a hard master, reaping where he hath not sow'd, and gathering where he hath not strewed.

PERHAPS they can say, as the young man in the gospel, with regard to the *letter* of many of the divine commandments, "All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" But when CHRIST assures them that they still lack *one thing*; that they must mortify, renounce and abandon their beloved lusts, those favourite sins which have hitherto easily beset them, and to which they have been attached with a peculiar partiality and indulgence, and follow him in this way of *mortification* and *self-denial*, they cannot think of obeying this commandment, and therefore they go away sorrowful (i). Tell them to read their Bibles, to attend the public worship of GOD in his church, to assume a profession and keep up a form of religion, perhaps they may go even thus far with some appearance of zeal and attachment; because thus far they may go without crossing any of their favourite lusts. But urge them to watch over their hearts, to moderate and bridle their passions, to render good for evil, to love their enemies, to lay aside

(b) John vi. 60.

(i) Mat. xix. 22.

malice, hatred, revenge and calumny against their neighbours, to live sober, chaste and holy lives in the world—particularly, to mortify any lust to which, either by constitution or habit, they have contracted the most violent propensity—in these *things* they desire to be excused; *these* are the *hard sayings* which they cannot hear! Every effort of the mind is used to strike these things wholly out of the list of vices; or, at least, they avail themselves of every shadow of an argument to *extenuate, palliate* and *excuse* them. And when conscience will not be wholly bribed or silenced, but speaks out and challenges them as to the evil of these tempers and practices, they are apt to say like *Lot*, with regard to the city of *Zoar*, “O not so my Lord; suffer me to escape with those sins; behold they are but little ones (*k*).”

HENCE it plainly appears that such persons have no true principle of obedience. They would serve *two masters*, which is an impossible endeavour in this case. They are inclined to give GOD only so much of their hearts and of their service, as they can conveniently spare from their lusts; and wherever it is necessary that *these* should be denied and mortified, *there* they rise in secret or open rebellion against GOD, and reject his authority.

NOR is this only the case of *profligate* and *abandoned* sinners, who publicly disavow the divine authority, and publish their sins like *Sodom*; but too much of this disposition is often found even in those who are *truly religious*. Much of the Christian war-

(*k*) Gen. xix. 20.

fare lies in subduing and mortifying this rebellious temper of the will against the commanding authority of God. Some of the best of men have still to complain, "that, when to will is present with them, how to do that which is good they find not; but that there is a law in their members, warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin." This is their great *burthen* and *conflict*, and it is their daily fervent prayer to be delivered from it: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ (1)."

Now, in our text, we have a noble remedy against this evil; an invincible argument against this rebellion of the will: "Be still, and know that I am God! Who art thou, O guilty and rebellious creature, that thou thus repliest against God, and darest to dispute his righteous authority, or cavil against his holy laws? Blind and presumptuous reptile; worm of a day, that thou art, know that I am God! that I have a right to give thee laws, and a right to demand thy willing and entire obedience! know that I am a *holy, just* and *wise* being, and therefore that my laws are *holy*—perfectly agreeable to the rectitude, integrity and perfection of my nature;—*just*—perfectly reasonable and equitable in themselves;—and *good*—calculated for promoting the greatest good and happiness of my rational creatures! Who art thou then that disputest,

(1) Rom. vii. 24. 1 Cor. xv. 57.

either the *sovereignty*, or *equity* of my government? When I command thee to deny thyself, to mortify thy lusts, to forsake thy sinful pleasures, thou presumest to think I am a *hard master*, and to tax my laws of *rigour* and *severity*: but *peace*; *be still*, and *know that I am GOD!* and therefore, that an universal and chearful obedience is thy bounden and indispensable duty. Know this, that I will never repeal or alter my pure and holy laws, which are the rule of order and source of happiness in my moral world, in favour of thy corrupt and sinful inclinations. Be it known to thee, that my laws can never be alter'd from the standard of purity and perfection; can never be lowered down into a conformity to thy lawless appetites and unbridled passions. It is therefore *absolutely necessary* that thy heart should be changed, and brought into a perfect and chearful subjection to my holy will. *Here lies thy duty, thy interest and thy happiness!*"—I should now,

2dly, PROCEED to shew you, that as our hearts are naturally prone to rise up in rebellion against the *preceptive will of GOD*, and to quarrel with the strictness and purity of his commandments, where they cross our lusts and sinful inclinations; so we are no less apt to murmur and complain of the *providential will of GOD*, when it is like to rob us of any of our darling lusts or idols—but this will be the subject of another discourse. I shall close the present by a reflection on what has been said.

THE perfect *reasonableness* and *equity* of the di-

vine laws deprives the sinner of one principal plea for his disobedience.

As sinners, we can have but two plausible pretences for violating the laws of religion, or living in the neglect of them. Either,

1st. That these laws are not agreeable to the dictates of our natural reason, and therefore ought not to be obeyed, being not obligatory on rational creatures, as such. Or,

2dly. THAT however *just* or *right* these laws may be in themselves, yet our nature is so exceedingly corrupt and perverse, that we have no *power* or *will* to obey them.

EITHER of these, if strictly true, would doubtless be a powerful plea for disobedience. The *first* contains in it an implication, that the laws of religion are not the laws of GOD : seeing it contradicts our natural notions of the DEITY to suppose him capable of imposing absurd or unreasonable laws on his creatures. The *second* supposes GOD to be a *hard master*, in claiming obedience to a law which his creatures, by the very circumstances of their nature, are unable to perform. On the *first* supposition, men *ought not* to obey the laws of religion : on the *second*, obedience to them would be *impossible to us*, and therefore disobedience would be the *fault of our nature*, but not *our crime*.

WITH regard to the *first*, namely, the *reasonableness* and *equity* of the Christian morality ; all the wisest philosophers, ancient and modern, who were

not Christians, have borne testimony to the excellency of the Christian precepts, either by expressly approving them, or by laying down moral precepts similar and analogous to them.

MEN must be divested of their rational human nature; that is, they must cease to be men, before they can coolly and calmly disapprove those virtues and graces of the Christian system which are *purely moral*. The reasonableness and equity of *justice, mercy, meekness, temperance, chastity, benevolence and charity*, are so very *clear*, and their influence on human happiness so very *self-evident*, that no man in his sober senses can have any thing to urge against them. And even those *evangelical* precepts of Christianity, such as *loving and doing good to our enemies—suffering the loss of all things, and even laying down our lives* for the testimony of JESUS, and the like, which seem most repugnant to the natural notions of men, will appear to be *equally fit and reasonable*, if we admit the principles on which they are founded, and the motives by which the gospel recommends them:—for why should we not *forgive, love, do good to, and pray for*, our enemies, after the example, and in obedience to the command, of our dearest Lord, if we believe that GOD hath, for CHRIST's sake, forgiven us; and that, while we were yet sinners and enemies, CHRIST loved us, and died for us?—And shall we think it *unreasonable* to lay down our lives for the testimony of JESUS, if we believe that he, *the Son of GOD*, laid down his life, as a martyr, to confirm this

testimony; and that he hath assured us, that he *who loseth his life for his sake and the gospel's*, shall find it, brightened by a glorious crown of martyrdom in a better world!

BUT there is a still more striking and convincing proof of the *equity* and *reasonableness* of the Christian morality, than any yet mentioned, and that is, "That every sinner condemns, with a merciless severity, those violations of the divine law in others, which he is not guilty of in his own particular—and even sometimes, by a strange blindness and inconsistency, those sins of which he is notoriously guilty himself." This truth might be illustrated by a vast variety of instances, which would make it clearly appear that sinners have no mercy on each other's vices, but are continually *lashing* and *satyrizing* those vices in each other, of which they think themselves not culpable: infomuch that there is not perhaps one single vice forbidden and condemned by the laws of Christianity, which has not found a severe satyrist amongst the most abandoned of men. This, then, is a most striking proof of the *equity* of the Christian morality, that even, sinners themselves being judges, the laws which forbid *all these vices*, are *holy, just* and *good*; and that these vices are never approved or indulged by the worst of men, only when they are pleading their own particular cause.

To this we may add: that altho' *corrupt reason*, blinded, perverted and bribed by passion and appetite, and under their immediate influence, will ever fly in

the face of those precepts of religion which would curb and restrain those passions and appetites in whose interests it is engaged ; yet, in its *cool, reflecting, dispassionate* moments it is ever on the side of virtue and religion, and proves a swift witness against all those vices condemned by the gospel. The greatest sinners, on a death-bed, or on *the eve of a reformation*, thro' a cool and sober reflection on the nature and tendency of their vices, are quickly and powerfully convinced of the *equity of the divine laws*, and the *unreasonableness of sin*. The clouds and mists of passion being then dissipated, they begin to see things in their true nature, and begin to lament (tho' often too late) that they have been so long the dupes of blindness and folly. Virtue reveals herself to the mind in all her native charms and beauties, and vice of every kind being stripped of her mask, appears in all her haggard ugliness and deformity. And thus the wicked themselves are constrained to bear a glorious and honourable testimony to the truth of religion.

How wretched then must we be, my friends, if we continue to violate the laws of religion ? Conscience and reason, whenever they are permitted to speak out, will bear witness against us and condemn us. And speak out they will sooner or later, in spite of all our pains to bribe or silence them. A *death-bed*, at farthest, will give them a voice as loud as thunder, and cause them to speak with terror to our inmost souls. They will thence summon us before

the impartial tribunal of that GOD, whose laws we have violated, from whence there can be no appeal. "O then that we were now wise; that we now understood this, and would consider our latter end!"

As to the *second* plea of the sinner, arising from the corruptness and perverseness of his nature, which disenable and disincline him to obey the *holy, just* and *good* laws of GOD, we will find it to be equally invalid and groundless, when we consider that there is *balm in Gilead* and a *physician there*. Sinners have an all-wise, all-gracious and all-powerful Physician in their offer, if they will but make application to him, who promises that he will remove this disease of the soul *radically*, by giving them *a new heart* and *a new spirit*, conformed to the dictates of the divine law;—yea that he will even *write it in their hearts*, so that it shall become the very *law* and *disposition* of their *new nature*; and that he will himself work in them both *to will* and *to do*, the contents and requirements of this law. If this were not so, the case of sinners would be desperate and deplorable indeed; but this declaration of the gospel quite alters the case, and fixes the whole blame upon obstinate sinners, who, notwithstanding a conviction of their own *impotence* and *aversion to all that is good*, will not apply to this merciful Physician, nor use the remedies he has prescribed. In vain do they lay the blame on their corrupt nature, when they might have *a better nature* if they would apply for it; and when they are com-

passionately urged and entreated to apply for it, but will not!

HOWEVER mankind have come by this corruption of nature, yet surely it is a grievous moral disease of the soul. That soul, if it has any moral feelings at all, must needs feel itself highly disordered, who is conscious of a disaffection and disinclination to those divine laws, in a conformity to which its *health, beauty, vigour, perfection* and *happiness* consists. This is such an unnatural perversion of taste and appetite, as plainly indicates the soul to be in a state of high disorder.

You say you have no *taste* nor *relish* for the morality of the gospel; no *power, will* or *inclination* to obey its precepts. Know then that you are a *diseased creature*; that your soul is in an unnatural state, in a state of high disorder. Know also that God hath provided for you a physician, in his own dear Son, whom he hath sent into this world to heal the sick, to seek and save that which is lost, and not only to call sinners to repentance, but also to enable them to repent; to give them repentance and the remission of sins. Before, therefore, you cast the blame of your rebellion and disobedience upon the *corruption of your nature*, go to this Physician; consult him upon your case; put yourselves under his care, all-sick and diseased as you are, and earnestly implore him to exert his healing power in your behalf; to subdue the reluctance and rebellion of your will, and to work in you the whole good pleasure of his goodness, and

the work of faith with power. And when you have continued to solicit his favour, and follow his prescriptions, as long as the inveteracy of your disorder and the importance of such a cure deserves; then go away and complain, if you can, that there is no hope or help in *Israel* for this thing.

## S E R M O N V.

The duty of obeying and submitting to  
the preceptive and providential will  
of G O D, in two sermons, from

PSAL. xlv. 10.

*Be still, and know that I AM GOD!*

## S E R M O N II.

**T**HE majesty of these words, as pronounced by  
JEHOVAH himself, from the high and uplifted  
throne of his glory, is surely, one would think, suf-  
ficient to strike a reverential awe and fear into the  
hearts of his creatures, and equally to silence their  
insolent cavils and perverse reasonings against the pu-  
rity and equity of his holy laws, and their fretful and  
peevish murmurings, against the dispensations of his  
sovereign and righteous providence.

IN a former discourse from the words, the first  
species of this rebellion of the human will, as it rises  
against the *preceptive will of God*, was considered at  
some length, and the aggravated guilt of it shewn and  
illustrated from a consideration of the *holiness, just-*

*ness* and *goodness* of the divine law, even in the judgment of sinners themselves, who condemn the violations of it in all mankind, *themselves only excepted*; and who, when they come to the sober exercise of reason and reflection, approve the divine law as *holy, just, and good*, and condemn themselves, as transgressors of it, with a mercileſs ſeverity. I now proceed to ſhew you

Idly, THAT, as the corrupt hearts of men are naturally prone to riſe up in rebellion againſt the *preceptive will of GOD*, and to quarrel with the ſtrictneſs and purity of his laws where they croſs and reſtrain their ſinful inclinations and lawleſs paſſions; ſo they are equally diſpoſed to murmur and repine againſt his *providential will*, when it threatens to deprive them of any of their darling luſts or idols.

THE very worſt of men are often ſatiſfied and contented enough, while they baſk in the ſunſhine of proſperity, and while their corn, wine and oil abound. Either, from ſome remains of a right diſpoſition which ſtill lies buried under the ruins of our fall, or rather from ſome operations of, that good ſpirit, with a diſpenſation of which GOD hath graciouſly viſited all men to call them to repentance, the human heart cannot be wholly *unfeeling* and *inſenſible* under a continual, uninterrupted profuſion of the divine mercies; but muſt feel *pleaſed* and *contented* with ſuch a ſeries of them, and is often raiſed even to ſome tranſient fits of *gratitude* and *rejoicing in GOD*, as a *generous benefactor*. While we are in *health, proſperity* and *eaſy circumſtances*, we are very ſubmiſſive to GOD,

and seem to be very much pleased with his providential goodness: but when the ALMIGHTY, by his sovereign providence, is pleased to lay his afflicting hand upon us, and touch us in a tender part;—when he is pleased to visit us for our iniquities, or to try us in the furnace of affliction, and deal with us as he did with his servant *Job*—to cast us into adversity; bereave us of our children, friends and substance, or lay us on a tedious bed of pain, infirmity and disease;—when afflictions croud upon us in quick succession, like the messengers of *Job*, so that all GOD's billows seem to be let loose against us, to overwhelm us.—When, strip'd of our substance, blasted in our credit and reputation, afflicted in our bodies, bereaved of our friends and exposed to the cruel scoffs and insults of our enemies, we seem to be abandoned of GOD, and left a helpless prey to poverty, disease, contempt and reproach:—In such circumstances as these, and even in much less distressing, all the rebel within us is apt to rise up against the providence of GOD. We are ready to follow the wicked advice of *Job's* wife, “to curse GOD, and die:” Or, if, by the power of restraining grace, we are preserved from the out-breakings of such a rebellious and abandoned passion, yet our hearts are apt to entertain hard and unworthy thoughts of the divine providence. We are ready to imagine that GOD deals *unkindly, unjustly and unmercifully* with us, and that he punishes us even more than our iniquities deserve. We are prone to tax the wisdom, justice and goodness of his providence;—in a word,

to forget that he is GOD; that his ways are equal, and that the judge of *all the world must do right*; for that he is a GOD in whom there is no iniquity, right and just is he (a). We inly marmor and repine at our lot; envy the happiness of others who are exempted from the afflictions under which we labour, and are sometimes even brought to doubt of GOD's faithfulness and loving kindness; to call in question or impeach his government of the world, and to complain, with the impatient Psalmist "Will the LORD cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath GOD forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies (b)?"—Or to say with *Jacob* "All these things are against me (c)." Nay, how many good men have been ensnared and have fallen by this temptation;—"Have been envious at the foolish, when they saw the prosperity of the wicked; while they themselves have been plagued all the day long and chastened every morning (d)."—How many have been tempted to fall, inadvertently, into the *envious, plaintive strain*, of the prophet; "Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy, that deal very treacherously?"—Not considering that "the wicked are as

(a) Deut. xxxii. 4,

(f) Gen. xlii. 36,

(b) Psal. lxxvii. 7.—9.

(d) Psal. lxxiii.

stubble before the wind and as chaff that the storm carrieth away:—that they are reserved to the day of destruction and shall be brought forth unto the day of wrath (e).”

BUT this is *our infirmity and wickedness*: Thus we prove ourselves ignorant, even as beasts before God. When we speak and think *thus*, we offend against the generation of his children, and blaspheme his righteous providence. Yet *thus* we are prone to *speak* and to *think* under his paternal rod. “When we are smitten, we are as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.” We *storm* and *foam* and *stret* and *reluctate* under his correcting hand. Afflictions, instead of humbling our haughty spirits and bringing us to a more close and resigned dependance upon God, which is their proper design and genuine tendency, are often the accidental occasion, through the corruption of our nature, of hardening us more and more, as they did wicked *Pharaoh*, and of exciting our perverse hearts to rebel against God, and to murmur against his wise and gracious disposals. This, it seems, was the unhappy case of obdurate *Israel*, and therefore God exprobrates with them, and seems to give them over as incorrigible and incurable; “Wherefore should ye be smitten any more? Ye will but revolt more and more (f).”

BUT now whenever we feel these risings of heart against the providential will of God, we ought to awe our souls into a quiet and humble submission by

(e) Job xxi.

(f) Isaiah i. 5.

a believing view of the being, perfection, and universal providence of GOD; we ought to silence every murmuring, rebellious motion of our hearts by a deep and realizing conviction of GOD's sovereignty over us, his propriety in us, and the consequent right he has to dispose of us according to his sovereign and righteous pleasure. We should consider that it is right and fit that GOD should govern the world, and dispose of all our affairs, for that unto him alone it appertaineth; and that we are both *secure* and *happy* in submitting ourselves, and all our concerns, to the management of so *wise*, so *holy*, so *just* and so *good* a Being. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." Clouds and darkness are round about him, and may wrap up his judgments and other providential dealings in a veil of obscurity, impenetrable by us in the present state: but this ought to be our comfort, and the sure ground of our acquiescence, that *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*; and that in the up-winding and issue of things, it will manifestly appear to the conviction of the whole rational world, that the judge of the whole earth hath done right in each and every of his procedures! We should hearken, with humble awe and reverent attention, to that sovereign command in our text; "Be still, and know that I am GOD." If we did but *firmly believe* and *duly consider* that it is GOD who carves and disposes our loss, and orders all our circumstances; and WHO OR WHAT this GOD is, under

whose government we are; this would effectually impose silence on every rebellious thought and undutiful expression. In the light of this conviction, we would *blush* and be *ashamed* to harbour one unworthy surmise of the divine providence under the heaviest afflictions; and we would be thoroughly persuaded that it is our duty—not to *find fault*, but to submit—not to *dispute*, but to *resign*.

Two considerations, among many others, would silence all our complaints on these occasions.

(1st.) OUR ignorance renders us utterly incapable of forming a right judgment concerning the equity and fitness of God's providential dealings with us, or with others. We have not penetration enough to discern what is fittest to be done in the government of the world, or in the ordering of our own lot in particular. This knowledge is too high for us: we cannot attain it: we have not *data* sufficient for this investigation. We are in a great measure ignorant of the complicated system of things;—know not the connections and dependencies which subsist between us and other beings; how our moral conduct may influence or affect them;—what remedies are best adapted to remove our moral disorders;—or, if afflictions are necessary, *what kind or degree* of them are needful to work the cure. We see but a little way into things, and cannot penetrate into the views and designs of God, in bringing afflictions upon *ourselves* or *others*.—All that we know, or *need to know* in this case, is, that we are under the care and management of a

wife and compassionate physician ;—that the rod is in the hand of a kind and gracious father, who afflicteth not willingly, neither grieveth the children of men ;—that it is only *if need so require*, that we labour under manifold trials and temptations, by the will of him who delighteth in mercy and in whom compassions flow ;—that judgment is *his strange work*, and only takes place either where nothing else will do, or where all milder methods have been tried in vain ;—that it is impossible for him to wrong or injure us or any of his creatures ;—that, in this state of trial, all his judgments have a *medicinal* and *salutary* intention, and do actually work together for good to them who love and fear him ;—and that he does not punish us *merely for his pleasure*, but *for our profit*, and for the profit of others, that *they* and *we* might, if possible, be made *partakers of his holiness*. But we do not always *see* and *consider* this gracious design and tendency of afflictive providences, and therefore it is that we frequently rebel and mutiny against God. “ All these things, says *Jacob*, are against me”—reflecting on the supposed loss of his children. But in this *Jacob* spoke *hastily* and *unadvisedly* with his lips, not knowing what great and beneficent designs God was carrying on by the means which he so much disliked.

THUS when we take upon us to arraign and censure the providence of God, we can only speak at random, and are guilty of the highest presumption, in judging of matters beyond the sphere of

our knowledge. Our duty therefore is “to be *still*, *contented* and *submissive*, and to know that he is God!”

(2dly.) As we are not qualified to judge of, or censure, the providence of God, so neither have we *any right* to do it. He is God, and we are *creatures*; he the *potter*, and we the *clay* of his workmanship; he an *absolute independent sovereign*, and we the *natural subjects* of his kingdom, wholly dependent on him for being and all things; consequently we have *no right* to demand an account of any of his matters. As is fit, “He does what he pleases, in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth, and none may say unto him, “What doest thou, or wherefore dost thou so or so?” Were it even in his *will* or *inclination* to deal unrighteously by us (which is impossible,) yet his absolute power over us, and property in us, renders it impossible for us either to resist him, or to withdraw ourselves from his government. We ought therefore to consider *our place* and attend to the duty of it; which is to yield ourselves up with a holy complacency to the divine will, without any bold conjectures or presumptuous inquiries, into the sovereign and (to us often) inscrutable reasons of the divine proceedings. I now come, in the

III. PLACE, to close the whole by a few reasons which should silence every rebellious thought against the providence of God, and engage us to a ready, chearful and submissive resignation to the divine will, in every instance of it.

1st. God's providential will should be submitted to, in the most afflictive dispensations of it, because, in the present state of trial, it has ever a *medicinal design* and *salutary tendency*. This I have hinted at before, but it deserves farther illustration. It is one of the most absurd and injurious aspersions we can cast upon a being of infinite perfection and benevolence, who is necessarily, essentially and unchangeably happy in himself, to suppose him capable of taking any pleasure in the misery of his creatures, or indeed of laying any afflictions on them, in the present state, which have not a tendency to their reformation and happiness—much more, that (as some have boldly ventured to suppose) he should visit many of his creatures with afflictions, merely with a design to increase their guilt and rebellion, that he might have the fairer pretence of inflicting an everlasting punishment on them, in a state of retribution! This would be to suppose the Almighty an *envious* and *malignant* being, who sports himself with the calamities and sufferings of his creatures; contrary to all our natural notions of him, and to that character which he every where assumes in his word, “As the GOD of love; the LORD GOD merciful and gracious; slow to anger; abundant in goodness; delighting in mercy; waiting long and patiently to be gracious; expostulating with sinners not to destroy themselves; following them to the very brink of perdition with the compassionate calls of mercy, and declaring, by his sacred honour and life, that he delighteth not in

the destruction of sinners, and is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance!" Can we suppose it possible for a being of this character either to seek occasion against his creatures; wantonly to sport himself with their sufferings, or indeed to lay any afflictions on them, which are not necessary for them, or which have not a native tendency to reclaim or reform them? This consideration alone, that the Almighty can have neither *pleasure* nor *profit* by the pains and distresses of his creatures, and that therefore they must be permitted for some *wise, benevolent* and *salutary* purpose, ought to be a sufficient apology for the *severest* and *most afflictive* dispensations of his providence; and, could we but keep it in view, would for ever preserve us from murmuring and repining against them.

IT IS an opinion pretty universally established, that *physical evil* is a natural consequence of *moral*, and follows from it, as an *effect* from its *cause*. Had not *sin* taken place in the system, none of GOD's creatures would ever have experienced *misery*. Now, it hath pleased GOD, in his infinite wisdom, so to order matters, that *physical* or *natural evil*, which is the effect and consequence of *sin*, should be one of the most powerful remedies of it and preservatives against it. That it is so, in *the present state*; —that *pain, affliction, losses, and disappointments* have a *salutary* and *medicinal* tendency in this world, and often actually prove a means of preventing sin, and curing the moral disorders of men, is,

I think, an indisputable matter of fact. *David*, and thousands besides him, could say, from a happy experience, "That it was good for them that they were afflicted;—that before they were afflicted, they went astray; but afterwards, they learnt to keep God's law." *Moral evil* among men generally proceeds, from unruly lusts, headstrong passions arising from luxury, idleness and high and pamper'd health—from an uninterrupted flow of prosperity; the pride and confidence of ambition, and independency, begetting a forgetfulness of God, and a thoughtlessness of death, judgment and eternity. Now it is evident that *poverty, pain, calamities, and disappointments*, which are the principal *physical evils* of this life, have a natural tendency to prevent and cure those moral evils. They have a natural tendency to mortify our passions; to starve our lusts; to humble our pride and self-sufficiency; to convince us of the vanity and uncertainty of all sublunary enjoyments; to shew us our dependence on God, the frailty and uncertain tenour of our mortal lives, and the necessity and importance of preparing for a dissolution, and transition to a state and world of retribution. These happy effects the afflictive providences of God have certainly a native tendency to produce, and if they do not produce them in all who are afflicted, it is owing to the *deepness* and *inveteracy* of the disease, which will not yield to the most proper medicines.

Now will it be disputed, I presume, that *physical evil*, lays a powerful restraint upon *moral evil*. In

the world, and daily prevents the commission of ten thousand aggravated sins among men. This is a truth, so obvious that it needs no illustration. *Millions* have been brought *afterwards* to bless the gracious hand which arrested them in the mad career of their sins, and, by some affliction or disappointment, powerfully prevented them from perpetrating the most atrocious crimes—and *millions* by being straitened in their worldly circumstances, or chained down on a bed of affliction, are mercifully, though against their inclinations, disenabled from being pests and nuisances to human society. Now from this single consideration it appears that *physical evil*, answers a beneficent end in the moral world, in its present corrupt and degenerate state, and therefore that it is wisely ordained and permitted to take place among men.

THAT *physical evil*, is the proper remedy of *moral*, is a truth so agreeable to the reason of men, that Father ORIGEN, and after him, the celebrated *Sieur Raoufay*, and, after them, the *universal redemptionists*, have imagined, that *all pain*, not only in the *present state of trial*, but also in the *future state of retribution*, will prove *medicinal* and *salutary* to the souls of men. Such sinners, they suppose, whose stubborn and refractory souls have not been reduced and humbled by the afflictions of this life, to a grateful compliance with the terms of the gospel, will be turned into hell, not as a state or place of endless misery, but as a farther state of trial and probation, where, in process of time, the

*weight* and *duration* of their torments will at length work their *moral cure*; bend their stubborn wills to an entire submission to GOD, and bring them earnestly to plead for, and thankfully to embrace, the offers of his redeeming love. So that although hell, as a place of torment and moral discipline for rebellious spirits, will continue an eternal receptacle for all the rebellious subjects of GOD's moral kingdom; yet the inhabitants of it will be released from time to time, as their moral cures are perfected. And thus, they imagine, that when *moral evil* is wholly rooted out of GOD's rational creation, *physical evil* will also cease, as being then useless; and the whole creation of GOD will exult and triumph in consummate and eternal blessedness, through the redemption and mediation of CHRIST, the glorious Redeemer.

THIS is a *fine* and *flattering* scheme, but I do not lay it before you as *gospel*, as I think it, by no means, clearly supported by the Christian system. I only alledge it as a supernumerary proof of the reasonableness of the doctrine I have been advancing, and how consonant it is to the natural notions of men.

Now, if all affliction in the present state is *medicinal* and *salutary*, how just and reasonable is it that we should receive it, not only with *silent submission*, but also with *approbation* and *gratitude*? If a skilful physician prescribed a very bitter and disagreeable medicine, as absolutely necessary for restoring our bodily health, would we not deem it our duty to receive it with gratitude, and bless the

hand that administered it? But our souls are pining away under a mortal disorder, by which they must soon inevitably perish without an effectual remedy. GOD our all-wise and compassionate physician, has prescribed the bitter cup of affliction to purge us of our lusts, and to cause us to nauseate and cast up those sinful pleasures, which we have long rolled under our tongue as a sweet morsel, and swallowed with greediness. "This cup, therefore, which our Father hath given us, shall we not drink it?" True indeed, "No chastening, no affliction, for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of our spirits and live? For they verily chastened us a few days for *their own pleasure*; but he *for our profit*, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Let us then learn to be still, and know that he is GOD!—Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of GOD, and he will exalt us in due season (g)."

2dly. WE should frequently consider and be firmly persuaded of this truth, that it is GOD who governs the world, and who has an immediate hand in all the afflictions which befall us. "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground (b)." "Shall there be evil in a city," says

(g) Heb. xii. 6.—11. James iv. 10.

(b) Job. v. 6.

the prophet, "and the Lord hath not done it (i)?" Whatever part second causes may have in our afflictions, yet this must be allowed as a certain truth; that all our *natural evils* are *permitted* and *disposed* by God, and that *his hand* and *providence* should be acknowledged in all. Many were the second causes and instruments of *Job's* afflictions; *Satan*, the *Sabeans*, the *Chaldeans* and his *ancient friends* all conspired, and had, each of them, a hand in his calamities; and yet we find he look'd *over* and *above* them all, and considered his troubles as coming from the hand of God, and by the appointment of his providence: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." A plain proof this of the interposition of a particular providence in every event that befalls us, and that not a single hair can fall from our head, without the permission and appointment of our Father in heaven (k)

Now this consideration should compose and quiet our minds under the heaviest losses and afflictions. "It is the Lord," said good old *Eli*, when he received that dreadful denunciation of judgment against his house, "let him do what seemeth him good." "Shall we receive good, says *Job*, at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also?" And so *David*; "I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou, LORD, didst it (l)." "Be still and know that I am GOD!" He is GOD: this we should know and consider, that as GOD and our GOD, he

(i) Amos iii.

(k) Job i. and ii. chapters. Matth.

\* 22.

(l) 1 Sam. iii. 18. Psal. xxxix. 9.

has a sovereign right to correct and deal with us as he sees fit, and therefore that it is the most criminal kind of treason in us to lift up a rebellious hand, or suffer a disloyal thought to rise up in our minds against him.

3dly. UNDER all our trials and afflictions, we should not only consider GOD'S absolute power and sovereignty over us, but also his other glorious governing perfections; which must needs render his government amiable in our eyes, and our entire submission to it perfectly reasonable. He is not only the *greatest*, but the *best* of Beings. "He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, and the scepter of his kingdom is a righteous scepter (m)." "He afflicteth not willingly, neither grieveth the children of men." There must be *reason*, sufficient reason, nay I had almost said *absolute necessity*, for all the afflictions he lays upon us. He cannot possibly *wrong* or *injure* his creatures by any of his dispensations. He designs the real and permanent good of his people, by all their afflictions. They are inflicted by the hand of a *father*, for the *kindest* and *wisest* purposes, and are made to work out for his people a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He is even represented as sympathizing with his people under them, with all the bowels of a tender father, who reluctantly puts a child to pain for his good: "As a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. He considereth

(m) Psal. xlv. 6.

that we are but dust. He putteth our tears in a bottle, having wiped them with a sympathetic and compassionate hand from our eyes, and in all our afflictions, he is afflicted, being grieved at the hardness of our hearts, which renders them necessary."—Considerations these, which should render us not only *quiet* and *submissive*, but even *thankful* to God under afflictions, as the tokens of his fatherly love, and the necessary means of our sanctification.

4thly. We should consider that all the crosses, losses and afflictions which happen in our lot, are the very things which, as Christians, we pray for. Do we not pray that God's will may be done *by us, in us, and upon us*? I do not mean that we pray for *evil*, as such: but do we not pray that God would take us under his care and government, and that he would dispose of us, and order the whole state of our affairs for the best;—that he would chasten us in love, and reprove us for our iniquities, and bring us home to himself in that way which appears best to his infinite wisdom? And yet shall we find fault when he deals with us, as children?—We first consent that he should govern us; beg that he would take us under his care, and then, by a strange inconsistency, take upon us to censure his administration!

5thly, AND to conclude: In all our afflictions we should look unto JESUS the great high priest of our profession, who for the joy that was set before him, *endured the cross, despising the shame*. He has set us a glorious example of *patience, magnanimity, fortitude, and perfect resignation* under afflic-

tions, that we should follow his steps. What kind of *physical evil* did he not encounter in their most distressing forms, although perfectly innocent and undeserving? And yet "when he was reviled, he reviled not again;—when he suffered, he threatened not." Under the most terrible calamity which ever fell upon human nature, he shewed the most astonishing instance of resignation which was ever exerted by a human soul; "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me:—nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done! Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!"

AND, indeed, my friends, it is only from HIM that we can receive that blessed temper which will enable us both to *do*, and *submit to*, the divine will, in every instance of it. O that we might wait upon him continually for the supplies of this good spirit, and for that grace and strength which may be sufficient in every time of need. Then ~~will it be~~ as our meat and as our drink, both to *do*, and *submit to*, the will of our Father which is in heaven. *Amen.*

## S E R M O N VI.

The Christian Philosophy of the heart  
and of the tongue, in two sermons,  
from

JAMES. iii. 13.—18.

*Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This &c. &c.*

### S E R M O N , I.

“**B**E not hasty in thy spirit to be angry,” says the wise preacher: “For anger resteth in the bosom of fools (a).”—Many a *rash, hasty, passionate, violent* man in the world thinks himself *very wise*; yea and justifies his *passion* as a proof and evidence of his *wisdom*. He is apt to say, with *Jonah*, “Yea I do well to be angry, even unto death. &

(a) Eccles. vii. 9.

Have good reason for my passion. No man, that has the spirit of a man, can bear it. He must be a *tame fool* indeed, who would not be revenged for such an affront as this!"—And then, with regard to his *meek neighbour*, who has learnt so much of the Christian temper as to put up with an injury, and forgive it, he is apt to say reproachfully "such an one is a fool—a coward—a poltron. Were it my case, I would be revenged; I would give railing for railing, reproachful language for reproachful language, and he should dearly suffer for his insolence!"

THIS, *my brethren*, is the *wisdom of this world*; that wisdom which is *earthly, sensual, devilish*. But it is not the wisdom of GOD: it is not the wisdom of the gospel: it is utterly inconsistent with the *meekness and gentleness of Christ*. The wise man gives all the abettors of this wisdom *the lie* without ceremony, and roundly affirms that he is a *fool* who is of a *hasty spirit*, and in *whose bosom anger resteth*. *Anger resteth in the bosom of fools*.

ANGER is often *lawful and necessary*. We ought frequently to be angry with ourselves.—Often we have reason to be angry with others.—Nay, such is human weakness and infirmity on the one hand, and the teasing incidents which surround us on the other, that even the *wise*, the *good* man is not seldom tempted to be angry upon the *slightest causes*, and *above the due measure*. But *anger resteth not, abideth not in his bosom*. He cherisheth not the angry, wrathful, revengeful thought.—He broodeth not upon it.—He hatcheth not the cockatrice's egg. He

suffereth not the venom to rankle and fester in his soul, so as to ruin his peace, destroy his charity, and drive him to unjust, cruel and revengeful actions. His wisdom shews him the *unhappiness*, the *folly*, the *danger*, the *wickedness* of this temper and conduct. He feels that his soul is *disordered*, *dislocated* and *poisoned*; that he can neither with peace pray to his GOD, nor think, speak or do good to his neighbour while this hellish passion is cherished; and therefore, if possible, he *letteth not the sun go down on his wrath*. And good reason: for what if GOD should cut him off while he is meditating revenge in the night watches?—What if the *devil* should be permitted to take the advantage of him, and work up his passion to purposes of murder before the morning light?—How can he pray GOD to *forgive him*, as *he forgives his neighbour*?—How can he be said to forgive his neighbour, while he means to do him a mischief?—And would he have GOD *thus* to forgive *him*?

No, no: anger resteth in the bosom of *fools*; of people who neither know their duty to GOD, to their *neighbour*, nor to *themselves*.—Not to GOD: for he requires us to be of a *gentle*, *meeke*, *loving* and *forgiving* disposition, and to forgive our neighbour, as we hope for forgiveness from him.—Not to their *neighbour*: for we are required to love him *as ourselves*; to do good to all men; to *love*, *forgive*, *pray for*, and *do good* even to our *enemies*; to render good for evil, and blessing for cursing:—but can we perform any of these duties to our neighbour

while we heartily hate him ; while we cannot bear to see him ; while we have bitter envying and strife in our hearts against him ; while we actually seek and devise in our hearts to hurt him, and while *anger resteth in our bosoms* towards him ?—Not to *ourselves* : for by the indulgence of this temper we destroy the *peace* and *charity* of our souls, and indubitably seal our own damnation.

BUT let the *Old Testament* be tried and judged by the *New* : let *Solomon* the *Jewish preacher*, be tried and judged by *James* the *Christian apostle*.

IN this epistle we have a noble system of *Christian Philosophy* ; and this chapter may be said to contain the philosophy of the *tongue* and of the *heart*.

IT would seem that in *James's* time, as well as in ours, there were a great many persons who boasted of their religious *wisdom, knowledge* and *profession*, while they thought that their tongues were at liberty to rail, abuse, backbite, slander, curse and swear—and their hearts to hatch, conceive and brood envy, malice, rancour and bitterness. To such sort of people, *James* thus addresses himself.—

“ IF any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain.” A *curfing, swearing, railing, abusive Christian*, is as great a joke, as a *holy devil*. Such a man only *seems* to be religious, but *is not*. His religion, in all its noisy pretences, is *vain* ; and he only deceiveth his own heart, by imagining that he hath one single grain of

true Christianity. As the tongue is the index of the heart; so the tongue that is full of *bitter, blasphemous, reproachful, slanderous* words proves to a demonstration that the heart, from which this language flows, is full of *rancour, malice*, and every *deadly poison*, and consequently void of every spark of true religion."

AND then, after shewing, in the beginning of this chapter, the *venom, danger, malignity* and *ungovernableness* of an evil tongue; and the absurdity of supposing that the *heart* can be *good*, where the tongue is *so bad*; how inconsistent it is for one mouth and one tongue both to *bless* and *curse*;—how impossible it is for one and the same fountain to send forth both *bitter* waters and *sweet*;—and how an ill tongue being instigated by the *devil* and pushed on by hellish passions, draws the whole body into sin, and sets all on fire and confusion around it, occasioning every kind of calamity and mischief in the society of men.—He then comes to shew how a Christian ought to manifest *true* wisdom and knowledge.

"You boast of your *wisdom* and *knowledge*, says he: you think yourselves very wise and very knowing Christians.—Well then, let me challenge such to manifest and display these talents. Who is a wise man and possessed with knowledge among you? let such an one shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom, and then I shall believe him."

THEY meant to shew their great knowledge and mighty wisdom, by censuring and contending with

their brethren ; by speaking uncharitably of them and abusing them. But the apostle shews them *another* and a *better* way of giving proof of their wisdom and knowledge—even by good *works*—a *mild, gentle, forgiving* conversation, and *the meekness of wisdom*.

“ MEEKNESS of wisdom.”—Christian wisdom is a *meek* thing ; not *noisy, blustering, passionate, contentious, censorious* ; but *meek and gentle, humble and patient*, delighting to pass over an injury, to forgive an offence, and to do good even to an enemy. This is the *wisdom of CHRIST* ; the *wisdom of true Christians* ; and it is easy to see how very different a thing it is from the *wisdom of this world*, that wisdom which is *most in vogue* !

“ BUT, says the apostle, if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.”—How sadly has the *devil* blinded the minds of sinners, when they can *glory* in the most hellish of all passions—“ Bitter envying and strife in their hearts ?”—And yet is not this the commonest thing in the world ?—How many even *glory* in this temper, and *that* under the notion of its being a very *brave, wise and worthy* accomplishment ?—Go to many men—tell them it is *unchristian and unmanly* to live in *strife and envy* with their neighbour—beseech them to *correct and mortify* these malignant tempers, and to do every thing that they *may and ought* to procure reconciliation, and to re-establish *peace, charity, harmony and friendship*—and what is generally the fruit of your labour ?—Either they

allege that the fault is not *theirs*, when it *really is*; and that they have used all proper methods to obtain the desirable blessing of peace, when they really have not:—or—which is much more common—they *turn pale* with anger, and account you their enemy for not approving and justifying the wickedness of their temper. “What? say they, would you have me *so mean* as to pocket such an affront as this without revenge, and yet pretend to be my friend? If you were indeed my friend, you would assist me in taking vengeance! You would hate the man that I hate; envy the man that I envy, and abuse the man whom I abuse—you would advise me never to put up with such an injury, nor forgive it! What? I seek peace with *him*! I be reconciled with *him*! with *such a fellow*, who has so affronted me!—No; I have *more spirit* [more *pride*, more *malice*, more *envy*, he should have said]—than all that comes to! God forbid I should be so *mean-spirited* as to put up with such an insult! I will never forgive him as long as I live. I do well to be angry, even unto death.”

AND pray who is the *criminal object* of all this wrath and indignation—the unhappy victim of all this premeditated vengeance?—Perhaps your *Christian brother*! Perhaps, one with whom you actually hold Christian communion, and sit down with him at the table of the LORD! Perhaps one whom you have once highly esteemed and loved, and whom you have still equal reason to esteem and love! Perhaps one to whom you have been under *many essential obligations*, and yet one *trifling error or neglect*; it may be, one

*groundless suspicion* has cancelled them all! Perhaps one who is heartily sorry that he has offended you, and who would gladly be reconciled to you on *Christian terms*! Perhaps one, whom, within a few months hence, when the turbulence of your passion is subsided and your temper is *Christianized*, you will *love* and *care* as much if not more than ever you did; and will you not *then* be *sorry* and *ashamed* that you have, but a few months ago, *abused* and *calumniated* this man, and cherished bitter envying and strife in your heart against him! Perhaps (O affecting thought!) one with whom you will dwell in the highest, purest and sweetest endearments of heavenly friendship through all eternity!

THUS do those who have bitter envying and strife in their hearts, often *glory in their shame* and *lie against the truth*, by calling these hellish tempers, *wisdom*, and hoping to get to heaven with them.

BUT how dreadfully are they deceived? "This kind of wisdom, adds the apostle, is not *from above*;" —is not that *Christian, heavenly* wisdom which cometh down as the gift of GOD into the hearts of men, by the influences of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, it is "*earthly, sensual, devilish*." It comes from the carnal corruption and depravity of men's nature; from their proud, sensual, hellish passions, and from the influence and agency of the *devil*, who now ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience. Indeed it is the very temper of the *devil* himself, and his proper *likeness* and *image*, by which *his children* may be most certainly distinguished from

*the children of God.* For, as a *kind, benevolent, merciful, compassionate, forgiving* temper, is called with great propriety a *GOD-LIKE* temper; it being the glorious temper and character of *GOD* himself: so the very *opposite* to this, namely, a *wrathful, envious, malicious, revengeful* temper is as properly termed *devilish*; it being the very characteristic temper of that malignant spirit who is the *enemy of all good.*

*SUCH* wisdom therefore, as the apostle justly observes, descendeth not from above, but is *earthly, sensual, devilish*, and therefore utterly incompatible with the Christian temper and spirit, which is of heavenly original and descent, and assimilateth the human mind to the temper of *GOD* himself, whose offspring it is, both by *creation* and *regeneration.*

Now that this is, in plain English, a *devilish temper*, may be clearly demonstrated by its fruits and consequences: "For, adds the apostle, where envy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." —And will this admit of a dispute?—Let us very briefly consider the influence of *envy, malice* and *strife, first*, on those who unhappily possess these tempers —and *secondly*, on the public in general.

1st. ON those who unhappily possess these tempers.

*THE envious, malicious* man labours under a continual *hectic* of the mind. He pines inwardly at every man's happiness and prosperity. His soul is ever boiling with rage against some *real* or *supposed* enemy. Every trifling affront, or shadow of an affront, ruins his peace, and sets his spirit all on fire,

Every other man's *honour, prosperity, or happiness,* is his *misery, adversity and torment.* He must needs have always a number of enemies: for every man whom he hates, or whom, on the lightest shadow of pretence he suspects to be his enemy, he deems *such;* and it is of the nature of *malice* never *freely* or *wholly* to forgive an injury. And as his *supposed* enemies are always numerous, so he hates them all with a *perfect hatred,* and is ready to *hurt* them, or to *rejoice* in their misfortunes. Now, while a man's heart is thus tinctured with malice and envy, it is impossible he should do any Christian office or duty to any whom he thus maliciously hates. He can neither perform the duties of *justice* or *charity* to such of his neighbours. He can neither heartily *pray* for them, nor *pity* them. If prudence at any time *obliges* him to speak well of them, it is in a *stingy niggardly* manner, and you can perceive his *malice* even in his *commendations.* He cannot even bear to hear them well spoken of, or common justice done them, by others. He cannot think of them, but with indignation and contempt. With a malicious pleasure he hears of their faults, and aggravates them. If any man, possessed of his own spirit, *abuses, traduces* or *vilifies* them, he hugs and embraces that man as his *best friend:* and if his very best and truest friend attempts to speak a word in their vindication, from thenceforth he accounts that man as one of his *greatest enemies.* Hence it comes to pass, that the envious, malicious man ever has the misfortune of choosing the worst of men for his

friends—namely, such who will either flatter him in his vices, and approve and commend his *envious temper*;—or such who themselves inherit *this temper*. The malicious man's friends must either be *malicious*, or at least *basely pretend* to be so: if not, the bond of friendship is quickly broken, and they are sure of his displeasure.

2dly. WHAT *confusion* and *evil work* do envy and strife make in human society? Bitter envying and strife in the heart, often break out into *bitter, provoking* and *reproachful* language, which is generally succeeded by *violent* and *injurious* actions: Hence whole neighbourhoods are set on fire. *Very friends* are separated, and made enemies. Scandals are spread: The peace of families destroyed. Hence quarrels; evil surmifings; noisy contentions; troublesome and expensive law suits; bloodshed; death; the ruin and desolation of families; an entire embargo laid on every Christian and friendly office; confusion and every evil work in this life, and a *congenial* hell in the life to come!

MUST not, therefore, bitter envying and strife in the heart be *devilish tempers*, when their natural fruits and effects are so *diabolical*?—Surely.

“ BUT, says the apostle, that wisdom which is *from above*;”—which hath GOD for its author, *happiness* for its portion, and *heaven* for its end—“ is *first PURE*”—free from all knavish cunning, and lewd, unchaste desires;—“ Then *PEACEABLE*,”—not proud, rigid and overbearing; but mild, humble and condescending; receding from its own strict rights

in order to peace; averse to animosity and contention; seeking reconciliation, and easy to be reconciled:—"GENTLE also;"—not rude and boisterous, but meek and lowly; hearkening patiently to reason, and making just allowances for human frailty and weakness:—"full of MERCY and GOOD WORKS;"—compassionate towards the offending party, and ready to meet him *half-way* where he discovers any symptoms of a right disposition (even as God is represented to act towards the penitent, returning prodigal;) ready to shew his offending brother, by *good works* and *kind offices*, that he hath *perfectly* forgiven him and is *perfectly* reconciled to him, without any remaining *spirit of revenge*, or unbrotherly *coldness* and *reserve*:—WITHOUT PARTIALITY, adds the apostle;—in the original it is, without PRYING OR CENSORIOUSLY JUDGING.

MALICE is a *sharp-sighted, censorious* vice; it is ever *peeping* and *prying* into our neighbour's character and conduct, in order to *spy out* faults. And when it has found one, it always *aggravates* and *doubles* it. Its judgments against its neighbour, are always *rash*, or *partial*, or *both*. The maliciously censorious man espies a *mote* in his brother's eye where there is none; and where there is one, he magnifies it into a *beam*.

BUT true Christian wisdom—that wisdom which is from above, and which is always under the influence and guidance of *charity*, is *without partiality*. It cures the soul of that *prying, censorious, fault-finding* disposition. Instead of looking narrowly for faults in

our neighbour's character, it is ready to excogitate *apologies* and *excuses* for things which seem *doubtful* and *suspicious*, and to cover *real faults* with a *cloak of charity*. Considering its own *weakness* and *imperfections*, it the more readily pardons the faults of others. It is ready to put the very best construction on the conduct of its neighbour, and to *believe all things*, and *hope all things*, in his favour. It *thinks no evil*; surmises no deep laid ill-design in its neighbour, without the fairest proof. It is ready to say—"The man was led into mistake—or was surprized by passion—or was overpowered by temptation—or perhaps, he did it *ignorantly* or *rashly*, without considering the consequences: for, surely, he could never do such a thing *deliberately*, or with the *full purpose of his will*. Or, if he did, I might myself have committed the like error, under the like temptation. Let me therefore forgive my offending brother, as I would expect forgiveness from him in the like circumstances. I, who daily tempt and provoke the most high God, hope for pardon and forgiveness for *ten thousand* aggravated offences; and shall I not forgive my brother this single trespass?"—*This, my brethren, is the character of Christian wisdom*—of that wisdom which is *from above*:—and surely a *heavenly* and *divine* one it is! Who is not charmed by so divine a form? What soul would not be allured by such a wisdom as this?

THE apostle then closes the chapter, by shewing the *happiness* of those who have *this heavenly wis-*

*dom* which leads to *peace*; and the *amiableness* and *usefulness* of the *peace-maker*, who heals the unhappy breaches of society, by sowing the seeds of peace, benevolence, and happiness among men. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace."—And

1st. THERE is a happiness resulting from this wisdom itself to all who possess it. A *peaceable* temper is a *righteous*, and therefore a *happy*, temper. "The fruit of righteousness and true happiness, is sown in peace, and will assuredly spring up from this precious seed. "Blessed, says Christ, are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth (b)."

THOSE who are of a *meek, humble, merciful, charitable, forgiving* disposition, are the only persons who can be said to have any true comfort or self-enjoyment upon earth. They indeed alone *inherit the earth*, with all its *innocent comforts* and *virtuous pleasures*, without alloy. They are happily strangers to that *corroding malice* and *envy*, which eat the very heart out of other men's enjoyments. Their temper and conduct make friends often of their most inveterate enemies. And even if they cannot always *overcome evil by good*, yet the very consciousness that they endeavour to do it, gives them a heart-felt satisfaction, which is not disturbed by any malicious, revengeful thought or design. While other men are embroil'd in contentions, these men enjoy peace with themselves and their neighbours, which can only be lessened by

(b) Matth..v. 5.

*beholding* and *pitying* the *folly* and *misery* of those around them who are tortured on the rack of envy, or tofs'd on the tempestuous ocean of contention and strife.

2dly. **THERE** is a *happiness* resulting to such as are instrumental in reconciling angry brethren, and re-establishing peace and good-will among men. He who *makes peace*, sows the *seed of righteousness*, and must needs be *happy* in his work. *Peace-making* is a blessed work, to the person who labours in it; to the parties reconciled, and to the world in general. He that *makes peace*, sows the fruit of *righteousness*; stops the progress of iniquity, and prevents a multitude of sins. "Blessed, says **CHRIST**, are the *peace-makers*; for they shall be called the children of **GOD** (c)." And well, indeed, do they deserve to be so called, seeing they bear one of the most amiable traits of his moral image.

**WHILE** those who, by *slander*, *backbiting*, and other envious and malicious practices, sow the seeds of *mutiny*, *contention* and *strife* in the world, and either make breaches among men, or widen them and prevent them from being healed among Christian brethren, richly deserve to be called *children of the devil*; because they imitate his most *malignant temper*, and do his *worst work*:—so *peace-makers*; those who endeavour to *undo this work of the devil*; —to bring brethren together in unity; in offices of mutual love and good-will, merit the appellation of

(c) Matth. v. 9.

the children of GOD. As the former are factors for the devil, so these are agents for GOD in the world; bearing a bright resemblance of that amiable Being, who delights to be known by the endearing name of the GOD OF PEACE; and who did so much to reconcile guilty sinners to himself, and to each other, and to establish peace upon earth, and good will towards men.

THE value of the peace-maker is known by the fruit of his labour. He aims at promoting righteousness, and if he is successful, he obtains it. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, by them that make peace, says the apostle." As sure as the seeds of peace which he sows, take root and grow up, they bring forth the fruit of righteousness.—If therefore he who diligently sows good seed in the ground, for the purposes of supporting and comforting human life, ought to be esteemed a useful man to society;—how much more he who, by preventing disturbances and healing differences among brethren, sows the peaceable seeds of righteousness?

HE who, either by open slanders, or sly whispers and innuendo's, breaks the bond of mutual love and good-will among neighbours, may be fitly compar'd to the devil; that enemy in the parable, who, while men were asleep, came and sow'd tares in the field to spoil the wheat and ruin the good husbandman's harvest.—You see two men cold and disaffected to each other. They shun each others company. When they are accidentally together, either a sullen silence reigns, or angry looks and abusive language. When they speak of each other elsewhere, it is either with the

most *poignant malice*, or with a *stingy, suspicious* reserve. Thro' bitter envying and strife in their hearts, their disaffection increases with time. A wound which might have been easily healed at the first, spreads, and rankles, and becomes almost incurable. Instead of being *reconciled*, they become more *unforgiving*, and mutually despise and reject every expedient for repairing the breach.—Would you know the reason of all this?—It may be, indeed, that some *misunderstanding*;—some *hasty, passionate, unguarded word*, or some *trifling provocation*, has laid the foundation of this quarrel—but depend upon it, AN ENEMY HATH BEEN THERE! some *evil-minded, loose-tongued, go-between*, hath blown up the coals of contention into a flame, and made that which was, at first, but a *slight and superficial cut*, a *dangerous, mortal wound*.—Some person (out of great friendship and good will, no doubt!) hath told one of the parties what his adversary has *said and done* against him; and, instead of *softening*, hath *aggravated*, every circumstance of the dispute;—very modestly observing, in the mean while; “I could tell you a great deal more, but I never like to make strife; and if I can do no good, I shall do no harm:”—and then insinuating in a very *Christian* manner;—“Surely you can never put up with such an affront as this!”—Another friend does the same *kindness* to the other party: and thus are *very friends* sometimes halloo'd on by *strife-makers*, to *irreconcilable* and incurable contentions!

Now, how *blessed* and truly *honourable* is the office of the *peace-maker*, who, by building *peace* and

*mutual good-will* on the ruins of these quarrels, often begun, and always fomented, by *strife-makers*, sows the peaceable seeds of righteousness among men, and destroys all those *bitter* and *poisonous* fruits of *malice* and *envy* which those quarrels have produced, to the eternal scandal and confusion of human society?—and what *fools*, and *dupes*, and *enemies* to their own peace and happiness are those unhappy persons who *hearken to*, and *encourage*, those wretched creatures called *strife-makers*, and who are *halloo'd on* by them to a continual state of warfare with their neighbours?—Whenever human creatures, of either sex, are found to be infected with this disorder of the tongue, they should be *marked* and *shunn'd* as the pestilence; as the common pests and nuisances of human society; whose tongues are *fires*; *worlds of iniquity*; *setting on fire the course of nature, being themselves set on fire of hell!*—Alas! persons will find it hard drudgery enough to follow the impulse of their own *unreasonable prejudices, passions and follies*;—and much more, surely, to be *dupes* and *slaves* to the *passions, prejudices, and follies* of other *ill designing* persons, who generally enjoy a hearty and malicious *sneer* at the *disturbances* and *distractions* which they themselves occasion!—but blessed is the *peace-maker*—and blessed are they who hearken to overtures of peace and reconciliation; who seek peace and ensue it, and account scarce any thing too dear to purchase so valuable a blessing!

THE peace-maker sows the seeds of *righteousness*; *ay, and of happiness* too.

I HAVE been at variance with many of my neighbours. This unhappy strife has been long fomented and kept up by the voice of slander. How have I enjoyed myself all this while?—Have I not felt my soul full of disorder?—I never think of these men, but with *pain*. I never speak of them, but with *anger* and *contempt*. I never see them, but with *rancour* and *indignation*. I cannot *pray* for them, or *do them good*, with a right and charitable frame of spirit. Perhaps I actually *wish* and *do* them *evil*! all this is *wickedness*! I *know* and *feel* it to be so by the *disorder* and *inquietude* of my soul. My *reason* and *conscience* remonstrate, and bear witness that it is *wrong*. I have no *peace*; can have no *self-approbation* in this course! I know I should not have this temper even to an *enemy*; yet I actually have it to one who, perhaps, deserves a better name! But what *Christian peace*, what *heavenly hope* can I entertain under the consciousness of this *wicked, unchristian* temper?—none—no, no—my own heart condemns me—and so does God, who is greater than my heart, and who knoweth and judgeth all things!

IN this wretched situation the *peace-maker* finds *me* and my *unhappy neighbours*, and, like an *angel of God* he pities us, and, by prudent counsel and healing methods, he *brings us together*, and heals the wound from the very bottom.

Now behold the blessed fruits of *happiness* which spring from *these seeds of peace* which he hath sown!—at the very moment of reconciliation with my neighbour, my heart feels a *transport of joy*, which

proves itself to be *divine* by the approbation it obtains from my *reason* and *conscience*. My soul feels a sudden impulse of *peace* and *ease*, which may be fitly represented by that *pleasing sensation* which a patient feels when a long dislocated joint slides into its socket—or when a person experiences present ease after long and severe agony and torture. This is at once a proof that my soul had been *before* in an *unnatural, disordered, dislocated* state; and that *peace, love, and good-will* is the true place of its *rest and happiness*.

IF the breach is soundly made up, the man whom the *last hour* I hated, I *now* love—and perhaps love him with the greater fervency and ardour, in recompence for my *long, unnatural* hatred! him, whom lately I could not behold but with *indignation*, I now behold with the eyes of *benevolence* and *friendship*!—him whom lately I *shunned* as the plague, I now meet with *pleasure*, embrace with *cordiality*, and give him the *right hand of fellowship*!—him whom lately I was disposed to curse, as an *enemy*, I now affectionately pray for, as a *dear brother*!—him whom lately I could not mention but with the *bitterness of contempt*, I now speak of *kindly* and *respectfully*, and am pleased to hear others do the same!—him whom lately I was disposed to *hurt* and *injure*, and the story of whose misfortunes I heard with a *malignant pleasure*, I am now ready to *help* and *assist* by all the offices of Christian friendship, and to drop the tear of condolence at the tale of his woes!—I look back on my former evil temper with *shame, grief, indignation*.

*passion and repentance!*—I wonder and am ashamed to think how I could have been so long such an enemy to my own peace; and why I had not sooner sought after and pursued *the things which made for peace!*—I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes, that I should have so long fostered and cherished bitter envying and strife in my heart;—and should have so long continued a slave to the *devil*, and a dupe to *evil men*.

THESE, *my brethren*, are some of the blessed fruits of *righteousness* and *happiness*, which are sown in peace, by them that make peace. The general improvement of the subject, I must leave for another opportunity. May the GOD of peace, accompany what has been now delivered, with a divine and effectual blessing, and to his name shall be the praise, *Amen*,

## S E R M O N VII.

The Christian Philosophy of the heart  
and of the tongue, in two sermons,  
from

JAMES iii. 13.—18.

*Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom &c.*

## S E R M O N II.

**I**N a former discourse from these words, I observed that this chapter exhibits the philosophy of the tongue and of the heart. It not only restrains the Christian tongue from cursing, swearing, strife, calumny, slander and all the sins peculiar to it; but, that it may the more effectually do this, it restrains the evil passions and diabolical tempers of the heart, which minister fuel to the tongue, and cause it to transgress. More especially, it sets a dreadful mark upon bitter

*envying and strife in the heart*, which are the sources of some of the most mischievous evils in society ; occasioning *confusion* among mankind, and *every evil work*.

I OBSERVED that what seems to have given occasion to the strictures in our text and context, was the prevalence of an *evil spirit* among those professors of Christianity, to whom St. *James* addresses this epistle. Many of them, it seems, who made a *flourishing profession*, and pretended to high degrees of Christian knowledge and wisdom, were notwithstanding very *envious* and *malicious* in their tempers, and very *uncharitable* and *unguarded* in their words and expressions. This called up all the apostle's *zeal* and *faithfulness*, to warn them of the *impropriety*, *inconsistency* and *danger* of such a conduct—and to excite them to *another* and a *better* way of giving proof of their Christian wisdom. “Who, says he, is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you ? Let him shew out of a good conversation, his works with meekness of wisdom.”—He then warns all such of them as were under the influence of a *different* temper and spirit, not to deceive themselves by fondly imagining they were *true Christians*—not to *boast* and *glory* in such a temper and conduct, as though it were *wise* and *becoming*—not to *lie against the truth*; to brazen it out against the clearest conviction, by justifying such a temper in themselves, and much less, by palming it upon Christianity ; which would be making their crime so much the greater.—But, says he, if, instead of having

this meekness of wisdom; this loving, charitable, mild, peaceable, gentle, forgiving temper of mind; ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts against each other, glory not in it, and lie not against the truth, by thinking or calling it Christian wisdom:—for this wisdom, if indeed it must be called by that name, is not from above; is not the offspring of a renewed nature and heavenly temper; but is earthly, sensual, devilish. And that it is so, adds the apostle, is clear from its fruits: “For where envy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” So that as the nature of a tree is known from the quality of its fruit; the nature of principles is known from the actions and effects which they naturally and uniformly produce. These hellish tempers are a continual source of *disquietude* and *misery* to those who possess them, and kindle *strife*, *confusion* and *contention* all around them.

THE apostle then draws the beautiful portrait of true Christian wisdom.—“But the wisdom which is from above;” that wisdom which, as *Christians*, you should labour to possess and shew in all your conversation and deportment—“is first *pure*, then *peaceable*, *gentle*, and *easy to be intreated*, full of *mercy* and *good fruits*, without *partiality* and without *hypocrisy*.”

AND then the apostle puts the finishing hand to this *fine* and *just* piece of moral painting, by crayoning out the fair and blessed fruits of *peace-making*: “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace.”—As *confusion* and every

*evil work*, is the natural fruit of an *envious, strife-making* temper; so the fruit of *righteousness*—(of *peace, love, amity, friendship*, and all the *duties and good offices* flowing from *these*)—is sown in peace, by them that make peace.

FULLY, *plainly and faithfully* to explain these verses, was the business of the foregoing discourse.—But will it be said, that this is a discourse *without an object*;—that it is *unseasonable* and *lost* in a society where *peace and harmony* reign, and where the pale-faced fury of envy and contention, with her hollow eyes and haggard looks, has not been able to make her entrance, with confusion and every evil work in her train?

LONG, very long, may this be the *boast and glory* of this little society. Long may brotherly love prevail, and perfect peace and harmony undisturbed, with all their lovely train of graces and blooming fruits of righteousness, preside in every heart, and dwell as the *law of kindness* on every tongue! O this is the fair emblem of *heaven*, where *perfect love* not only casteth out *fear*, but also all manner of strife and discord, unfriendly coldness, and suspicious jealousy and distrust;—and where all the *good and virtuous, meet and mingle souls* for ever!—This is also the bright and lovely form of *true Christianity*. By this all men would know that we were in reality the disciples of the PRINCE OF PEACE, if we loved one another with a pure heart fervently; and the very GOD OF PEACE would dwell with us, and give us peace in all ways and by all means!

I AM therefore willing that my hearers should consider this subject as an attempt in the *prophylactic* method:—rather as a *preventive* of an evil which *may happen*, than a *remedy* for an evil which *exists*— But alas! where is the human heart, in which these enemies of human peace and human society have not made a lodgement? *Bitter envying* and *strife* are native tenants of the human heart, which is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; they are born into this world with us; and are members of that *old man*, which nothing can disarm and cast out, but the superior, new-creating, all-transforming power of regenerating, sanctifying grace. These diabolical tempers may indeed lie dormant in our souls for a season, being *lulled* and *kept quiet* by a happy constitutional softness of temper; in concurrence with a series of smooth, easy and prosperous circumstances of life:—but how quickly may some cross accident rouse this sleeping lion into all his native fury and rage? Our latent corruptions need only a spark of temptation to kindle them into a blaze—and then perhaps it is first known to ourselves, and to the world, what mines of corruption and iniquity lay concealed in our hearts!

I AM not conscious that I have said one single word on the subject, which did not naturally and almost unavoidably arise from the *sense*, *spirit*, and *meaning* of the text; nor have I designedly concealed any thing which the subject naturally suggested. As the characters of the *envious*, *bitter-spirited*, *unforgiving* and *strife-makers*, which are so clearly found-

ed upon the very words of our text, were drawn for *general use*, for the use of myself and every one of my hearers, so far as we may be concerned ; so they are *general characters* : no particular person or persons were intended to be pointed out in them. And therefore I would be sorry to think, that any individual would so far give these characters to his neighbour, as not to think they were equally designed for himself. The *sacred desk* is the most improper place in the world for *personalities*—for venting the unhallowed fire of *private, personal* anger and revenge ! This would be to cherish, with a witness, that bitter envying and strife in the heart, which it is the business of the Christian ministry above all things to eradicate out of the human heart ; and to do it too in that *sacred place* which should breathe nothing but love, and peace, and gentleness, and good-will towards men !

YET if we do draw *general characters* at all, and none will deny that this is an important part of our duty, we must draw them with a *strong and determined pencil*, and mark them with *all their proper features* ; otherwise we do nothing to the purpose. Can there, for instance, be a stronger picture, than that which the apostle has drawn in our text ?— Now for a person, who handles this text, not to fill up the great out-lines which the apostle has marked, is wholly to *lose the likeness* :—'tis to handle the word of GOD deceitfully, and not permit it to speak out its genuine language.

BE, therefore, I have been led, by the nature of the

subject, to any *distinguished warmth* or *earnestness* in composing and delivering it, I take the liberty to declare that, as far as I know my own heart and its motives and designs, it proceeded not from any *bitterness of spirit*, but from as *servent a charity*, and as *pure and Christian a zeal*, as I ever felt in my life for the good of my Christian brethren.

SOME may perhaps think it a fine thing to have the privilege of *scolding men out of the pulpit*, as the world affects to call it. But if you rightly knew and considered the *pain* and *anxiety* which such a task gives to *humane* and *conscientious* men, you would as much pity those upon whom this necessity is devolved; as you would a tender-hearted surgeon, who hated the bloody and cruel office of amputating limbs, and yet was obliged to submit to it, in the way of his duty, in order to save the lives of his patients. *St. Paul* once fought with wild beasts at *Ephesus*; and faithful ministers must expect to encounter with *unreasonable men* and with *brutal passions*, in every part of the world. If we are not *faithful*, we lose our own souls, and endanger the souls of those that are under our ministry. If we are not *plain* and *honest*, we betray our trust, and are good for nothing. If we deal *plainly* and *honestly*, that is, *faithfully* and *lovingly*, with our people, we run a great risk, thro' the unreasonable prejudices and hellish passions of men, of doing more *harm* than *good*. We not only lose their *friendship* and *good-will*, upon which often our temporal sustenance and support depends, and become their enemies by telling them disagreeable truths; but we are

also accidentally in danger of making them greater enemies to God and goodness than ever, by moving and stirring up their corruptions and evil tempers. Often when we *intend* and *hope* to do the greatest good in our power to the souls of a people whom we love, by a *plain, home, honest, practical* discourse, we are sadly disappointed and mortified to find, that we have only excited their anger and resentment, and made them actually more wicked and devilish by the very means which were calculated for their reformation!

GUESS then, with what *anxiety* and *concern*, with what *fear* and *trembling*, a humane and conscientious man must go about the business of *honest* and *plain dealing*?—what reason he has to fear *for himself*, and to fear *for the souls of his people*?—Every *plain, pointed* and *useful* discourse, by disturbing the consciences of the *guilty*, stirs up a *nest of hornets*, and puts a whole host of *angry, mischievous* passions in motion, which the restraining grace of God alone can allay and disarm.

YET unless *this* be done, sinners cannot, in an ordinary way, be *awakened, reformed, or saved*. In an ordinary way, God worketh *by means*, and by no means so commonly and efficaciously, as by *plain and faithful* preaching. Wo unto *gospel* ministers, therefore, if they use not *this means*! It were better for them, that they had never been born! It were easy, indeed, to flatter men in their vices, and to be so silent concerning their failings, as never to disturb them. —We should then avoid giving offence, and the most

obnoxious transgressors would be of the number of our *staunchest warmest* friends: but what would this be in exchange for *their* and *our own* souls? How should we answer it to *our master, our consciences, and themselves?*—See them going down *securely* and *peacefully* to destruction, and not warn them of their danger!—We must therefore submit to the disagreeable necessity of being *faithful*:—we must sometimes tell them *disagreeable truth in the spirit of love*, and leave the event with GOD, who has the hearts of all men in his hand: we must obey the apostle's exhortation, happen what will in consequence of the discharge of our duty—“ I charge thee, therefore, before GOD, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge both the quick and the dead; preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; *reprove, rebuke, exhort* with all long-suffering and doctrine: for the time will come when they will not endure sound *doctrine*, and when they shall *turn away their ears from hearing the truth* (a).”

BUT I return from this, I hope, not unimportant digression, to observe—That whoever looks abroad into this *spiritual hospital, the world*, must, among the numberless *moral diseases* which will every where attract his attention, be peculiarly struck with the commonness of that sin, pourtrayed with so masterly a pencil, by the apostle in our text. Who must not observe, even in the Christian world, amidst all our Christian professions and hopes, the prevalence of a *most rancorous, unchristian spirit*—much confusion,

(a) 2 Tim. iv. 1,—3.

and many *evil words* and *works*, arising from bitter envying and strife in men's hearts—uncharitable hints—unchristian judgings, surmisings and suspicions—bitter railings, revilings and calumnies—declared purposes of revenge—treacherous, undermining practices—contentious jealousies—parties formed and combined against parties, often from a mere spirit of malice and contradiction—strange malicious attempts and endeavours to *weaken*, and even to *break* and *disunite* friendly and Christian connexions, from no conceivable motive often but a sheer love of wickedness?

If these things therefore be so, it cannot, I think, be disputed that mankind are generally under the influence of that *infernal spirit and wisdom* which the apostle here declares to be, not *from above*, but *earthly, sensual, and devilish!*

AND what is most alarming and distressing of all is, that we do not seem sufficiently aware, how utterly inconsistent this spirit and temper is with our Christian profession and hopes! How often hath it shock'd me to see two persons sitting down together at the LORD'S table, who had hardly friendship enough to have communion in a common meal;—and yet not seeming to doubt but that GOD accepted their sacrifices, and that they were in the *safe* and *sure* way to *heaven*, while they actually carried *hell* in their bosoms!

Is it not also melancholly to observe that, when *contending brethren* are brought by any means to a reconciliation, it is too often only *outwardly* and in *words*;—that the wound is only slightly skinn'd over, as it were, while the venom is still rankling within;

—and while, upon the least trifling accident, the quarrel breaks out afresh, and perhaps with greater rage and violence than ever! Thus we often satisfy ourselves by keeping up a *sickly face of friendship*, while our hearts and affections are really alienated from each other;—and unhappily suppose that this is sufficient for all the purposes of Christian fellowship and communion, and that it will do as a *passport* at last, to secure us an entrance into the heavenly felicity!

Now, if GOD could also be deceived and flattered with the *name*, for the *thing*, and with the *shadow* and *pretence* for the *substance*: if he could be so far imposed on, as to believe our *words* against our *actions*, and our *outward* professions, against our *inward temper* and *spirit*: if he could be persuaded to believe that we are reconciled to each other, and live in Christian love and unity, when it is no such thing, but while we have still the remains of bitter envying and strife in our hearts—we would have no need to be much concerned about the matter.

BUT if we are assured both by the *word* of GOD and the *reason of the thing*, that, under the influence of this diabolical temper, we must all go to hell, from the most flourishing profession of religion, and the most sanguine hopes of salvation;—“That he who hateth his brother, is a murderer, and that no such murderer hath eternal life.—That he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love GOD whom he hath not seen.—That if we do not *from the heart* forgive every man his trespasses, neither will our hea-



venly Father, forgive us our trespasses.—That he who is angry with his brother and abuseth him, without a cause, is in eminent danger of hell fire, if he repent not, and learn not a better temper. That *envy, emulations, wrath and strife*, are *works of the flesh*; and that none who practise them *shall or can enter into the kingdom of heaven.*—If, I say, these things are indeed so, without all controversy: that is, if the gospel of Christ is not all a lie, and hath not lead us astray, *toto caelo*, in the terms and conditions of the salvation of sinful men—then how can the *watchmen of Israel keep silence*, and yet be *faithful* to the souls under their charge, who are in danger of this damnation?

WITH this important duty, therefore, in my eye, I proceed to apply the doctrine advanced in the former discourse. And

1st. LET us hence learn what *true wisdom is*, and wherein it consists.

THAT loud, boisterous, noisy, passionate, obstinate, unper-suadable thing, which generally passes in the world under the name of a *firm, resolute, wise and manly* temper and conduct, is not WISDOM; or, if you will needs call it so, the apostle has here given it its true character—it is not *from above*, but *infernal*; it is not *heavenly*, but *earthly*; it is not *spiritual* and *Christian*, but *sensual* and *devilish*:—it is the offspring of a *proud, self-conceited, malicious, and revengeful* temper.

BESIDES; what is there *charming, alluring, or engaging* in this kind of wisdom? Does it not render

a man *ridiculous* and *bateful* to others; *miserable* and *wretched* in himself? What is got by *anger* and *malice*? What is got by *strife* and *contention*? What is got by *envy* and *spleen*? What is got by *rude* and *abusive* language? What is got by a *relentless, unforgiving* temper? Were either the *righteousness* of GOD or *human happiness*, promoted by *the wrath* of man; it were some apology for it; but when an *uneasy mind* and a *troubled defiled conscience*; the *displeasure* of GOD and the *contempt* and *hatred* of men; are its only fruits and effects, nothing can be plead in its palliation or excuse. With *such an one* a wise man would not willingly have any connexions or concerns: Even the friendship of *such a man* is *dearly purchased*, and *hardly maintained*. Hear what the *wisdom* of GOD saith in this matter: "Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.—It is better to dwell in the wilderness alone, than with a contentious and an angry person.—Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words, there is more hope of a fool than of him.—An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.—He that is soon angry, dealeth foolishly; and a man of wicked devices is hated.—A fool's wrath is presently known; but a prudent man covereth shame.—Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceases.—As coals to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.—He that passeth by and meddleth with strife, not belonging to him;

is like one that taketh a dog by the ears. The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds; when he speaketh fair, believe him not; for there are seven abominations in his heart. He whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation."

So much for God's *description* and *opinion* of this *unfancified, infernal* wisdom, which arises from bitter envying and strife in the heart, and which is the source of confusion and every evil work in society. And is it not a *hateful* and *forbidding* picture? Would any of my hearers wish to sit for it, or to be *so marked out* both to God and *man*? If we saw a man whom this picture, drawn by the pencil of inspiration, resembled, could we cordially *love* or *esteem* him?—Would we wish to be connected with him?—Would we wish to be *that man*, if he were even the lord and proprietor of the whole earth?—And if we could *see* and *know* that we ourselves were *these very men*, would we not be filled with *shame* and *horror* at our own condition?

AND how do we know but that *we, even we*, may be such?—We think *not*:—but may we not be deceived?—*Self-love* blinds men, and hides their own greatest failings from them; and our friends, generally speaking, are not honest enough to put us in mind of our failings, lest they should offend us. The faithful preaching of the word, indeed, gives us an excellent opportunity of *knowing ourselves*: but we make shift to deprive ourselves even of this benefit, by supposing *others* are characterized, and *not we*.

*ourselves!*—Our enemies, indeed, often prove our best friends in this respect: for though they *mean* us no good, and commonly say much more than the truth against us;—yet they generally tell us a great many *useful*, though *disagreeable*, truths, together with abundance of *slander* and *calumny*: but we will not believe *them*, and therefore continue deceived.

You may think it a wonder that men should continue utterly ignorant of their own greatest failings; and that the world should generally know them, much better than they know them themselves: but I appeal to your own experience. Have you never heard *backbiters* rail against *backbiters*—*liars* have no mercy on *liars*—*drunkards* reproach *drunkards*—and *proud, vain-glorious boasters*, intolerant of *pride* and *vain-glorious* boasting in others?—There is also good reason why it is so.—Few men impartially examine themselves, and therefore how should they well know their own failings? The malicious world, regardless of our virtues, are ever spying out our failings, and therefore know them *best*:—whereas self-love is ever *meditating on*, and *magnifying* our virtues, and hiding our failings from us, and therefore *we* know them *least*. In short; nothing but true humility of soul; a hearty desire, to know the very worst of ourselves, and that *self-examination* and *self-knowledge*, which are the fruit of these, will ever bring a man truly to *know*, and sincerely to *hate*, his own failings—and alas! how few are possessed of these?

BUT supposing we knew this to be our own infirmity, would we sincerely desire a cure?—Take then the following *recipes* for this purpose.

1st. THEN, as without *true Christian love* or *charity* for your neighbour, you can never expect to get rid of an *envious, malicious, unchristian* temper towards him; study and labour by all means to obtain a *truly renewed Christian heart*. As long as a man's heart is unrenewed, although we now and then shame him out of a wicked disposition towards one or another individual—or so persuade him of the absurdity of his wicked temper, as that he may *disown* it, and apparently *lay it aside* for a time: yet how can we expect *good fruit* from *a bad tree*? the bitter roots of envy and malice still lie buried in the mind, and will spontaneously shoot up by the first provocation. Wicked men, once at variance, are seldom ever soundly reconciled by *rational considerations*, much less upon gospel principles, or by gospel motives. If they are, it is only by motives of *self-interest* or *self-love*: or perhaps they combine together, as robbers do, to form a league of malice against some *third person*!

BUT no sooner does the love of GOD fill a man's heart: no sooner does he begin truly to see the relations he stands in to his neighbours and Christian brethren, and the obligations of duty which arise from these relations—and his own weaknesses and infirmities—and how much GOD hath forgiven him—and the *love* and *forgiveness* which he owes to his neighbour, by the command of GOD and his need

of reciprocal love and forgiveness—but he begins to love his neighbour as himself; and then rooted, settled envy and strife can have no place in his heart, but flee away before charity, as darkness does before the rising sun. As soon as a principle of true religion takes place in the heart, it sets all things to rights there; at least it implants a good and right disposition both towards God and our neighbour. It cannot dwell in the same heart with bitter envying and strife, but gives them no rest till they are mortified and driven out.

You need only to tell a true Christian, or put him in mind of what he ought to do, and he will immediately attempt to do it with all his might. He may indeed forget it again; but as often as he is reminded, he will renew the attempt to do his duty. And the reason is; *his heart is right set, and he is a law to himself!*

2dly. SERIOUSLY lay to heart the character, fruits and effects of that noisy, envious, strifeful, and strife-making temper here exposed by the apostle. If God had not taught us the evil of it, experience might have done it. “If, as the apostle says, we bite and devour each other, what can we expect, in the very nature of things, but that we should be consumed one of another (b).” “If we have bitter envying and strife in our hearts against each other, what can we expect but confusion and every evil work?”—And is it not evident that such a temper is *earthly, sensual, devilish?*—The devil cannot do more a-

(b) Eph. v. 15.

gainst us, than we ourselves do against both ourselves and each other, by such a temper as this. The *drunkard*, the *glutton*, the *worldling*, and the *whoremaster*, have a much *pleasanter*, *easier*, *more eligible* passage to hell, than the *envious*, *malicious*, *contentious* man. Indeed these wrathful tempers make a kind of *hell* themselves; in so much that the man who is under their power is, if I may so speak, *doubly damned*, and goes but out of *one hell*, into *another* a little hotter.

WHEREAS the contrary *Christian*, *meek*, *loving*, *forgiving*, *peaceful*, *benevolent* temper, makes a kind of *heaven* upon earth. Ah! how *heavenly* and *delightful*, how full of *tranquillity* and *happiness*; is the very sound of that exhortation;—"Grieve not the holy spirit of GOD: let all *bitterness*, and *wrath*, and *clamour*, and *evil speaking* be put away from among you, with all *malice*; and be ye *kind* one to another, *tender-hearted*, forgiving one another, even as GOD for CHRIST's sake hath forgiven you. Put on therefore, as the elect of GOD; holy and beloved; *bowels of mercies*, *kindness*, *humbleness of mind*, *meekness*, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as CHRIST forgave you, so also do ye. Above all, put on *charity*, and let the *peace of GOD* rule in your hearts; to the which ye are called in one body."

3dly. CONSIDER the extreme *unreasonableness* and *absurdity* of these tempers. We know by sad experience that they *vex* and *torment* us, and throw

our minds into an *unnatural* state, and *painful* ferment. Their effects are also *permanent*. They are not like *drunken follies*, which *come* and *go* with the strength of the liquors which we drink: they are *sober*, *deliberate* things, which stick close to us, and follow us to our *stores*, our *fields*, our *beds*, and even to the *church*, and *lash* and *sting* and *torment* us wherever we go. But what do they profit us? A man may get some profit by *cheating* or *robbing* his neighbour, or by *lying* or *dissembling* to him—or he may get some pleasure, such as it is, by *debauching* his wife or his daughter, or getting intoxicated by his liquors: but what do we gain by *hating* our neighbour? Can this hatred or malice make us the more *happy*, or our neighbour the more *miserable*?—What can we profit by *envying* or *grieving* at the good of our neighbour;—at his *health*, *wealth*, *honour*, or *happiness*?—Does this envy make our neighbour the *poorer*, or us the *richer*? Does it make him the more *dishonourable*, or us the more *honourable*? Can it make us the *happier*, or him the more *wretched*? Is it not a *vulture* preying upon our own vitals; impairing our health, shortening our lives, and *sully-*ing our reputation?

BUT “revenge, you say, is sweet.”—Sweet to whom, I pray?—to *devils*, and to other creatures almost as wicked as they! I am sure it is not sweet to *Christians*. They cannot endure it. It is against their nature, as *Christians*. Revenge, i. e. *private* revenge, is ever *unjust*, *unmanly*, *base* and *unchristian*! nay, in most cases, it is extremely *childish*,

and renders men *mean* and *contemptible* in the eyes of the world.—Above all, what profit can we have by the scandalous practice of *strife making*;—of setting other people together by the ears?—all allow this to be a most detestable practice; and indeed it is commonly rewarded at the last, just as it deserves—with the hatred of both the contending parties when they are agreed—and with the contempt of all the world.

4thly. CONSIDER that all the great and glorious examples of moral excellence, which are set before us for our imitation, as Christians, are diametrically opposite to the diabolical tempers here condemned by the apostle: the *love, benevolence and tender mercies* of the GOD of *peace*; his reconcileableness to, and long endurance and forbearance with obnoxious sinners—the *meekness and gentleness* of CHRIST the *prince of peace*; his amazing *philanthropy* to a world of enemies and rebels—and that remarkable *charity, meekness, patience* and universal *benevolence*, which has ever made the most lovely part of the image of GOD in all his saints and people.

5thly. CONSIDER in due time what flame and combustion a *small spark* of wrath may kindle, and observe that admirable precept of *Solomon* which deserves to be written in *letters of gold*: “LEAVE OFF CONTENTION BEFORE IT BE MEDDLED WITH; for the beginning of *strife* is as when one letteth out *water*. To be slow to wrath and restrain passion, what divine qualities?—How many dreadful scenes of quarrel have risen from small beginnings, which a

Little Christian *meekness, patience and prudence* might have crushed in the very bud?—Therefore bear a great deal before you begin contention. Consider what the end may be—what it may cost your own peace and happiness, and that of others, and *religion itself* in the scuffle. Wherefore *leave off contention before it be meddled with*: that is, meddle not with it at all, if you can possibly avoid it—and if it is wholly unavoidable, consider what a *buckler and ornament* a *meek and quiet spirit* will be in the management of it!

FINALLY, consider that while we are under the power of *wrath, envy and malice*, we cannot—we *dare not* pray to GOD for our neighbours;—nor *can* we, nor *dare* we, nor *ought* we to sit down at the LORD's table with them: and if we should be cut off in this state, we are excluded from all hope of salvation! Let us then, as the elect of GOD, put on *bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and the God of peace shall be with us. Amen.*

## S E R M O N    V I I I .

The divine duty of Psalmody stated  
and explained, in two sermons, from

PSAL. xlvii. 7.—

—*Sing ye praises with understanding.*

### S E R M O N    I .

**P**R A I S E is twofold, either of the *heart* or of the *lip*. The soul may be fervently engaged in paying a grateful tribute of praise to GOD, while the lips, by certain considerations, may be restrained from uttering the language of the heart. So we find *David* commanding his *soul* to bless the LORD: “ Bless the LORD O my soul and all that is within me (a).” And *Mary* declares; “ My soul doth magnify the LORD, my spirit rejoiceth in the GOD of my salvation (b):” and this may be properly termed *inward* or *mental* praise.

ON the other hand; our tongues may be very active in sounding forth the praises of the MOST HIGH,

(a) Psal. ciii. 1. &c. (b) Luke i. 46, 47.

while our hearts are cold as lead and wholly absent from the work. And this, alas ! is the case of multitudes. " With their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. They draw near to GOD with their mouth and honour him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him (c)." This, if it may be called *praise* at all, is *verbal* or *oral* praise ; but indeed it is so far from being praise in the sight of the GOD whom we pretend to worship, that it is the vilest mockery ; the most provoking affront we can well offer to an *omniscient, all perfect Spirit*. It is but the mere carcass of praise—a body without the soul ; a form without the life ; a shadow without the substance.

BUT there is another kind of praise, formed out of these two, and taking in the substance of them both, which, for distinctions sake, we may call *perfect praise* ; and that is, when the lips express the reverent and joyous sentiments of the heart. I say, *reverent* and *joyous* or *grateful*, because I suppose there are two different motives of our praising GOD, which affect our minds in two different manners.

THE *first* spring or motive of praise proceeds from a penetrating sense of GOD'S peculiar and unutterable perfections, such as his *self-existence, eternity, omniscience, omnipresence* &c. which, when realized to the mind by faith and fixed by serious meditation, raise great and worthy apprehensions of the DEITY in our hearts, and beget reverent affections towards him. This, therefore, is to praise GOD

(c) Ezek. xxxiii. 31. &c.

for what he is *in himself*; to render him the glory due to his adorable excellencies, *in themselves considered*. And hence the frequent injunctions in scripture, to ascribe *greatness* and *strength* unto the LORD: “Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength; give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name (d.)”

THE *second* motive of divine praise arises from a consideration of GOD’S goodness, richly communicated to all his creatures—especially to the children of men—and more particularly to ourselves; a proper sense of which cannot but affect the human heart with sentiments of gratitude and joy. In this view, GOD is our *benefactor*; and our neglecting to pay him the tribute of praise arising from *this consideration*, must argue the most stupid insensibility, and the basest ingratitude.

If a mortal friend makes us but a very inconsiderable present, we think ourselves indispensibly bound to return him our hearty thanks, by way of grateful acknowledgment; how hainous then is that ingratitude, which denies to the Author and Giver of every good and perfect gift, to that GOD from whom we have life and breath and all things, that tribute of hearty and thankful acknowledgment, which we owe him in return for his multiplied, accumulated mercies? Hence the Psalmist in a multitude of places, and no less than *four times* in the 107th psalm, expresses this affectionate and reasonable de-

(d) 1 Chron. xvi. 28.

fire; "Oh! that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." When, therefore, we are *reverently* affected with a sense of God's uncreated excellencies, and *gratefully* affected with a sense of his goodness to mankind in general, and to ourselves in particular; and when we express these *reverent* and *grateful* feelings in suitable language, we may be said, with the Psalmist, to *praise the LORD with uprightness of heart* (e).

Now, as the voice is, so to speak, the index of the mind, the echo of the thoughts conceived there; so, the inward harmony of the affections; the overflowings of the heart with *joy*, *gratitude* and *wonder*, are best and most naturally expressed by the *harmony* and *melody* of the voice.

When we are *angry*, the voice discovers it by a *loud*, *clamorous*, *interrupted* tone. When our hearts are sunk and overwhelmed with grief, the voice expresses it by *languid*, *dejected* and *melancholy* accents. But inward *joy*, *gratitude* and *reverence*, naturally vent themselves in a *sprightly*, *cheerful* and *harmonious* flow of sounds. When these joyous affections are not *turbulent* and *excessive*, they admit of a mixture of *gravity*, *solemnity* and *cheerfulness*, which composes the spirits, and tunes the voice to melody and harmony. When the lips, therefore, vent the inward and genuine devotion of the heart in these melodious accents—when the music of the voice is a just and natural expression of an inward, rational re-

(e) Psal. cxix. 7.

verence for the DEITY, and a grateful sense of his goodness—we may be justly said to *sing his praises with understanding*, or, as the apostle expresses it, to *sing with the spirit*, and to *sing with the understanding also* (f).

How high and glorious a privilege is this, therefore, of the human nature, that we are able not only to form just and worthy conceptions of the great GOD in our hearts, but also to express these conceptions in adapted and exalted strains of adoration, to the promoting of true piety in our own souls, and exciting it in the souls of others? How great an ornament is the human voice when employed to that noble purpose, for which it was, no doubt, principally designed; for shewing forth the praises of the eternal King, and pouring out the harmonious effusions of a pious mind in songs and hymns of gratitude to the GOD who formed it, and who has therefore the most sacred and inviolable right to its services? Hence the pious Psalmist frequently calls his tongue, his *glory*: “My heart, is fixed, O GOD! my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise: awake, my glory; awake psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early, I will praise thee, O LORD, among the nations; I will sing unto thee among the people. O GOD, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise, even with my glory (g).”—Which passages are thus beautifully made verse, by *Dr. Watts*;

(f) 1 Cor. xiv. 15. (g) Psal. lvii. 7. cviii. 1. &c.

“ My heart is fixt, my tongue shall raise  
 “ Immortal honours to thy name;  
 “ Awake, my tongue, to sound his praise,  
 “ My tongue, the glory of my frame.”

What pity then, that our tongue, the glory of our frame; the most noble and ornamental member of our body, should be, as the apostle *James* emphatically expresses it, *an unruly evil, full of deadly poison* (b)? What pity that those who use it, or at least should use it, in the exalted employment of  *blessing* GOD, *even THE FATHER*, should at any time so far abuse it, as therewith to *curse men who are made after the similitude of GOD*? What pity that out of the same mouth should proceed  *blessing* and  *cursing*? *My brethren, these things ought not so to be* (i). Again; what pity that the divine art of singing should be prostituted to so base and vile a use, as to be made the channel and vehicle of obscenity and impurity; —as to be employed about such songs and compositions as serve only to inflame impure desires and corrupt the heart—about such songs as are sufficient to raise a blush in the face of a strumpet, and the very hearing of which must fill a virtuous heart with shame and indignation? How much more becoming a reasonable creature is it to employ his tongue and voice in the praises of his Maker and his portion; or, at least, on such subjects as have a tendency to improve the understanding, exalt and en-

(b) Jam. iii. 8.

(i) Jam. iii. 9, 10.

noble the affections, refine the passions and mend the heart? For this reason, the inspired apostle, whom we have been just quoting, advises, "Is any man merry? let him sing psalms (k):" that is, if any Christian feels his joyous affections raised, and his heart chearful under any instance of the divine goodness (whether it be a healthful state of body; a peaceful state of mind; wordly prosperity; the kindness of friends, or the refreshing smiles of God's reconciled countenance imparting a sunshine of spiritual joy to his soul,) let him not suffer a pleasing sense of these blessings to evaporate and spend itself, in carnal mirth, as is too much the custom of the world; but let him rather express the joy of his heart by songs of praise to the bountiful Author of that goodness which then exhilarates and makes glad his soul. This will best become him, as a Christian; and will, at the same time, both preserve and refine that sense of the divine goodness which he then feels warm at his heart. To the same purpose, is the apostle *Paul's* exhortation to the *Ephesians*: "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess; but be ye filled with the spirit: speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your hearts unto the Lord (l)."—Here again the mirth or chearfulness of a Christian is directed into the right channel. *Excessive drinking* is the only expedient which multitudes flee to, either for the relief of a sorrowful heart, or the exercise of a chearful one (the most

(k) Jam. v. 13.

(l) Eph. v. 19.

stupid expedient surely that ever perverted reason devised!)—But this the apostle strictly forbids, under the notion of *excess* or *intemperance*, which is highly unbecoming a Christian; and advises that we should be habitually filled with the Spirit of God, and then, out of the fulness of the sanctified heart, the mouth will utter psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; and so we shall *sing*, and at the same time (which is the very soul of the duty) *make melody in our hearts to the Lord*.

THIS then is the duty enjoined on us by *David* in the words of our text: “Sing ye praises with understanding.”

FROM these words I design, by GOD’S assistance, to prove to you

1st. THAT singing praises to GOD has been one principal part of the worship of the DEITY, in all ages of the world, and under every successive dispensation of religion.

2dly. To explain what we are to understand by singing praises *with understanding*; or how we may perform this part of divine worship according to the Psalmist’s direction, and to divine acceptance.

AND may he who *inhabiteth the praises of Israel*, lead our hearts into the true spirit of this duty, while we hear it explained and enforced from his holy word. *Amen!*

1st. I AM to shew you, that singing praises to GOD has been one principle part of the worship of the DEITY, in all ages of the world, and in every successive dispensation of religion.

So very consonant is this part of worship to the reason of mankind, that the heathen practised it by the light of nature. The most ancient compositions of theirs, now extant, are songs of praise to their deities. Their two most ancient poets, *Hesiod* and *Homer*, intimate to us how the art of singing ought to be employed, when they represent the *Muses*, surrounding *Jupiter*, their greatest god, and warbling hymns of praise around his throne. It were easy to shew from numerous passages in their ancient writers, not only that *vocal* and *instrumental* music were made use of in their religious worship, but that their most favourite diversions were intermingled with songs and hymns in honour of their respective deities. They had psalms of praise composed on purpose for their public solemnities; such as the ingathering of the harvest and vintage, their full moons and sacrifices, which were sung by all the people together in concert, as our psalms are now sung in our worshipping assemblies. Now this makes it evident—either that singing of praises is a duty of natural religion, discoverable by the light of reason—or otherwise, that these heathens have had the custom handed down to them by tradition, from the church of God: either of which suppositions makes it evident that it is a duty highly acceptable to the Supreme Being.

BUT as the Bible is the only rule of our faith and duty as Christians, so it is with that we are principally concerned in the present enquiry; and *there* we find this part of divine worship *early* hinted. True, indeed, we have no express mention made of *singing*

*praises to God* in that part of the bible, which contains the history of the church before the deluge; owing probably to the shortness of the history, which cannot admit of a full and circumstantial account of any thing practised during that period. Yet even *there* we have a hint, from which we seem warranted to conclude, that *GOD* was worshipped at that time by songs of praise. “*Jubal* the son of *Lamech*, we are told, was the father of all such as handle the *harp* and *organ* (*m*).” Now, as these two instruments are always afterwards mentioned as *sacred*, and appropriated to divine psalmody; to assist the voice in the praises of *GOD*, it is a great deal more than probable, they were used for the same purpose in *Jubal's* time, which was long before the flood.

THE first divine songs we meet with in sacred writ, are two composed by *Moses* the servant of *GOD*. The *first*, which we find in the 15th chapter of *Exodus*, was composed on the occasion of the children of *Israel's* escape from *Pharaoh's* host, by passing over the Red Sea, while the *Egyptians* were overthrown and destroyed; and was sung by *Moses* and the whole congregation in full concert;—*Miriam* his sister, together with the other women, at the same time *singing* and *dancing* and *playing on timbrels*: which is a plain proof that they had been accustomed to that kind of worship before. The *second* song of *Moses* is recorded at large in the 32d chapter of *Deuteronomy*, wherein just before his death, he sets forth both the mercies and judgments of *GOD* towards the  
(*m*) Gen. iv. 21.

children of *Israel*, and warns them in particular against *idolatry* and *apostacy*, to which vices he knew they were exceeding prone. We also find a *third* valuable divine poem, ascribed to *Moses* the man of GOD, which now stands the *ninetieth* in order among the psalms of *David*.

AGAIN; in the time of the *judges*, we find a song of praise sung by *Deborah* and *Barak*, upon a notable defeat of the *Canaanites* under the command of *Sisera*, whom *Jael*, the wife of *Heber*, *slew*. This *elegant* and *spirited* composition is recorded in the 5th chapter of *Judges*, and was no doubt sung by the whole congregation of *Israel*, as a part of their public worship.

BUT divine psalmody was brought to its highest perfection in the Jewish church, by *David* the sweet singer of *Israel*. That collection of *one hundred and fifty* divine poems, commonly called *the Psalms of David*, were, as to the greatest part of them, of his own composition; by him also set to musical airs, and so consecrated to the service of the tabernacle, and made an essential part of the public worship of GOD's people. And it is probable that these *songs of Sion* were in high repute and estimation in the courts of the eastern monarchs. Many of these divine lyric poems were composed by *David* while he was banished from the court and presence of *Saul*; wherein he praises GOD for his remarkable deliverances out of the hands of his enemies, and expresses his trust and confidence in the divine providence and protection (*n*). In others

(n) 2 Sam. xxii. compared with Ps. xviii.

He mourns his absence from the tabernacle of God and his public worship (o). One was composed upon the solemnity of the ark's removal from the house of *Obed-edom* to mount *Zion* in *Jerusalem*, and delivered by *David* to *Asaph* one of the chief musicians and his brethren, to be sung on that occasion (p). The rest of this collection were composed on various occasions and emergencies, some by *David* himself, and others by *Asaph*, *Jeduthan* and *Heman*, who were not only chief musicians, but also prophets, inspired and over-ruled by the *Spirit* of God in those divine compositions.

THESE holy songs were collected together, as is probable, chiefly in the order in which they were composed, and, after being set to music by the rules of art, were consecrated to the service of the church, and made up the body of the Jewish psalmody. And that this part of public worship might be the more regular and magnificent, *David* appointed two hundred and eighty-eight persons, instructed in the songs of the LORD, to praise him with *cymbals*, *psalteries*, and *harps*, under the conduct of *Asaph*, *Jeduthan* and *Heman*, the chief instructors and leaders of the public music. So that *singing* was now reduced to a regular art, and made an essential part of the public worship. And so we find that when *Solomon* had built the temple, in place of the tabernacle, and dedicated it to the LORD; at the solemnity of the dedication, when the *priests* took their places in the public worship, ac-

(o) Pf. xlii. lxiii. lxxxiv.  
comp. Pf. cv.

(p) 1 Chron. xvi. 7.

According to their office, the *Levites* also took their places *with instruments of music of the Lord, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, when David praised by their ministry (q).*

SOLOMON himself is also said to have made *one thousand and five songs (r)*, none of which are now extant but that noble divine pastoral, called the *Canticles*.

AGAIN; when the public worship was very much neglected and corrupted under the wicked reign of *Ahaz*, one among the first things which good *Hezekiah* restored was the *public praises of GOD*, as you may read 2 Chron. xxix. 25,—30.

THE same ordinance was re-established with great care and solemnity, upon the return of the children of *Israel* from the Babylonish captivity, when *Jeshua* and *Zerubbabel* began to build the *second temple*. They set the *Levites*, the sons of *Asaph* with cymbals to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of *David* king of *Israel*: and they sung together by course, praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever towards *Israel (s)*.

THUS we find that the ordinance of *David*, in this particular, was closely adhered to in all periods of the Jewish church, as a principal part of the public worship of GOD.

AND that singing praises to GOD is always to be continued as an essential part of worship in the Christian church, is evident from many considerations.

(q) 2 Chron. vii. 6. (r) 1 Kings iv. 32. (s) Ez. iii. 10.

We find the *prophets*, in almost all their prophecies concerning the gospel church, recommending this duty in the strongest terms. Thus *Isaiab*, speaking of the enlargement of the Messiah's kingdom, and the ingathering of the Gentiles to the Christian church, exhorts them by the spirit of prophecy to this duty. "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth; ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof, lift up their voices; let the inhabitants of the rock sing; let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory to the Lord, and declare his praise among the islands (t)." Again; speaking of the gospel church, he calls "her *walls salvation*, and her *gates, praise* (u);" thus giving her a principal denomination from shewing forth the praises of God in her public worshipping assemblies.

CHRIST himself, in the days of his flesh, has set us an example, in this kind of worship; for not only did he assist at all the public solemn praises of the *Jewish sanctuary*, but we also find him and his small church, consisting of the eleven apostles, convened together at his last supper and singing the praises of God: for when they had sung an hymn (probably the 22d or 69th psalm) they went out into the mount of *Olivet* (w). And after his ascension, we find the disciples continued this practice: "They were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God (x)."

(t) Isa. xlii. 10. (u) (Isa. lx. 18. (w) Mat. xxvi. 30.  
(x) Luke xxiv. 53. Acts ii. 47.

THE apostles in their epistles also frequently persuade to this duty, as in the fore-cited Eph. v. 19. "Be filled with the spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord: giving thanks always for all things to God, even the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." And again, to the *Colossians*: "Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you, in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord(y)."—Also to the *Hebrews*: "By him (i. e. by Jesus Christ) therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name(z)." *Saint Peter* also calls us "To shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light (a)."

AND indeed we find that composing and singing of psalms was one amongst those miraculous gifts, conferred by the spirit of Christ on his first disciples. This is evident from the directions given by *Saint Paul* to the Corinthian church for the right management and exercise of this gift, unto edification: "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done to edifying;" i. e. let all these gifts be exercised with *decency, regularity and order,*

(y) Col. iii. 16.

(z) Heb. xiii. 15.

(a) 1 Pet. ii. 9.

and so as they may best promote the edification of the whole church (b).

FARTHER: it seems this is not only the worship of men, but of *angels* too—not only the worship of *time*, but of *eternity*. When prayer shall cease, and preaching shall cease, and sacraments shall cease, *praises* and *halleluiabs* to GOD and to the Lamb shall still continue in the upper world, and be an essential part of the heavenly worship. There is a time coming, yea *now is*, when the whole assembly of heaven, *saints* and *angels*, shall join in one eternal song of praise, and the new Jerusalem shall resound with the high and seraphic praises of GOD thro' eternal ages.

WE have indeed abundant reason to believe that this has been always a part of the *angelic* worship: nay, it appears to have been the first expression of their homage and gratitude to that Being who had recently called them into existence, and placed them in such joyous and exalted circumstances. Upon the creation of the world, it is said “that the morning stars sung together, and all the sons of GOD (namely the angels) shouted together for joy (c).” Afterwards also, at the birth of Christ, “a number of the heavenly host (which in the second verse below are expressly called angels) are represented as praising GOD, and saying, *glory to GOD in the highest, on earth peace and goodwill towards men* (d).”—But in heaven, it seems, they are to join with the spirits of just men made perfect in the same harmonious worship, and *all* are to

(b) 1 Cor. xiv. 26, 40.

(c) Job xxxviii. 7.

(d) Luke ii. 13.

compose but *one melodious choir*.—*one tuneful praising assembly*, of united, *holy* and *happy worshippers*.

MANY are the clear intimations we have of this in the revelations of *Saint John*. In these divine visions that holy man “ beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was inconceivably great, even ten thousand times ten thousand and thousand of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing—blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever (c).” Another of these celestial songs we have recorded Rev. xiv. 3. “ I heard, says *St. John*, the voice of harpers, harping with their harps, and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts and the elders.”—In like manner, in the 15th. chap. at the 3d. verse, we have a vision of the saints, “ holding the harps of GOD, and singing the song of *Moses* the servant of GOD, and the song of the Lamb, saying, great and marvellous are thy works, LORD, GOD, almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints!”—Once more; on the downfall of *Antichrist*, in the 19th chap. we have another specimen of this heavenly music. “ After these things, says the apostle, I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Halleluiah! salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the LORD our GOD: for  
(c) Rev. v. 11, &c.

true and righteous are his judgments, for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornications. And a voice came out of the throne, saying; Praise our GOD all ye his servants, and ye that fear him both small and great:—and I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Halleluiah: for the LORD GOD omnipotent reigneth; let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him (f).”

THUS amply, *my brethren*, is the duty of singing praises to GOD supported in the scriptures. Not only has it been an essential and very important part of the public worship of GOD in the *Patriarchal*, *Jewish*, and *Christian* churches, but will also continue to be the joint worship of holy men and angels to all eternity.

It were also easy to shew, were it necessary, that praise is a very natural and common expression of good men's gratitude to GOD, under a sense of *personal favours*. The holy scriptures are full of instances of this kind. Good men, on various emergencies, both in prosperity and adversity, have betaken themselves to this kind of worship, as well to thank and praise GOD for the undeserved mercies still continued with them, and for the fatherly chastisements inflicted upon them, as to implore his favour and protection.

JEHOSHAPHAT, when threatened with an invasion by the *Ammonites*, *Moabites* and inhabitants of mount *Seir*, did not think it sufficient to appoint a fast, and

(f) Rev. xix. 1—7.

implore help from the Lord by prayer, but also appointed singers unto the Lord, to praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out towards the army. And it is remarkable that when they began to sing and to praise the Lord, their enemies were smitten before them (g).

Good *Hezekiah*, upon his recovery from an illness which threatened his life, expresses his gratitude to GOD in an excellent song of praise, recorded *Isaiab xxxviii. 9,—21.*—Remarkable, to this purpose, was the conduct of the blind man, whose eyes *Jesus* opened. Immediately on receiving his sight, he testified his gratitude and joy “by following his benefactor and glorifying GOD: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to GOD (b).”—How did the astonished and joyous throngs, which accompanied our Redeemer when he rode in triumph to *Jerusalem*, give vent to the overflowings of their hearts? Why, we are informed that “the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and to praise GOD for all the mighty works which they had seen, saying, Blessed be the King which cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven and glory in the highest (i).” The joy of the poor cripple’s heart, whom, by a miracle of healing, *Peter* and *John* restored to the use of his limbs, broke out in the same natural and just manner. “He, leaping up, stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising GOD (k).”

(g) 2 Chron. xx. 19,—22.

(b) Luke xviii. 43.

(i) Luke xix. 37.

(k) Acts iii. 8.

—In like manner, when *Paul* and *Silas* were persecuted for the testimony of *Jesus*, and cast into prison, though in chains, they betook themselves to this delightful part of divine worship. “At midnight *Paul* and *Silas* prayed and sung praises to God; rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for their divine master’s name.” And so pleasing was this worship to the MOST HIGH, that he immediately appeared for their deliverance: “For suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors flew open, and every one’s bands were loosed (1).”

AND, indeed, if we attentively peruse the psalms of *David* we will find the greater part of them indited upon some particular *personal* emergency. Some of them are prayers to the DEITY for help and relief under some pressing *personal* affliction; others are songs of thanksgiving for some *personal* favour or deliverance; and others hymns of a more *general* nature, in which he either celebrates the divine perfections, or sets forth the *greatness* of his works, or the *wisdom, equity* and *mercy* of his *providential dealings*.

HAVING thus sufficiently insisted on the *first* thing proposed, and proved the duty of singing praises to God, I should now proceed to the *second* general head; namely, to explain what is meant by singing *with understanding*. But this must be referred to a second discourse on the subject. I shall now con-

(1) ACTS XVI.

clude with an important inference of two from what has been said.

INFERENCE 1st. How *groundless* and *unreasonable* are the complaints of those persons, who object against religion as a *mopish melancholy* thing?

THE very word *praise* denotes cheerfulness of temper and joy of heart. Praise, which is one of the principal exercises of religion, to which the Christian is called in every circumstance of life, springs from the *most refreshing motives*; from a contemplation of *God's adorable perfections*, and from a sense of his *wonderful goodness* to the children of men. And what more fit to excite and cherish the cheerful passions and joyous affections of the heart, than these meditations? What upright mind can be cast down or troubled, when it considers itself under the immediate inspection and providential care of an *all-wise, all-powerful, and all-merciful* God? Under this view of things, how inexpressibly great was the pious Psalmist's exaltation of heart, and in what rapturous strains does he express it? "Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad: let the sea roar and the fullness thereof: let the field be joyful and all that is therein. Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness; and the people with his truth (m)."—And again: "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and

(m) Psal. xcvi. 11,—13.

judgment are the habitation of his throne (n).”— In these and the like passages, the *joy* and *exultation* of the Psalmist's heart bursts forth, and shines out, through the language and sentiments. All nature seems to laugh and smile around him, and he seems to *exult* in the midst of an *exulting creation*!

AGAIN; what can be better fitted to excite our joy than a sense of the *divine goodness*; especially of his forgiving love? Mark the *sentiments* and *expression* of holy *David* upon this occasion: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies, who satisfieth thy mouth with good things (o).” Do such sentiments and such language as this savour of *gloominess* or *melancholy*?—Nothing less so! nothing more the reverse!—therefore we are frequently commanded to “make a *joyful noise* unto the Lord; to make a loud noise and *rejoice* and sing praise; to serve the Lord with *gladness* and come before him with singing; to go up to God's house with the multitude that keep holy-day, with the voice of *joy* and praise; yea to *triumph* in his praise.” Passages of this kind are frequent and almost numberless in the psalms and other places of scripture, all of which prove the benign and exhilarating genius of religion.

(n) Psal. xcvi. 1, 2.

(o) Psal. ciii. 1,—5.

TRUE religion, my friends, is a *cheerful, joyous* thing; full of heavenly hope, and replete with motives of the noblest and sublimest pleasures: and nothing is more certain than that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart (*p*)."  
 "The truly religious, and they only, have reason to rejoice in the Lord, and to give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." Therefore the church is commanded (*q*) "to rejoice in the Lord, and to glory in the holy one of Israel."—And so she does, in the most grateful and triumphant language, *Isaiab lxi. 10.* "I will *greatly rejoice* in the Lord; my soul shall be *joyful* in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels:"

TRUE, indeed; religious people have their sorrows and troubles, and their dark and melancholy seasons as well as others; but these are not the fruits of religion (which, where it is felt in its power upon the heart, always inspires with *joy* and *gladness*) but rather proceeds from the *want* or *imperfection* of religion. The melancholy seasons of the Christian are generally occasioned by his own falls and miscarriages, his shortcomings in duty, or untenderness of conscience, which so darken his evidences for heaven, oppress his mind with a sense of guilt, provoke God to withdraw the light of his countenance from him, and deprive

(*p*) Psal. xcvi. 11.

(*q*) Isa. xli. 16.

him of the comforts of religion, that his animal spirits are sunk and depressed, and he *walketh in darkness*, and hath *no light* of joy or comfort. So that this melancholy, which is often imputed to religion by ignorant and thoughtless men, really springs from a quite different source; either from the *want of it*, or from *false and mistaken* notions about it. Whereas in truth, "All the ways of real religion, are *ways of pleasantness*, and all her paths, *peace*;" and the Psalmist does nothing more than justice to that part of divine worship in particular, which consists in singing praises to GOD, when he declares; "My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee, and my soul, which thou hast redeemed (r)."

2. FROM what has been said we may infer, that it is the duty of Christians to praise GOD *always* and *at all times*—in sickness as well as in health—in adversity as well as in prosperity—when GOD frowns as well as when he smiles.

EXAMPLES of this duty of *perpetual praise*, at *all times* and in *all conditions*, are frequent in the scriptures. Thus *David* declares; "My praise shall be of thee *continually*:—I will yet praise thee *more and more*:—in GOD will I boast *all the day long*, and praise thy name *for ever*:—*seven times a day* do I praise thee;—my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praises *all the day*: *while I live* I will praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto my GOD *while I have any being*:—it is a good thing to

(r) Pf. lxxi. 23.

give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O thou MOST HIGH; to shew forth thy loving kindness *in the morning*, and thy faithfulness *every night.*" Thus you see the pious Psalmist thought this part of divine worship seasonable *at all times.*—And that it is so *on all occasions*, and in *every supposable circumstance of life*, is equally evident from a number of scripture examples, as well as from the reason of the thing. JOB blessed and praised a *taking* as well as a *giving* GOD. In a series of the most affecting calamities which ever perhaps happened, in such quick succession, to any one individual, he still finds cause to bless the Lord: "What! shall we receive good at the hand of GOD, and shall we not receive evil also? The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the LORD (s)." We find *Jehoshaphat* praising GOD in the field of battle, as well as *David* in his *palace*, or in the *sanctuary.*—*Paul* and *Silas* sang praises to the Most High in a *dungeon*, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer persecution for Christ's sake, while they were loaded with chains, and could not tell the moment when the fiery trial of martyrdom was coming upon them; as well as the cripple whom *Peter* and *John* had loosed from his infirmity, or King *Hezekiah*, on his recovery from a seemingly mortal disorder. We find that the first believers in *Jerusalem*, altho' in jeopardy of their lives every day, yet "eat their meat with *gladness* and singleness of heart, *praising* GOD, and having favour with all the

(s) Job i. 21. ii. 10.

people (t):” which gives us a convincing proof of the power which true religion has to support the mind under all outward calamities, and to fortify it against all the terrors and dangers which may surround it.

SUCH is the *spirit and power of true religion* that it makes men *blessed*, and inspires them with *joy and gladness*, under the keenest worldly reproaches and sufferings. “Blessed are ye, says Christ, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name’s sake: rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (u).” — “We rejoice, says *St. Paul*, in hope of the glory of GOD; and not only so, but we glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of GOD is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us (w).” “Finally, brethren, says the same apostle, rejoice in the LORD—rejoice in the Lord always, and *again*, I say unto you, *rejoice* (x).” So that Christians should never suffer their minds to sink so far under any worldly care or outward calamity, as to prevent them from this duty and privilege of *rejoicing in GOD and singing his praises with gladness of heart*.

THE prophet *Habakkuk* supposes the most desolate and forlorn case: he supposes the good man stripped of all his outward substance, and of all sublunary com-

(t) Acts ii. 46. (u) Mat. v. 11, 12. (w) Rom. v. 2,—5. (x) Philip. iii. 2,—4.

forts, and yet still he represents him as exulting in GOD: "Altho' the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall;"—well, what then? shall he hang up his harp on the willows, and be angry and murmur and repine, because Divine Providence (ever wise, just and good) hath deprived him of these outward good things? No: the good man has not so learnt religion: he still finds abundant reason to trust GOD; yea to rejoice in him too: "Yet I will rejoice in GOD; I will joy in the GOD of my salvation (y)."

LET us try our religion, *my brethren*, by this touchstone. *Worldly-mindedness* itself will doubtless be willing to praise GOD, under prosperous circumstances, and an affluence of the good things of this life. "The men of this world rejoice, when their corn, wine and oil abound, and when they inherit the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces (z):" but can we rejoice in GOD, and praise him with joy of heart, when he *takes*, as well as when he *gives*; when his providence frowns upon us; when our substance, our health, or our reputation is injured, and perhaps well nigh blasted?—Alas! I fear many of us know not what manner of spirits we are of, in this respect; and that, if this be a mark of true religion, we are still without it; utterly destitute of this important branch of the Christian temper.

(y) Hab. iii. 17.

(z) Ps. iv. 7. Eccl. ii. 9.

“IF any man, says the apostle, have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” But what was the spirit and temper of Christ in the most trying and disagreeable circumstances? Why, he bore the rudest injuries with the greatest meekness, and altho’ he had not where to lay his head, yet never was he heard to utter one murmuring or repining word against the Divine Providence. While he was not only forsaken of all his friends, but in a great measure of his heavenly Father also, he shewed the utmost resignation and submission to the divine will, saying, “Not my will but thine be done: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”—In the near prospect of the last scene of the most dreadful tragedy of his sufferings, with the perfidy of his friends, the malice and cruelty of his enemies, the vinegar and the gall, the cross, the nails, and the spear, full in his eye, he sang a hymn of praise to God with his disciples in the guest chamber, and thence went forth to the mount of Olives, to await the false disciple who should betray him; and this dreadful scene he closed, by pouring the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit of a dying malefactor, and praying mercy down upon the heads of his murderers.

BUT reason, indeed, as well as scripture, may assure us that there can be no circumstance in the life of man so comfortless, as to render the praises of God an unseasonable duty. It is surely matter of praise and rejoicing to the most guilty and miserable of the human race, that they are still in the land of the living, and in a place of repentance;—that a

number of undeserved mercies are still continued with them;—that the Lord, who reigns, and who will judge the world in righteousness, is still waiting to be gracious; that they are still in a place of hope, and their spirits not yet groaning under a load of divine vengeance, with other guilty spirits like themselves. Indeed “why should living men complain?” Every thing on this side a fixed state of misery, is *mercy*, and justly claims the *tribute of our praise* to him whose compassions fail not, and whose tender mercies are over all his works. “O then, praise ye the Lord: praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power: praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness: let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord: praise ye the Lord!” Amen.

## S E R M O N IX.

The divine duty of Psalmody stated  
and explained, in two sermons, from

PSAL. xlvii. 7.—

—*Sing ye praises with understanding.*

## S E R M O N II.

PSALMODY makes such an essential and important part of our *public worship*, and should make such a constant part of our *private* and even of our *secret* devotions, that I need not, I hope, farther apologize for dwelling pretty largely upon the subject, and cultivating it with a compass and circumstantiality which its importance seems to deserve.

TRIFLES deserve not much of our time or attention, and *brevity*, joined with *perspicuity*, has doubtless its advantages even in important subjects, when the design is only to strike the mind with general views of them: but it must also be allowed that there is an advantage in cultivating *important practical* subjects; in viewing them on all sides, and distinctly considering them in all their parts and dependencies.

This tends to open and expand the mind ; give it enlarged and comprehensive views, and furnish it with clear and determinate ideas.

AN ingenious mind delights in system. It loves to see truths in their harmony and connexion, and while it beholds a doctrine surrounded by all the arguments which can support it, and illuminated by all the evidence it will admit, it is captivated by the love of truth, and powerfully influenced to the obedience of faith.

It cannot easily be accounted for, that, while the Christian world is filled with volumes on the *sacraments* and the duties of *preaching, meditation* and *prayer*, yet so little should have been wrote on the *divine duty of psalmody* which constitutes such an important part of our public worship ; and that it should be so very seldom explained and enforced from the pulpit, that I really do not remember ever to have seen a sermon or treatise on the subject. This consideration, and the *superficial* and *indeavour* manner in which this part of the divine service seems to be too generally conducted, have engaged me to consider the subject more fully, than otherwise might have seemed necessary or expedient.

IN a former discourse from the words, I have fully proved, that singing praises to God, has been one principal part of the worship of the Deity, in every age of the world, and in every successive dispensation of religion. I come now to shew you, under the

SECOND head of discourse, what is meant by sing-

ing praises *with understanding*: or how we may perform this part of divine worship according to the Psalmist's injunction, and to divine acceptance.

WE may be said to sing *with understanding*

1st. WHEN we understand the *words* and *phrases* which we sing;

2dly. WHEN we understand *the mind* of the *spirit*, or the *scope* and *drift* of the psalms which we sing;—

3dly. WHEN we sing with raised and elevated affections, suitable to the *sense* and *spirit* of these psalms;—and

4thly. WHEN we sing *according to the rules of art*; or accompany the inward melody of the heart, with the outward music and harmony of the voice.

ALL these four things, I apprehend, are in some measure understood in the Psalmist's precept, *sing ye praises with understanding*. I shall *first* briefly illustrate each of them in their order, and then make some practical application of the subject.

1st. IN order to sing with understanding, we must understand the *words* and *phrases* which we sing. It might seem trifling to attempt the illustration of so obvious a matter, did we not actually know that the prejudices of mankind have duped many of them into the preposterous custom of *praying to God* and *singing his praises* in an unknown tongue, and that out of a stupid veneration for antiquity; altho' it is a custom diametrically opposite to the express declaration of GOD in scripture.

THE same may be said in this case, which the a-

posible applies upon another occasion, with regard to the *use of strange tongues*, which was one of the first miraculous gifts conferred on the apostles and other disciples, for the more speedy and convenient propagation of the gospel among foreign nations. It seems the teachers of the *Corinthian* church perverted and abused this gift, by *praying* and *prophesying* or preaching in an *unknown tongue*, which the apostle *Paul* severely reproveth, as not only *sinful*—making a vain and ostentatious parade of a divine gift, given by Christ for the propagation of his gospel;—but also *absurd*—using this gift in such a manner and in such circumstances, that the church could not thereby be edified. The apostle's reasoning on this subject is worth reciting. “Even things, says he, without life, giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue, words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air. . Therefore if I know not the *meaning* of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh a *barbarian*, and he that speaketh shall be a *barbarian* to me. Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, *my spirit* prayeth, but mine *understanding* is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understand-

ing also : I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt *blefs* or *pray* with the *spirit*, how shall he who occupieth the room of the unlearned say, *Amen*, at thy giving of thanks ; seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest ? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my GOD, I speak with tongues more than you all ; yet in the church I had rather speak *five* words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than *ten thousand* words in an unknown tongue (a).” Indeed the whole of this chapter is so obviously applicable to our present purpose, that it needs no comment. If we understand not *the meaning* of the *words* and *phrases* we sing, let us sing with never so loud, or never so musical an air, yet we sing we know not what ; our knowledge is not thereby increased ; our devout affections cannot be raised ; our hearts cannot be bettered ;—although we may *seem* to praise GOD outwardly with the voice, yet we do it *without understanding* ; which robs the duty of all its pleasure, profit and acceptableness, and renders it a mere carcass of praise, which can neither please GOD nor profit ourselves.

HENCE you see how necessary and expedient it is, that we should not only choose the most obvious and intelligible translation of the psalms, but also that we give the closest application to the study of these divine poems ; so that, if possible, we may understand the meaning of every word and phrase ; that

(a) 1 Cor. xiv. 2,—26.

while we are so often called upon to join in this part of divine worship, both in our public and private devotions, we may do it with enlightened understandings and raised affections. Indeed *knowledge* and *practice* are so intimately and inseparably united in religion, that the *latter* cannot have an existence without the *former*. That "ignorance, therefore, should be the mother of devotion," is the most senseless and absurd of all paradoxes.

Idly. Not only ought we to have a competent understanding of the *words* and *phrases* which we sing, but also of the *drift*, *scope*, and *tenour* of the psalms themselves.

THIS is of somewhat a different consideration from the foregoing particular: for a person may well enough understand the particular *words* and *phrases* of any discourse which he reads or hears, and yet have little understanding of the whole taken together in its connexion, or of the *drift*, *scope* and *design* of the speaker or writer. In the psalms, as well as in the rest of the bible, there are many things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unlearned in the mystery of godliness, are in danger of wresting, as they do other scriptures, to their own perdition (b). The sense indeed of the *devotional* and *penitential* psalms, is very obvious to all such as have their minds exercised unto godliness: but the *historical*, *typical*, and *prophetical* psalms, and such in which references and allusions are made to the *ceremonial* and *judicial laws* require a very competent knowledge, not only

(b) 2 Pet. iii. 16.

of the prophecies, types, ceremonies, and figures of the Old Testament, and their fulfilment under the New ; but also of the Jewish history and antiquities ; in order to their being well understood, and to our *singing the praises of GOD with understanding*. But this will more fully appear under the

III. d. PARTICULAR which runs thus ; “ We must sing with elevated and engaged affections, suitable to the *sense and spirit* of the psalms which we sing.”

INDEED this is the great art of singing, which, I fear, few—alas ! very few singers understand or practise as they ought. This is to sing praises *with understanding* ; to sing with grace, making melody in our hearts to the Lord. A psalm thus sung, is a *real act of devotion* ;—a *real means* of purifying the heart and of raising and spiritualizing the affections ; a sacrifice truly acceptable to GOD and profitable unto us.

THIS is the *only* music which is agreeable to GOD ; the *only* harmony which pleases his all-discerning ear. He claims *the heart* in his worship : All the rest is nothing without it : HE IS A SPIRIT, and requires indispensibly that those who worship him, should do it *in spirit and in truth* ; and should pay him a *reasonable service*. Be our voices ever so melodious ; be our skill in music ever so nice and accurate ; yet if there be a defect *here* ; if our *hearts and affections* go not along with the sound of our voices ; if our *souls* be not in tune to sing the songs of Zion ; if our *minds* be not properly exercised upon the sense and meaning of what we sing, the most ravishing notes

and melodious airs, will be but as a *sounding brass* and a *tinckling cymbal* in the ears of *that GOD* who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men.

REGULAR and devout affections are the music of heaven. These are the harmony of the upper world. Holy love, fear, reverence, gratitude and desire, are the sacrifice of praise which *GOD* requires. These will make our songs and halleluiahs reach the heavens and bring down the dew of grace and comfort on our souls. The Lord regardeth a broken heart; a broken and a contrite spirit he will never despise. He requires truth in the heart and uprightnes in the inward part. Without *this*, our loudest songs of praise are but mere mockery, highly displeasing to the Divine Being, and utterly unprofitable to ourselves.

It is impossible for me, on the present occasion, to run through the whole psalms and shew you, as I go along, how our *inward affections* should be exercised, while we sing every particular psalm and verse. I shall, however, by the divine assistance, make a few general observations which I hope, may serve as a key to this part of divine worship, and which, by the help of your good sense, may direct you in particular cases.

IN general; our *minds* and *affections*, in the time of singing, should be exercised correspondently to the *sense* and *matter* of the psalms we sing. To instance in a few particulars.

I. ARE we singing a penitential psalm; that is, a psalm wherein the Psalmist is confessing his sins, im-

ploring the divine forgiveness, and resolving upon repentance (as in the 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 132, 143, &c.); we should endeavour to call into remembrance our own sins, with their heinous nature and aggravations; ask pardon for them, and resolve in the divine strength instantly to abandon and forsake them; thus applying the Psalmist's language to our own case, and having our affections moved and exercised accordingly.

2. ARE we singing a psalm wherein the Psalmist prays for increase of grace, deliverance from the power of enemies, or from any other affliction or calamity either in soul or body (of which kind are the 25, 39, 88, 90, &c. &c.); we should consider at the same time what *kind* or *degree* of grace we most stand in need of;—what enemies spiritual or temporal, are most likely to prevail against us;—what affliction bodily or spiritual we most labour under;—and so put up our most fervent desires to God, with the words of the Psalmist, that he would supply all our wants,—grant us all needed grace and assistance,—preserve us from the power and malice of all our enemies spiritual and temporal,—and graciously, in his own good time and way, deliver us from such bodily or spiritual afflictions as we are at present labouring under, and preserve us safe to his heavenly kingdom.

3. ARE we singing such psalms as set forth and celebrate the infinite power, wisdom and knowledge of God; the wisdom of his counsels and the greatness of his works (of which kind are the 8, 19, 104,

139, 148, &c.); we should endeavour to raise our hearts to grand and worthy conceptions of the great God; to a reverential admiration of his adorable perfections;—his inconceivable power, unsearchable wisdom, and boundless eternal existence. In a word; we should endeavour to frame such worthy notions of the great God, while we sing these psalms, as *David* had while he composed and indited them, and so utter these exalted sentiments in the words of the holy Psalmist.

O what a sacred relish would this exercise of heart give to the singing of psalms! What pleasure and improvement would the rational soul receive in thus shouting forth the praises of its Maker *with understanding!*

4. **WHEN** we sing those psalms which set forth the goodness of God to all creatures in general, or to the children of men in particular;—his goodness in *creating, preserving, providing for and sustaining all things*; especially his forgiving grace and redeeming love (as in the 8, 29, 89, 103, 147, &c. &c.); we should try to have our affections raised to an endearing sense of God's goodness, and of his wonderful works to the children of men. We should think of all his goodness to ourselves in particular, and work up our hearts into a holy rapture of love and gratitude to so kind a Creator, so bountiful a Benefactor, and so gracious a Redeemer; and a penetrating sense of his great and undeserved goodness should, as it were, overwhelm our souls with a holy sorrow for our vile ingratitude, and for the poor returns of love and obe-

diſcence we have made him in return for all his benefits conferred on us.

5. WHEN we are ſinging thoſe *hiſtorical* pſalms, wherein the Pſalmiſt records and abridges the hiſtory of the Jewiſh church, and ſets forth GOD'S various providence towards that highly favoured people;—his ſaving and delivering them when they humbled themſelves for their ſins, and put their truſt in him; and his diſtreſſing, afflicting and deſtroying them, when they revolted from him, and followed after lying vanities and dumb idols (among which are the 44, 105, and 107, &c.); we ſhould endeavour to raiſe our hearts to a grateful admiration of GOD'S *goodneſs* in planting a church among men;—of his *power* and *wiſdom* in preſerving it amidſt ſo many enemies and dangers which were in league for its deſtruction;—of his *holineſs* and *juſtice* in puniſhing iniquity with ſo much impartiality and ſeverity in his own covenant people,—and of his *mercy* in ſo graciously hearing and delivering them upon their repentance and amendment. Theſe hiſtorical pſalms ſhould alſo excite in us a holy fear leſt we fall into thoſe ſins which brought ſuch awful judgments upon that unhappy people, and at length unchurched them altogether; ſo that they who were once the people of GOD, are now become aliens to the commonwealth of *Iſrael*, and ſtrangers to the covenants of promiſe;—and ſhould fill us with compaſſion for their unhappy fate, and inſpire us with ardent deſires that they may be again reſtored to the friendſhip and favour of GOD; ſo that both *Jews* and *Gentiles* may make but one

*boly, united church, under the glorious Messiah, the shepherd and bishop of souls.*

6. WHEN we sing those psalms wherein the holy Psalmist expresses such *earnest desires* after communion with GOD;—such *ardent breathings* after a sense of his favour;—such *servent affections* towards him;—such an *unfeigned delight* in his pure and holy law, and in the obedience of it,—and such a *seraphic zeal and affection* for his public worship and ordinances (among which are the 26, 27, 42, 43, 63, 65, 84, 119, 122); we should bewail our want of such *earnest* and *intense* breathings after GOD;—mourn over the lukewarmness of our love, and the dulness and stupidity of our frames, and pray that GOD would vouchsafe us such a discovery of himself and of the beauty of holiness as may inflame our hearts with a more ardent love and zeal for himself, his laws, his ordinances, and for the enlargement and prosperity of his church and kingdom; so that we may be enabled to join, with our whole hearts, in those holy and exalted songs of praise, and sing them with raised affections.

7. WHEN we are singing those psalms, which are prophecies concerning the *person and sufferings* of Christ (among which are the 2, 22, 40, 45, 69, 72, and 110), every *devout, pious and grateful* affection should be stirred up, and give *pathos and energy* to the accents of our praise. Our inmost souls should bless the LORD for the early discoveries he made of Christ to his church by prophecy; for the characteristic descriptions he gave of his *person and offices*, his

*labours and sufferings* in those early predictions, which are all exactly and circumstantially fulfilled in our Jesus;—as appears by comparing these prophecies with the history of his life and death in the New Testament. While we sing his *sufferings*, we should be deeply affected with sorrow for those sins which required and occasioned them. While we sing his *resurrection, ascension, and subsequent glories*, we should rejoice in spirit that he is so compleat a Saviour, who has made a full atonement, entered into Heaven before us, and ever lives there to make intercession for us. We should act a lively faith in his merit and righteousness, and rejoice in the confirmation which these prophecies give to our faith and hope.

8. WHEN we sing psalms of confidence and reliance upon GOD. (as the 23, 25, 27, 31, 37, 40, 73, &c.); we should labour to exercise the same virtue, and to excite the same temper in our own hearts; to cast off all dependance on ourselves and every other creature;—trust wholly and entirely in him alone;—commit our souls and bodies and all our spiritual and temporal concerns to him, as to a faithful Creator and Redeemer;—leave ourselves entirely with him, and wait patiently and submissively for his will and pleasure;—for this purpose, calling into remembrance, his infinite power, his tender mercies, his unerring wisdom and his unfailling faithfulness and truth; all which are sufficient reasons and motives of our unlimited confidence in him:

9. WHEN we sing the marks and characters of

good men, as we have them laid down in the 1, 15, 24, and other psalms; we should carefully observe, as we go along, whether we ourselves answer to the characters laid down in these psalms; mourn over our deficiencies and shortcomings, and resolve in the strength of Christ upon amendment.—When we sing the character of the wicked, as in the 1, 5, 9, 11, 37, 73, psalms, and the dreadful miseries to which they are exposed; we should stir up in our souls an abhorrence of all wickedness, which renders sinners so vile, odious and hateful in the eyes of God, and which inevitably exposes them to his heavy judgments.—And when we sing of the blessedness of the righteous, and that glory which is prepared for them, as in the 4, 15, 16, 17, and 23, psalms; we should raise our affections to a love and esteem of holiness, which is the health and beauty of the rational soul and renders it like to God;—lift up our earnest desires after greater degrees of it, and long for the heavenly happiness with which it shall be finally rewarded.

10. THERE are also other psalms wherein the Psalmist seems to pray down heavy curses upon his enemies (such as the 35, 55, 69, and 143). These have given no small offence to many good men, and have abundantly opened the mouths of infidels against the scriptures, as seeming to favour of *private revenge*; a vice condemned even by the light of nature and the law of *Moses*, and diametrically opposite to the spirit and genius of Christianity, which expressly commands us to render good for evil and blessing for

curſing;—to love our enemies, and to do good to, and pray for, them that hate us, and evilly intreat and perſecute us.

IT ought however to be conſidered that the Pſalmiſt, in many of theſe pſalms, ſpeaks *in the perſon of Chriſt*, as in the 69; and then theſe curſes pronounced againſt his enemies, are to be underſtood as the language of Chriſt concerning finally impenitent finners; which is doubtleſs reaſonable and juſt.—In others of theſe pſalms the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks as a *prophet*, and ſo does no more than denounce the judgments of GOD againſt his obſtinate and irreclaimable enemies. For inſtance; Pſal. xxxv. 4. “Let them be confounded and put to ſhame that ſeek after my ſoul.”—And Pſal. lxix. 24. “Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them, &c.” In ſuch paſſages as theſe, the Pſalmiſt only foretels, *as a prophet of GOD*, what *ſhall* happen to theſe wicked men. As if he had ſaid: “They *ſhall* be counfounded that ſeek after my ſoul: thine indignation *ſhall* be poured out upon them, and thy wrathful anger *ſhall* take hold of them.” And indeed the words might as properly be tranſlated ſo, ſeeing in the Hebrew tongue, the *imperative mood* is often uſed for the *future tenſe of the indicative*—as *let them*, for *they ſhall*, and the like.

PERHAPS it were moſt prudent not to ſing theſe pſalms at all, in public worſhip, leſt their ſenſe and application might be perverted and abuſed by individuals, unleſs in ſuch a form *as the imitation*

of the psalms of David by Dr. Watts, where the evangelical sense of them is given, and every abuse of them guarded against. But if we do sing these psalms, we must not think ourselves warranted to wish the destruction of our temporal enemies. We may indeed safely pray that God would blast and confound their unrighteous designs against us, as this is consistent enough with the love which we owe them:—however we should, at the same time, desire their reformation and pray for their eternal happiness. It is most advisable, however, to turn the meaning of these psalms against our *spiritual enemies*, in which case these imprecations are warranted in their utmost latitude:—but in no other way is it safe for us to imitate the Psalmist, who was an *inspired man*, a *prophet*, and a *type* of Christ, in the language of these psalms.

I HAVE been more circumstantial, perhaps, than may be thought needful, in the illustration of this particular, because I think it of the last importance to the right performance of this part of divine worship. Thus should we sing praises with understanding; with raised and elevated affections, suitable to the sense and meaning of the psalms which we sing;—our hearts symphonizing, as it were, with the spirit and genius of these divine compositions, and according in sweet harmony with the sentiments and affections which inspired them. Indeed without this concord and consonance of the affections, with the spirit and genius of the compositions we sing, it were as

good we sung *fa, sol, la*, or any other unmeaning notes, as the best psalm in the bible.

WHAT pity is it then that the thoughts of many Christians should be entirely taken up with the *tunes* which they sing, whilst the *words* and *matter*, the *design* and *intention* of the psalm, are little, if at all, regarded? And is it not to be feared that many sing psalms in this manner, who, provided they carry on the music of the tune, and bear a tolerable *chorus* with their fellow worshippers, are regardless of the matter of the psalm, and pay little attention to the *music of the heart*, the *harmony* and *melody of holy affections*, which alone is of any avail, in the esteem of that heart-searching GOD whom we pretend to worship?

I WOULD beg leave to stop for a few minutes and make a few reflections on this branch of the subject.

WHAT thanks do we owe to GOD who hath furnished us with such an excellent collection of psalms, indited by his Holy Spirit, and so well fitted and adapted to all the cases and circumstances of the Christian? Here is a noble treasure of animated and sublime devotion for the exercise and comfort of the pious mind, in almost every condition and circumstance of the Christian life. Is the Christian under trouble of mind or distress of conscience, under a sense of guilt? Here are penitential psalms excellently calculated for the *broken heart* and the *contrite spirit*?—Is he under the smiles of GOD's countenance and ravished with a sense of his favour; his

cheerful passions raised, and his heart exhilarated with a sense of his loving kindness, which is better than life? Here are songs of praise which will add vigour to his warmest gratitude, and give wings to his swiftest, strongest devotion.—Is he under the pressure of heavy afflictions, either of body or of mind? Here he will be taught to trust in GOD, and wait his gracious will with patience, complacency and perfect resignation.—Is he filled with worthy and exalted apprehensions of the divine perfections; of GOD's power, wisdom, goodness and universal providence and presence? Here are psalms which will help his meditations, raise his admiration, and teach him to celebrate the divine attributes in some measure answerable to their excellent greatness.—Is he poor and afflicted, despised and forsaken, destitute of worldly friends or of worldly comforts? Here are psalms which will teach him to rejoice in GOD as his portion and inheritance, and to enjoy a more exalted pleasure in this consideration, than worldlings can possibly experience in the greatest increase and abundance of their corn, wine and oil:—yea, to say, with the triumphant Psalmist, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth whom I desire besides thee: my heart and my flesh fail; but GOD is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever (c).” —Is he rich and prosperous? these divine songs will not only teach him the proper use and application of superfluities, but will also instruct him how to make grateful returns to his benefactor, in the language of praise

(c) Psal. lxxiii. 25, 26.

and thankfulness. In short there is scarce one supposable circumstance in the Christian life, but there is some psalm, or part of a psalm, in this collection, adapted to it.

LET us then, my brethren, resolve to acquaint ourselves more than ever with this divine treasure of inward and experimental devotion. Let us more attentively study the *rich sense* and *sublime beauties* of these heavenly compositions, and labour to conform and attune our hearts to the holy sentiments which they breathe and inspire; until they catch the divine *pathos*, and glow and burn with the same celestial fire. In a word: let these psalms of David, be our song and rejoicing in this house of our pilgrimage, until our heavenly harps are strung, and our hearts are attuned, to join the celestial band of quiresters which surround the throne of GOD, and sing the song of *Moses* and of the *Lamb* for ever and ever. I now proceed to shew you in the

IVth. AND last place, That when the psalmist exhorts us to *sing praises with understanding*, he may also have regard to *the manner of our singing*; namely, that we sing them *musically*, or *according to the rules of art*.

MANKIND are prone to run into two extremes in the modes of divine worship. The *first* is that of those who make religion to consist almost wholly in *externals*, and a *bodily service*, which, as the apostle justly observes, *profiteth little*; in certain modes and ceremonies;—in a stated and methodical round of certain *outward acts, sufferings, exercises, gestures* and

*sarcical grimaces*; as tho' the kingdom of heaven were to be taken by *bodily violence*; or as tho' a *routine* of these *bodily actions* and *juggling tricks* could have any tendency to please the DEITY, who can only take pleasure in the *contrition, repentance* and *recovered virtue* of his lapsed creatures. This is to make religion consist merely of a body, and that a very *monstrous, deformed, and antic* one too; whereas it consists *only* and *wholly* in a due sense of the rational soul's obligation to GOD, together with correspondent sentiments and a correspondent practice. He who *knows* and *loves* GOD as he ought, and serves him in the virtues and graces of a holy life, and *he alone, is truly religious*; and such an one will surely not neglect any outward services and observances which his GOD hath enjoin'd; as coming home upon his conscience with all the weight of divine authority. Even when a multitude of expensive sacrifices, burthenome ceremonies, and laborious bodily services, were enjoined by GOD; and made a considerable part in the worship of his ancient church, yet they were even then accounted but *the lesser matters of the law*, and always gave place to *judgment, mercy, faith, righteousness* and the *love of GOD*, which were *the weightier matters of the law*; the capital duties of morality and religion. *St. Paul* calls these things *a yoke of bondage*, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, and rejoices and exults in *that liberty wherewith Christ had made his disciples and followers free, by blotting out and cancelling that handwriting of ordinances, and nailing it, as a dead let-*

ver, *to the cross of Christ*, in whose incarnation, passion and superior spiritual dispensation, it had its full accomplishment. How absurd is it then in Christians to entangle themselves again in *the same*, yea in a *worse* yoke of bondage; having begun in the *spirit*, thus to end in the *flesh*, and by a cumbersome and futile *will-worship*, not only to usurp the prerogative of Christ, who alone has power and right to make laws and ordinances for his church, but also mar and deform that beautiful plan of a simple and spiritual worship which he hath laid down for his disciples? Who, indeed, hath required these things at our hands? Or how can we hope to please him, “by teaching for doctrines the commandments of men; or making void the word of GOD by vain traditions, and uncommanded observances?”

OTHERS again, running to the opposite extreme, think they can never enough strip religion of every thing which is *visible* and *external*; some denying the external use of the sacraments, and the use of psalmody, and others going still farther, and declining the public, social worship of GOD, and confining all religion to a kind of *solitary quietism*, and the *silence of mental prayer*. Now the error of these good people lies in their stripping religion of *its body* altogether, and making it a mere kind of *ens rationis*, a mere *creature of the brain*, or, at least, having its existence only in the understanding and affections, without any *visibilty*, whereby it might be made manifest to the world: whereas religion, as it exists in, and is exercised by, man, who is a being of a mixed nature, consist-

ing of a soul and body in union ; must be, in part at least, a *visible thing*, having a *body* as well as a *soul*. The apostle, indeed, justly observes that *bodily service profiteth little* ; yet it profiteth *something* ; and it were very easy to prove to a demonstration that the very idea of *social worship* includes *the necessity of it*. If it is the duty of Christians *not to neglect the assembling of themselves together* for the solemn, public social worship of their *common Creator, Benefactor, and Redeemer* ; to pray to him ; to read and hear his word ; to sing his praises, and to receive the sacraments of his appointment ; then it is equally necessary that they should mutually agree upon some convenient *time* and *place* for this purpose ; that they should present their *bodies* at *this place* ; that they should use their *tongues* and *voices* and *ears* for the purposes aforesaid, and that they should employ such outward bodily actions and gestures as decency and expediency suggest, for the performance of this social worship. In *one word* : religion without the *heart* and *affections*, is but a *mere dead carcass* ; or rather, by no means deserves the name :—without some bodily services or external usages, it can neither be exercised *socially*, nor can it be of much service to society. We must let our *piety* and *good worship*, as well as our *good works*, appear before men, that others, beholding them, may glorify our Father in heaven. Religion, so far as it is *exemplary*, or fitted and calculated for promoting the good of others, must be clothed with the body of *good works*, and *holy duties* ;—must be *visible* and *external*. But then *this body*

must be animated by a *soul*; otherwise it no more deserves to be called *religion*; than a marble statue deserves to be called a *man*.

ENLIGHTENED and sanctified reason, guided and directed by scripture, and the customs and usages of the primitive apostolic church, will teach us to steer a middle course between these two extremes. Reason teacheth us that GOD is to be worshipped *socially* or *in public*, as well as *personally* or *in secret*;—that as he is a *pure, holy, omniscient, omnipresent Spirit*, he must chiefly be pleased with *inward piety and virtue*, with the *rectitude and sincerity of the heart*, and the *servent ardour of pure and holy affections*;—yet that he requires the homage and service of our *entire nature*, which he has made and supports principally for this purpose—so that *our bodies*, as well as *all that is within them*, should be a consecrated thing unto the Lord, and should be reverently and actively employed in his service, so far as they can prove subservient to the promotion of *inward religion*, either in ourselves or others;—yet that these bodily services, being the mere *shell and exterior* of religion, and only useful to an higher end, or instrumental to that which is *spiritual and internal*, if we multiply them above what their reason and utility requires, they must then become *superstitious*; needlessly burthensome to ourselves, and rather displeasing than otherwise to that GOD who, being a *pure Spirit*, must chiefly be pleased with a *pure, spiritual worship*; with true homage in the *heart*, and sincerity in the *inward part*.

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Now, it cannot, methinks, but greatly recommend the religion of Christ and his apostles to our approbation and acceptance, that it recommends just such a *simple, rational and spiritual* worship of the DEITY, as our best reason dictates and approves. We find it encumbered with no burthenfome, expensive ceremonies; no parade of troublesome bodily services; nothing in it, in short, of this kind, but what is either absolutely necessary to accommodate it to *society*, or highly conducive to some *spiritual* acts and exercises of the mind. In a word; these divine *teachers* and *modellers* of the Christian worship, have not only set us an example of the greatest *simplicity* and *spirituality* in conducting it; but have expressly forbid all *human additions* and *inventions* to be joined with it, under the notion of *will-worship*, being wise above that which is written, and teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. They every where insinuate the *futility* and *unprofitableness* of carnal observances and bodily services, and the criminal nature of tacking the inventions of human wisdom to the pattern laid down in the mount; that *simple* and *majestic* model of it laid down by themselves; as implying in it an encroachment upon the prerogative of Christ, who is the great and only lawgiver of his church, and whose sole right it is to *mark out* and *prescribe* that plan of divine worship which is acceptable to the DEITY.

IN the *pure, primitive, apostolic* age of the church, we find that Christians convened together by mutual consent, on the *Lord's day*, and on other proper oc-

caſions, and *there*, in a *ſolemn* and *devout* manner, prayed to GOD; ſung his praifes; preached and heard his word, and adminiſtered and received the ſacraments of baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper. This ſocial worſhip was generally led either by one of the apoſtles, or by other diſciples ordained by them, and approved by the churches; except when, in that age of plenary inſpiration, the gifts of the Spirit fell upon any other members of the churches promiſcuouſly; and then theſe were permitted to *pray, prophecy, or exhort*, as the Spirit gave them utterance; ſo they exerciſed theſe miraculous gifts with *regularity, decency and order*, to the edification of the church. Beſides this, we find that the apoſtles and other primitive teachers had other private meetings for ſocial worſhip, and that they taught *privately* and *from houſe to houſe, teaching and admoniſhing* with all long ſuffering and doctrine, and doing all the good they were commiſſioned and enabled to do, both to the ſouls and bodies of men.

THIS is the whole account we have of the matter in the New Teſtament; and in adhering cloſely and ſcrupuloſly to *this ſimple and ſpiritual plan* of divine worſhip, as it has been transmitted to us by Chriſt and his apoſtles, theſe maſter builders of the Chriſtian church, we ſurely cannot offend our divine Maſter, but muſt render him the moſt *rational* and *acceptable ſervice*.

WE doubtleſs naturally love *ſhew, and pomp, and novelty, and parade* as well as other men; but in the worſhip of GOD we dare not ſet up our own wiſdom

or the wisdom of any other men, above the wisdom of our divine Lawgiver, and are afraid of being wise above that which is written. And if we differ from any other of our Christian brethren, by retaining those too positive institutions of Christ, *baptism* and *the Lord's supper*; we trust it is from the *same respect to the authority of Christ*, who has *expressly instituted and never repealed* them, and from a hearty conviction of their *significancy, wisdom and great utility* in the Christian life.

THIS may perhaps be deemed a *digression from the subject*, but I hope it is neither *unnatural, unimportant or unuseful*. To return then to the subject. To *sing praises with understanding*, may imply a regard to *the manner* of our singing; that we sing them *musically, or according to the rules of art*. For altho' GOD chiefly regards the *heart, or the holy affections* of the singer; yet doubtless he regards *the manner* in which the worship is performed too. "We are to serve him with our *bodies* as well as with our *spirits*, which are his (g)." We are commanded "to offer the sacrifice of praise to GOD continually, which is called *the fruit of our lips*, giving thanks to his name (b)." And therefore *Hosea* calls these sacrifices, *The calves of our lips*. (i). And because the *tongue* is to be engaged in this exercise, as well as the *heart*, therefore the Psalmist calls his tongue, *his glory* (k). Our *tongues* and *voices* are talents given us by GOD; they distinguish us from the brutes, and therefore

(g) 1 Cor. vi. 20. (b) Heb. xiii. 15. (i) Hos. xiv. 2.  
(k) Ps. lxxii. 108.

ought to be improved by us to his glory. And certainly we cannot improve them to a more noble purpose, than to *sing his praises with understanding*.

TRUE indeed, where GOD hath not given a voice for singing, or a capacity to learn (as some persons are naturally mistuned;) or where he hath given no opportunity for the improvement of our voices in this art, he will not require it of us, but will graciously accept the *inward praises of the heart*, for the *outward music of the lip*. But certainly persons who have *voices, capacity and opportunity* to learn the *art of psalmody*, and yet neglect it, are guilty of a misimprovement of one of their noblest talents, and must one day be answerable to GOD for that neglect.

MUSIC is, indeed, a difficult and extensive science, and much both of genius and application is necessary to make men adepts in it. But this is no excuse in the present case. Church music (to the shame of the professors of that noble art be it said!) has been but very little cultivated, especially in Protestant countries. A few very plain and easy tunes, not exceeding 15 or 20, are the most which are commonly used in any of our churches; and did persons but closely frequent public worship, and avail themselves of such other opportunities as they might easily command, they might make themselves masters of them, with a very small degree of capacity and application; and it is surely their guilt and shame that they do not!

THAT singing with order and regularity, according to the rules of art, is essential to our *singing praises with understanding*, we cannot at all doubt,

if we would but give ourselves leave to consider that psalmody has been ever conducted by the rules of art in the church of GOD. We have already observed that the psalms of *David* were set to music by himself and other celebrated artists in the Jewish church, and that *two hundred and twenty eight* trained singers, *instructed in the songs of the LORD*, were appointed to lead the public psalmody. And all Christian churches have followed the same rule, and appointed some approved tunes, whereby to sing these psalms. And indeed the reasons of it are very plain, for

1st. THE unity and harmony of voices has a great tendency to compose the mind and assist the devotion both of ourselves and others. It naturally tends to make the heart more cheerful, and moves and excites the pious affections of ourselves and our fellow-worshippers.

2dly. IT is scarcely possible that persons can join in this part of divine worship, unless they be agreed in some one air whereby to regulate their voices. All is confusion and disorder where this is not the case. The mind naturally delights in *harmony* and *concord*, and nothing is more disagreeable to the ear than *jarring, discordant sounds*. This naturally tends to mar our devotions, by discomposing our minds and putting us out of temper. I may appeal to the common feelings of my hearers, whether one bad singer by raising his voice, does not discompose and give pain to a whole congregation?—For which reason, it were certainly most adviseable for such persons who

cannot follow a tune tolerably well, either to sing very low, or else, forbearing singing altogether, only to look over the psalm and exercise their thoughts upon it while the rest are singing.

ON the other hand; how pleasant and delightful is it when a whole assembly, with united hearts and harmonious voices, shout forth the praises of God? This bears some resemblance to heaven, where men and angels tune their harps, and mingle their voices in warbling one harmonious and eternal song of praise to the heavenly King!

So much then for the doctrinal part of the subject.

**APPLICATION.** How much is it the duty of Christians frequently to read and diligently to meditate on this excellent portion of scripture? This sacred treasure of truth, this fountain of divine comfort and consolation is put into the hands of every Christian, to be his song and rejoicing in this house of his pilgrimage, and certainly those who neglect it and suffer it to lie unperused and unread in their bibles, lose one of the greatest helps and comforts of religion: they not only bury in the ground a talent of inestimable value, for the improvement of which, the giver will one day call them to an account, but also rob themselves of one of the most delicious and refined pleasures in life. There is certainly no book in the bible, or in the world, so fit to raise and assist our devotions, to mend our hearts, or to forward the divine life in our souls, as the book of psalms. Let it not therefore disgust my hearers, if I repeat the exhortation, that

you apply yourselves more closely and attentively to the perusal and study of it than ever. Enter into those deep things of God, and of the divine life, which it contains, that you may be enabled to sing praises with understanding, making melody in your hearts to the Lord. This will render our religion both more pleasant and profitable to us; and then our singing of psalms will be, not only *the labour of the lip* (as I fear is too often the case); but also the pious and rational exercise of the heart and affections. Our hearts will be consecrated altars, and the incense of our lips, a sweet-smelling savour unto God.

It is to this intent, that the psalms are generally read before singing, that comprehending the matter and design of them, our hearts may be thereby prepared to sing them with understanding, and our pious affections raised and exercised according to the spirit and purport of what we sing. And with the same view no doubt it was, that the devout Psalmist so often called upon his *soul* and *all that was within him*, to be stirred up to praise and bless God's holy name: as if he should say; "My soul, thou art now about to sing the praises of God: be therefore recollected and composed: let thy devout affections be *raised, engaged and centered*, and see that thou performest the duty, not only with *life and spirit*, but also with *seriousness and understanding*."

But it is now time I should speak of the poetical versions of the psalms now in use in our churches, and the preference which some of them seem to merit above others.

A VERSION signifies a *translation*, or the turning of any literary performance out of one language into another. The psalms of *David* were originally written in the *Hebrew tongue*, and therefore when Christianity came to be propagated among all nations, it became necessary not only to make *prose*, but also *poetical* translations of these Hebrew psalms, into the various languages of the different nations among which they were received and sung. The *English* have had *four versions* of these Hebrew psalms, which have been generally sung in their churches. Of the two old versions, one was made by *Sternhold and Hopkins*, and was generally used by the established church of *England*;—the other was composed by I know not who; was appointed to be sung by the *Westminster Assembly of Divines*, and has generally obtained in the established church of *Scotland*, and among the protestant dissenters in *England* and *Ireland*. These versions are deemed very honest and faithful, as to the matter of them; were well adapted to the state of the language and of poetry in the times they were written; and doubtless the churches of Christ were under great obligations to the pious and worthy composers of them, for the help and comfort they afforded them in divine worship. They were good in their time: nay they were the best our forefathers had, and doubtless they sung them with exalted pleasure—and let me add, they are still *excellent in themselves*, and would be *good for us*, if the greatly improved state of our language and poetry had not furnished us with *better*. For far be it from me to

depreciate the labours of these pious men, or to speak disrespectfully of the *old versions*: I would only modestly insinuate the superior excellence of the *new ones*, and cannot help flattering myself, that I have the good sense and good taste of my hearers on my side in this judgment of the matter.

TIME and age which meliorates and improves some things, impairs others and makes them worse. Human language is certainly among those things which grows worse by time; because it becomes more unintelligible by the lapse of years, by either rising up to, or falling down from, the standard of its purity and perfection. The language which was spoke and written in *Great Britain* 300 years ago, would not now be intelligible to an *Englishman*, and it is probable the language we now speak will not be easily understood by our posterity 300 years hence. This alteration and improvement of the English language and poetry, gave occasion to many new poetical versions of the psalms, of which the two which chiefly obtain among the churches, are Dr. *Watt's Imitation of the Psalms of David*, and Messrs. *Teat and Brady's* version of them; both of which have their respective excellencies. My reasons therefore, for preferring these new versions to the old ones, are the following.

1st. THE new versions are beyond all doubt the best language; the properest and most classical English. This no judge of the English tongue can once question who will be at the pains to compare the versions of any particular psalm together. Many words and

phrases in the old versions are become obsolete, quite out of use in our language, and the sense of them little, if at all, understood at this day, by an English reader; and in proportion as our language undergoes a farther change, this *unintelligibility* of the old versions must increase more and more; whereas the new versions are proper genuine English throughout, written in the *purest* most *elegant* and *poetical* style. Both versions, indeed, give us the *same sense* of the Hebrew psalms, yet they do it in a very different style and language: and that the new versions ought to have the preference, in *this respect*, I think is beyond all controversy.

2dly. I THINK it equally indisputable that the new versions merit the preference in point of *poetry*, and therefore are better adapted to the harmony of sounds, and for exciting our pious and chearful affections while we sing. That person must have a wretched ear indeed, and be a miserable judge of poetry, who cannot at once observe this advantage in the new versions above the old, upon hearing a psalm read in both. The composers of the old versions, however they might have been *faithful translators*, and *excellent divines*, yet they were certainly *poor poets*. Their psalms have little or no harmony in their number or measures; they read harsh and grate upon the ear. This indeed was probably more the fault of the times, than of the men; *poetical excellence* at that time having been very rare and uncommon in *England*. However it must be allowed to make much against the old versions, if we consider

that the *Hebrew psalms* of *David*, of which they are a translation, are allowed by all good critics, to be the *grandest* and *sublimest* poems in the world. All the elegance of *Greece* and *Rome* are not once to be compared with the Hebrew psalms for *beauty of language*, *sublimity of stile*, and *grandeur of sentiment*; and certainly a *low, flat, hobbling, inelegant* version of these divine songs must be a great marring and debasing of their original beauty and excellency. The very best words and measures which our language can afford are too poor and feeble to copy and express the *incosparable inimitable* beauties of the Hebrew original; how much more so is the *flat, dull, unanimated* language of the old versions?—Now the new versions are allowed by all good judges to be excellent poetry; the language *pure and noble*—the phrases *proper and poetical*—the numbers *smooth and harmonious*—the expression *easy*, and at the same time, *sublime and majestic*. Now this cannot but be a great recommendation of the new versions, as it renders them every way more fit for the purposes of music and devotion.

3dly. THRO' the growing difuse of the old versions, they are wearing out of print, and not easily to be come at, especially in this sequestered part of the world; so that many even in our little society, cannot conveniently join in this part of public worship for want of psalm books; whereas the new versions are very common, and may be had with the greatest ease and conveniency.—I might add

4thly. THAT a great majority of our small society seem inclinable to a change of the version.

I CAN think of but two objections which can be offered against such a change.

FIRST, That such a change might seem to militate against the specific plan and form of our worship; as the version we now sing, has been long and generally used by the *church of Scotland*. It has so indeed, partly for want of a better, and partly thro' that prejudice which the *populace* have in favour of old things, merely because they are old: but surely our old version has nothing in it properly *presbyterian*. Its use is enjoined upon us by no article of our faith, nor by any ecclesiastical law or canon of our church. Our directory no where says that we shall use *this*, and no other! so far from this, that our churches are falling off from the old versions and adopting the new ones, as fast as the prejudices of the vulgar will permit them.

SECONDLY; Predilection in favour of antiquity is the grand objection to all changes of this kind, and merits some indulgence. "Our grandfathers sung this version with much edification and devotion, and why should it not be good enough for us? Why should we affect novelty and change?"—I answer; this reasoning, carried as far as it would lead us, would condemn all reformation in religion, as well as improvement of language. It condemns our relinquishing the religion of our forefathers, and justifies our neighbours in using a *Latin* version of the psalms, because their forefathers the Romans, who understood

that language, used it. Nothing of antiquity is venerable, but truth and virtue. The psalms of David are venerable upon this account, but not the old versions of them, which tend to obscure this truth and virtue, and to conceal their beauties and charms from our minds. It is not the psalms which ought to be changed, but the garb and dress in which they appear in the old versions.

THUS I have finished this tedious subject, and have only to leave it to the free choice and determination of my hearers what version they will adopt. May the great head of the church so order and over-rule all matters, even the smallest which relate to his worship, that glory may redound to his great name, and peace and edification to his church. *Amen.*

## S E R M O N X.

The security, perpetuity, and encreasing magnitude and glory of the Christian Church, in two sermons, from

Matth. xvi. 18.

*And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

### S E R M O N I.

**T**HERE is perhaps no word in our language more grossly abused and perverted than the word *church*.—The most understand nothing else by it, than a *house* built and set apart for public divine worship.

**W**HEN you speak of a *church*, their minds are immediately impressed with the idea of a *large house*, with or without a steeple and bells, filled with pews and ornamented with a pulpit:—whereas the word has not once this meaning, in the whole scriptures. Others do indeed a little more extend their idea of the word *church*, and apply it to those various divided sects in religion, which unhappily have taken place in

*Christendom.*—Thus we hear of the *Greek*, the *Roman*, the *Reformed*, the *Lutheran*, the *English*, and the *Moravian* churches: and the word *our church*, is always used *empbatically* by those of every sect, to signify the *best*, and (by some) the *only true church*: whereas, in strict propriety of language, there *is*, and *can be*, only *one, true, universal Christian church*, whereof CHRIST is the living *head*, and all real Christians (however distributed among various sects) are *brethren and members*.

THE simple literal sense of *εκκλησια*, which we translate *church*, is, “an assembly of men called together, whether on a *civil*, or *religious* occasion.” And it is frequently used in *both senses*, both in the scriptures, and in the ancient Greek writers. But Christians commonly confine the word to *religious worshipping assemblies only*.

THUS we hear, in the apostolic times, of churches held at various private person's houses—and of *all the churches*,—and the churches (or religious assemblies) of the saints.

As therefore the word *church* is become so *ambiguous* by the abuse of language,—so the common cry that “*the church is in danger*,” is a mere *cant phrase*, which has no determinate meaning;—unless we first understand what the speaker means by the word *church*. If, by the word *church*, he means “the whole collective body of the clergy of any *particular* or *national* church, together with their *titles, honours, dignities* and *emoluments*” (which seems to be almost the only meaning of the word with some);—then

this really may happen, and yet the true church of CHRIST, be nothing at all the loser, but rather the gainer, by such a revolution. This was really the case with a *certain church* at the time of the Reformation, and yet we protestants are inclined to think that the true church of Christ; was never in a more *promising, thriving, prospering* way, than by that revolution.

IF, by the word *church*, he means any *particular sect or denomination*, in the present divided state of Christendom, it seems pretty evident that not only *one*, but even *many* of such sects might be *annihilated* and totally lose their present *forms, names, and existence*, and yet *real Christianity*, or the true interest of CHRIST upon earth, be no sufferer by the event. —But if, by the word *church*, he should mean only “*a single congregation of Christians* ;” —it is evident that numbers of such churches may be *dissolved and crumbled into pieces*, by the death, the *lukewarmness*, the *intestine divisions*, or the *apostacy*, of their members, and yet that the *general interest of Christianity*, might suffer but very little, by such *local* disasters.

THE Christian church *in general*, signifies “*all real Christians* in the world (of whatever nominal sect or division) who *truly believe in Christ*, and sincerely obey his gospel :” and GOD only can *know and distinguish* who all these are. —He knew that there were *seven thousand* true worshippers in Israel, in king *Ahab's* time, who had not bowed the knee to *Baal* ; —altho' the fears of his prophet *Elijah*, had

suggested to him, that there was not one such remaining *in all Israel*, but himself alone.

WHEREAS a *particular church* only signifies “a number of people, professing Christianity, met together in one place, for the public social worship of GOD.”—It is evident therefore, that many of these particular churches may be dispersed, and their visibility lost, while the foundations of the universal church of CHRIST may *stand firm*, and its real interests *increase and flourish*.

IN short; the word *church* is so *variously understood*, and so *often shifts its meaning*, among different kinds of people, that the cry of the “*church's* being in danger”—ought to give little *solicitude* and *uneasiness* to those who understand their religion, and the common abuse of language, in this particular: for it is very little matter *what church* is in danger, so the *church of CHRIST* be *safe and secure*. And CHRIST our Lord, has assured us that he will take particular care of this, as his *own peculiar concern*.

“UPON this rock, says he, I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

THE design of this discourse is a little to *illustrate* and *improve* these words, and in doing this I shall confine myself to no particular method or order, but pursue my thoughts just as they rise upon the subject.

OUR Saviour doubtless foresaw, that not only his *apostles*, but also *future Christians* in all ages of the world, would be often alarmed with fears and anxie-

ties about the *very being* and *perpetuity* of the church, when they would see it either outwardly attacked by formidable enemies, or internally torn to pieces by *schisms, animosities, heresies, immoralities, and apostacies*:—AND therefore he has assured us, in the most *positive, clear* and *absolute* manner, that all these fears are vain;—that the church shall not *utterly perish* or totally decay:—but on the contrary, that it shall grow, flourish, and even increase to the end of time, against all opposition; its stability being impregably secured, by the firm foundation on which it is built, even the **ROCK OF AGES**.

“THOU art *Peter*, says CHRIST, and upon this rock I will build my church.”—I need not tell my hearers, the use which has been made of *this text*, in order to build the fabric of *church power* and *spiritual domination* in the Christian world.

SOME people are very fond of *figurative* and *metaphorical* explanations of *some* places of scripture, while they utterly deny that liberty in others. For instance;—we must take the words “*This is my body*” *literally*, and it would be *profanity* and even *blasphemy* to understand it otherwise:—and yet, in our text, *the rock* on which CHRIST was to build his church, must be *figuratively* understood to signify *Peter*; because Πετρος forsooth in the Greek signifies *a rock*.—And yet on this *sandy foundation*, is built the claim of a *certain church*, to *infallibility*, *supreme power* in spirituals (I had almost said, in *temporals* also) and *perpetual uninterrupted succession*.

from *Peter*, as the only legitimate source of church power and spiritual prerogative.

IN order to understand our text aright, we must critically attend to the *occasion* and *circumstances* in which it was spoken. Our Saviour put the question to his apostles, who were with him in private, saying—“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”—They answered, “Some say thou art *John the Baptist*;—others *Elias*—others *Jeremias*, or one of the ancient prophets risen again from the dead.”—He then put the question *to them all*, and said; “But whom say ye my apostles, that I am?”—To which *Peter*, who was upon all occasions a ready and forward speaker, replied, in his own name and the name of all the apostles—“Thou art the **CHRIST**, the Son of the living GOD!”—Now this was a noble and a just character and confession.—It was upon the true and unfeigned faith of this declaration of his that the whole Christian church was to be built. This was the *grand fundamental* article of the Christian faith; upon the true and real belief of which, and a correspondent practice, every Christian to the end of the world, was to obtain salvation. No wonder then, that our blessed Saviour was so highly pleased with this confession and declaration of *Peter's*:—and, therefore, addressing *Peter*, as the *mouth* and *spokesman* of all the apostles, he said; “Blessed art thou *Simon, Bar-jonah* (and blessed are all ye my other apostles who have the same faith)—for flesh and blood hath not revealed this faith to you [the preju-

pieces of your education and countrymen, and my mean appearance, making directly against it] and therefore it could proceed only from my Father in heaven, who hath opened your eyes, enlightened your minds, and removed your prejudices, to *see* and *acknowledge* my *true* and *real* character."—And therefore he goes on, still addressing himself to *Peter*, as the speaker of the other apostles, intrusting *him* and *them* with *the keys* (which are a well known emblem of *power* and *stewardship* in a great family). By which power they were authorized, in their *preaching* and *writings*, to *bind* and *loose men*, and to *open* and *shut the kingdom of heaven*; i. e. to lay down the *duty of Christians*, and to *fix* and *establish those terms and conditions*, upon which sinners are either admitted into the kingdom of heaven, or excluded out of it. And this is a *power*, which was *only* intrusted with the *primitive* apostles of Christ, who were to complete the *canon* of the scripture, and which it would be presumptuous arrogance in any of their successors to claim; otherwise than in a *declarative way*, by the *explanation* and *enforcement* of their decisions.

“UPON this rock I will build my church.” The precise meaning of our Saviour in these words, depends much on *the manner* in which he spoke them. If he uttered the words without any particular *emphasis*, he must have meant by *this rock*, the *confession of Peter*; or *faith in himself, as the Son of God*.—If he pointed to *his own breast*, and laid a particular emphasis on the word *this*, he must have meant *himself*, who is indeed the rock, and whose work is per-

fect (a);—who is indeed the *chief corner stone* of his church;—the *foundation laid in Zion, elect and precious*:—“For other foundation, says *St. Paul*, can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is *Jesus Christ*.”

IT is therefore evident, that whatever *other particular sense* CHRIST might mean to insinuate in the words, *this* must have been the *principal*: for CHRIST himself, and *faith in him*, is the *only rock* on which the church can be built;—HE *only* is our Lord and master in heaven;—HE *only* is the *author and finisher* and *object* of our faith, and *rock of our salvation*.—*Peter* and *Paul*, and all the other wise master-builders, in every age of the church, have laid *this foundation*, and built upon it, “for other foundation can no man lay (b).” However,

IF CHRIST, while he spoke the words, did actually turn to the *other apostles* and *point to Peter* (which it is impossible for us to know) then he might indeed mean to intimate, not only the *truth and importance* of *Peter's confession*, but also the *personal honour* he would do him, in making him a *chief pillar* and *support* of his church. And in this *subordinate sense*, not only *Peter*, but the other apostles also, are termed *pillars and foundations* of the church, JESUS CHRIST himself being the chief corner stone. “*James, Cephas, and John*, says *Paul*, seemed to be pillars (c):”—again; “Ye are built, says *St. Paul*, upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, JESUS

(a) Deut. xxxii. 4. (b) Isaiah xxviii. 16. (c) Gal. i. 9.

CHRIST himself being the chief corner stone (d):"—and so, in that symbolical representation of the church (e), "the wall of the city (*i. e.* the church), the New Jerusalem had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

AND that Peter had not an exclusive right to the keys, and to the power of binding and loosing, is evident from (Matth. xviii. 18. and John xx. 23.), where *this honour and power*, is expressly given to *all the apostles*. And, indeed, how could it be otherwise?—How can we imagine, our Saviour would give Peter any primacy, or precedence over his fellow apostles, when he expressly tells them "to call no man on earth master:"—"for, says he, *one* is your master, even CHRIST, and all ye are brethren, or equals (f)."

TRUE, indeed, our Lord shewed *distinguishing marks* of favour to some of his apostles above others; but if this were an argument for precedence or prelacy in the apostolic college, one would think this honour ought to have been appropriated, to John the beloved disciple, with whom Jesus cultivated a peculiar intimacy, and for whom he expressed a peculiar affection.

BESIDES; if our Saviour had indeed conferred a supremacy upon Peter, is it not natural to suppose that he would have sat president in all the apostolic

(d) Eph. ii. 20.  
xiii. 8, 10, 11, 12.

(e) Rev. xxi. 14.

(f) Mat.

councils, and taken the lead, and given the decisive vote in all the business which came before them? And would not the other apostles have been taught to *respect him*, and *submit to his decisions* in all cases, in character of their *prelate*? How comes it then, that *Paul*, (a younger brother) was so deficient in his respect to *Peter*, and so indiscreetly called in question the infallibility of his conduct, in the case of his dissembling with the *Jews* and *Gentiles*. "But when *Peter*, says he, was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed: for before that certain came from *James*, he did eat with the *Gentiles*: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself;—and the other *Jews* dissembled likewise with him, in so much that *Barnabas* also was carried away with their dissimulation (g)."

AGAIN; in the grand *apostolic council* in *Jerusalem*, when the important case, about the circumcision of *Gentile* converts was agitated; it surely would have been a fit occasion for *Peter* to have *claimed* and *asserted* his *supremacy*;—*taken the lead* in the council, and *pronounced a decisive sentence*!—But, quite the reverse;—*James*, who was the present *bishop* or *pastor* of that city, and *moderator of the assembly*, *takes the lead* from his brother *Peter*; and says "Men and brethren, hearken unto ME!—my sentence is, that we trouble not them, who from among the *Gentiles* are turned to GOD; but that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols,

(g) Gal. ii. 11. &c.

and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."

WOULD not one think now that *James* was *primate* in this apostolical council, and *Peter* and all the other apostles, but mere *bishops*, or only *presbyters* if you please?

THE truth is; neither *Peter*, nor any of the other apostles, had any claim to *supremacy*, and therefore they never *asserted any such claim*. These squabbles for spiritual *priority*, *supremacy*, and *domination*, were reserved for a *later* and *more corrupt* period of the church. As for the apostles, they were taught to believe, that they had only *one master*, in *heaven*, and that all they were *co-equals* and *brethren*.

"UPON this rock, says *Christ*, I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

THE *stability* and *perpetuity* of the Christian church is built upon such foundations, that it is utterly impossible it should ever be *annihilated* or *destroyed* to the end of time.

I CANNOT take much time at present in *establishing* and *illustrating* this truth; nor indeed is it needful to Christians, who read and believe their bibles,—as the whole scriptures set forth the *perpetuity of the church of God*. THE whole tenour of the *prophecies*, both of the Old and New Testament, prove it. The *promises* of GOD are engaged to accomplish it. The *power* and *providence* of GOD, are principally employed about its security: concerning this vineyard of his, he declares; "I the Lord do keep it,

I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day (b).” “ He has promised to give his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession ;—that to him shall the gathering of the nations be ; that of his government there shall be no end ;—that every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue confess ; and that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the whole earth, as the waters cover the sea.”

THE *Millennium state and the glory of the church in the latter days*, is described in such a manner, as leaves us no room to doubt of the *perpetuity* and increasing glory and prosperity of the Christian church, even to the end of the world.

THE church is the *purchase of CHRIST's blood* ; the *fruit of his travail* ; the *gift of his Father* to him, and the prime object of his *care, power and guardian providence*.

GOD hath made him “ head over all things for the good of the church. Lo, says he, all power is given me, in heaven and earth ; go ye, teach all nations, baptizing them, and lo I am with you always even to the end of the world (i).”

AND in our text ; “ Upon this rock I will build my church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail gainst it.”

IF, therefore, after *all this evidence of the perpetuity* of the Christian church, any shall seriously declare it to be *in danger*, they must do it either at the expence of *CHRIST's power*, or *his veracity* :

(b) Isaiah xxvii. 1.

(i) Matth. ii. 8.

—either they must disbelieve the *divine* authority of the scriptures—or the *power of God* to accomplish his own promises and predictions.

I SHOULD NOW consider some objections against this doctrine: but I must postpone this as the subject of a future discourse, and shall close the present with a practical reflection on what has been advanced.

Although the church of CHRIST, in general, can never *utterly fail or perish*, as long as the sun and moon endure, being built on the sure foundations of the *power, promise, providence and veracity of God*, who is the rock of ages, and whose ways are perfect.

ALTHO' the kingdom of CHRIST in the world, is an *everlasting kingdom*;—yea, altho' it *is*, and *must be*, an *encreasing quantity* in the world, as well as in the *hearts of men*;—the little *leaven*, which must, in time, leaven and assimilate the whole lump;—the *grain of mustard seed*, which must *grow up and flourish* into a great tree, and give shelter to all the nations and kindreds of the earth:—altho' from the *precise and punctual* accomplishment of all the other ancient prophecies, we have the strongest reason to *believe and rely upon* the accomplishment of those which predict the *increased glory* of the church in the latter days—when the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flock into it;—and the knowledge of the LORD shall cover the sea:—altho' the *principled and intelligent* Christian may *securely smile* at all the insinuations of *ignorance, despondency or infidelity*, that the church of CHRIST is in danger; being well

assured that it is built upon a *stable rock*;—that its being, its *well-being*, its *perpetuity* and all its *essential interests*, are the *peculiar care and concern*, of its GLORIOUS HEAD, “to whom all power in heaven and earth is committed, and who is made head over all things for the good of the church:”—yet all this does not hinder, but that the *church and interest of CHRIST*, may *totally fail, vanish and disappear* in some particular parts of the world, thro’ the just judgments of GOD, on the *profanity, indolence, infidelity and apostacy* of a people. CHRIST threatened the once flourishing churches of *Asia*, that if they returned not to their *first love*, and did not their *first works*, he would remove their candlestick out of its place. And how awfully has this threatening been long since verified? Of those once *numerous and flourishing* churches in the east, which were once the *boast and glory* of the Christian name, scarce a vestige now remains;—but, in their stead, a few wretched congregations of *ignorant, superstitious and idolatrous* worshippers, which scarce deserve the name of *Christians*. They fell from their *first love*, and CHRIST, in just judgment removed their candlestick out of its place,—and seems to have given his everlasting gospel a direction to *the west*; and put this precious and divine talent into the hands of a people who have, hitherto, somewhat better improved it.—Now, my friends,

THE same causes will constantly produce the same effects. The same *lukewarmness* and *apostacy* which destroyed the churches of the east, must, in time,

operate to the destruction of all other churches, where they *obtain* and *prevail*. GOD indeed waiteth long to be gracious; but still there are certain limits to his forbearance and indulgence. *Abused mercies must and will be forfeited*, in time, by those who abuse them. Indeed *long abused mercies*, are *real curses* to those who enjoy them, tending only to increase their guilt and aggravate their condemnation;—and therefore it is *real mercy* in GOD to take them away from a *hardened, irreclaimable people*.

Two *things* are absolutely necessary to keep up the *being* and *spirit* of Christianity in any particular church, 1<sup>st</sup>. That the members of it *habitually* attend the public Christian ordinances of prayer and preaching of the word. This is absolutely necessary to the *very being* of a Christian church. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of GOD preached.”—Indeed this is the *very church itself*, which is nothing else than a number of Christian people, assembled together in Christian worship. If none therefore *thus met and assembled* for public worship, there could be no *Christian church* in the world;—and whatever individual, withholds himself, upon any futile pretence whatever, from the public worshipping assemblies of GOD’s people, does, what in him lies, wholly to destroy the *very being* of the Christian church in the world. Such is the evident guilt of *church-neglecting*, how trifling soever it may seem to multitudes who live in it without a *blush*, or the *least remorse*.

2<sup>dly</sup>. It is necessary, if not to the *very being*, yet certainly to the *well-being* of the Christian

church, that its members should not only attend on the ministry of the word; but that they should also recognize the vows of their baptism, by an approach to the LORD's table; "being thus found walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD blameless." A Jew, a Mahomedan, a Deist, may attend on the preaching of the word, being induced by *curiosity*, or by the *eloquence* or *morality* of the preacher; but we cannot thence infer, that *they are* Christians. The church, in short, can have no proper security that men have not disavowed or renounced their baptism, but by their publicly recognizing it at the LORD's supper. But when baptized Christians, without the temptation or inducement of *test acts*, *freely* and *voluntarily* approach the LORD's table;—they make an *honourable* and *exemplary* profession of religion; *publicly* and before the world espouse the cause and interests of Christianity, and make it appear to all men that they are not ashamed to be numbered with the followers of a crucified Redeemer, and to share both in good report and in evil report with his disciples.

INDEED, as this is the most *distinguishing* and *discriminating* ordinance of Christianity, the habitual participation of it seems necessary to denominate a man a Christian, in the fullest sense of the word; and those who are not aiming, at least, at a fitness for this privilege, and striving to obey this dying command of their Redeemer, seem ill to deserve the honour of bearing his name.

AND now my hearers, if we will take these two

requisites of a Christian church along with us, shall we not have reason to pronounce, that our *own little church* in this place, is in a *declining, unprosperous, unflourishing* estate.

Of the few subscribers to its temporal support, how very few indeed can be said *habitually* to attend the public preaching of the word; insomuch, that if it were not for the occasional attendance of strangers, we should often have occasion to preach to nearly empty pews. I well know all the supposable excuses for *non-attendance*: some of them, indeed, have weight; but with regard to many, they are merely futile, and can neither stand the test of *reason*, nor *conscience*. The fault must lie some where, either in the *preacher* or the *people*:—if in the *preacher*, it would be *candid* and *Christian* to advertize him of it, that he might endeavour to remove the offence:—But if in the *people*, the remedy lies in *their own power*; and it is to be hoped that, upon a conviction of *guilt* and *delinquency*, they will speedily make conscience of wiping off the offence, by a more *constant* and *cordial* attendance on the ordinances of their Redeemer.

TRUE, indeed, were we all to a man to renounce the public worship of GOD, and mingle ourselves with the unchristian herd of church-neglecters, we could do but *little* against the general honour and interest of CHRIST in the world.—Yet we would do our *little best* against it;—and it is worth considering that we ourselves would be the only sufferers, by the

flight and contempt we put upon the Christian institutions.

2dly. OF the few who do make some conscience of attending the word preached, how much fewer still can be prevailed on to approach the LORD's supper? —It is truly *shameful* to declare, that *eight* or *nine* communicants, are the *only fruit* of a three year's preaching of the gospel in this church; altho' a multitude of discourses have been preached, to set this duty in the clearest and strongest point of light!

THIS is really *for a lamentation*, and is a strikingly disagreeable proof of the little fruit of a preached gospel among us.

THE sacrament of the supper is approaching on the ensuing LORD's day. May GOD himself incline all your hearts seriously to consider the obligations you lie under, as *baptized Christians*, to approach and participate this sacred distinguishing ordinance of Christianity, for the honour of his name, for promoting the interest and glory of his church, and for advancing your own salvation. O that he would smile upon this little society; pour out his spirit upon every member of it; purge its corruptions; preserve it from *lukewarmness*, *formality* and *apostacy*, and make it a name and a praise to himself in the earth. Amen and Amen.

## S E R M O N XI.

The security, perpetuity, and encreasing magnitude and glory of the Christian Church, in two sermons, from

Matth. xvi. 18.

*And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

## S E R M O N II.

**H**AVING in the former discourse considered the obvious meaning of the words of our text, in their connexion, and taken occasion from them to prove the *security* and *perpetuity* of the Christian church 'till the end of time;—I now proceed to consider and answer some objections raised against this doctrine, from the appearances of things in the world, and

1st. **MANY** professors of religion acknowledge themselves that the church is in danger. To this I answer that professors of religion are as liable to err in their opinions, as other men, either thro' *ignorance*, or *despondency*. I have observed before, that the word

*church* is so much abused, and so differently understood—that the cry of *the church's being in danger* is often a mere unmeaning *cant phrase*, which has no precise, determinate signification;—and that many churches may indeed be in danger, while the true church of CHRIST is *perfectly safe* and very *flourishing*.

IT is certainly *fit and right* that every *false, erroneous, superstitious, and antichristian church*, which is not formed upon the *Christian, apostolical model*. *should be in danger*.—And I think it pretty certain that *every such name* will be *lost*, and *every such church annihilated*, in the last and most glorious state of the Christian church: the present divided state of the church, being the strongest symptom of its *degeneracy, imperfection, corruption, and want of the true spirit of Christianity*.

THE church of *Baal*, for instance, was in imminent danger, when his priests were outdone by *Elijah*, in their contest about the true GOD,—and *four hundred and fifty* of them slain, as *idolaters and impostors*;—but what did the *church of the true GOD* suffer by this event?

THE church of the goddess *Diana at Ephesus*, was in great danger by the preaching of *Paul, Gaius* and *Aristarchus*: the *craftsmen, shrinemakers and priests* were like to lose all their custom,—and a mighty uproar they made about it, that the *church was in danger*; because “by that craft they got their wealth.”—And indeed, the *Jewish*, and all the *Gentile churches*, met with a most ruinous and destructive

blow, by the *miracles* and *preaching* of the apostles: their idol *gods* were despised;—their temples deserted;—their oracles silenced;—their *church-power* and *church-craft* detected and exposed, and their priests and augurs beggared, or forced to some more honest occupations for bread;—and yet every Christian must allow that the *true church of God* was so far from being in *danger*, by the destruction of of *their false* religions, that it arose *fair, beautiful* and *majestic*, upon their ruins!

A CERTAIN *church* was in great danger at the protestant reformation; but surely no consistent protestant will imagine that the real interests of Christianity suffered any thing by that revolution!

INDEED it is the trick of all *priests* and of the *clergy* of every denomination to cry out that *the church is in danger*, when their *own self* seems to decline a little, and more especially when their *honours, dignities* and *emoluments* are *struck* at. Upon such an occasion, *proud, selfish* and *mercenary* men, of all *churches*, will feel the same passions, as *Demetrius* and the *craftsmen*; and for the same reason too; because “by *that craft* they get their honour and wealth!”

BUT *humble* and *well-instructed* Christians, need never fear the ruin of the church of CHRIST; for he has made that his own *peculiar care*, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.

2. OTHERS assure us that *Deism* is prevailing universally in the Christian world, and therefore that the Christian religion is in imminent danger from this

quarter. This is either the language of *Christians*, through ignorance or despondency;—or of *infidels*, by the way of *bravado*.—1st, To Christians I would answer; it is not common or easy for any one man to know the true state of religion in the world. Our opinion concerning this matter must depend partly on our own *observation*,—partly on the books which we read,—and partly on the *company* we frequent. (1st,) The observation of every man is limited to a *very narrow compass*; and even, with the greatest penetration, we may be much imposed on: because our judgments are apt to be perpetually perverted by prejudices and prepossessions, which steal upon us imperceptibly, and at length become *habitual*.

ELIJAH, with all his penetration, and divine gifts, (what from a gloomy despondency by the present unfavourable appearance of things, and what from his want of the gift of discerning spirits) verily thought that there was *not one true worshipper* left in *Israel* besides himself; and yet God assures him, that, in *that worst of times*, his church in *Israel* consisted of *seven thousand men*, who had not bowed the knee to *Baal* (k). Were an uninstru<sup>ct</sup>ed *Chinese* or *Japanese*, upon his first coming to Christendom, to fall in among a knot of *Deists*, he would naturally suppose that *Deism* was the prevailing religion of these countries. —Were a stranger only to frequent the *Robin-hood* society, and hear the *smarts*, *minute philosophers*, and *venerable orators* of that society, continually belching out blasphemies against the Christian insti-

(k) 1 Kings xviii.

tion, and retailing those crumbs of profane wit which they have gleaned up from the tables of their masters in infidelity, he would probably imagine that *Christianity* must be at a very low ebb in *England*; seeing this collective body of the great wits of the nation, had the honour to *profess* and *defend infidelity*. But should this stranger be afterwards induced to make the tour of the many great and populous Christian congregations of that metropolis, and attentively observe *thousands* (I had almost said *millions*) who constantly frequent those numerous places of divine worship, with all the marks of *sincerity*, *attachment* and *devotion*, he would quickly see reason to change his opinion;—to pronounce *Christianity* the prevailing religion in *England*, and to believe that *infidelity* had only picked up its votaries and made its triumphs among the *half-thinking* and *wrong headed* part of the people, who, by a *perverted education*, *bad morals*, *libertine books* and *companions*, and *want of lawful business* and *employment*, have been induced to set themselves up for *wits* and *free-thinkers*, and to preach up *infidelity*, as the best *defence* and apology for a *worthless* and *profligate* life.

WERE I, for instance, from my own little observation to decide upon this grand question, whether *Christianity* or *Deism* prevails most in the Christian world, I am sure I must, from superabundant evidence, pronounce in favour of *Christianity*: having never met with a dozen persons who *roundly owned* and *seriously defended* the cause of *infidelity*;—against

a great many thousands of *nominal* and *sincerely professing Christians*. Although indeed it must be candidly confessed, that the observation of no one single individual, is adequate to the decision of this question.

(2dly.) *THE books which we read* tend greatly to influence our opinion of the present state of Christianity in the world. I would by no means be for hindering *well principled Christians* from reading the books of *infidels*, because I can see no hurt *such persons* can receive from reading *such books*. In short, my opinion of the evidence for the truth of the Christian religion, is so *high* and *exalted*, that I can never suppose it possible for a man who *knows this evidence*, to be perverted into infidelity;—unless the *violence of his passions*; the strength of his *lusts*, and the *blindness* and *prejudice* which these may bring upon his mind—wholly put out the light of this evidence, and hurry him into infidelity on his own defence. Yet it is pretty evident to me that the *constant reading of infidel books*, may, in time, induce us to *imagine* and *fear* that *infidelity* is more prevalent in the world than it really is. Were one unguardedly to read the writings of *Bolingbroke, Voltaire, D'Argens, Hume, Chubb, D'Alembert*, and a few others, one would be apt to imagine, that surely *Deism* is a very *fashionable* and *prevalent* religion, and that *Christianity* would hardly dare to lift up its face, because of the contempt and *ridicule* cast upon it by the *greatest wits* and *geniuses* of the age: but if such readers will deign to turn their attention to a *different class of writers*;—if

they will peruse the writings of a *Boyle*, a *Newton*, a *Locke*, a *Grotius*, a *Glarendon*, a *West*, a *Littleton*, a *Forbes*, and an *Addison*, those oracles of reason, whose *learning*, *originality of genius*, *depth of penetration*, *amiableness of character*, *profound researches into the most abstruse and recondite branches of human and divine knowledge*, and *laborious search after useful truth*, do honour to human nature, and will render their memory dear to mankind through every period of time :—I say, if such persons will deign to turn their attention to *writers of this class*, their rising prejudices in favour of *Deism* ;—at least, their opinion of its *universal prevalence* in the Christian world, will be quickly annihilated, and they will wonder how any person of sound judgment, who had thoroughly studied the argument, could possibly fall into the *snare of infidelity*.

MY hearers will observe, that I have designedly avoided the mention of *any of the clergy*, in the above catalogue of names ; because they are liable to be suspected as *partial and interested* advocates in pleading the cause of Christianity :—tho' I can really see no good cause why the *clergy* should not be intitled to some share of *common sense* and *common honesty*, as well as *other men* ; and surely if they are not *downright Atheists*, they have as *deep an interest* in the truths of religion, and as *great reason* to dread *falsehood* and *delusion*, in matters of eternal consequence, as any of their fellow creatures possibly can have.

BUT the above mentioned writers (and many other

respectable names might easily be added to the number) being *mere laymen*, could have no possible motive or inducement, *but the love of truth*, to plead the cause of *Christianity*: nay, it would have been their *honour and glory*, as *philosophers*, had they found any *capital flaw or defect* in the evidence for the truth of *Christianity*, to have disabused the *Christian world* by exposing the delusion, and to have delivered mankind from the tyranny and oppression of *proud, covetous and unrighteous churchmen*. But, on the contrary, these great lights of the world, being at once overpowered by the luminous evidence of the truth of *Christianity*, and captivated with its charms, thought it the most *essential and important service* they would render their fellow creatures, to set this evidence in a *true light* before their minds, and to inculcate upon mankind the *belief of Christian doctrines*, and the *practice of Christian duties*. So that if this grand question were to be decided by the *characters, talents and abilities* of the writers on both sides, *Christianity* would assuredly obtain a glorious and compleat triumph over *infidelity*. And, indeed, *Christians* may comfort themselves with an assurance that this *ever will and must* be the case, seeing *CHRIST* hath built his church upon the rock of his own *veracity and omnipotence*, and therefore all the havoc of *apostacy and immorality*, all the *cunning and malice of devils*, and all the *sneers and sophistry of infidel writers*, will never be able to prevail against it, to its utter extirpation and ruin! *As vainly do the tribe of infidels labour to write, and laugh, and*

*argue* Christianity out of the world, as their great predecessor *Julian* the emperor did to rebuild the temple of *Jerusalem*; and thereby give the lie to our Saviour's prophecy that it should never be rebuilt. Nay the effects of both these vain attempts are perfectly similar: for as *Julian's* vain and defeated attempt to rebuild the temple, proved, directly contrary to his intention, one of the noblest and most striking evidences of the truth of Christianity; so the present class of Deistical writers, do in fact advance the cause they mean to destroy, by occasioning *such solid defences* of the Christian religion, as infidelity can never demolish by the weapons of *reason* and *fair argumentation*.

INDEED, how can any weapon formed against *Zion*; against *God*, *reason*, and *truth*, prosper? Truth is *great*, and *must* finally prevail!—Men may suffer themselves to be *blinded* by their lusts and prejudices, and led away into *error* and *infidelity*, if they choose it. As they may shut their eyes so that they cannot behold the light of the sun, so they may shut their eyes against the evidences of Christianity. Nor let them blame the Almighty for suffering them to fall into such a chosen delusion. *God* hath given them *eyes*, and he hath given them *a sun*; but he will not force open their eyes to behold the light. It would be *absurd* to suppose this. This would be to destroy their *free-agency* and render them incapable of *virtue* and *reward*. It is enough that he furnishes them with the *organ* and the *object*, and *commands* and *persuades* them by the most engaging motives, to make

use of both, and offers his almighty aid to their feeble endeavours, in the use of both. If, after this, they will be hoodwinked and deceived, they must, and there is no remedy. But the fault will be found to lie wholly in themselves, and not in the evidences of Christianity; seeing it is impossible the Almighty should give a religion to mankind, without giving sufficient evidences of its truth to a sincere enquirer. But if men will be infidels, either against the light of evidence, or for want of taking pains to discover it, they must stand to the consequences; but GOD and Christianity are blameless of their folly and misery. But to return from this digression,

(3dly.) THE company we frequent will greatly influence our opinion of the state of Christianity in the world. This is indeed much akin to the two former considerations. Men insensibly assume their opinions and manners from the society they frequent. This is what chiefly forms the almost invincible prejudice of education, which is the source of all obstinate bigotry and dangerous prepossession, and should put every prudent person on his guard against immoral, profane, and erroneous connections in society. "He who walketh with the wise, says Solomon, will be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed (1)."

If frequent communications with deistical persons (who are remarkably fond of broaching their paradoxes in company, that they may pass for great geniuses)—if such communications, I say, do not poison our minds, and wholly seduce us from better prin-

(1) Prov. xiii. 20.

iples; yet they will incline us, at least, to *think* more *favourably of Deism*, and to imagine it more *prevalent and fashionable* in the world, than it really is: for this, I think, may be depended on, as a *just maxim*, that “men will, in time, adopt something of the *taste, cast, manners and opinions* of the company which they frequent by choice.”

INDEED our opinion of the general state of religion in the world, will be powerfully influenced, by the general state of it within our own observation. For instance; were we to borrow our idea of the general state of Christianity in the world, from the general state of it in these *West India islands*,—where the very forms of it are almost wholly neglected, and where the minds of mankind seem to be totally *engrossed and divided* between the *hurry and bustle of business* on the one hand, and the pursuit of *low sensual pleasures* on the other, we must naturally imagine that Christianity was *at a low ebb indeed*; and that the church was *truly in danger*:—but were we to shift the scene to *Europe*, or the *continent of America*; and behold the flourishing appearances of religion there; and perceive, that the advocates for *Deism*, are chiefly confined to a few *young libertines*; a few *sprouts of physic and the law*, who, thro' want of better employment, have been induced to exchange the study of *Boerhaave*, and *Coke upon Littleton*, for that of *Chubb*, *Tindal* and *Voltaire*, and so propagate, in *clubs and taverns*, those principles which are the best apology for their own vices;—we would quickly be cured of this *narrow local prejudice*, and see reason

to lay aside our fears concerning "the danger of the church."

2. To Deists, who announce the danger of the church, it may be answered, that they are as liable to error and *prejudice of judgment* as other men; and that the question, is a *question of facts* and not of opinions. The question is not, at present, whether Christianity is the *best*, or *only true*, religion; but whether it is *losing ground* in Christendom, and *Deism* is *creasing upon its ruins*, so as to threaten the total destruction of the Christian church; and therefore it can be only a *true state of facts*, which can furnish a satisfactory answer to this question. We have already considered the *matter of fact*, and seen how little reason there is for the boasts of the *Deists*. It is easy for a *Deist*, in the *heat and zeal* of his spirits, to insinuate that "no wise man can believe the Christian revelation"—and to affirm "that Christianity is in a *declining condition*, and will soon be *totally extinct*." *Bolingbroke's* arrogance, which characterizes all his writings and almost all his actions, once ventured to *prophecy* (tho' a great enemy to prophets) that the *reformation*, which he calls the *resurrection of letters*, would prove fatal to Christianity; and, for the emolument and consolation of the world under the loss of all popular religions, and Christianity among the rest, he graciously vouchsafed to set up his own **FIRST PHILOSOPHY**, as the great light of the human mind, amidst the error and confusion which he foresaw would prevail. But unfortunately for this glorious light of the intellectual and moral worlds, his benevolent de-

ign was frustrated, by the *gross inconsistencies* in his own system; and *doctor Warner*, without writing a single line of his own, has effectually answered and confuted him, merely by setting his lordship's *concessions* in favour of Christianity, and his *calumnies* against it, in opposite columns, and permitted the one to *invalidate* and *destroy* the other. Thus, his lordship being formally convicted of *suicide*, his arguments on one side and the other, stand *just* for nothing.

I WOULD beg leave to conclude this branch of the discourse with a few strictures upon *Deism* and *Deists*.

(I.) PURE *Theism* or *Deism* is, so far as it goes, a good and true religion. It is the *pure religion of nature and reason*, disengaged from the peculiarities of the *Jewish* and *Christian* systems. It professes to believe "the *unity and natural and moral perfections of GOD*; the immortality of the human soul; the accountableness of men for their moral conduct; the necessity of repentance and virtue in order to a happy immortality; a judgment to come, and a future state of rewards and punishments." Now, a *Deist*, acting upon *these principles* must needs be a *pious* and a *virtuous* man. This was *nearly* the religion of those great *lights and worthies* of the *heathen world*, *Socrates*, *Cicero*, *Epictetus*, *Antoninus Pius*, and *Marcus Aurelius*.

THE celebrated *Lord Herbert*, was the first, of any note, who laboured in this vineyard in *England*. He was a truly *pious* and *virtuous* man, so far as natural religion could make any such man, and is perhaps the *only* deistical writer of that character which

*Christendom* has produced. He was a great admirer of *Christian morality*, and never ridiculed *Christian doctrines* or *mysteries*. He was *too wise, too pious, and too good* a man, for this dirty work; and left it to his more profane and sceptical followers to use those *unfair and ungentle* weapons in the cause of infidelity. His only objection against Christianity, was, "that it is a *local religion*, whereas he thought the *true religion* ought to be *universal*: an objection which would have been easily removed from so *good* a mind, in the present enlightened state of the *Christian world*.

As to the other writers who have enlisted in the cause of infidelity since *Lord Herbert's* time, they scarce deserve the name of *Deists*. We have already mentioned *Lord Bolingbroke*. *Lord Shaftsbury* was an ingenious young man; but his favourite maxim, "That ridicule is the test of truth," is both *absurd* and *ridiculous*;—and his supposition that Christianity cannot be the *true religion*, because it addresses itself to the *hopes and fears* of men, and is therefore *mercenary*, evidently arises from a capital mistake in the fundamental constitution and principles of the human nature.—*Bayle* is a mere sceptic, who *believes nothing* and has no *principles*. Besides *Hume's scepticism*, and verging towards downright *Atheism*, his love of *paradox*, and perplexing all things by *metaphysical subtleties*, renders him the most unfit guide to the human mind that can be imagined. It is doing no injustice to *Voltaire*, to pronounce him a *mere buffoon in religion*: his *low sarcasms, witty*

Ineers, and the whole of his *unmannerly* and *disingenuous* treatment of Christianity, merit the contempt, if not the *indignation*, of every sober thinker. And as for the *royal infidel* of the north, it would be *blasphemy* to call him a Deist: his denying the immortality of the soul, renders him unworthy the honour of that appellation, and justly ranks him with the wretched *La Mettrie*, in the list of infidels.

IN a word; almost the whole tribe of our *modern infidel writers*, instead of setting up a light to guide their wandering fellow mortals into the paths of *truth*, *virtue* and *happiness*, seem designedly to perplex all things; to unhinge all principles of piety and virtue, and to throw mankind into a state of *scepticism* in principle, and *libertinism* in practice. Their aim seems to be, to destroy Christianity, without *leaving any thing in its stead*, as a guide to *moral perfection* and *final happiness*. And it seems greatly against them, that scarce a single writer amongst them has been eminent for *piety*, or of *irreproachable moral character*.

(2.) WE will find that the cry of the *great increase* of *Deism*, is not well founded, if we consider that a great part of the Christian world has, in all ages, been *worse than Deists*, though they have not, till of late, *been called by that name*; because *Deism* has not, till of late, been *reduced to a system*, and become a *distinctive religious profession*.

THE meaning of a *Deist*, in the common acceptation of the word, is an *infidel*, or one who *believes not the scriptures*. Now a *wicked*, *profane*, *immo-*

ral Christian, who is resolved at all adventures, to gratify his lusts and continue in his wicked habits, is really a *practical infidel*, and needs only to be instructed in the *sophisms* and *arguments* of *Deism*, in order to become a *speculative, professed infidel*. For there is all the reason in the world to believe that every *determinately* and *resolvedly* wicked Christian would profess *Deism* publicly, were he master of the arguments; as, by this *means*, he would find his conscience somewhat eased, and get rid of the *obligations* and *terrors* of a religion, which expressly sentences him to condemnation. The number therefore of *infidels*, is not *now increased*: *wicked Christians*, who were always *infidels* under a *false name*, and *false colours*, have only adopted a *new name*, and a *new profession*, more agreeable to their *real principles*, and call themselves *Deists*; having enlisted themselves under the banners of some fashionable infidel writer, for the ease of their consciences, in a debauched life. And, indeed, if all incorrigibly licentious men, would assume the *name* and *profession* of *infidelity*, I see no loss or inconvenience, which the real interests of Christianity could suffer by the event. Surely, it would command the esteem and respect of the world much more than it does at present,

THUS I think I have *fairly* and *candidly* stated and considered the principal objections which has been brought against the doctrine advanced in our text, either by *narrow, desponding, ill-informed Christians*, or by the *boasts* of *infidelity*.—But this is not

enough. I would still farther advance, upon what I think to be sufficient evidence, not only that the Christian church *is in no real danger, nor possibly can be*; but that Christianity is really an *increasing quantity* in the world; is enlarging its conquests, and extending its triumphs over *ignorance, barbarity, immorality, infidelity, and every opposing principle*, and that it will continue to do so to the end of time, when the *Jews*, together with the *Gentile nations*; shall be brought into it; and when every knee shall bow to CHRIST, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

TRUE, indeed, sometimes the church of Christ has a *greater degree of visibility* than at others. It is sometimes driven, as it were, by the dragon into the wilderness (*m*), and its visible glories for a time concealed by prevailing tyranny and persecution: but all this while its virtue is *imperceptibly spreading*, and like leaven, assimilating the whole lump. The interests of Christianity are often also in a *fluctuating state*; ebbing in some places, and flowing in others. The *tide of Christianity*, as we have already observed, seems to have been flowing to the *westward*, from its first establishment in the world. The present improved state of navigation, and the prevailing passion for *colonizing and new discoveries*, perhaps, without designing it as much as Christian navigators ought to do, is carrying the *seeds of Christianity*, into all the habitable parts of the earth, and scattering them among every *people, tongue and kindred*; and it is not an

(*m*) Rev. xii. 3, 8.

improbable conjecture, that, when it has reached the *utmost limits of the west*, it will flow back again, like the river *Jordan*, to its source, and cover the face of the whole earth, as the waters cover the face of the sea; so that not only the *mole-hills of infidelity*, but the *highest mountains of ignorance, prejudice, superstition, idolatry and immorality* will be brought under its saving and fructifying influences.

THE *prevailing*, tho' ignorant and ungrounded opinion, that *former ages were wiser and better* than the present, may render it difficult to be believed, that *virtue and Christianity* or true religion flourish more in the present age, than in any foregoing one since the Christian aera; but whoever shall take the pains to read, with attention, *Winder's History of Knowledge; Hartley on Man; Worthington's Essay on Redemption; Lord Clarendon's Essays divine and moral; Fortin's Ecclesiastical History; and Doctor Edmund Law's Theory of Religion*, will find abundant convictive evidence of this agreeable truth.

Indeed, were not our minds blinded by prejudice, general history would inform us, that in no age, since the establishment of Christianity, has religion been *better understood*, and its *spirit and genius* shewed itself more evidently, in the general fruits of *civilization, moderation, meekness, tolerance, forbearance, public spirit, benevolence, charities* of every kind, and *universal decorum and good order* in society; than the present:—*plain and agreeable proofs* that the muddy stream of human nature is clearing up; that the *spirit and genius* of true religion is *spreading*.

and *prevailing*, and that things are *gradually ripening* for that *universal reformation* of the world, which Christians are warranted to *expect* and *hope for* in the latter days.

INSTEAD, therefore, of giving way to *desponding* fears, "that the church is in danger;" that Christianity is on the decline in the world, and in peril of being swallowed up of *infidelity*, let us repose our *unshaken confidence* on the express declaration of CHRIST; "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

LET us also comfort ourselves with the evidence we have, both from *our own observation*, and from the *general history of providence*, of the *fulfilment* of *this prediction* of our Lord *hitherto*;—that that blessed and divine religion which he has planted in the world, *keeps its ground* against all opposition, and still goes on to *spread* and *flourish*, both in its *theory* and *power*, and that we have so hopeful a prospect of its finally prevailing over every let and obstacle. How consolatory ought these words of our Lord be to his true church in all dangers and extremities; "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted; behold, I will lay thy stones with *fair colours*, and thy foundations with *sapphires*. All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be their peace. In righteousness shall thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror for it shall not come near thee.—No weapon that is formed against thee

shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn (n).”

To conclude: We have seen the *stability and perpetuity* of the Christian church. It should be our *principal personal concern*, as *men and Christians*, not only, to the utmost of our power, to promote its interests in the world, by our *influence and example*; but to see to it, that we *fall not from it* ourselves by *sloth, apostacy and irreligion*. There is no truth more certain, than this, “That *out of the church there is no salvation*.” What therefore can it advantage us, that CHRIST has a *true church* upon earth; and that *this church will endure*, and *increase* to the end of time; and that *every soul* who belongs to this church, and is a true member of it, *shall be saved*, if *we ourselves* keep out of it and fall into perdition? Q then let us haste to secure unto ourselves a place in this *only ark of salvation*, by a *true faith*, a *sincere repentance*, and a *speedy reformation* of life; that when the flood of divine vengeance comes, we may not be swept away with the world of ungodly men. Amen.

(n) H. liv. 11,—17.

## S E R M O N XII.

The free and astonishing love of GOD,  
in the salvation of a lost world, thro'  
faith in CHRIST as the condition on  
the part of sinful man, in three ser-  
mons, from

John iii. 16.

*For GOD so loved the world, that he gave his  
only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth  
in him, should not perish, but have everlast-  
ing life.*

## S E R M O N I.

**I**T seems to me a fine and just remark of an able  
divine and good critic—"That the whole New  
Testament does not contain so much of pure gospel, in  
so small a compass, as the twenty-one first verses of  
this chapter;—that in these verses we have the gos-  
pel in miniature; that if all the other writings of the  
New Testament were lost, and these few verses, were  
alone handed down to us with sufficient authority,  
they contain a sufficient remedy for a perishing world."

—For what else is the gospel, in the strict and proper sense of the word, “but the revelation of a way of salvation for lost sinners of the race of *Adam*?— And what essential part of this way of salvation, have we not revealed in these few verses?”—Is a *new nature and holy life* an essential part of the salvation of sinners?—Here we have the *nature*, the *necessity*, the *manner*, and the *agent* of this renovating, sanctifying change in the sinner, clearly expressed in our SAVIOUR’S conference with *Nicodemus*. Is a *sacrifice* necessary to expiate the sinner’s guilt? Behold, we have here the great sacrifice revealed, and the way *in which*, and the end *for which* he should be offered: “As *Moses* lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish.” Is it necessary that human sinners should know, that this way of salvation was of GOD’S appointment, and by his approbation?—Our text reveals *this*, and *much more*.—It declares it to be the effect of GOD’S most amazing love to human sinners;—and that the victim was no *other*, no *meaner* person, than his own, only begotten Son:—“For GOD so loved the world, that &c.”

Is it necessary that sinners should know the *terms* and *conditions* necessary to be performed on their part, in order to their salvation thro’ Christ? These are distinctly repeated three times, almost in three succeeding verses—“Whosoever believeth in him (i. e. the only begotten Son of GOD) shall not perish, but have everlasting life:—he was to be lifted up on the cross,

that whosoever believeth on him (under the notion of a sacrifice for sin, and a crucified Saviour) should not perish, but have eternal life:—he that believeth on him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God!”—In these passages also we have a revelation of the *nature* of that salvation which sinners obtain thro’ faith in CHRIST.—It is not a *temporal, political* salvation, such as the *Jews* expected from their *Messiah*; but a *complete spiritual* salvation;—a salvation from a lost, perishing condition, and an advancement to eternal, everlasting life.

WAS it expedient that mankind should know the reason, why such multitudes of sinners come short of this *glorious, purchased* salvation? The reason is here assigned, namely because men love their sins, and hate to be reformed; and this causes them to wink hard, and even shut their eyes against the glorious revelation of gospel light:—“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness, &c.—For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh, &c.”—

AND because guilt is a *jealous, suspicious, mistrustful* thing; and a world of rebels hearing that GOD was about to send his Son among them, might suspect that it was with a design to *chastise* and *punish* them; GOD condescends here, not only to express his great love to the world in general terms; but even expresses it in such terms as wholly to remove this suspicion,

and to persuade them, that he was sending his Son among them, not as a *judge* and *executioner* of deserved vengeance, but on the *kindest* and most *gracious* design; as a *Redeemer*, to die for them, and by dying, to save them: "For GOD sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world thro' him might be saved!"

SUCH, *my friends*, is that *full* and *compendious* abridgement of the pure gospel of CHRIST which these few verses contain: believe it; embrace it; bind it to your hearts, and be happy for ever. It were easy also to make it appear, were it necessary, that as these verses contain a *full*, tho' *compendious abstract* or *epitome* of the gospel of CHRIST, so the words of our text contain a *compendious abstract* of these verses; —and that there are *few leading* or *essential* truths in the whole, which may not be clearly *inferred* from the words of my text.—"GOD so loveth the world, that he gave, &c." However; instead of labouring to draw such a number of conclusions from the words, which would spin out the subject to an unwieldy length, I shall only deduce from them the few following propositions, which are clearly contained in the words, and which will furnish out abundant matter for *two* or *three* discourses.

1<sup>st</sup>. I SHALL endeavour to evince from the words, the unspeakable love of GOD to our world, in sending his Son into it.—

2<sup>dly</sup>. THE condition on which the guilty inhabitants of this world may be put into full possession of

all the blessed fruits and effects of this love of GOD.

3dly. THE *reasons* upon which this condition is grounded.

4thly. THE *universality* of the offer of this love to sinners.

5thly. THE impossibility of our being *saved*, and the certainty of our *destruction*, if we *reject* this offer, and neglect this condition."—The illustration of these propositions, with the application of them to ourselves, will compleat the plan of this discourse; and certainly, *my friends*, if the love of GOD, or the gospel of CHRIST, have any charms for us, it may be candidly hoped, that none of us will, at *this time*, and upon this occasion, turn a deaf ear to the call of mercy, or steel our hearts against the impressions of the love of GOD.

Ist. THEN, I am from the words to evince the unspeakable love of GOD to our world.—I call it *unspeakable*, not only, because it can never be fully expressed, but also, and chiefly because it is very emphatically left *unspoken* in our text.—“GOD *so* loved the world;” the *measure* and *nature* of this love is left to the *inquiring, labouring, wondering* thoughts of men and angels. And when all of them shall have employed their thoughts and tongues about this love to all eternity, they shall never be able *fully* to *conceive* or *express* it. How *little a portion* then can we *know* or *speak* of it? How imperfectly can we speak of that which is *inexpressible*, and which *passeth all knowledge*?—May GOD enlighten and warm our hearts with the beams of this love, and then

shall we speak of it *worthily*, though not *perfectly*; —then shall we speak of it *feelingly*, *gratefully* and *affectionately*, although we can only *stammer* and *lisp* it out in *broken accents*, like infants lisping out their imperfect conceptions of an indulgent father's love.

THAT I may give as *just* an idea as I am able, of the unspeakable love of GOD to our world, permit me to propose and answer the following questions.

Question 1st. WHAT sort of world is this which GOD hath so loved?—True, indeed, it was a world of GOD's own making,—the workmanship of his own hands;—but still it was perhaps one of the *meanest* worlds he has made. What multitudes are there of more glorious worlds than this of ours, on which GOD might have fixed his *peculiar love*, while this of ours might have been cast aside as an *useless* thing, and expunged out of the creation, with as little loss, perhaps, as a drop of water out of the mighty ocean.

BUT this is *not the worst* of our world.—GOD might have a respect to it, as the work of his hand; as a link in the scale of being; as an useful and ornamental part in the plan of the creation; and, above all, as having planted and settled it with rational beings, made after his own image, and put under the influence of a moral law. But how had these rational inhabitants of this world, answered the end of their creation? Had not the very *first*; the *progenitor*; the *natural* and *covenant head* of these rational beings rebelled against his GOD, and involved *himself*, and his *whole posterity* into guilt and misery? Did

not God see it expedient to curse this earth and all its enjoyments, for the sin of its inhabitants? This little province of God's vast dominions, once so high in his favour; once a garden of innocence, an Eden of delights, is now become a province of rebels—an accursed place—a place of guilt, misery, disease and death; the plain signatures of the divine curse lying upon it, for the sin of man.—Behold! then a world of *sinners; rebels* against the *greatest* and *best* of Beings, their Creator, Sovereign and continual Benefactor.—“*All* rebels, in every part of our guilty globe; none righteous, no not one, rebels from age to age, and from generation to generation, for many thousands of years:—*thousands; millions; myriads* of rebels. Behold a world lying in wickedness; helpless; *hopeless*; despairing of relief;—the very suburbs of hell;—the range of malignant devils;—the region of guilt, misery and despair;—the mouth of the infernal pit!” \*—a world once drowned for its wickedness, and now doomed and reserved to be burnt with fire, as the only adequate purification of its filth! What a *wretched world*? what an *obnoxious race* is this?—And might not God have *consumed* it with its wicked inhabitants, when *all mankind had thus corrupted their way*? Might he not have blotted it out of the plan of being? or if such a world was a necessary link in the chain of being, might he not have *new-created* it?—No; he had a design to *bear* with, and *spare*, its guilty inhabitants, and to make it the *scene* and *object* of his

\* Davics.

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astounding grace, and to renew and redeem it, in a manner which angels could not have conceived.— And therefore (wonderful thought!) *such is the world*, which GOD *so loved* as to give his *only begotten Son* for it? such are the creatures; *ungodly; sinners; rebels*; without one exception, *to, and for whom* GOD gave this gift!

Question 2d. LET us inquire what sort of gift was this which GOD gave to this world, and thence let us estimate the *measure of his love*?—Was it thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Alas! this would have been a *cheap and easy* gift to the high possessor of heaven and earth, to whom this earth and the fulness thereof belongs; yea, who is the absolute Lord and disposer of ten thousand worlds, with all that they contain. But the blood of bulls and goats could not wash away sin!—Did GOD give *one nation* of the earth, as a *price and sacrifice* for another; did he appoint *our Isaac's* to bleed for us, “so that we might be permitted to sacrifice our first-born for our transgressions, or offer the fruit of our bodies to atone for the sin of our souls?” GOD might perhaps easily have done this: all are his creatures, and he might have disposed of them as he pleased; but no man could by any means redeem his brother, or give to GOD a ransom for him:—all are *sinners*; obliged to eternal sufferings for *their own guilt*, and therefore could not be expiatory sacrifices for others.—Whole *hecatombs* of human sacrifices *would bleed in pain* for this purpose! Were the *whole human race* to be offered in one *sacrifice*, it could procure no be-

nefit to this guilty world; it could not redeem *one soul* of our guilty race! GOD would *abhor* such an *inhuman, polluted* offering!

WELL; did GOD give *Gabriel*, or one of the upper ranks of angels, or a whole legion of those exalted beings to leave their thrones, and hang upon crosses, to save this world and its perishing inhabitants from sinking into ruin? Alas! had the whole surface of this earth been filled with crosses and every angel in heaven, assumed a body, and bled upon a cross; even this *expensive sacrifice* could have done no good to our guilty world; it could not have redeemed *one single soul*; such an astonishing display of *divine* and *angelic* love would have been utterly ineffectual! The truth is, *no creature*, properly speaking, can merit for another.—Every creature owes its *whole obedience*; the *united and perpetual service* of all its powers to GOD; and therefore let a creature do what it *will*, it can never do more than it *ought*, and therefore can never make up for the *defects of other creatures*, or work out any *imputable righteousness* on their behalf!—No, no; the gift which GOD gave to our world, was *quite of another nature*, and excelled even angels in *worth and dignity*, as far as heaven excelleth earth. He gave not *angels*, but the LORD and *maker* of angels; *him* whom he commanded all the angels to worship;—*him* whom he hath appointed heir of all things; by whom he also made the worlds;—“*him* who was the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;”—“*him* who was brought up with him from the days of eter-

nity; whom he possessed in the beginning of his way, before his work of old; who was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;”—*him* concerning whom he said, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee; thy throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore GOD, even thy GOD, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Thou, LORD, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth &c. Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool (a).”—This is the *glorious person*,—this is *the gift* which GOD gave to our world.—GOD had, indeed, *many sons*; but he had only *one only begotten and best beloved Son*, concerning whom he said, with a voice from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, hear ye him;”—and *this Son* he gave;—he *spared* him not; *withheld* him not; but delivered him up for us all, and our lost world (b). We and our world were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of CHRIST, the anointed Son of GOD.—This was the *gift* given to us;—this the *price* paid for us; the ransom with which we were redeemed (c). Our world was in a perishing condition, and none but CHRIST could relieve it; otherwise GOD would never have given his only *begotten Son* (a person whom he loves infinitely more than the whole creation,) to save it. So *great*, so *dear* a person, would never have

(a) Prov. viii. Heb. i. (b) Rom. viii. 32. (c) 1 Pet. i. 19.

been sent from his Father's bosom, his native heaven and all its glories, upon a mission which any other being, or number of beings, could have discharged.—However; as this gift was necessary, God withheld it not.—Let this therefore be a comment on the words of our text—“*God so loved the world, that, &c.*”

Question 3d. *In what manner did God give this gift to our world?* I answer; *freely, undeserved, unasked, undesired.* This is an additional proof of the greatness of God's love to our world.—Had a guilty world come by any means to know that there was *such a Being* in heaven as the *Son of God*, who was *willing and able* to undertake their relief, and save them from perishing; and that there was some hope that God might part with him, for this purpose, at their earnest request: and had human sinners, from a deep sense of their wretchedness and danger, in all ages, wrestled with God by prayer, and importuned him with tears, out of the depth of their ruin, to have mercy upon them, and send his Son to redeem and save them,—the gift would have been *more deserved, and less free and unconstrained.* But the real case and state of sinners was just the reverse of this. Altho' they *needed*, yet they *desired not* a Saviour: and even had they known there was such an one in heaven, and that their prayers and tears could have obtained him from God; yet they would not have asked him. A great part of the misery of a *guilty, perishing* world, consisted in its *blindness, insensibility*, and even *unwillingness* to be saved. This is cer-

tainly true in fact : for GOD never yet attempted to work salvation for a sinful world, but they *refused it*, and strove against it, and abused the very attempts which GOD was using to make them happy. They opposed the Spirit of GOD preaching by *Noah*, and would not be saved by him :—it was with the greatest reluctance, and not without a kind of force, that the *Israelites* would be saved by *Moses* from the vilest and most *wretched* slavery.—They opposed the Spirit of GOD in all the prophets ; choosing *destruction*, rather than *salvation*.—And when CHRIST the Son of GOD came into the world to save them, they put him to death. And altho' sinners now among us have *no excuse from ignorance*, and know that there is a powerful and *willing* Saviour, and are *intreated* to apply to him, at the peril of damnation, and are assured that they may obtain pardon and glory *by and thro'* him ; yet they will not come to him that they may have life.—They *refuse, oppose, and abuse* him ; and their hearts must be conquered by grace, before they will submit to be saved by him.

Now, GOD so loved this world, that he gave his Son to it *unasked, undeserved, undesired* ; yea, against their *opposition, hatred and malevolence* ; yea, *so freely* did he give him, that he provided and appointed him before the world was made, and before sinners existed. And no sooner had *Adam* fallen, but he revealed him to his fallen creature, as the foundation of his hope and religion ; as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. This gift was of GOD's *free, original, eternal* appointment, and was as little

*desired or expected, as it was deserved by human sinners.*

Question 4th. To what *end* and *purpose* did God give his only begotten Son to this world of ours? Answer; *first*, to suffer and die a sacrifice for our sins,—and, *secondly*, by his incarnation and obedience to the death, to save a guilty world from the lowest misery, and to advance them to the highest happiness and glory.

It greatly enhances the *love of the giver*; that the gift be, not only great and valuable in itself, but that it be also *dear* and *expensive* to the giver; and that it answer the noblest purposes to the receiver. Now, both these circumstances attend the gift of God's only begotten Son to our world, in the most eminent degree.

1st. God gave his only begotten Son to suffer and die a sacrifice for the sins of our world. To have sent his Son into the world, to condemn the world, had been *just*, and such a piece of justice as a guilty, rebellious world had reason to fear and expect.—To have sent his Son into the world in every possible circumstance of dignity and happiness, to mediate a reconciliation with *sinners*, and offer terms of peace and pardon to *rebels*, had been such a piece of *mercy* and *wonderful condescension*, as ought to have astonished our world, and been the wonder of angels.—But to send his only begotten Son from his native heaven; from the throne of his glory; from the worship of angels, to be born in the deepest poverty; to assume our degraded nature, and to spend thirty-

three, or thirty-five long years, in poverty, disgrace, and persecution; dying as a *malefactor* and a *slave*, in the midst of ignominy and torture, and lying a mangled corps in the grave, was such an instance of the love of God to our world, as passeth all knowledge! Let us only consider what it would cost the heart of a father, to have one of the least beloved of his children, transformed for a few months or hours into a worm, or other insect, and, in that form, to be subjected to the power and malice of a few barbarous children, who should employ every invention of cruelty to trample, torture and put it to death!—and then may we form some imperfect idea of the manner in which God loved our world, when he gave his only begotten Son, to assume the nature of its mean inhabitants, and to suffer thirty years, and die by the hands of those whom he came to save!—But

(2dly.) HE gave his Son, by his incarnation and obedience to the death, to *save* a guilty world from the *lowest misery*, and to advance them to the *highest happiness* and *glory*. Here then would arise two other questions, by which the love of God in giving his only begotten Son to our world, would be highly magnified—namely—“ what was that misery which God sent his Son to save sinners from? And what is that happiness and glory, to which, by this gift, he meant to advance them?”—We may be very certain, my friends, that as the Son of God would not have suffered and died *unnecessarily*, or to no purpose; so he would not have suffered *such things* and died a *sacrifice*, for a *mean, inconsiderable, or trifling* purpose!

If it is so indeed, that GOD gave his only begotten Son to die for the world? we may be sure that the purpose of his death must be something very great; and that the fruits of his sacrifice must be something *very grand* and *noble*, and worthy of such an expensive price of redemption. We are sure indeed that GOD's own glory, was of principal consideration (as it ought to be) in this *strange* and *astonishing event*.—Never could the justice of GOD, in executing the penalty of the law, have been so much honoured by the eternal punishment of the whole world of sinners, as it was by the *sufferings, death and sacrifice* of his only *begotten* Son;—and never could the divine law have been so much honoured and magnified, by the perfect obedience of all mankind, as it was by the obedience of the SON OF GOD!—But, with the glory of GOD, the happiness of a guilty world was closely connected, in this astonishing event; and GOD only meant to display his own glory in the way of shewing mercy to perishing and miserable sinners. This is beautifully urged by the apostle; “If GOD spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

YEs, sinners, GOD gave his only begotten Son for you, that believing in him, ye might *not perish*, but have everlasting life.—He gave him for you, to deliver you from—what?—Ask the bondslaves of sin and *Satan*, who are wholly under the dominion of filthy lusts and tyrannising passions:—ask the remorseful, the desponding, the troubled and wounded in conscience, who are trembling under the agonies of a

guilty conscience, and the fears of eternal torment:—ask the damned in hell, who are sweltering in tormenting flames, gnawing their tongues in pain, and looking forward in vain to an endless eternity for an end of their torments,—and these alone can *fully* tell you, from what a *slavery*; from *what agonies of soul*; and from what *unspeakable and endless misery and torment*, GOD gave his only begotten Son to deliver you, by the pains he felt, the agonies he endured, and the death he died.—He gave him for you, to advance you to what?—Ask those happy souls who have obtained the precious liberty of the sons of GOD; who are delivered from the slavery of Satan, and the dominion of lust;—whose natures are renewed; whose lusts are mortified; whose affections are sanctified—whose hearts enjoy the halcyon days of a calm and serene conscience, the beams of the divine love, the sweets of communion with GOD, and the comfortable hopes of an immortality of happiness in his presence:—ask the saints in glory; *Abraham, David, and Paul*—and the whole general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven, who shine in different spheres around the eternal throne, and quaff in full draughts from those rivers of pleasures which flow for ever at the right hand of GOD;—these alone can fully tell you, to what a pitch of happiness and glory GOD gave his only begotten Son to advance this guilty world of ours, by the ignominy and pain of his cross!

THESE (my friends) are fruits *worthy of so wonderful a sacrifice*;—effects worthy of the love of GOD and death of CHRIST; and prove what was the rea-

*lity and greatness* of "that love wherewith he loved our world, in giving his only begotten Son for it; that whosoever of its guilty inhabitants believed in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life!" And this brings me in the

II<sup>d</sup> PLACE, to take notice of the *condition* on which the guilty inhabitants of this world may be put in full possession of all the blessed fruits and effects of this love of God.

THO' the gift of God's only begotten Son was made to the world in general, yet the *beneficial* and *saving* effects of this gift, are plainly *limited* to persons of a *certain character*. The love of God freely gave this unspeakable gift to a guilty world; yet those only, *who received this gift*, could benefit by it:—and if there are any of the wretched inhabitants of this world, who will so far despise this love of the Father, or doubt his veracity, as to reject the gift of his Son, they shall be justly excluded from all the special benefits of his death and purchase. The question *is not here*, how God may deal with those rational and sinful inhabitants of this world who have never heard of his Son, nor received the offer of this heavenly gift?—It is certain that *such* will never be condemned for *slighting, rejecting, or abusing this gift*? Such will be judged according to that *law and light* under which they have lived, and perhaps God may make gracious grants of allowance to such among them, as have shewed a penitent disposition, and *pardon and justify them thro' the merit of an unknown Saviour*.—Perhaps in *such*, he may deem some particular dispo-

sition, as equivalent to faith in the Redeemer;—or may allow them some opportunity of trial in another state ! It seems probable indeed that the happiness of such, will be something different from, and *inferior* to, the happiness of believing Christians; otherwise the revelation of the gospel dispensation would be a privilege of small consequence.—But that GOD will eternally condemn all the heathen, is a doctrine which we have no sufficient ground to assert :—nor hath GOD limited himself in this matter, from shewing mercy to such of them as he pleaseth, in some manner to us unknown.

THE sole object of our present inquiry, is, “ what is the *only condition* of *pardon* and *eternal happiness* to those sinners of mankind, who live under the *light* and *privileges* of the gospel of CHRIST ? ”—and that the gospel *uniformly* and *universally* affirms to be *faith in the Redeemer*.—“ GOD so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life.—He that believeth on him, is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of GOD :—he that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of GOD abideth on him. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.—Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved (e).” You see, therefore, that “ *faith in the*

(e) John iii. 16, 18, 36. Mark xvi. 16. Acts xvi. 31.

LORD JESUS CHRIST," is the *grand term*, and *suspending exclusive condition* of a sinner's salvation under the gospel; the *only condition* on which perishing sinners of mankind, can become partakers of the wonderful love of GOD to a lost world. Sinners *may* and *ought* to *admire* the astonishing love of GOD to their guilty world; but this love can never profit them, if they *believe not in his only begotten Son*. Men may, if they please, make *their own conditions* of salvation.—They may set up the deeds of the law, and moral righteousness, or a sober, inoffensive behaviour;—or generous and charitable actions;—or justice and integrity in their dealings;—or a flourishing formal profession of religion;—or fastings, mortifications, and penances;—or crossings, pilgrimages, absolutions and unctions, while perhaps they have little regard to the Redeemer in their religion:—But what will all this avail, if they *reject GOD's appointed method* of saving sinners, and neglect that only condition of faith in his Son, on which he hath suspended the salvation of a lost world? All this is but *will-worship*, if put in the place of *faith in CHRIST*;—and is only a specious kind of rebellion against the established law of heaven, if not founded on the principle of a living faith.—And GOD may well say to persons, who would recommend themselves to his favour by these methods,—“Who hath required these things at your hands? And what can these things avail you, seeing ye have rejected the only method of a sinner's salvation, which I have established in the gospel?”

THIS is not a proper place to give a *full and comprehensive* idea of that faith in CHRIST which is the established condition of pardon and salvation to a lost world.—It may be proper, however, to give *some general* idea of it here ; and the *shortest, clearest, and most comprehensive* I can at present think of, is this : “ *That faith in the only begotten Son of God, which is the condition of a sinner’s salvation ; which secures him from perishing, and gives him a title, through the gracious appointment of GOD to eternal life, is a belief that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the only begotten Son and messenger of GOD ; and such a regard to him, under this character, as the gospel requires.*” I could produce a number of passages from the New Testament to prove, that this is the *plain and simple* notion of faith in CHRIST, which the apostles every where recommended to the *Jews and Gentiles*, as the *condition of their baptism and salvation*. Some believed that he was an impostor and had a devil :—others believed that he was *Elias*, or one of the old prophets risen from the dead :—but in opposition to all these false opinions and beliefs, his true disciples believed “ *that he was the CHRIST ; the only begotten Son of GOD, the Messiah that was to come into the world.*” This was the *pure and genuine* faith of *Peter*, to which CHRIST himself gives a sanction, declaring it to be the very faith, on which he would build his church,—and that it proceeded from the special revelation of his Father.—CHRIST asked his disciples—“ *Whom do men say, that I the Son of man am ? They said, Some say thou*

art *John* the Baptist, some *Elias*, and others *Jeremias*, or one of the prophets:—But whom, says CHRIST, say ye that I am?—*Simon Peter* answered, Thou art CHRIST the *Son of the living God*; we believe, and are sure, that thou art CHRIST, the *Son of the living God*.—And *Jesus* answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, *Simon Bar-jona*: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven; and I say also unto thee, that thou art *Peter*, and upon *this rock* I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (*f*).”

GOD the Father makes this revelation of his Son to a guilty world; “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him (*g*).”—Now, I imagine, that a *true* and *saving* faith in CHRIST, answers this declaration, in this manner: “Yea, Lord, we *believe* that he is thy *beloved Son*; we *receive* him as such, and we are willing to *hear*, *obey*, and *submit* to him, in all things that he is commissioned of thee to declare to us, under this character!”

IT is easy to see how the whole *practical* part of the Christian religion, will flow from this *easy* notion and *simple* principle of faith in CHRIST. If we truly believe him to be the *Son* and *messenger* of the living GOD, we must needs believe every revelation and *declaration* of his will:—and if so, we must needs repent of our sins, and return unto GOD through him,

(*f*) Mat. xvi. 16. John-vi. 69. (*g*) Mat. xvii. 5.

and depend on his merit and sacrifice, and plead his righteousness, and hope in his mercy, and walk in his commandments, to the end of our lives.

Now God so loved this world of ours, that whoever of its guilty inhabitants, *thus believeth* on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.—I should now proceed,

IIIly. To shew the *reasons* on which this condition is grounded:—but this, and the following doctrines, must be left for another opportunity—and I shall close the present discourse with an inference or two from what has been said.

I. DID GOD love our guilty world in such an astonishing manner, and yet does this world of ours so little love GOD? What kind of world then, is that in which we live? O the *blindness*, the *hard-heartedness*, the vile *ingratitude* of sin! Can there be a *clearer*, *stronger* proof of the degeneracy of our world than the little love which exists in it towards blessed GOD? Search this world, for which GOD hath done such astonishing things, and you will find millions of rational creatures in it, (whole nations of them) which know him not, and who are worshipping and serving devils and dumb idols.—The generality of the American savages pay no kind of religious worship to any else but the *devil*;—and that out of fear. The good Being, they worship not; pay him no acts of gratitude nor homage, although they acknowledge him as their Maker and Benefactor! Search those nations of this world, which profess the true religion, and have a clear display of the riches of GOD's re-

deeming love, and you will find the greater part of those highly favoured people, wholly insensible to the attractions of divine love; nay enemies to God by wicked works!—Need we any thing more to prove, that *this world lieth in wickedness!*

2dly. LET us try our own temper and character by the light of this doctrine. The first sensible effect which divine grace has on the soul, is to make it *see* and *admire* the love of God to a lost world, and to *itself* in particular; and, as a consequence of this, to fill it with *gratitude* and *reciprocal love to God*. The soul no sooner *tastes* and *sees* that the Lord is gracious, but it is filled with a grateful and affectionate sense of his grace; and this is the *spring* and *first mover* of all true religion, and the genuine principle of all acceptable obedience: hence flows a *deep contrition* for that sin which is committed against the *love* and *goodness* of God; a *heartly return* to him, and *affectionate endeavours* to render him a service and obedience in some measure worthy the greatness of his love:—and as this love is *known* and *felt* to be *infinite*, so there can be no limits set to the gratitude and obedience which is paid to it, on this principle. Is this then our case? Does a sense of it fill us with gratitude? Are we inquiring what acknowledgement we shall make of it, and what returns we shall make for it?—We are told, “that this is the love of God that we keep his commandments?”—Are we thus endeavouring to approve the sincerity of our love to God; and do we find that, in this view, his commandments *are not grievous*, but

that they are the *joy and rejoicing of our hearts*? If we do indeed obey GOD from the principles of love and gratitude; our obedience, how difficult soever, must yet needs be pleasant? And when corrupt nature would make it otherwise, a renewed sense of the divine love will set all to rights again, and give new *life and love* to our obedience.

3dly. DID GOD *so love* our guilty world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him may not perish, but have everlasting life? And is it possible that any of these perishing creatures should reject this remedy? And are there any of us, *my dear hearers*, amongst the number of these unhappy creatures? Yes, doubtless! Alas! where is the happy congregation where all have accepted of CHRIST?—The wonderful love of GOD hath given him to us, that whosoever believeth on him may not perish, but have everlasting life. It is our duty to *bold forth* this Redeemer, in all his saving offices, to the acceptance of sinners;—to display his *power and grace*; his *ability and willingness* to save to the uttermost all that come to GOD by him.—It is the gracious command of GOD, that you should believe on his Son, and be saved. We are *perishing*, and *must perish*, without him; and yet many of us will not come to him that we might have life!—We are told that they “who believe not on the Son, are condemned already, and that the wrath of GOD abideth on them”—and yet, had we rather be condemned and perish under the wrath of GOD, than believe on him? O let us not act thus foolishly any longer, in rejecting

the counsel of GOD against ourselves!—The day will come, when we will not have it in our power to reject an offered Saviour, and abuse the love of GOD; —the day will come when it may be too late, to repent of our unbelief. O therefore let this be the happy day, in which we embrace the only begotten Son of GOD, agreeable to the Father's offer of him, that so we may not perish, but have everlasting life! Amen.

## S E R M O N XIII.

The free and astonishing love of GOD,  
in the salvation of a lost world, thro'  
faith in CHRIST as the condition on  
the part of sinful man, in three ser-  
mons, from

John iii. 16.

*For GOD so loved the world, that he gave his  
only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth  
in him, should not perish, but have everlast-  
ing life.*

## S E R M O N II.

**T**HESE, *my brethren*, are the words of the blessed  
Jesus, who came forth from the Father's bosom  
to declare his will to men: we may depend, there-  
fore, that they contain a *just* and *true* report of the  
good-will of GOD to a guilty perishing world: "For  
altho' no man hath, at any time, seen the Father, yet  
the only begotten *Son*, who came forth from his bo-  
som, hath truly declared him (*b*)."  
And as this is

(*b*) John i. 18.

doubtless a *true report* of GOD's good-will to our world, so I observed to you, in a former discourse from the words, that, in connection with the context, they contain one of the *shortest* tho' *fullest* and *clearest* abridgments of the *pure* and *glorious gospel* of the *blessed* GOD, any where to be met with in the New Testament. *Nicodemus*, a ruler of the *Jews*, comes to our Lord by night, acknowledging him to be a teacher sent from GOD, and desires to be instructed by him, in the great, leading doctrines and truths of the *Messiah's* kingdom.—Our Lord highly gratifies this Jewish ruler, in the twenty-one first verses of this chapter; teaching him the necessity of conversion and spiritual regeneration in order to a sinner's admittance into heaven;—shewing him the great Christian sacrifice, with the manner *in which*, and the ends *for which*, it was to be offered;—magnifying the love of GOD in giving this expensive sacrifice to our world,—and pointing out faith in this sacrifice, as the grand condition of salvation to our guilty race.

From the words of our text, I proposed to raise and illustrate five doctrines—1st, To shew the unspeakable love of GOD manifested to our lost world, in sending his Son into it as the Redeemer of its guilty inhabitants.—2dly, To shew the *sole* and *grand condition* on which our lost world becomes intitled to all the blessed fruits and effects of this unspeakable love of GOD,—namely, faith in his only begotten Son.—3dly, To shew the *reasons* on which this condition is grounded.—4thly, To shew the universality of the tender of this love of GOD, to all, and every sinner

of this lost world, who will perform this condition, and embrace the Saviour.—And, 5thly, To shew the impossibility of the salvation, and the certainty of the destruction, of all those, who neglect this condition, and reject this offer of a Redeemer.

UNDER the Ist of these heads, I endeavoured to illustrate the exceeding greatness of the love of GOD from the four following considerations—1st, The meanness, guilt, and unworthiness of this world to which he gave his only begotten Son—2dly, The astonishing worth and greatness of the gift which he gave to this rebellious world; being nothing less than his *only begotten, best beloved* Son, who was infinitely dearer to him than the whole creation—3dly, The manner in which he gave this unspeakable gift—*freely, undeserved, unasked, undesired*—And, 4thly, The purposes for which he gave this his only begotten Son to our world—(1st.) To suffer and die a sacrifice for it—And, (2.) To deliver it, by his sufferings and death, from the *lowest misery* and to advance it to the *highest* degree of happiness and glory. Under the IId general head, I shewed you that, whatever *terms, devices and conditions* men may invent to recommend themselves to the favour of GOD, yet GOD has appointed but *one* in his gospel, and that is, *faith in his Son JESUS CHRIST*:—“namely, a firm and well grounded belief that JESUS CHRIST of *Nazareth* was indeed the only begotten Son, Prophet, and Messenger of the living GOD; and such a regard to him, under this notion and character, as the scriptures require.”

THIS I observed to you was the celebrated faith of *Peter*, which our Saviour so highly approved, and set up as the model of the faith of his church (i).— This also exactly corresponds with the Father's declaration concerning his Son; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him."

THIS is also the *simple* notion of faith in CHRIST every where proposed by the apostles, both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as the condition of their baptism and salvation;—and from this simple notion of faith, the whole of practical Christianity, *naturally* and spontaneously flows.

WE now come under the

III. GENERAL head to consider the reasons on which this condition of the salvation of sinners under the gospel, is grounded.

As there have not been wanting persons who have ridiculed the scripture account of the *fall* and *apostacy* of man; and laught at the notion of GOD's being so highly displeas'd with our first parents for eating an *apple*, as to expel them from *Paradise*, and pronounce sentence of condemnation against them;— and as this ill-timed merriment has proceeded from ignorance in the laughers—who did not maturely consider the multitude of heinous sins, contained and included in this one seemingly small and inconsiderable transgression of our first parents;—and that the *smaller* the prohibition was, the greater was their crime in trampling upon it:—so there are not wanting numbers of persons, even in the Christian church,

(i) John vi. 69. Mat. xvi. 16.

and wearing a Christian profession, who no less ridicule the notion that *faith in Christ* is the *sole condition* of a sinner's salvation under the gospel.—The generality of the *Romanists*, and not a few *Protestants*, have such a *mean opinion of faith in CHRIST*, that they seem wholly to exclude it from being a condition of the covenant of grace, and set *good works*, and *moral righteousness* wholly in its place.—Others there are, a little more modest, who are loath wholly to exclude it *as a condition*, and yet doubting of its *weakness* and *insufficiency* to stand *alone* in this work, they call in *repentance* and *sincere obedience*, as two other *auxiliary conditions*, to make up for the deficiencies of *faith alone*,—and say, “That the condition of a sinner's pardon and justification before GOD is, *faith, repentance* and *sincere obedience*.” And I think we may freely venture to affirm, that this *mean* and *contemptible* opinion of faith, arises from an ignorance of its *worth* and *excellency* as a religious *principle*. 'Tis true, indeed, that *repentance* and *holiness*, are, in some few places of the New Testament, mentioned, as *conditions of a sinner's salvation*;—and they are *truly so*, in as far as that no sinner can be saved *without them*, or being *destitute of them*. But the question is, whether faith in Jesus CHRIST, is not the *primary, grand, and leading* condition of the salvation of a lost world; and whether it hath not *worth* and *virtue* enough, to *stand alone* in the support of this great and noble fabric? That faith in CHRIST as the only begotten Son of GOD, is the *sole condition* of the salvation of lost sinners, I think, will

appear very evident, if we consult all those passages in the New Testament, where CHRIST and his apostles, are expressly laying down *the terms of salvation*, and directing sinners in the grand inquiry, what they shall do to be saved.

WE ought not, therefore, rashly to depart from these scripture declarations, and to rob *faith in Christ* of the honours which the inspired writers gave it, in declaring it the sole condition of the salvation of a lost world? These holy men whom GOD inspired to publish his everlasting gospel to sinners, certainly best knew the conditions of it.—And after the declaration made by CHRIST in our text, and thrice besides in this chapter—“that GOD so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, &c.”—It would be little better than *blasphemy* to suspect that faith in CHRIST, is an *insufficient condition* of the salvation of a lost world.

BUT as our *infidel hearts* are unwilling to submit to the *wisdom of GOD*; and as our *infidel reason* wants to be satisfied as to the *reason and expediency* of every part of the divine proceeding; it may not be unuseful to give an answer to this *infidel objection* against the *excellency and sufficiency* of faith in CHRIST as a *principle of religion and condition of salvation*. “What *merit or worth* can there be in *believing on CHRIST*, that it should be made the sole condition of the salvation of a lost world, and the leading principle of the Christian religion?” I answer,

(1st.) FAITH IN CHRIST is a giving credit to the testimony of GOD, which is a disposition of great va-

due. But you will perhaps ask, "Is it so great a virtue to believe the testimony of GOD? I answer—Yes—in such creatures as we are, who are so prone to infidelity. This very *sin*, strange as it may seem, first made its way into the heart of innocent man; and it is not to be thought strange if it is still the ruling *sin* in the hearts of *apostate, corrupt mortals*? *Infidelity* towards GOD; a disbelieving the testimony of their Maker, and believing the *devil* rather, was the *first sin* committed by our progenitors, in the happy garden; even when they saw GOD, as it were, face to face, and had the highest demonstrations both of his *being* and *providential goodness*.—And the same cursed sin of unbelief, has been the *radical sin* of our nature ever since.—The old world would not believe GOD preaching by *Noah*.—The *Israelites*, amidst the most wonderful profusion of miracles, yet would not believe GOD, nor his servant *Moses*.—Infidelity was the prevailing character of that people, in all ages; and even all the miracles of CHRIST when he appeared in the flesh, could not cure it.—They believed neither *him* nor his *Father*; his *doctrines* nor his *miracles*! It was the prevailing complaint of the prophets—"Who hath believed our report?"—And of the apostles, "The word preached, did not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it (*k*)."<sup>(k)</sup> Altho' the word and testimony of GOD is infinitely worthy of belief;)—altho' GOD is a Being of infinite veracity, who can neither *lie*, nor *deceive*,—

(k) Isaiah liii. 1. Heb. iv. 2.

and therefore is the only worthy object of every kind of faith;—yet it is of the nature of sinful man to *doubt* and *disbelieve* every thing which comes from this unerring fountain of truth, and to believe the *devil*, and his *own lusts*, and every deceiver, *rather than GOD*.

THIS, therefore, considered, faith in CHRIST, built upon the testimony of GOD, is a very *worthy*, *uncommon* and *excellent* grace and principle in such creatures as we are, so naturally prone to, and madly bent upon, infidelity. And the grace of faith will still appear the more *excellent* and *meritorious* if we consider the following things.

(1st.) THE *strangeness* and almost *incredibility* of the gospel report, to be believed; or which is the objection of faith.—The gospel report is indeed *good news*, *glad tidings* of great joy; but it is *very strange* and *surprising* news, and tidings, the truth of which reason can scarce admit. It were easy to believe, indeed; that GOD is infinitely *great*, *powerful*, *wise* and *good*. It were easy to believe that GOD would love this world and its rational inhabitants, and do them good, so long as they continued *loyal* and *obedient*.—But to believe that GOD should love a *rebellious world*, and *so love* it too, as to give his *only begotten Son* to become *incarnate*, and die a sacrifice for its guilty inhabitants—is strange doctrine to reason indeed, and not easily to be credited.—“To the learned *Jews*, this doctrine was a *stumbling-block*, and to the wise and philosophic *Greeks* it was foolishness.”—Both deemed it equally *monstrous* and *incredible*.—And I

venture to say, it never will be *firmly* and *cordially* believed by any thinking considerate person, without the aids and influences of enlightening grace. “*This faith* must indeed be the *gift of* GOD;—and no man can say (understandingly) that *Jesus* is the LORD, but by the HOLY GHOST (1).”—And I dare venture to affirm that the reason why the multitude believe, or pretend they believe, the gospel, is because they have never considered it, nor maturely weighed the nature of the message which it brings.

(2.) NOT only is the gospel report *strange*; but it is also conversant about *absent*, *spiritual*, and *invisible* objects, to which our *carnal*, *sensual* minds are greatly averse, and to the consideration of which we are very loath to apply ourselves.

THE coming and *incarnation* of the *Messiah*, was an object at a *great distance* from *Adam* and the *Patriarchs*; and its *futurity* or coming to pass, depended for many ages; on a few obscure prophecies, and yet *these* were the only *objects of saving faith*.—When CHRIST came in the flesh, he had no form or comeliness wherefore the world should desire him:—he was *mistaken* and *evilly intreated* by his own *peculiar people*; and he had so much of *meanness*, *frailty*, and *indigence* in his outward appearance and circumstances, that it was no small trial of faith to acknowledge him for the *only begotten Son of GOD*—and it was only the privilege of the discerning, highly favoured few, to distinguish the *word made flesh*, and to “behold his glory, the glory as of the only begot-

(1) Ephes. ii. 8. 1 Cor. xii. 30.

ten Son of God, full of grace and truth. I thank thee, says he, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight (m).” To us in these latter times, the gospel reports a fact, which is said to have happened a great many *ages past*. Besides; all the other objects of faith, are things *spiritual, unseen and eternal*—such as *pardon of sin—spiritual privileges—and future glory*. In a word, the apostle well characterizes *faith* in general, when he calls it “the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for.”

(3.) IF we consider the *objections and difficulties* which faith has to *struggle* with and *conquer*, we shall be still more sensible of the *worth and excellency* of a *victorious, triumphant* faith—and how well this grace deserves to be the *term and condition* of *salvation* to a lost world. It would be endless to mention the numberless obstacles which *the devil*, and the *corrupt hearts of sinners* suggest against a *true and saving faith*. Sometimes the tempter is bold enough to suggest that *GOD is a liar*, and his *testimony false*: as he did to *Adam*—“Hath GOD said that in the day you eat thereof, ye shall die?—Ye shall not surely die, but ye shall be as GODS knowing good and evil (n).”

THE long delay of the execution of GOD’S threatenings, and fulfilment of his promises, is another great obstacle in the way of faith:—“Because judgment

(m) John i. 14. Mat. xi. 25, 26. (n) Gen. iii. 4, 5.

is not executed against an evil work speedily, therefore, &c." Because the good are not rewarded, and the wicked are not punished immediately, infidelity suggests that they never *shall*, and that the divine promises and threatenings have no *truth* nor *reality*; not considering "that one day is with the Lord as a *thousand* years, and a *thousand* years as one day:"—and therefore it has been the language of scoffers and infidels of all ages, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the father's fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation (*n*)."—It is a great obstacle in the way of faith to such *carnal, sensual* creatures as we are, who have no ideas but *from our senses*, that the objects of faith are *invisible*. We cannot see GOD, and therefore we find it hard to believe that *he is*, or to form any believing conceptions of him.—We never saw *heaven* nor *hell*, and we are by nature strongly disposed to doubt whether there are any such places, and therefore the *invisible world* has no *reality* to *unbelievers*; it is to them as a *dream* or a *fable*; and it can be only *discerned* and *realized* by that faith which is the evidence of things not seen.—There are also many obstacles in the way of faith from the *strangeness* and *difficulty* of the things to be believed.—"Sarah laughed and doubted thro' unbelief, when she was told she would conceive and bear a son; because *she was old*, and *past the custom of women*, and because her husband *was old also!*" How many obstacles lay in the way of *Abraham's* faith also? "How shall I sa-

(\*) 2 Cor. iii. 3,—12.

crifice my son; my Isaac? Surely a GOD of mercy cannot give such a command as this!—And if I do kill my *Isaac*, how shall GOD's promise be fulfilled, that in him and his seed, all the families of the earth shall be blessed? Surely GOD cannot contradict himself! And if *Isaac* is sacrificed, how shall he live again?" It must be a great *virtue* and *strength of faith*, that did not stagger at all those difficulties; and which believed as it were against belief, and hoped against hope?—The *Antideluvians* found it hard to believe that GOD would drown the world; and no doubt the philosophers among them made calculations (as some have done since) and proved it impossible that the clouds could furnish so much water. The *Greeks* and *Romans* laugh at the doctrine of the resurrection, preached by the apostles, as an *absurd, incredible fable*,—which brought this question from the apostle,—“Why should it be thought a thing *incredible* with you, that GOD should raise the dead (o)?" In short, almost every object of faith is *incredible* to those “who know not the scriptures, nor the power of GOD.”—We are apt to think it strange that the whole Jewish nation did not believe on CHRIST, when he appeared among them on earth; but if we considered the prejudices that nation lay under, against an *humble, suffering Messiah*;—their *pride* and *carnality*—and their *strong*, tho' false and groundless, expectations of a triumphant, glorious, temporal deliverer—and the amazing circumstances of poverty and meanness in which CHRIST appeared.

(o) Acts xxvi. 8.

among them, we shall think it *less strange*, and see many obstacles in the way of their faith in him. *True*, indeed, "He spake as never man spake:"—but this they doubtless ascribed to the *force of natural genius!*—*True*, he wrought numberless surprising miracles; but so did many of their own prophets; and miracles were less surprising in that age! *True*, he lived a most holy and exemplary life, and preached an excellent doctrine; but their prejudices against his person shut their eyes against all the lovely virtues and glories of his life; and his doctrine, being levelled against their vices, piqued their pride, and raised their hatred and indignation.—They expected, in their *Messiah*, great *earthly pomp*, and *military glory*; but they found nothing of this in *Jesus*; nothing but the *peaceable, quiet virtues of holiness, charity, zeal, humility and resignation*, which escaped their notice.—They saw him born among themselves of poor parents; bred to a poor mechanical trade;—of little repute in the eyes of the world;—despised by many of his neighbours and relations;—in mean apparel;—associating himself with the *poor, publicans, barlots and sinners*,—and they could by no means reconcile these appearances with his being the Son of GOD, and their long-expected *Messiah*.—At length they saw him taken without resistance; arraigned; tried; condemned, and crucified between two malefactors!—What obstacles were these to faith in *Jesus*, with such a people as the *Jews*?—*Therefore* he was *despised*, and *rejected* by men. *Therefore* the *Jews* *denied* and blasphemed the holy One and the Just,

and would not come to him, nor believe in him, that they may have life. And was it no virtue in a *Jew*, think you, to believe in *Jesus*, as the only begotten Son of GOD, in these circumstances, and under these prejudices? What think you of that act of faith which the thief exerted towards *Jesus*, when he was hanging by him on a cross, under the imputation of a malefactor? Was there *no worth* or *excellency* (think you) in that grace which enabled this thief to act a triumphant faith, in a Saviour that was *dying on a cross*?—How many obstacles, think you, opposed themselves to this act of faith?—“What? GOD suffer his only begotten Son to die thus as a malefactor, by the hands of sinners? If this be indeed the Son of GOD, why does he not come down from the cross, and save *himself* and us? Why does not his thunder consume all these his murderers? How can a man, who is thus *dying himself*, be the Saviour of the world; or carry me with him to paradise? And if this be not indeed the Son of GOD and Saviour of the world, I am now dying under the guilt of a gross act of idolatry in believing on him!” Upon the whole, I venture to say, that this act of faith in the thief, had something *more miraculous* in it, than had he removed a mountain; and something *more worthy, excellent, and meritorious*, than had he performed all the good works in the world.—I would not be here understood as making an *apology* for the *unbelief* and *infidelity* of the *Jews*: this, to be sure, was *wholly inexcusable*, as arising from *false* and *ignorant* prejudices against the truth:—nor do I mean

to decry the worth and excellency of *good works* and *moral righteousness*.—I only mean to shew the *worth* and *excellency* of that faith which can conquer so many prejudices; and to prove that no other *grace* or *principle* better deserves to be established, as the condition of the salvation of a lost world?

IF we also consider our own situation in these latter days, at the distance of *eighteen hundred years* from the incarnation of the Son of God; how many obstacles is infidelity ready to throw in the way of our faith in CHRIST?—Our faith has still nearly the same difficulties to struggle against, as that of the *Jews* and *Gentiles* of old, (their prejudices only excepted;) besides a great many others, peculiar to our own times and circumstances.—The *devil* and our own corrupt hearts are ready to ask, “How can these things be?” Are we certain there was such a person as CHRIST? May not history deceive us? Or if there was, might he not be an impostor? How are we sure that the gospels give us a true account of his life? If he wrought such miracles, why did the *Jews* put him to death? Why did they not believe in him?—If he was indeed the Son of God, why is not all the world already converted to him? Why does he not yet work miracles for the conviction and conversion of *Jews*, *Mahomedans*, and *Heathens*?—Why are not his enemies made his footstool? Why are his followers so much divided among themselves? Why doth he not pour out the vials of his vengeance on the idolatrous seat of the beast, and make his name glorious in the whole earth?—How are we sure

that the scriptures are not either *forged*; or *else corrupted and perverted*, in so long a course of time, and where there have been so many contending parties among Christians? In a word; what sure foundation can we have, for our faith in *Jesus*, as the only begotten Son of GOD, and Saviour of a lost world? —I have only mentioned *a few* of the *doubts* and *objections* of an infidel heart,—and is there no *worth* or *excellence*, think you, in a *virtue* and *principle* which triumphs gloriously over all these obstacles, and embraces Christ with that *heart-felt confession*—  
 “We believe and are sure that thou, O Jesus of Nazareth, art the CHRIST, the Son of the living GOD; and we cordially embrace thee as our Saviour and the Saviour of a lost world, and put our souls and all their everlasting interests into thy *powerful*, and *merciful* hands; confiding and reposing ourselves on thy power and grace, without restriction or limitation. —We see, acknowledge and adore thy divine excellencies, through all the clouds by which infidelity would obscure them; and we adhere to thee *living* and *dying*; for unto whom should we go? thou hast the words of eternal life!”

2dly. To believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST is *gratefully to receive the gift of GOD*. But, you will perhaps say, “What great *worth* or *excellence* can there be in this disposition? Is it not natural to receive a valuable gift with gratitude?”—I answer, however *proper* and becoming such a disposition may be in itself, yet there is nothing *least natural* in sinful

man, than *gratefully* and *thankfully* to receive spiritual blessings from the hand of God. It is of the nature of sin, (like a lethargy or delirium in persons who have dangerous fevers,) to render the *sinner insensible* of his wants, misery and danger. The sinner, before he is awakened by grace, has no proper sight, sense, or feeling of the danger and wretchedness of his case. He imagines himself to be perfectly *well* and *safe*, and *secure*, and that his sins are *nothing*, and will never hurt him. "He thinketh himself to be rich and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing, and knoweth not, seeleth not, perceiveth not, that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (p)." And hence it is, that, thinking himself *whole*, he seeth no need of the *physician*, and setteth no value on the *gift of God* (as thinking it needless), and therefore *despiseth*, *undervalueth* and rejecteth it. It is therefore a disposition of *great value* in a sinner, to be brought to receive this gift of God *gratefully*. Now, he who believeth on the only begotten Son of God, makes it manifest that he hath this grateful temper. He makes it appear that he is *duly sensible* of his *lost* and *perishing condition*; that he has seen the evil of sin, and *his danger* by it—and that he approves and *gratefully accepts* the remedy which God hath provided for it. He not only sets to his seal, that God is true; but makes it appear that he approves the *wisdom* and *goodness* of God in the plan of our redemp-

(p) Rev. iii. 17.

tion ; and that he esteems his Son, a most *necessary* and *valuable* gift, and *worthy of all acceptation* from a lost world.

THE language of faith is—“ LORD, although the *Jews* have regarded thy Son crucified as a *stumbling block*, and the *Greeks* have regarded him as *foolishness* ; although infidels of every name and age, have cast a slight and contempt on the doctrine of the cross, and have deemed it unworthy of thee ; yet do I *see* this method of salvation to be a glorious display of thy *power* and *wisdom* ; I approve it ; I rejoice in it ; I cast all the interests and concerns of my perishing soul upon it ; and, with the deepest gratitude of soul, I receive thy glorious Son by faith, as my Prophet, Priest, King, and everlasting Friend ! I am not ashamed of the cross of CHRIST ; nay, I glory in it as that by which the world is crucified unto me, and I ~~upon the world~~.

3dly. FAITH is a grace which pays the *highest* honour to the Son of GOD, and therefore must be a disposition of great value, and peculiarly pleasing to the Father. It is doing the highest honour to him whom the Father delighteth to honour. The Father assures us of his tender love to his only begotten Son. “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.” CHRIST himself assures us “ That the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that he himself doth, and hath committed all judgment to him—and *that*, too, with this *express* design (the words are exceeding remarkable !) “ That all men should *honour the Son*, even as they *honour the*

FATHER: he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him (g).” Now, faith does the highest honour to the beloved Son of GOD.—GOD hath set him forth as a most *glorious* and *excellent* person, (as the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;) as an almighty, most merciful, and all-sufficient Saviour, and therefore most worthy of the *love, trust, and obedience* of a sinful world.—GOD hath set him forth as the *Creator, Ruler and Judge* of the world, and as the *Prophet, Sacrifice, Mediator, Head and King* of the church;—and faith *approves*, and sets its seal to the truth of this *testimony* and *record* which GOD hath given of his Son—and receives him as such, under all these characters!—The language of faith is—“Yes, blessed Jesus, I believe the record of thy Father concerning thee,—I believe thee to be his only begotten, best beloved Son; fairer than the children of men; the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely:—I believe thee to be a most *powerful* and *willing* Saviour,—and I apply to thee, and embrace thee, and love and regard thee, as such!”

4thly. FAITH in Jesus Christ, is a *self-emptying, God-exalting* grace, and therefore must needs be a grace of *great worth and excellency* in the esteem of that GOD, who hateth the proud, but giveth grace to the lowly; of that GOD, who will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images. GOD must delight in *truth*; i. e. in a *true, right, just* and *becoming* disposition of mind: but faith brings

(g) John v. 20,—23.

the sinner just to *this* disposition. The believing sinner *sees* and *is sensible* that he is *lost* and *undone in himself*, and that he is by no means able to be his own Saviour, or to help himself out of his guilt and misery. He *sees* that he has neither *righteousness, merit, nor strength* in himself equal to this task.— In a word, he *sees* and *feels* just the *truth* of his own case and circumstances; that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked;—without any resource either of help or hope *in, or from* himself;—and that, altho' he hath *destroyed himself*, yet his help can come from no creature, but from GOD alone.—And then he is brought to see that there is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby he can be saved, but that of *Jesus of Nazareth*;—and that in this person (being the LORD JEHOVAH) there is everlasting strength: and faith, having obtained this *just and true view of things*, carries the sinner wholly out of himself, to GOD, thro' CHRIST, for every part of this salvation, and causes the sinner wholly to depend upon GOD for every part of his salvation, and to ascribe the *whole, undivided praise* of the whole to him; making mention of his righteousness and strength, and his only, with joyful lips. The merit of faith lies in its disclaiming all merit, and the language of faith, in this respect, is, “Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name be the glory:—not me, but the grace of GOD in me!” And hence proceed the *becoming and excellent graces of humility, self-denial, self-loathing, &c.* in all true believers.

I MIGHT here add, in the 5th and last place, That faith in JESUS CHRIST is a grace of *great usefulness*, and *absolute necessity* in the religion of Christians, in as much as it is the established mean of *transferring* our guilt to the sacrifice of CHRIST, and of pleading, *applying* and *appropriating* his merit and righteousness to us, for our justification.—Sinners can neither satisfy the penalty of that law which they have broken, nor can they fulfil the righteousness of the law, so as to be justified by their obedience. CHRIST the only begotten Son of GOD, hath done *both these* for a perishing world. By his sufferings and death, he hath endured a punishment equal to the eternal sufferings of a lost world of sinners, and by this means has fully satisfied the demands of the law against sinners, and opened a way for their redemption from hell.—By his holy and obedient life, he hath wrought out a righteousness equal to the perfect personal obedience of the whole human race. The law of GOD was as much honoured by the *sufferings* of CHRIST, as it could have been by the eternal punishment of all the sinners in the world;—and the same law was as much honoured by the *obedience* of CHRIST alone, as it could have been by the perfect and sinless obedience of the whole world of mankind.

NOW CHRIST did truly *thus suffer* and *obey* in the *room* and *stead* of all sinners in the world, who do believe on him: but then, *faith in him* is the *necessary condition* of their reaping the benefits of his *sufferings* and *obedience*. It is only on a sinner's be-

believing in CHRIST, that GOD imputes his sins to CHRIST, and the righteousness of CHRIST to him—and thereby, as it were, reckons the suretyship righteousness of CHRIST to his account, as though it were the sinner's own personal righteousness, and pardons and justifies him on the score of this righteousness of his SON. So that by this *wonderfully gracious constitution*, the sinner's guilt is transferred to the sacrifice of CHRIST, and considered by GOD as expiated by this sacrifice,—and the righteousness of CHRIST is transferred to the believing sinner, and considered and rewarded by GOD as his *own proper righteousness*.—And indeed this is the very thing which faith pleads—“O gracious GOD, let my sins be washed away by the blood of my Redeemer, and expiated by his sacrifice. Accept of his sufferings which thy law demands of me, as a sinner:—and as I have no righteousness of my own whereby I can be justified, graciously accept of that righteousness which he hath wrought out in the room and stead of sinners, as *my righteousness*.—I embrace it by faith:—O do thou graciously impute it to me, and let me be justified for his righteousness sake.”

So that you may see what an *eminent* and *distinguished* place, faith in JESUS CHRIST holds in the catalogue of Christian graces;—how *radical* and *fundamental* it is to the very *being* of Christianity; and, therefore, how *fitly* and *properly* it is established by GOD, as the *grand condition* of the salvation of a lost world: “For GOD so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten SON, that whomsoever be-

lieveth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.”

I HAVE, contrary to my first design, employed a whole discourse in considering the reasons for which GOD hath established faith into the grand condition of a sinner's salvation under the gospel. I have taken some pains to shew the great *worth* and *excellency* of this grace, as containing and including in it some of the most *noble* and *becoming* dispositions of the human heart, considered as in a way of recovery by grace.

FROM this view of the excellency of faith in CHRIST, as a religious principle, I would draw the following inferences for our use.

1st. Is faith in JESUS CHRIST such a grace as I have proved it to be? Hence we may clearly infer how very *rare* and uncommon a thing it is even in the Christian world, and among Christian professors. One of the first articles of our creed runs thus, “I believe in JESUS CHRIST, his only Son, our Lord.” This, *all repeat* without hesitation, and because they repeat it, make no doubt but they are true believers in CHRIST. And indeed if we narrowly examine and inquire “what it is which passes for faith in CHRIST, in the Christian world,”—we shall find it to be little else than a being born within the pale of the Christian church; being baptized into CHRIST, and repeating the apostles creed.—*All, in short, pass for believers*, who are not downright *infidels*, and who do not argue against the truth of the Christian reli-

gion, or blaspheme the name of CHRIST. But alas! there is a wide difference between not denying CHRIST, and *believing in him*;—between *confessing him with the mouth*, when it is honourable to make such a confession, and believing on him with the *heart*! Multitudes *make no doubt* of a thing, which yet they do not believe; and that because they have never considered seriously of it at all. This, I fear, is exactly the case with the multitude of *mere nominal* Christians. True, they do not publicly *deny*, or *blaspheme* CHRIST; yea, many of them even seem *well pleased* with the glad tidings of the gospel, and with the news of salvation thro' a Redeemer: but have they ever seriously considered *the wonderful purport of the gospel*;—the *strangeness* of the message,—and the many obstacles of faith? Or have they ever run the risk of suffering for the Christian faith? No such matter; they never trouble their heads about these things.—Or have they ever thankfully accepted the gift of GOD's only begotten Son; or honoured him by submitting their hearts and lives to his authority;—or seen their own helpless and undone condition without him;—or heartily applied to him under the various characters he sustains as a Redeemer;—or humbly plead his merit and righteousness with GOD as the grand reason of their pardon and justification?—No such matter; they are still strangers to a saving interest in him; without GOD, and without CHRIST in the world.

2dly. WHAT has been said concerning the excellency of faith in CHRIST, as a religious principle,

should make us highly value this grace; earnestly covet it; and give us a mean opinion of those Christians who put a slight upon it. It is probable, indeed, that the mean opinion which some Christians entertain of faith, may have proceeded from their having taken their idea of it from the *common nominal* faith, which prevails among the professors of the Christian religion. But *this*, as I have shewed you, is only a *wretched counterfeit* of the true grace of faith, and therefore it is a *great abuse to call it faith* at all,—and a great injustice to disparage the most excellent grace in a sinful world, because it is counterfeited by vile hypocrites, and mere formal professors. True faith, as I have shewn you, necessarily includes in it some of the noblest dispositions of the human heart; and is necessary to the very being of a Christian. I am far from discrediting *holiness* or *good works*; but if we have a true regard for *these*, how can we entertain a mean opinion of that *faith* which is their *root* and *principle*? O then, let us *first* and *above all things*, labour to be strong in faith, giving glory to GOD; then shall we, like *Abraham*, perform the most difficult and *self-denying* duties, with cheerfulness and delight. Let it be our *first* and *chief* endeavour to be united to CHRIST in the bonds of a lively faith; then shall we neither be *condemned*, nor *perish*, but have everlasting life. To expect the *fruits of holiness*, where the *seed of faith* is not first sown and taken root, is preposterous madness:—it is counter both to the reason of things, and GOD's established method of saving sinners, and therefore cannot

prosper. The tree must first be made good, before the fruit can be good. Faith in CHRIST is the necessary foundation of all true holiness and acceptable obedience in a sinner. I should now proceed,

IVthly. To shew the universality of the tender of this love of GOD to all and every sinner of this lost world, who will perform this condition, and embrace this Saviour:—"Whosoever believeth, &c." But this, and the other head of discourse, with the general improvement, I must refer to another occasion.

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.