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The works of John
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THE
WORKS
OF
JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D.

SOMETIME MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT PAISLEY, AND LATE
PRESIDENT OF PRINCETON COLLEGE, IN NEW JERSEY.

CONTAINING
ESSAYS, SERMONS, &c.

ON
IMPORTANT SUBJECTS;

INTENDED TO ILLUSTRATE AND ESTABLISH THE DOCTRINE OF
SALVATION BY GRACE, AND TO POINT OUT ITS
INFLUENCE ON HOLINESS OF LIFE.

TOGETHER WITH HIS
**LECTURES ON MORAL PHILOSOPHY,
ELOQUENCE AND DIVINITY;**
HIS SPEECHES IN THE AMERICAN CONGRESS;
AND MANY OTHER VALUABLE PIECES, NEVER BEFORE
PUBLISHED IN THIS COUNTRY.

VOL. V.

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C O N T E N T S

OF

VOLUME V.



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The charge of sedition and faction against good men, especially faithful ministers, considered and accounted for.

Preached in the Abbey Church of Paisley, on Thursday, September 7. 1758, at the Ordination of Mr ARCHIBALD DAVIDSON, as one of the Ministers of that Church. To which is subjoined, the Charge to the Minister, and the Exhortation to the People.

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INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

SERMON XVII.

THE CHARGE OF SEDITION AND FACTION AGAINST GOOD MEN, ESPECIALLY FAITHFUL MINISTERS, CONSIDERED AND ACCOUNTED FOR.

Preached in the Abbey Church of Paisley, on Thursday, September 7. 1758, at the Ordination of Mr ARCHIBALD DAVIDSON, as one of the Ministers of that Church. To which is subjoined, the Charge to the Minister, and the Exhortation to the People.—Published at the desire of those who heard it.

ACTS xvii. 6. last clause.

These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.

MY BRETHREN,

YOU have had, of late, frequent opportunities of hearing discourses on the ministerial character and office. These subjects indeed have, on occasions of this and a similar nature, been so often and so well

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handled, that it is hard to say any thing on them which shall not be either bare repetition, or an alteration very much for the worse. I have therefore made choice at this time of a subject somewhat different, but the usefulness of which, both to ministers and people, may be easily discerned.

A great part of the sacred volume consists of history. And, as the knowledge of past events, and the history of mankind in general, is an improving study, so there is no object of study more pleasant or more profitable, than that extensive view of the great plan of Providence which is exhibited to us in the word of God. There we have access to observe the power, the wisdom, and the grace of the various revelations of the divine will given in successive ages, their correspondence one to another, and how well each is suited to the season and other circumstances of its discovery. Above all, it is useful and delightful to observe the perfect union and harmony of the whole, and the several striking and distinguishing characters that are to be found on all the works of the one eternal and unchangeable God.

This uniformity is in nothing more remarkable, than in the sufferings of good men and their causes. True religion being the same in substance in every age, we may expect to find a very strong likeness in all the real servants of God. however distant the periods in which they make their appearance. A conformity of state also may be expected, as well as a similarity of character. They have the same end in view, they tread in the same path, and therefore must meet with resistance from the same enemies.

There was from the beginning, and there will be to the end of the world, a strife and conflict between the righteous and the wicked, between "the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent." And, in particular, it is natural to suppose that slander and calumny will be always one of the weapons used by the enemies of the truth. We have no reason then to be surprised, that every good man should have occasion to say with the Psalmist David, and with a greater than he, the Son of David; "They laid to my charge things that I knew not."

This was the case with the apostle Paul and his companion, in the passage of history of which my text is a part. But the nature of the accusation here brought against them seems to be singular, and to merit particular attention. They were the servants and the ministers of the Prince of peace. Their office was to preach and publish the gospel of peace. Their doctrine was full of meekness and love. They discovered the love of God to men: and, after the example of their Master, they charged men to love one another. They were mean in their outward appearance, and neither possessed nor claimed any earthly dominion. In one word, they had nothing about them that one would think could give jealousy to the civil power, that could seem formidable or dangerous to any character or class of men. Yet here they are charged as seditious, as disturbers of the public peace, as enemies to the government. "These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also.—These all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying, That there is another king, one Jesus." What sort of an accusation is this?

not only false but improbable. Does not the arch-enemy, the accuser of the brethren, seem to have failed in his usual skill? Is there the least prospect of success in so groundless a charge?

But what shall we say if upon an accurate examination it be found, that the same charge hath been brought against the servants of God in every age? that none hath been advanced with greater boldness, and none with greater success? Nay, perhaps, that it is the single standing charge from which their enemies have never departed since the beginning of the world, and which, of all others, hath been most readily and most universally believed. In other instances, the reproaches thrown upon the children of God have been opposite, and mutually destructive of each other. Christ himself, when his zeal in his Father's business made him forget to eat bread, was said to be beside himself, and mad. At other times he was called a cunning deceiver, and master of the curious arts. But in this his enemies, and those of his people, have never varied; and their success has been equal to their malice. They crucified him as an enemy to Cesar, with the title of usurpation written over him; and they have compelled all his disciples after him to bear his cross, and to groan under the weight of the same unjust and slanderous charge.

There are few subjects more worthy of the serious attention of those who firmly believe the word of God; none which will afford greater occasion to adore the mysterious depth of divine providence, or furnish more instructive lessons to such as desire to hold on with steadiness in the paths of true religion.

Above all, this subject may be useful to ministers of the gospel. It will contribute to ascertain the character which they ought to bear; to direct them in their duty; to prepare them for, and fortify them against the trials which it is impossible they can avoid.

In discoursing further upon this subject, it is proposed, through the assistance of divine grace,

I. By a short historical deduction, chiefly from the holy Scriptures, to shew, That the character of seditious, troublesome, and disorderly, hath been constantly given by wicked men to the servants of God.

II. To inquire, and endeavour to point out what it is in true religion that gives occasion to this charge, and makes the world prone to believe it.

In the last place, To make some practical improvement of what may be said.

I return to the first of these, viz.:

1. By a short historical deduction to shew, That the character of seditious, troublesome, and disorderly, hath been constantly given by wicked men to the servants of God.—It would not be difficult to point out something of this spirit prevailing in the world, from the life of almost every good man whose name stands upon record, however short and general the account be that is given of many of them in Scripture. But, as much of what might properly enough fall under this head, will be necessary in the illustration of the second, to prevent confusion and repetition I shall content myself with some leading instances, in very different ages, from the earliest to the latest times.

The first I shall mention is a passage as extraordinary in its nature, and as singular in its circumstances, as any that history affords. It is the meeting of Ahab and Elijah, in the time of a great famine in the land of Israel. Ahab, that profane prince, had, by his apostasy and idolatry, brought down the judgment of a righteous God, both on his kingdom and on his house. We are told, "That he did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, than all the kings of Israel that were before him," 1 Kings xvi. 33. He had persecuted the worshippers of the true God with unrelenting violence; and, as it was natural to expect, he hated with uncommon rancour, and distinguished by uncommon severity, all the prophets who continued stedfast in the cause of truth. As many of them as he could lay hold of, he had put to death. He had hunted for Elijah, not only through all the kingdom of Israel, but through the neighbouring nations, as we find related by Obadiah, his principal servant: "As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation that they found thee not," 1 Kings xviii. 10. After all this severity on his part, when Elijah by the command of God went out to meet him, see the form of his salutation: "And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" 1 Kings xviii. 17. To this the prophet makes the following strong and just reply: "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy Father's house have troubled Israel, in that thou hast

forfaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou haft followed Baalim.”

Another instance fimilar to the former may be found in Jehoshaphat and Ahab's confultation before going out to battle. “ And Jehoshaphat faid, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we may inquire of him? “ And the king of Israel faid unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man (Micaiah the fon of Imlah) by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil,” 1 Kings xxii. 7, 8. Here, you fee, Micaiah was the object of hatred and averfion, becaufe he denounced the judgment of God againft the king's wickednefs. That vengeance which he himfelf not only merited, but foli-cited by his crimes, was attributed to malice in the prophet.

See an instance of a general accusation of this kind againft all the worshippers of the true God, by Haman in the book of Esther. “ And Haman faid unto king Ahafuerus, There is a certain people fcattered abroad, and difperfed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws are diverfe from all people, neither keep they the king's laws; therefore it is not for the king's profit to fuffer them,” Esther iii. 8.

The prophet Jeremiah met with the fame treatment at different times. Neither prince, nor priests, nor prophets, were able to bear without refentment the threatenings which he denounced in the name of God. “ Now it came to pafs, when Jeremiah had made an end of fpeaking all that the Lord had commanded him to fpeak unto all the people, that the

priests, and the prophets, and all the people, took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? and all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord," Jer. xxvi. 8, 9. "Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die, for he hath prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your ears," Jer. xxvi. 11. We find him afterwards expressly accused of treachery on the same account. "And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the Son of Haniah, and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans," Jer. xxxvii. 13. See also chap. xxxviii. 4.

The prophet Amos is another instance, precisely parallel to the last. Because of his fidelity to God, he was invidiously represented as an enemy to the king. "Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words," Amos vii. 10.

Our blessed Lord and Saviour fell under the same accusation. However plain and artless his carriage, he is called a deceiver of the people. "There was much murmuring among the people concerning him, for some said, He is a good man; others said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people," John vii. 12. His enemies endeavoured to embroil him with the civil

government by this insidious question, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cesar or not?" And that which brought him at last to the cross was the same pretended crime. "And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him; but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cesar," John xix. 12.

I shall close this view of the Scripture history with the passage of which my text is a part. The whole crime of the apostle Paul and his companion was preaching the doctrine of the cross of Christ, his great and darling theme. We are told he opened and "alleged, that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead." Then the Jews, to whom this doctrine always was a stumbling-block, were "moved with envy," and endeavoured to inflame the resentment of the idolatrous multitude; they took for their associates the most wicked and profligate: "Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort." They "set all the city in an uproar;" and as, no doubt, the friends of Paul and Silas would endeavour to protect them from the injurious assault, their enemies very gravely charge them as the authors of the confusion, both there and elsewhere. "They that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also."

Having produced these instances from the holy Scriptures, which are liable to no exception, I shall say but little on the subsequent periods of the church. Only, in general, the same spirit will be found to have prevailed in every age. Whoever will take the pains to look into the history of the church be-

fore the Reformation, cannot fail to observe, that when any one, either among the clergy or laity, was bold enough to reprove the errors in doctrine, or the ambition, luxury, and worldly lives of his cotemporaries, he was immediately branded as a factious and disorderly person, and often severely punished as an enemy to the peace of the church.

That this was the case with the first reformers, both at home and abroad, is too well known to need any proof. And we have had still more recent examples of it in both parts of the united kingdom. The noble struggle which many in England made, about an hundred years ago, for their liberties sacred and civil, still bears the name of the grand rebellion. And it is remarkable, that however just a title they had to stand up for their rights as men and Christians, yet their doing so at that time was in a great measure owing to the fury and violence of their enemies, who were, in every respect, the aggressors. A very judicious historian says on this subject, "That which, upon the whole, was the great cause of the parliament's strength and the king's ruin, was that the debauched rabble through the land took all that were called Puritans for their enemies; so that if a man did but pray in his family, or were but heard repeat a sermon, or sing a psalm, they presently cried out, Rebels, roundheads, and all their money and goods that were portable proved guilty, how innocent soever they were themselves. This it was that filled the armies and garrisons of the parliament with sober pious men. Thousands had no mind to meddle with the wars, but greatly desi-

red to live peaceably at home, when the rage of soldiers and drunkards would not suffer them *.”

And in Scotland, after the restoration, though there was no struggle for civil liberty, all who chose to obey God rather than man, either in the substance or circumstances of religious duties, were charged with treason, and suffered as rebels. They were expelled from the church, yet censured as schismatics. They were harassed, fined and imprisoned, when living in peace, without any fault but “concerning the law of their God,” and yet complained of as troublesome. They were banished, excommunicated, and denied the common benefits of life; and yet, when the extreme rigour of their oppressors compelled them to take up arms in self-defence, they were condemned in form of law for resisting that government which had denied them its protection.

I forbear to add any more particular examples; but from the deduction above given, it will plainly appear, that worldly men have been always disposed, first to oppress the children of God, and then to complain of injury from them, that by slander they might vindicate their oppression. Their slander, too, hath still run in the same strain; troublers of Israel, deceivers of the people, enemies to Cesar, and turners of the world upside down, have been the opprobrious titles generally given to the most upright and most faithful men, in every age and country.

We proceed now,

II. In the second place, to inquire, What it is in

* Calamy's Life of Baxter, chap. iv.

true religion that gives occasion to this charge, and makes the world prone to believe it.

That there must be something of this kind is very evident. So uniform an effect could not take place without an adequate cause. And, to a serious and attentive observer, I am persuaded it is not difficult to discern. The general cause of this effect is, that, in an equivocal sense, the charge is just. True religion does indeed give trouble and uneasiness to wicked men, while they continue such; and it cannot be supposed but they will deeply resent it. In order to illustrate this a little more fully, I beg your attention to the three following observations.

1. The example of the servants of God is a continual and sensible reproach to the contrary conduct of the men of the world. Nothing can preserve peace to any man, but some measure of self-satisfaction. As a deceived heart turns the wicked aside, so the continuance of self-deceit is necessary to his tasting those pleasures of sin in which his mistaken happiness is placed. To reproach his conduct, therefore, is to disturb his dream, and to wound his peace. And as pride, however finely disguised, has the dominion in every unrenewed heart, how offensive must every species of reproof be to men of this character? Now, is not the example of every good man, a severe and sensible, though silent reproof to the wicked? With whatever specious arguments men may sometimes plead for sin, with whatever false pretences they may often excuse and palliate it to their own minds, when it is brought into one view with true religion, it is not able to bear the comparison. The example of good men to the

wicked is, like the sun upon a weak eye, distressing and painful. It is excellent in itself, but it is offensive to them. If I may speak so, it flashes light upon the conscience, rouses it from a state of insensible security, points its arrows, and sharpens its sting. What else was it that produced the first act of violence that stands upon record, the murder of Abel by his brother Cain? Of this the apostle John speaks in the following terms: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother: and wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."

And, as every worldly man's own conscience is thus made troublesome to him by the example of the children of God, so it tends to set sinners at variance with one another, and exposes the conduct of each to the censure of the rest. Sin, however universally practised, is yet generally shameful. Conscience though bribed, and comparatively blind in a man's own case, is often just and impartial, at least under far less bias in the case of others. It is in this way, and in this way alone, that the public honour and credit of religion is preserved, amidst so great a majority who are enemies to it in their hearts. Must not then the example of a strict and conscientious person, set in the strongest light the faults of those who act a contrary part, so often as they happen to fall under observation together. Nay, does it not open the eyes of the world upon many lesser blemishes which would otherwise escape its notice? The degree of shame that attends any practice, is always in proportion to the sense which the

bulk of mankind have of the evil of it. And this sense cannot by any means be more strengthened, than by an example of what is good; as deformity never appears so shocking as when compared with perfect beauty. Thus a truly pious man is, by every instance of his visible conduct, exposing to reproach some one or other, and, by consequence, provoking their resentment.

It is for this reason that men discover such a proneness to disparage every profession of piety superior to their own. How common is it to ascribe every such appearance to weakness or hypocrisy. In the generality of wicked men this is not so properly malice as self-defence. If they should allow the excellence of such a character, it would be condemning themselves out of their own mouths. Their inward reflection, in all probability, is perfectly similar to that of the Pharisees, when Christ asked them whether the baptism of John was from heaven or of men? "They reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say from heaven, he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?" In the same manner, should any confess the excellence of a conduct opposite to their own, it would be impossible to avoid saying to them, Why do ye then so sin against light?

Every one will see, that this must necessarily hold most strongly in the case of those whose office or whose work is of a public nature. They are like a city set on a hill. As their character is most conspicuous, it is, by necessary consequence, most useful to the good, and most provoking to the wicked. Faithful ministers of Christ, for instance, are the

lights of the world, and, by their piety and diligence, are a standing reproach to the world lying in wickedness. But, in a particular manner, they must be the objects of the hatred and resentment of those of their own order, who will not follow their steps. This is an evident consequence of the principle above laid down. As their character suffers most by the comparison, their passions must necessarily be most inflamed. Let a minister of Christ be ever so guarded in his speech, ever so inoffensive in his carriage, ever so distant in reality from injuring others; if he is more frequent or more affectionate in preaching, if he is more assiduous in the duties of his function, this must naturally excite the resentment of the lazy, slothful part of his profession. This of itself is injury enough to those who love their worldly ease, and have more pleasure in the possession of their benefice, than the exercise of their office. Is this surprising? Not in the least. His conduct does indeed molest their quiet; it either forces them to greater diligence, or holds up their real character to light, and exposes them to contempt and scorn.

In order at once to confirm and illustrate this truth, be pleased, my brethren, to observe, that the force and malignity of envy in defaming of characters, is always in proportion to the nearness of the person to whom the character belongs. Distance, either of time or place, greatly abates, if not wholly extinguishes it. Suppose the character of a person drawn, who lived many ages ago, or even at present in a very distant country; suppose him represented as eminent in virtue of every kind, as re-

markably diligent, as indefatigably active in doing good; there are few who shew any disposition to call in question the fact, or impute it to sinister motives. But let the same be the apparent character of any man among his cotemporaries, and how many are immediately up in arms against him! How implicitly do they believe, and with what pleasure do they spread every idle calumny to his prejudice! How is his piety immediately converted into hypocrisy, his zeal into faction and ill nature, his fervour and diligence into affectation and love of popularity; and, in a word, every valuable quality into that vice by which it is most commonly or most artfully counterfeited.

That this difference of judgment is entirely owing to the reason I have assigned, will further appear if you consider, that so soon as a connection of the same nature happens by any accidental circumstance to be established, the same invidious resentment immediately takes place against the most distant characters. What inveterate prejudice do infidels generally shew against the characters of the Scripture saints, and those of the fathers of the Christian church, because the establishment of such characters does necessarily and manifestly infer the overthrow of the cause in which they are embarked. In the mean time, the wise men of the heathen nations are suffered to possess, without contradiction, all the reputation which their countrymen in after ages have thought fit to bestow upon them. Nay, sometimes, to serve a certain purpose, their character is increased and magnified beyond all reasonable bounds.—What pains have been taken by those Christians

who patronize the modern inventions and improvements in theology, to undermine the characters of the most eminent champions of the ancient faith! What would some persons teach us to believe of Athanasius and Augustine in earlier, Calvin, Luther and Melancthon in later times? Not that we have not well attested evidence of their piety and integrity, but that, being of different sentiments from their accusers, the excellence of their character is too good a support to their cause*.

2. Another reason why the servants of God are represented as troublesome is, because they will not, and dare not comply with the sinful commandments of men. In matters merely civil, good men are the most regular citizens and the most obedient subjects.

* I take the opportunity here to add, That the principle above laid down will plainly account for the great and unassaulted reputation which the monks and retired devotees so long enjoyed in popish times. It was their reputation, indeed, which upheld for so long a period that immense load of idolatrous superstition, the Romish religion, and it was not lost till they were grossly corrupted, and convents were become receptacles of the most shameful impurity and lust. These persons were separated from the world. No frequent, and few near comparisons could be made between them and others. Nay, their character was voluntary, and peculiar to themselves, containing no pretence of an obligation upon all others to imitate it, and therefore they were suffered to live unenvied. But if any persons of piety towards God, and fidelity to their Master's cause, live in the world, and refuse to be conformed to it, they must expect the same treatment that he met with. This he hath told them himself, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you," John xv. 18. "The servant is not greater than the Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also," John xv. 20.

But, as they have a Master in heaven, no earthly power can constrain them to deny his name or desert his cause. The reply of Peter and John to the Jewish rulers, when they were commanded "not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus," was in the following terms: "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye," Acts iv. 19. With what invincible constancy and resolution did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's golden image? The case of Daniel was perfectly similar, whom even the king's commandment could not restrain from prayer to God.

When good men are unhappily brought into these circumstances, their conduct is an apparent contradiction to authority. How ready are lordly and oppressive tyrants to style it obstinacy and pride! And when are there wanting slavish and submissive flatterers near every inferior tribunal to aggravate the crime, and to cry, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's friend?" It is not to be imagined indeed, but such as are strangers to true religion must be greatly provoked at those who will not comply implicitly with their commands. There is a remarkable passage in a letter of Pliny the younger to the emperor Trajan, which plainly points out the sentiments entertained by many on this subject. He was a man in other matters abundantly humane, and yet hear his own account of his treatment of the Christians when brought to his tribunal. "I asked them if they were Christians? if they confessed, I asked them again, threatening punishment. If they persisted, I commanded them to be executed;

for I did not at all doubt but, whatever their confession was, their stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished.”

There is a love of dominion natural to all men, which is under no controul or restraint in those who are void of religion. This must naturally dispose them to carry on their schemes, and to insist on having them universally complied with. It frets and provokes them, therefore, to find any who will not be subservient to their pleasures. A refusal to obey, on a principle of conscience, is expressly setting bounds to their authority, and saying, Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further. How few are able to bear this with patience, the history of the world in every age is one continued proof.

Such refusals, also, do always reflect some dishonour upon the measures to which they stand in opposition. Whatever any person refuses to do, he, as far as in him lies, represents as wrong and sinful; and, in some respects, unworthy or unfit to be done. Thus it comes to be considered, not only as withdrawing his own allegiance, but as corrupting and seducing others. And no doubt it tends to draw the attention of the world to the disputed command, and makes some, perhaps, sit and examine what they had before blindly gone into without suspicion.— Hence it naturally follows, that whenever such interference happens between human and divine authority, good men must be considered as disorderly and troublesome; and those of them of all others most troublesome, who with the greatest constancy adhere to their duty, or who with the greatest ho-

neſty and boldneſs, reſiſt and oppoſe corrupt meaſures.

It is leſs ſurpriſing to find inſtances of this between heathen and Chriſtian, between the profeſſing ſervants and open enemies of the true God. But it is aſtoniſhing to think how often the ſame thing has happened between Chriſtian and Chriſtian, who ought to have been better acquainted with the rights of conſcience, the meaſures of ſubmiſſion, and the duty of forbearance. Not only all the perfecutions, but many, if not moſt of the ſchiſms and diviſions that have fallen out in the Chriſtian church, have ariſen from the rigorous impositions of uſurped authority. Unjuſt authority is the very eſſence of popery. The church of Rome has expreſſly claimed a power of making laws to bind the conſcience, diſtinct from the laws of God; and ſeverely puniſhes all who call this authority in queſtion. Nor hath this been confined to them. Proteſtant churches, though their ſeparation is founded upon the very contrary principle, have yet often in practice acted in the ſame arbitrary manner. They inſiſt upon obedience to all their appointments, however ſinful in the judgment of the ſubject; and, as a good man will not comply in ſuch caſes, how often doth it happen that, after they have expelled him from their ſociety, ſtrip him of his office, and robbed him of his maintenance, they alſo caſt out his name as evil, loudly charge him as ſeditious and troubleſome, and the author of all that confuſion which their own tyranny occaſions.

3. One other reaſon why the ſervants of God are accuſed as troubleſome is, becauſe they are, in many

instances, obliged to bear testimony against the sins of others, and openly to reprove them. Reproof is plainly, of all others, the greatest offence and provocation of the proud, and draws down their heaviest resentment, and yet it is often unavoidable. There are some cases in which every Christian, without exception, must feel the constraint of this divine law: "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him," Lev. xix. 17. Some sins are so flagrant in their nature, that even to witness them with silence, would imply some participation of the guilt. In such cases, it is the glory of the poorest and meanest servant of God, to resent the dishonour that is done to his name, and reprove the most exalted sinner.

But this duty, and the odium arising from it, falls most frequently to the share of the prophets and ministers of God, who have received a commission to speak in his name and to plead his cause. The faithful discharge of their duty includes in it plainness and boldness in reprovng sin of every kind. They must assert and maintain the truth, and point out the errors opposite to it, with all their guilty fruits, and all their dreadful consequences. How offensive this to human pride! It must certainly either convince or provoke, reform or inflame. When righteous Lot says, in the mildest terms, to the lustful Sodomites, "I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly," how fierce is the answer! "And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge," Gen. xix. 9.

How many martyrs to truth have there been since

the world began ! Without mentioning those in the Old Testament, you see John the Baptist lost his life by reprovng the incestuous adultery of Herod and Herodias. Our blessed Saviour gives the following account of the hatred of the world to him, and the contrary reception it gave to his temporising brethren, “ The world cannot hate you ; but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil.” By consulting the history of the gospel you will find, that what gave rise to the conspiracy of the Scribes and Pharisees against him, was his dragging off the mask under which they lay concealed, and discovering the errors of their doctrine and the licentiousness of their practice. When they “ perceived that he spake against them, they took counsel against him to put him to death ;” and accomplished it so soon as they could do it with safety. But there cannot be a better example, or indeed a more lively and well drawn picture of the effect of plain and just reproof, than in the case of Stephen when pleading his cause before the Jewish rulers : “ Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted ? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the just One ; of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers.—When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth,” Acts vii. 51, 52. 54. It is plainly for this reason that the apostles, in their prayers for assistance, do almost constantly ask that they may be endued with a proper degree of boldness and resolu-

tion: "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word," Acts iv. 29. Many other prayers are to be found in the apostolic writings which run in the same strain. See Eph. vii. 19. 2 Theff. iii. 2.

It is very natural for every one, at this distance, to imagine, that he could have been in no danger of making such an obstinate resistance to the truth, or persecuting, with such implacable enmity, those who espoused it. But, my brethren, all worldly men, in every age, have still the same abhorrence of the faithful servants of God; the same impatience of reproof when it touches themselves. Our Saviour draws their character with great beauty, in speaking to the Pharisees: "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets." Matt. xxiii. 29, 30, 31. It is very delicately hinted in this last verse, that they were of the same nature, that they grew, as it were, upon the same stock, and therefore it might be expected that they would bring forth the same fruit. I cannot but here mention a remark of a very eminent writer upon this passage, "That all nations partake much of this disposition of the Jews, to honour the dead saints and persecute the living*."

* Tillotson.

I have taken notice above, that in every period of the church, the most faithful of the servants and ministers of God have, in fact, been counted troublesome by corrupt and worldly men. The same passages of history constantly shew, that this has arisen chiefly from their attempts to stem the tide of prevailing vice; from their boldness and faithfulness in reproving fashionable crimes. In the twelfth century, Arnulphus, a devout man and excellent preacher, speaks thus to the clergy: "I know that you seek my life, and will shortly kill me: But why? I speak the truth to you, I reprehend your pride and haughtiness, avarice and luxury; therefore I please you not*." And in the fourteenth century, an ancient writer speaks of the court of Rome in the following terms: "For what can you conceive will happen where virtue was long ago extinct and buried? There surely truth is the highest crime, and of itself sufficient to procure the hatred of many. For how can we expect but that should happen, where a true word cannot be spoken without a great reproach—where the worst of men are promoted—where simplicity is esteemed madness—where good men are rendered ridiculous, inasmuch that now scarce any of them doth appear but to be laughed at. These few things truth itself hath dared to speak, whence you may gather what you are to think of many others, which fear doth force me to conceal †." It is unnecessary to cite many passages to this purpose; I shall therefore conclude this head with the following just reflection of the pious, dili-

* Whitby's App. to his book on Host-worship.

† Petrarch's Ep.

gent, and catholic Mr Baxter: "I see there is no help for it, but we must offend wicked men. It is impossible to avoid it but either by our silence or their patience. Silent we cannot be, because the word of God commands us to speak; and patient they cannot be, because sin has the dominion in their hearts."

We now proceed, in the last place, to make some practical improvement of what has been said. And,

In the first place, You may learn from what has been said upon this subject, the just and proper answer to an objection against the gospel, much insisted on by its enemies, viz. That it has introduced persecution for conscience sake, with which the world was in a great measure unacquainted before. There are few subjects on which infidels enlarge with greater pleasure, than the cruel hatred and animosity that has prevailed, the bloody wars that have been carried on, nay, the savage and inhuman massacres that have been perpetrated on a religious account, since the publication of the gospel. I think this objection is but seldom answered as it might be. It is usually indeed, and justly observed, that whatever may have been done by those professing the gospel, there is no countenance given in it to such a spirit and practice. But the objection is not wholly removed while infidels are allowed still to contend, as if it served their own cause, that persecution has been its constant attendant and inseparable effect. We ought, therefore, to wrest this argument out of their hands, and first to produce this fact as an accomplishment of our Saviour's pre-

dition: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household," Matt. x. 34, 35, 36.

Having gone thus far, we have reason to contend that the disciples of Christ have always suffered, and never inflicted the injury, though they have often been obliged to bear the blame. The multitude of heathen religions, though not always, yet did generally agree together: and well they might, for they were all from the same author. None of them, however, could agree with the gospel, for this plain reason, that "no lie is of the truth." But from what quarter did the violence proceed? Did not the dreadful persecutions against the Christians, in the three first centuries, proceed from the heathens? Did the Christians commit any other crime against them, than pointing out the sin and danger of their idolatrous worship and immoral practices? Was not this alone sufficient to raise a cry against them, as turning the world upside down? And in all the subsequent persecutions among professing Christians, was it any thing else than the proud, violent, and worldly spirit of those who made a gain of godliness, oppressing the few real believers of every denomination? There is an antichristian spirit in every church that shews itself in persecution, in a greater or lesser degree. But there can be nothing more unjust, than to attribute the perse-

cution of Chr st's disciples by his enemies and theirs to the spirit of his religion.

Is it then boldly affirmed by some, that the Christian is the only religion in the world that leads to persecuon? I answer, on the contrary, It is the only religion that has suffered persecuon from all its numerous enemies; and, at the same time, it is the only religion in the world that requires, and points out the obligation of mutual forbearance, and makes the just and proper division between the things that are Cesar's and the things that are God's. That it is often blamed as persecuting others, is a proof and illustration of this truth. For all is of a piece, and the false accusation arises from the source which I have opened up above, and confirmed by examples produced from history. To these I shall now only add one observation, which comes in with peculiar propriety here, That innumerable instances may be given, in which those very persons who were ready to lift the secular arm against good men, have loudly complained of the exercise of discipline, and the censures of the church upon their crimes. These they often style persecuon; and always affirm to flow from a persecuting spirit. But as they are often necessary, so even when they are unjustly applied, it is plain from their very nature, that if they be groundless they must be perfectly harmless.

Thus the state of the world is so far from being an objection against, that it is a proof of the truth of the gospel. True Christians have suffered from every quarter; from within and from without; from open enemies and from false brethren. They have

been first persecuted, and then slandered as persecuting others; nay, obliged to bear the odium of that very oppression under which they groaned. Of all this they are fairly fore-warned by their Saviour, who says, "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." They are exposed to injurious treatment from many, and may expect to suffer without cause. None however make so cruel a havock as those wolves who put on sheep's clothing; and yet, of all their cruelty, the poor suffering sheep must bear the blame.

2. From what hath been said you may see the guilt and danger of those who falsely accuse the children of God. Perhaps you may be ready wholly to refuse the charge, and to say, Where is the necessity, where is the propriety of this at present? Have we not all civil and religious liberty? and are not religion and its ministers in esteem and repute? I answer, It is never unnecessary. The fault I complain of is no part of the peculiar degeneracy of this age. It is not confined to any one age, country, or profession, but is common to them all; and we would but deceive ourselves, should we fondly fancy we are exempted from it. Nay, our present state as a church and nation, seems to render such a warning peculiarly seasonable. We have long enjoyed outward peace. In every other country this has introduced a worldly spirit, ambition, luxury and sloth. And is there no vestige of these characters among us now? Who will pretend it? Are there not some who cannot endure such strictness as is inconsistent with conformity to the gay and fashionable world? Do not all such incline to charge every

profession of piety with hypocrisy? Do they not consider every faithful reprovcr as an enemy to their peace? Do they not hear with secret pleasure, and spread with apparent triumph, every report to the prejudice of such troublers of Israel?

This then is the character, and as many of you as conscience charges with the guilt may see your danger. You may see whose cause you plead, and whose reward you shall share. What inward enmity do you discover against the spirit and power of true religion? You are of the number of those who "hate the light, and will not come to the light, lest your deeds should be reprovcd." You are of the number of those who say "to the seers, See not, and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, and prophecy deceit." You will not "endure sound doctrine," but love and follow only that which will exercise and amuse your imagination and fancy, soothe and gratify your pride and vanity, or make and keep you at peace with yourselves. You are asleep in security, and will avoid every thing that may tend to disturb or interrupt your dangerous repose. And how hurtful is your conduct to others! You blast the characters and lessen the usefulness of the ministers of Christ. You bring an evil report upon the truth, by rendering them odious or contemptible who bear it. And if we, my brethren, who are ministers of the gospel, imitate this example in any measure; if we discover a suspicion and jealousy, or an aversion and hatred at all who are more diligent than ourselves, what dishonour must fall upon our profession, what

a hindrance is it to the edification of others, and what guilt do we bring upon our own souls !

3. If this has been the constant lot of all the servants of God, to be accused as seditious and troublesome, let every cautious person beware of being misled by the persecuting cry. I ask any man who is conversant in the world, if he hath not, in many instances, been insensibly taught to form a hateful idea, or to entertain a despicable opinion of many ministers, without the least personal knowledge, the least satisfying evidence or proof. What is the reason ? Why, he hath been told, that they are proud, hypocritical, factious, censorious, troublesome men. Well, the thing is possible, no doubt ; but, in the mean time, it is far from being certain : and this sort of character industriously propagated is no evidence of it at all, or rather is a presumption of the contrary. You see, from the instances produced above, that this is a reproach perpetually thrown upon the most upright and faithful of the servants of God ; that it may very naturally arise from their fidelity itself ; and that it cannot be avoided by those who resist the corrupt measures, who reprove the public vices, or who shame the criminal laziness and negligence of others. An ignorant, vicious, worthless minister, is envied by nobody. He is therefore quite safe from all the poisoned arrows which fly from that quarter. He is rather a foil to many, to set off and illustrate their own comparative excellence. He is therefore often pardoned, pitied, and protected. Whereas a faithful minister, who openly dares to bear witness against the apostasy of others, is traduced and slandered, loaded with imaginary

crimes, and often falls a martyr to the sinking cause of truth and righteousness.

4. Since the world is so prone to receive the accusation of faction against the children of God, let them be careful to give no real ground for it. Unjust calumny has sometimes the contrary effect. When men find that it is impossible to please a capricious world, or wholly to escape slander, they are apt to give up all sollicitude upon that head, and take no farther pains to avoid suspected appearances. This I take to be precisely what the Scripture calls being "overcome of evil." But how much better is it "to overcome evil with good!" Let us, as often as possible, confute the accusation by an unblameable carriage; and when we must suffer, let us be careful that we suffer not as evil doers, but for well doing. For this purpose I would humbly offer to ministers the two following directions, which I esteem of great moment.

(1.) Let all our zeal for the glory of God be conducted, not only with steadiness but with meekness. Let us ever remember, that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Let our language be always strictly guarded, and free from expressions of rage and fury. If we are faithful to our duty, it will sufficiently provoke sinners, we need not add to it by any mixture of human passion. What noble and effectual principles are we furnished with in Scripture for avoiding every dangerous extreme! Love to God and love to man make up the sum of practical religion. These are the immediate fruits of faith, and all the truths of the gospel tend to strengthen and improve them. And as love to God

produces indignation against sin, resolution and boldness in opposing it, so love to man will naturally produce the deepest compassion for the miserable state of every enemy of God, and prevent firmness from degenerating into violence.

(2.) The other direction I would offer upon this subject is, that ministers take care to avoid officiously intermeddling in civil matters. A minister should be separated and set apart for his own work; he should be consecrated to his office. It is little glory to him to be eminently skilled in any other science, except such as may be handmaids to theology, and are by him habitually turned into a divine channel. Ministers giving themselves to worldly employments have been commonly of bad fame; and where there is a sufficient provision made for their maintenance, seems to be an unjust alienation of their time and talents. But it is still more sinful and dangerous for them to desire or claim the direction of such matters as fall within the province of the civil magistrate. When our blessed Saviour says, "My kingdom is not of this world," he plainly intimates to his disciples, that they have no title to intermeddle with state affairs. Nay, he expressly warns them against a lordly and arbitrary dominion, even in their own proper sphere. "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you let him be as the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve," Luke xxii. 25, 26. I cannot help mentioning here, that this is one of the things for which our worthy ancestors of

the church of Scotland (now despised by many) deserve the highest commendation. It was an invariable principle with them to be against the civil power and places of kirkmen. And surely if ministers confine themselves entirely to their own proper duty, they will be much less liable to exception than otherwise. They may then warrantably use the greatest fidelity in reprovng, and the greatest strictness in discipline; and though the wicked slander and oppose them, the good will defend them, and God will support them.

5 In the last place, Since the charge of faction and sedition has been always brought against faithful ministers, let us learn to bear it with patience, and never dissemble the truth, or depart, in any measure, from our duty, in order to avoid it. A person of a generous mind feels a wound in his reputation more deeply than almost any other injury. We are still apt fondly to flatter ourselves, that as religion is truly amiable in itself, and ought to make no enemies, that therefore we shall have none. Some are very apt to omit, or slightly to perform several parts of their duty, through that "fear of man that bringeth a snare." They are unwilling to forego the hope, that by certain prudent compliances they will conciliate and preserve the favour of every man and every party. But the expectation is wholly vain. The experience of many ages hath proved it so. Let us therefore bear with patience the false accusation. It hath been the lot of the best and worthiest men in every age. It was the lot of our blessed Master, and shall we refuse to bear his cross? Is it not "enough for the disciple that he be as his

Master, and the servant that he be as his Lord?" The triumph of sinners is but very short. In a little time all earthly relations shall be dissolved. Then high and low, magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. He shall "render to every one according to his deeds." There the great and noble shall find no partial favour; there the poor and mean shall not escape observation; and there the lying slanderer shall be put to eternal silence. He shall openly acknowledge every faithful servant, and "bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon day."

T H E C H A R G E .

SIR,

AS you are now ordained a minister of Christ, and have received the charge of this congregation, I hope you will bear with me a little, while I offer you a few advices as to the discharge of your important trust. And I cannot help beginning by congratulating you on the unanimous call you have received from this people. However despised by some, I count it a most happy circumstance both for you and them. It introduces you with great advantage. It gives you a fair and impartial hearing; and if you do not preserve their esteem and love, it will probably be, in a great measure, owing to yourself.

I must first of all beseech you, in the most earnest manner, to be strict and frequent in inquiring into the truth and reality of religion in your own soul.

Personal religion is the foundation of all relative duties. They can scarcely be performed in any tolerable measure without it. It is equally necessary to your usefulness and to your comfort. It is a difficult thing, and it is a dreadful thing, to preach an unknown Saviour. Examine, therefore, whether you are "born again;" whether you have "passed from death to life;" whether you are united to Christ by faith; whether you know by experience the difference between a state of nature and a state of grace or not. While I speak this, I assure you I do not mean it, and I hope none will interpret it as any reflection against, or implying any suspicion of you, who have given me no cause. I speak it from a deep impression of its importance to us all. How miserable a case is it to have it as our business to bring others to the kingdom of heaven, and be ourselves at last thrust out. A minister is as much liable to self-deceit as any other, and in some respects more so. We are in danger of thinking ourselves too easily safe, by comparing that outward regularity to which our office itself, even from secular motives, obliges us, with the licentious extravagance of profane sinners. We may also mistake our frequent thinking and speaking of the things of God, in the way of our calling, for an evidence of true religion in ourselves. Nay, we are in danger of mistaking those gifts with which God furnisheth us for the benefit of his own people, for the fruits of the Spirit, and gracious dispositions in our own hearts. Maintain therefore a holy jealousy over yourself. Give "diligence to make your calling and election sure." And if you save your own soul,

you will probably carry many others with you to a better world, and be able to say, after the example of Christ, "Behold I, and the children whom God hath given me"

As to the duties of your office, see that you preach the pure and uncorrupted doctrine of Christ. Preach Christ crucified, who is "the way, and the truth, and the life;" and without whom "no man can go unto the Father." You will never be able to make men truly good, till you convince them of their lost state by nature, and thence make them see the necessity of justification by the free grace of God, through the imputed righteousness of Christ. If you would know what place Christ ought to hold in your preaching and scheme of doctrine, observe what room he fills in the oracles of truth. To the cross of Christ give all the prophets witness. The cross of Christ is the sum and substance of the New Testament. The cross of Christ is the Christian's hope. The cross of Christ is the Christian's glory. You see, by a serious perusal of the New Testament, that the sacred writers largely illustrate the several parts of his character and office, and seem with pleasure to embrace every opportunity of speaking to his praise. They shew how much we are to depend upon him for strength in the discharge of our duty; and enforce all their exhortations by motives drawn from what he hath done, and is still doing for his church and people. You will soon find from experience, that no cold reasonings on the nature and beauty of virtue, can have such influence in mortifying corrupt affections, as a believing view of a pierced Saviour. For this very reason many

detest the doctrine of the cross. It gives a mortal blow to every darling lust. It gives such a view of the holiness and justice of God, as is intolerable to all those who cannot think of breaking their attachment to sin and vanity.

There is one particular reason why I have mentioned this at present, and insisted on it at some length. It is ordinary to meet with serious persons who complain much, that from many pulpits they hear little or nothing of the doctrine of the grace of God; that the grand and leading truths of the gospel are either flatly contradicted or kept entirely out of view, and something else substituted in their place. I am far from saying that this is indeed the case. On the contrary, I tremble to think that it should be but barely possible; for all these doctrines are clearly contained in the Confession of Faith, which every minister in Scotland has subscribed. If, therefore, there be any one among us who doth not preach the doctrine of original sin, of Christ's imputed righteousness, justification by free grace, the necessity of regeneration, and the operations of the Spirit, he is guilty of perjury of the worst kind, for which I know no excuse. Such a person is not only chargeable with departing from the faith, but with an absolute prostitution of conscience, and a whole life of hypocrisy and deceit. I am indeed entirely at a loss how to account for this apprehension in the people, of a difference in doctrine; but as there certainly is such an apprehension, I think I cannot discharge my duty on this occasion, without exhorting you to be clear and explicit upon these heads. The

truth is, they are of so general consequence, and have so necessary a connection with every other part of religion, that, be the subje& what it will, where they are firmly believed, I should imagine the manner of thinking and speaking would be such, as to leave no jealousy of an intended omission.

This leads me to exhort you to preach plainly, or in a way that may be level to the capacities of the hearers, both as to sentiment and expression. God forbid that I should desire you to rush into a pulpit without preparation, to preach in a disorderly method, or in a mean, slovenly or indecent style. All pains should be taken to seek out fit and "acceptable words." But there cannot be a greater absurdity in speaking to a multitude of common people, than to discourse in such a stiff and abstract way, as it is plainly impossible for them to comprehend. Nor is it any less absurdity to dress up an harangue with excessive elegance, and a vain, ornamented show of style. Some discourses may very well be likened to painted windows, which, with fine colours upon themselves, keep out the light, and make the house comfortless and dark. Such conduct is ordinarily followed by those who would willingly recommend themselves to persons of better taste; but it must evidently render them contemptible to every person of sound judgment. However, it is much worse than absurd, for it is very wicked when the everlasting salvation of sinners is at stake, to speak in such a manner as they cannot understand, or such as tends only to amuse their fancy, and never can reach their hearts. If we would know what is a proper and just manner of style and composition

in preaching, let us consider how any man would speak if he was on trial for his own life. Would he not speak with great plainness, earnestness and force? and is not the salvation of souls of infinitely more moment than any man's life? and should it not, if we believe the Scriptures, be more regarded by every faithful minister?

You must also take care to preach experimentally and particularly. You will soon find that this is the only profitable way of preaching, and that, unless you apply general truths to the several classes and characters in your audience, they will make but a sorry improvement of the best instruction. The ignorant cannot, and the wiser will not apply them to themselves. Besides, the general way is not only useless, but pernicious and hurtful. Suppose I should make an encomium on the wise, just, and gracious government of God over his rational creation, and observe what reason all have to rejoice under his administration—should I say so to this audience without distinction, it would be to many a dangerous and stupifying poison. A just and holy God is a consuming fire to all the workers of iniquity. Those who are still in their sins should tremble to think of the government of God.

Besides public preaching, you must be diligent among your people "from house to house." You must not neglect family instruction, and personal admonition or reproof. This is, if not the most useful part of a minister's work, at least absolutely necessary to the success of his preaching. It is also by far the most laborious part, from which slothful men are most apt to excuse themselves. A man may

gratify his vanity by preaching and public performances, or, the neglect being visible, he may be compelled to regularity by fear of reproach or persecution. But diligence in private can scarcely arise from any thing but a sense of duty, and of the presence and observation of God.

The exercise of discipline is another part of your duty which must not be omitted. It is of very great moment to the interest of religion. It is a saying of one of the first reformers, "They that desire to banish discipline, desire to banish Christ from his church." There must needs be offences in the Christian church. But when discipline is neglected, then the offence becomes unspeakably more dangerous, especially to the young and weak. It makes them think lightly of the character and privileges of a Christian, when there is either a promiscuous admission to church communion, or when openly wicked persons are suffered to continue without censure. When you come to instruct young persons, in order to renewing their baptismal engagements in the Lord's supper; or if ever you have occasion to instruct a heathen in order to baptism, I can assure you, from experience, you will find the unhappy effect of the low state of discipline among us. It will immediately strike yourself, and these catechumens will soon betray, by their discourse, how hard it is to have a just sense of the sanctity of the Christian character, while so many profane persons are suffered to be called Christians; and not a few whose conduct is very exceptionable, continue to be admitted, at stated times, to the seals of God's covenant.

How inexcuseable are we in this neglect! If the

first Christians, without the help or sanction of an establishment, kept so strict a discipline, what might we do who have the countenance and approbation of the civil power. In discipline then be strict, regular, and impartial. Especially be impartial. It is commonly want of impartiality that makes us fail in strictness. You will have many enemies to impartiality in discipline. You will have the great and wealthy, many of whom, though they live in open defiance of the laws and ordinances of Christ, yet will be much offended, and complain of it as a grievous injury, if by a judicial sentence you deprive them of his name. Nay, you will find in every congregation some professing piety, who, though they are well pleased with, and commend the strict exercise of discipline in the case of others, yet when it comes to touch themselves, or their own relations, will use many arts to evade it. But if you be firm and unbiassed in so good a cause, it will have a sensible effect.

This leads me to exhort you, in the whole of your work, public and private, to beware of the sin of man-pleasing. I do not say, beware of popularity; because, in the sense to which common language hath confined that word, it is but one half of the snare. Besides, in propriety of speech, popularity should signify only being accepted and beloved, which in itself is neither duty nor sin, but a blessing. Man-pleasing signifies, in Scripture, having this as the end and motive of our actions, rather than being acceptable to God. You ought indeed for edification, to avoid displeasing any without necessity. But

as in this, so in every other thing, you should have a far higher principle than merely courting the favour either of great or small, good or bad. It is, doubtless, a mean and despicable principle, to act only with a view of gaining the applause of the vulgar and ignorant. But I have often wondered, how some should so boldly and uncharitably lay this to the charge of their brethren, without considering how easy it is, with at least equal justice, to presume that they are under the influence of, and acting with a view to please the great. I am sure there is a much stronger temptation to this than the former. And, if I am not mistaken, fawning and servility hath been the road in which ambitious and corrupt churchmen have travelled to preferment in every age. The truth is, they are equally detestable in the sight of God; but the last is much more destructive to the interest of religion than the first. The favour of the multitude can scarcely be obtained, without either the truth or the appearance of piety; but the favour of the great is often obtained by silence, and suffering them in their crimes, being assistant in their pleasures, or subservient to their political designs.

To deliver you, Sir, from both, remember the condition on which you hold your office. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life: the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I

require at thine hand," Ezek. iii. 17, 18. Forget then the foolish accusations of popularity or vanity; and consider that your people are daily carried to their graves, and you must give an account of every soul that perishes through your neglect.

To conclude, Be much in earnest prayer to God that he would fit you for your work, and crown your labours with success. Prayer is absolutely necessary to the steadfastness and growth of every believer, and especially to a minister. If you believe the gospel, you will believe that "every good gift cometh from above;" that God only can make you an able and useful pastor; and this will make you importunate with him for a plentiful measure of the Holy Spirit to fit you for his service. And I desire to join in praying that God, for Christ's sake, would make you an "able minister of the New Testament," and help you to preach the gospel, not with the wisdom of "words," but with "the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."

EXHORTATION TO THE PEOPLE.

MY BRETHREN,

YOU have heard the charge given to your minister. Are there, then, so many duties incumbent on him by his standing in the relation of a pastor to you? Is not the relation mutual? And are there not several correspondent duties incumbent on you as his people? I beg your patience while I put you in mind of a few of the most important and necessary.

In the first place, It is evidently your duty diligently to attend upon his ministry. It is plainly impossible that you can profit by him if you do not hear him. I am sorry that there are many in these days who pour contempt upon the ordinances of Christ's institution. But, in particular, there hath been of late a great and remarkable desertion of public worship by those of higher rank. There is a happy opportunity in this case to put all such among you in mind, that having subscribed a call to their minister, they stand bound by consent to attend upon him. Is it not surprising to think that any should forget the terms in which that invitation runs? You intreat him "to take the charge of your souls, and promise him all due obedience and submission in the Lord." Can a man honestly subscribe this, who seldom comes within the walls of any church? One would be counted infamous in the world, who should act in the face of a signed obligation, in any other matter, or who even should falsify a solemn promise. And is it less criminal because it relates to religion and the service of God? It is indeed seldom repented or punished by men, because the offence is not immediately against them, but it remains to be punished by that righteous God—"to whom vengeance belongs—and who will not be mocked."

In the next place, my brethren, let me intreat you to be tender of the character of your minister, and of ministers in general. As their office makes the guilt of their sins great, and as a stain on their character is most hurtful to religion, on both accounts you ought not rashly to receive an accusation against

them. I do not mean to ask indulgence to the unworthy, I give them up freely to that reproach and contempt which they justly deserve. But let it fall upon the person, and not upon the office. Do not transfer the faults of particulars to the whole order. It is easy to observe the different reception which the faults or miscarriages of ministers meet with from persons differently disposed. The good are affected with grief and concern for the offence, or filled with zeal and indignation against the sinner; but loose and careless persons disparage the profession, and bless themselves in their own uniformity and consistency of character. You may spare your reflections, "that ministers are but men, ministers are but like other men," and the like, when I assure you we deny it not. We have all the same great interest at stake. We often speak the more earnestly to you, lest, while we preach the gospel to others, we ourselves should be cast-aways; and many times describe the workings of a deceitful, wandering, slothful, worldly mind, by taking the copy from our own.

It falls very properly in my way on this occasion, to take notice of a reproach thrown upon ministers by the mistake or perversion of two of the questions usually put at an ordination, and which you have just heard put to your minister. They are supposed by many to be such as no man can answer with truth, and so quite improper to be put at all. The first of them is in the following terms: "Are not zeal for the honour of God, love to Jesus Christ, and desire of saving souls, your great motives and chief inducements to enter into the function of

the holy ministry, and not worldly designs and interests." This is maliciously interpreted to suppose, that a minister in accepting of a fixed charge hath no view or intention, primary or secondary, of being provided of a maintenance. This would be both unnatural and unreasonable. "They that serve at the altar must live by the altar." The plain meaning is, That the great motives of a minister in consecrating himself to this employment, and accepting the particular station assigned him, ought to be the honour of God and interest of religion, as expressed above. And surely that this should be the case hath nothing in it incredible in our country, the provision for the ministry not being so large but a man of tolerable abilities hath a much greater hazard of rising to wealth and dignity in many other employments. But, alas, how ignorant are they who cavil at this question? Do they not know that every Christian is bound habitually and supremely to regard the glory of God in all his actions? This is not peculiar to ministers, except so far as they ought to be exemplary in every thing. Wo to every man in this assembly, be his employment what it will, if he does not habitually point his whole actions to the glory of God. "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your bodies, and your spirits, which are God's," 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

The other question is this, "Have you used any undue methods, by yourself or others, in procuring this call?" It is impossible to find fault with this question, but by leaving out the word *undue*. And indeed it is so far from being wrong, that there

would be no harm if it were more particularly explained. It was probably intended to discourage all bribing and solicitation, other than a man's real character does for itself, or the free unbiassed judgment of others inclines them to do in his behalf. I apprehend it does reach a reproof to all those who either promote or hinder settlements from political connections, or in expectation of temporal favours, and to those who, by promises or threatenings, endeavour to influence their inferiors in such a cause. In the mean time I dare say it will be allowed, that any thing of this kind done by a minister himself, or at his direction, in his own favour, would be very wrong; and, blessed be God, it is at present among us considered as highly indecent and criminal.

I must also put you in mind of the great duty of family instruction and government. Heads of families must prepare their children and servants for receiving benefit by public instruction, and endeavour by repetition to fix it in their minds. It is our duty to speak plainly, no doubt; but it is impossible, preserving the dignity of the pulpit, to speak in such a manner as to be understood by those who have had no previous instruction in a familiar way. It is like casting seed upon an unopened, unprepared soil, which takes no root, and brings forth no fruit. Is it not hard that, when many are so ready to find fault with every neglect of ministers, and sometimes expect more work from one than ten can perform, they should take so little pains in their families, these smaller districts, which are committed to their own charge?

To conclude all, Strive together with your mini-

ster in your prayers to God for him. There is no way more effectual to prepare him for serving you in the gospel, and there is no way more proper for preparing you to attend upon his ministry. If you make conscience of this duty, you will come to receive the answer of your prayers, and indeed to hear the word of God. Alas, that there should be so few of our hearers of this charitable, sympathizing kind. We have some stupid and insensible hearers, some proud and disdainful hearers, many criticising and censuring hearers, but few praying hearers. Let all that fear God give themselves to this duty. And let them not only remember that corner of God's vineyard in which their own lot is cast, but the kingdom of Christ in general; and pray that his name may be great, "from the rising of the sun unto his going down." Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

PRAYER FOR NATIONAL PROSPERITY, AND
FOR THE REVIVAL OF RELIGION,
INSEPARABLY CONNECTED.



Preached on Thursday, February 16. 1758, being
the Day appointed in Scotland for a Public Fast.

ISA. li. 9.

*Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord :
Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of
old. Art not thou it that hath cut Rahab and
wounded the dragon ?*

MY BRETHREN,

WE are this day called by our Sovereign to the duty of solemn fasting and humiliation, and to earnest prayer for the blessing of God on his councils and arms. Religion and humanity conspire in urging us to a hearty compliance, especially while public affairs wear so threatening an aspect. It ought also to awaken the attention, and increase the seriousness of every particular worshipping assembly.

that they are joining with so many others in intreating deliverance from these national calamities, in which all are equally concerned.

We have often, for some years past, professed to humble ourselves in the sight of God, and have done it, alas! with a shameful coldness and indifference, or with an hypocrisy still more criminal. But it is remarkable, that such is the situation of affairs at present, as hath given an alarm even to some of the most insensible, and constrained them to consider this duty as now somewhat more than a form. There has been, for some time past, such a continuance and increase of public judgments, such a series of abortive projects, and broken disconcerted schemes, as makes the most obstinate and inconsiderate stand and pause, and seriously ask, Is there not a cause?

Our setting apart this day, and applying ourselves to the duty of fasting and prayer, implies a confession of the power and providence of God.

It implies that we believe in him as the almighty Creator and righteous Governor of the world; the supreme Disposer of every event, and sovereign Arbitrator of the fate of nations. How were it to be wished that there was a just sense of this truth on the minds of all of every rank! and that, in all who are in any measure sincere on this occasion, the impression may not be transient and partial, but lasting and effectual! It should excite us to a holy jealousy over ourselves, that we have so often essayed the like duty without any apparent success. "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" The fault, doubtless, lies in ourselves. Our fasts have

not been such as God has chosen, and therefore he hath refused to hear our prayers.

In general, no doubt the evidence and the effect of an acceptable fast, is repentance completed by reformation. Where this is wanting, we are justly liable to the charge brought by the prophet Isaiah against the children of Israel, "Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me, the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth, they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood," Isa. i. 13, 14, 15. There is no question but the unrestrained flood of impiety which has overspread this nation solicits divine vengeance, and prevents the efficacy even of the sincere prayers that are offered up for deliverance and mercy. But as, with respect to particular persons, every error or defect in practice is the consequence of an erroneous or defective principle, as every vicious action proceeds from an impure heart, so, in a national capacity, I am persuaded that our fasting and prayer has been fundamentally wrong, or essentially defective in itself, and therefore has been followed by little or no sensible fruit; or rather, that impiety which it should have removed, it hath only contributed to increase.

For this reason my intention at this time is to point out to you what is the just and proper object of prayer for divine aid in a time of public calamity,

as well as the great encouragement to its exercise. For this there is a proper foundation in the passage of Scripture just read in your hearing. In the former part of the chapter the prophet had pronounced many gracious promises of inward and spiritual prosperity, and of outward protection and security to the church, though surrounded and threatened by enemies to her interests in both respects. He then changes the form of his discourse, personates believers, and in their name, as one of them, addresses to God the prayer in the text: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord: awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art not thou it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon?"

The beauty and strength of this language, the justness and force of the figures here used, it is almost impossible to overlook. The prophet prays for such a display of divine power and mercy as might be signal and sensible. "Awake, awake, put on strength," that is, exert thy power, discover thy glory in such a manner, as that thy present forbearance may be like the vigour of a waking man, compared to the defenceless and inactive state of one that is fast asleep. "O arm of the Lord!" This expression, the arm of the Lord, with the addition of making bare his holy arm, is frequently used in Scripture; and it is so strong, and at the same time so intelligible a figure, that it is impossible to amplify or explain, without weakening it. In the last part of the verse he animates his own faith, and enforces his request, by calling to remembrance past transactions, and former displays of the power and

grace of an unchangeable God. By Rahab and the dragon we are to understand Egypt and her king, as appears by comparing other passages of Scripture, particularly by Pſal. lxxxvi. 4. and Ezek. xxix. 3. the laſt of which runs thus: "Thus ſaith the Lord, Behold I am againſt thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the miſt of his rivers; which hath ſaid, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myſelf."

In diſcourſing on this ſubject, what I propoſe, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, is,

I. To point out to you the import of this prayer in the firſt part of this paſſage, "Awake, awake, put on ſtrength, O arm of the Lord!"

II. To conſider the encouragement included in the laſt part of it, "Awake as in ancient days, in the generations of old: art not thou it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon?"

III. To apply the ſubject to our preſent ſituation.

And we are to conſider,

I. The meaning and import of the prayer: "Awake, awake, put on ſtrength, O arm of the Lord." And in this I have no hope either of inſtructing or perſuading any but thoſe who have ſome meaſure of real religion, who do unfeignedly believe, and will, when called upon, recollect the conſtant ſuperintendency of divine providence. Theſe only will be ſenſible, that as every event is directed and over-ruled by the Almighty, ſo there are righteous, wiſe and gracious purpoſes to be ſerved by

them. All men, it is true, are ready to complain under distress. The most wicked and profligate, "when the waters are gone into their soul," when they feel their misery, will cry for relief. And as they will turn them on every hand, and lay hold on every twig that may afford the least prospect of saving them from sinking, so the terror of divine power, with which public calamity is sometimes accompanied, will even make them cry unto God. But there is a great difference between this complaint of the miserable, and the prayer of faith which proceeds upon just views of the nature and government of God, and is assured of success. It may sometimes please God to make use of desolating judgments or alarming public strokes to awaken a secure thoughtless generation; but dutiful, acceptable and successful prayer for their removal, can only be the work of his own children.

Perhaps it may be thought unnecessary to direct persons of this character to the proper object of their prayers, as they must be supposed habitually to flow from right principles, and to point at just and warrantable ends. But it is certain that, when wickedness and profaneness greatly and universally prevail in any nation, the real servants of God are not only few in number, but even this little flock always receives some degree of infection. This we are taught to expect by our blessed Saviour, who says, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." They may both be negligent and defective in their duty, restraining prayer before God, and may be in a great measure unmindful of the great and principal views with which

they ought to offer up their intercessory requests. But, hoping that all such among you as are justly liable to this charge will discern the light, and feel the force of divine truth, it is my desire to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.

And, in general, such a petition as this, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord," suggests to us, that our prayers for divine interposition and deliverance from public calamities should be supremely directed to the glory of God. This, as it is upon the whole the leading purpose of every real believer, so it ought to hallow every single action, and purify every particular desire. Therefore our prayers must be conceived in such a manner, and our desires after deliverance must be so qualified, that the supreme honour due to God may be preserved inviolate, that duty may maintain its precedence before interest, and sin may be still more feared and avoided than suffering. The great end both of personal affliction and national correction is to weaken our attachment to present and temporal enjoyment, by staining its glory, and convincing us of its vanity. If then our chief or only aim in asking deliverance from outward calamity, is that we may again recover the ease and quiet of security, and the pleasure of plenty, though we may seem to honour God by imploring his aid, yet is our homage really given to a sensual idol.

That this is neither impossible nor unfrequent, is plain from the history of the children of Israel. They often applied to God in their straits: "When he slew them, then they sought him, they returned and inquired early after God," Psal. lxxviii. 34.

But this sort of seeking, merely for present relief or temporal mercies, was far from being acceptable to him. We are told that it was tempting God thus “to ask meat for their lust,” Psal. lxxviii. 18. In opposition to this, let us look into the grounds assigned in Scripture for God’s granting deliverance, and thence learn with what views we ought to implore it. The Psalmist says, “Nevertheless he saved them for his name’s sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known,” Psal. cvi. 8. And the prophet Ezekiel, “But I wrought for my name’s sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known to them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.”

But in order to illustrate this a little further, observe, that a just regard to the glory of God in our prayers implies the two following things. In the first place, That we expect deliverance from God alone, desire that it may be attended with such circumstances as his hand and power may be seen in it, and are willing to acknowledge him as the supreme and only Author of it. This is plainly included in the words of the prophet, “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord.” As if he had said, In thee alone is our hope; “curst be the man that maketh flesh his arm.” A profane irreligious people are always prone, in undertaking any enterprise, to put their trust in human prowess, to glory and boast in the greatness of their strength. And when they are disappointed in their expectations, they are ready to dwell so much upon second causes, that they entirely overlook, or are with

great difficulty brought to acknowledge the supreme agency of God. We may, however, be sensible, by his taking to himself so often in Scripture the title of the Lord of hosts, "great in might and strong in battle," that such conduct is robbing him of the glory that is justly his due. Many are the warnings we have in the word of God, not to place too much confidence in any human means of safety. "Put not your trust in princes, (says the Psalmist) nor in the son of man in whom there is no help," Psal. cxlvi. 3. "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety, neither can he deliver any by his great strength," Psal. xxxiii. 16, 17. And there is no Scripture truth more frequently or more sensibly confirmed in the course of providence. How often do we find, both in former and later ages, the events of war diametrically opposite to the greatest human probability, and the most confident human expectation!

Now prayer for divine interposition should always be made under a deep impression of this truth. And indeed we shall never come to importunity and fervency in prayer for such a mercy, till we are somewhat affected with it. All the honour that is given to man is taken from God. All trust and dependence on human means as such, or on their own account, divides and weakens our reliance on God. But when he is considered as the single and only source of relief, we apply with that ardour and earnestness which necessity and extremity suggest. This doth not hinder the diligent use and application of

outward means, but keeps them in their proper place, induces us to ask the divine blessing upon them, and prevents us from provoking the divine jealousy, by idolizing and trusting in them.

It ought also to be our desire, that the glory of divine power may visibly shine in our deliverance; not only that his hand may do it, but that his hand may be seen in it, and, if possible, to the conviction of all. Nothing is more impious, and nothing more provoking to God, than when men arrogate to themselves the honour of what they have done by his help, or acquired by the bounty of his providence. Hear the language of the proud monarch of the east: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" Dan. iv. 30. But mark the unexpected change by the more powerful word of the King of kings. "When the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee," Dan. iv. 31. How often in Scripture is the destruction and punishment of kings and princes assigned to their self-sufficiency, insolence and pride? Thus in that remarkable prophecy against the king of Babylon: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look

upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms? that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof? that opened not the house of his prisoners?" Isa. xiv. 13. 17. How strongly does this prove, that in order to pray acceptably for the interposition of divine providence, we should be willing that God alone should have the honour entire and undivided: "that the lofty looks of man should be humbled, and the haughtiness of man should be bowed down, and the Lord alone exalted in that day," Isa. ii. 11. Was it not thus that the ancient warriors of the holy nation fought and prospered? In confidence of divine aid, or resigned to the divine will, they went out and played the men for their people and the cities of their God. And when they had done so, they acknowledged that his right hand and his holy arm had gotten HIM the victory. See the song of Moses on his victory over the Egyptians: "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: Thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble," Exod. xv. 6, 7.

I cannot conclude this branch of the subject without observing that we have had, in the course of Providence, a very recent instance, both of a singular appearance of the hand of God in defence of a righteous cause, and a modest ascription of it to the power of the Highest. That prince who appears now to be the chief outward support of the Pro-

testant cause in Europe, has been enabled literally, according to the ancient promise, "with five to chase a hundred, and with a hundred to put ten thousand to flight." The greatest earthly potentates had combined against him, and conspired his ruin. Assured of victory, they were forging chains for his followers, and dividing his inheritance by lot. But in the name of the Lord he set up his standard. The Lord turned the counsels of his enemies into confusion. His victories have been numerous, extraordinary and important. And he hath all along avoided boasting and vain-glory, and piously acknowledged that "salvation belongeth unto God."

In the second place, In applying to God for an extraordinary interposition of his providence, we ought also to pray for a dispensation of his grace and mercy. When we pray that the arm of the Lord may awake and put on strength, it should be that a revival of religion may accompany temporal relief, and that by a plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit many sinners may be delivered from the worst of bondage, and brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God. As this should be in itself the object of our desire, so it should be inseparably joined with the other, and their mutual connection still kept in view. Temporal mercies to a nation, as well as to particular persons, ought always to be made subservient to the promoting of truth and righteousness. It is remarkable that these two things are always joined in Scripture. And, indeed, if temporal mercies be considered in the light I formerly mentioned, it is impossible that they can be put asunder. Let any one consult the intercessory prayers

in which deliverance from external calamity is intreated, the prophecies in which it is promised, or the songs of praise in which it is celebrated, and he will find that the purity and spiritual prosperity of God's heritage is still kept in view. They are considered as involved in one another, and the one as only valuable because leading to the other. Instead of enumerating many passages, I shall only mention one of the prophet Isaiah: "And I will turn mine hand upon thee, and purely purge away all thy dross, and take away all thy tin. And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Sion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness."

And, my brethren, is not the arm of the Lord and the glory of his power particularly displayed, when the influence and dominion of error is destroyed, and the obstinacy and rebellion of sinners is subdued? This is a more extraordinary, as well as a more excellent effect of power, than producing the greatest changes in our outward state and condition. It seems to be on this account that in Scripture the Saviour of sinners, the King of Sion, is so often represented as glorious in his person, and great in his power: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace," Isa. ix. 6. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Most Mighty, with thy glory

and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things," Psal. xlv. 3, 4. These, and a multitude of other passages, plainly shew that the conversion of sinners, and defeating the powers of the prince of darkness, require an exertion, and is a signal display of the strength of the divine arms.

But as it is a matter of the utmost importance and propriety at present, I must beg your patience while I endeavour a little to illustrate the necessity of joining earnest intercession for the revival of religion and the glory of Christ's kingdom, with our prayers for a recovery of national prosperity.

For illustrating this, let us attend to the three following particulars.

1. We have no warrant to ask the last of these without the first.

2. We have no reason to expect that it will be separately bestowed.

3. If it should, in any degree, it would not be a blessing but a curse.

First, We have no warrant to ask national prosperity without a revival of religion. Our prayers are then only warrantable when we adjust and proportion our esteem of the mercies of God to their real worth, and desire them for their proper ends. Now a love to one's country, and a desire of its outward welfare, is, no doubt, an excellent and an amiable disposition. But it is much more so to be concerned for their everlasting interest. Why doth the love of our country merit any praise, but because it is a disposition and tendency to communicate hap-

pinefs? But what is temporal to eternal happiness? What is a fruitful field to a renewed heart? peace at home to peace with God? security from an earthly oppressor to deliverance from the wrath to come? A compassionate heart bleeds for the misery of his fellow-creatures in poverty or bondage; but a sanctified heart is still more deeply affected with the ignorance and guilt of others, and their endless consequences. Now is it a warrantable manner of offering up our desires to God, to admire or ask a share in the bounty of his providence, while we despise and trample upon the riches of his grace?

But that such prayers are unwarrantable, doth not only appear from the unjust preference given to lesser before greater mercies, but from their being a total perversion of our desires from the great point in which they ought to centre. The gifts of God are intended to lead us to the Giver; the events of his providence to be subservient to the methods of his grace. When, therefore, we ask temporal prosperity, without an equal, or rather superior solicitude for the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, we are alienating his mercies from their proper use, turning them into weapons of rebellion against him, and cherishing that love of the world which is destructive of the love of God.

Secondly, As all such desires are unwarrantable and disorderly, so we have no reason to expect that they shall be granted. Let us recall to mind this important truth, that God is the supreme Disposer of all events. Every prosperous event is the effect of his bounty. Every calamity is the rod of his

anger, and carries his commission. Are there not, then, wise ends to be served by every thing appointed by him? Affliction springeth not out of the dust. National calamity is not the rigour of an arbitrary tyrant, but the wise chastisement of a gracious Father, or the punishment of a righteous Judge. He ruleth the nations "sitting upon the throne of his holiness;" and unless when he hath a mind to "make a full end" of a people ripe for destruction, gives them for a season into the hands of their enemies to bring about their reformation. If, then, public calamity bears a commission for this purpose from him whose work is perfect, what reason is there to expect that it will be removed before it hath attained its end? Will he not repeat the stroke, and increase its severity, till it procure submission? It is true, we cannot precisely say how far the forbearance of God may go, or how long his patience may endure. There may be a remission or suspension of the final stroke for their farther trial. But it is certain that when there is no returning to God by repentance, there can be no reasonable ground to hope that his displeasure will cease, or its effects be removed.

Thirdly, Though temporal deliverance were granted to a nation, in any measure, without a dispensation of the Spirit and revival of religion, it would be no blessing but a curse, and could not be of any long duration. It would be giving them up to themselves, to fill up the measure of their iniquities, that, when the appointed time of vengeance should come, their destruction might be more terrible and signal. It is remarkable that this is found among the judg-

ments of God, and reckoned one of the most dreadful, when he ceases to strive with a people, and gives them up to themselves. Thus he says by the Psalmist, "But my people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would have none of me; so I gave them up to their own hearts lusts, and they walked in their own counsels," Psal. lxxxii. 11, 12. So also saith the prophet Hosea, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone," Hof. iv. 17. The consequence of this is the continuance and increase of all manner of wickedness. Then spiritual judgments come in the room of temporal, which, though they are less sensible, are but so much the more fatal. Blindness of mind, hardness of heart, and an obstinate contempt of instruction, are the usual consequences of un sanctified prosperity. In such circumstances a nation may exult, and bless themselves in their abundant wealth; nay, they may be the envy of their foolish and short-sighted neighbours, but to the eye of faith their condition is most wretched and deplorable. To what a pitch of impiety they may proceed when all restraints are withdrawn, some nations recorded in history are a standing and melancholy proof. And the sudden desolation sometimes inflicted, after long forbearance, by the Lord of nature, on cities and kingdoms, by fire from heaven, by earthquakes, pestilence, or the sword, is a fearful presage of the fate of all who in the day of recompence shall suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.

All these things are plainly founded on the word of God, and manifest consequences of the divine government. They will, however, make very little

impression on a thoughtless and secure generation, plunged in sensuality and lust; and least of all on those who have expressly lifted themselves under the banner of infidelity, and learned to be profane upon principle. This is one of the worst symptoms of our present condition; the greater our guilt, and therefore the nearer the danger. Nothing was less looked for by the Babylonian monarch, in the height of his riotous midnight feast, than his kingdom's being taken from him. And yet how speedily was it accomplished, and in how short a time was this superb and opulent city, the "beauty of the Chaldees excellency," turned into a ruinous heap! See *Isa. xiii. 21.* to the end.

I proceed now to the second general head, which was,

II. To consider a little the encouragement to prayer, contained in the last part of the text: "Awake as in the ancient days, as in the generations of old," &c.

In this the prophet animates his faith, and encourages his own dependence, and that of others, upon the promises of God, by celebrating the greatness of his power, as manifested in former memorable deliverances granted to his chosen people. He continues his address to the arm of the Lord; and instead of an enumeration of the mighty acts of this arm in ancient days, and the generations of old, he fixes upon one signal and leading display of divine majesty and power, in the destruction of the Egyptians, and the deliverance of Israel from that subjection and bondage in which they were formerly held by that people. This is done with the highest pro-

priety ; for the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage was most remarkable and extraordinary in its circumstances, and the hand of God did most eminently appear in it. Thus the prophet says, in the verse immediately following the text, “ Art not thou it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, that hath made the deeps of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over ? ” From this appearance in behalf of Israel, God often takes his designation. This chiefly constituted the special relation between him and the people of Israel, and on this their obligation to obedience is founded, in the preface or introduction to the moral law : “ I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ” And indeed this deliverance is often considered, and justly, as typical of the still more important deliverance of the elect of God from sin and misery.

Now let us consider a little the effect of such a view upon the mind, and its influence in prayer. This, I think, may be included in the two following particulars :

First, It satisfies us of the power of God, and his ability to save. There can be no prayer addressed to God for relief and deliverance in an acceptable manner, but what proceeds upon a confidence in his power. And there is in men, for the most part, on this subject, a very imperfect and wavering persuasion. Nay, there is often a greater degree of unbelief than they themselves are sensible of, or distinctly apprehend. They are often so held captive by sense, and their attention so much taken up and engrossed by outward means and instruments, that they

are backward to believe or rely even on an almighty, because an invisible power. This was the case often with the children of Israel, even after repeated proofs of the strength of the divine arm. Thus says the Psalmist: "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert? Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the holy One of Israel. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy," Psal. lxxviii. 40, 41, 42. Against this unhappy tendency, God, by the prophet, warns his people, a few verses after the text: "I, even I, am he that comforteth you; who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy; and where is the fury of the oppressor?" Isa. li. 12, 13. And indeed nothing can be more supporting under such fears, than to remember the instances in which God hath formerly made his power known. It is, as it were, realizing the divine perfections, and making us to see him who is invisible. In this very way does the Psalmist recover from a disconsolate state, and dark discouraging views of divine providence. "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. And I said, This is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old,

I will meditate also of all thy works, and talk of thy doings," Pſal. lxxvii. 9,—12.

In the ſecond place, The ſame view ſerves to aſcertain us of the mercy of God, and his readineſs to help us in diſtreſs. It is not enough that we have ever ſo unſhaken a perſuaſion of the power of God, unleſs we have ſome ground to believe that it ſhall appear in our behalf. Now former inſtances of extraordinary providential deliverance not only afford a proof of divine power, but ſhew us in what caſes we have reaſon to expect that it ſhall be exerted. That part of the providence of God which is already open to our view, enables us, from analogy, to infer what ſhall be his ſubſequent conduct; at leaſt ſo far as to direct and encourage us in our own duty. We know, for example, that he is a refuge in times of trouble to thoſe that are in diſtreſs; and that in extremity, when all human help fails, then is deliverance more to the glory of God. By this very argument does Jehoſaphat conclude and enforce his prayer. "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might againſt this great company that cometh againſt us; neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee," 2 Chron. xx. 12.

We know alſo that his faithfulneſs is engaged to hear thoſe, who, reſuſing to lean on any broken reed, or truſting any refuge of lies, place their confidence in him alone; and that the glory of God is immediately and chiefly concerned in the ſupport and preſervation of his own people. They ſee that he hath, in all ages, counted this his own cauſe; and therefore they ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "They that know thy name will put their truſt in thee, for

thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee," Psal. ix. 10. In fine, former instances of extraordinary deliverance point out the great end and design of such interpositions. That they are for promoting of truth and righteousness, and to make those who are the objects of them cheerful and willing servants to God; not only partakers of the bounty of his providence, but monuments of the riches of his grace. "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah. We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation that keepeth the truth may enter in," Isa. xxvi. 1, 2. "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting and destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise," Isa. lx. 18. From all which it appears, that in prayer properly warranted, and rightly directed, it must give unspeakable confidence and hope to survey the remarkable instances of divine providence, and thence take encouragement to commit our cause to, and rest our hope on the same unchangeable God.

I conclude this head with observing, That in the expression of the prophet, "Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon," he hath a particular view to the eternity and immutability of God. "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." If he hath done great and marvellous things in the most distant ages, "his hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear;" his strength is not impaired by exercise, nor his fulness wasted by communication. Such an argument would not hold with re-

gard to man, whose power is so exceeding mutable, and his strength so exceeding liable to decay. It is recorded in history, that an old Roman, Milo, who in his youth was a prodigy of strength, happened to live to old age, and that he used often to weep when he looked on his arms, his once nervous and vigorous arms, and saw the wrinkled and decayed sinews, and the weak, feeble state to which they were reduced by time. But this is not, cannot be the case with the arm of the Lord. His strength and stability, particularly as opposed to created weakness and frailty, is often declared in Scripture. Thus in the following sublime passage of the prophet Isaiah: "And the voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever," Isa. xl. 6.

I proceed now, in the last place, to apply the truths you have heard on this subject to our own present situation as to public affairs.

And, first, Is not our state, both as a nation and as a church, exceedingly fallen and low? and have we not the greatest need to address this prayer in the text, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord?" May we not take our low and fallen state as a nation from the universal confession of all without exception, however opposed in sentiments or interest! Every class and denomination of men among us, every party and faction, however unwilling each may be to acknowledge its own share of the

guilt, and however prone to load its adversaries with the blame of procuring it, is yet willing to acknowledge that we are at present in a distressed, and in a contemptible state.

And indeed the thing itself speaks. We have of late suffered under a variety of public strokes. We have not only had, for some time past, repeated threatenings of scarcity and dearth, but vast multitudes have been afflicted with famine in its rigour, which is one of God's "fore judgments." Through the mercy of God this is alleviated in some measure at present, but far from being entirely removed. We have also been long engaged in war with a powerful and politic enemy. And has not the providence of God sensibly frowned on us, and visibly frustrated almost every one of our attempts? This hath been the case to a degree hardly known in any former instance. We have "turned our backs faint-hearted before our enemies," in almost every encounter; and the greater and more formidable our preparations for any enterprize, the more pitiful the issue, and the more shameful our defeat and disappointment. Has there not been an obstructed trade, a loss of territory, a loss of honour, and expence of treasure? Is not this nation, once in a manner the arbiters of the fate of Europe, now become the scorn and derision of her neighbours and all that are round about her? What weak and divided councils among those that preside! Instead of any genuine public spirit, a proud and factious endeavour to disgrace each other's measures, and wrest the ensigns of government out of each other's hands. How numerous and expensive, but how useless and inactive,

have been our fleets and armies ! And how deplorable is the condition of our colonies abroad ! They are the chief theatre of the war, because indeed they are the subject of the contest. And surely it is affecting to think of the unnatural barbarity and cruelty that there is often exercised, when no age or sex is spared. It is true, the distance of the place may probably make us less sensible of their misery. But if it please God to suffer our enemies to continue their progress, it is hard to say how far the desolation may extend, or how universal it may prove.

Are we not also in a very low and fallen state as a church or a nation, still retaining some profession and form of religion ? This will be found to correspond with the other, as the cause with the effect. How have all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, corrupted their ways ! How gross and prevalent is infidelity, undermining the principles of natural, with the same zeal and eagerness with which it formerly endeavoured to weaken the foundations of revealed religion ! How many of high rank have wholly deserted the house and worship of God, nay, openly and boldly treat his service and servants with contempt ? How often do we observe such, with a criminal and insolent self-contradiction, trample upon the very laws against profaneness which they contribute to make ! And with how much zeal and diligence does the lower part of the nation emulate the higher, in that which is the reproach of both ! So great is the prevalence of irreligion, contempt of God, sensuality and pride, that many of the grossest

crimes are not only practised but professed, not only frequent but open, not only persisted in but gloried in and boasted of; insomuch, that it requires no small degree of fortitude and resolution stedfastly to adhere to the principles and character of a disciple of Christ, in opposition to the spirit and strain of fashionable conversation.

It is not indeed to be wondered at, that not only this nation, but the Protestant states of Europe in general, should be brought under the rod, as they have so shamefully departed from that purity of faith and strictness of morals which was the glory of the Reformation. How many have of late been ashamed of the cross of Christ, and the doctrine of the grace of God! And what hath been substituted in their room? A pliant and fashionable scheme of religion, a fine theory of virtue and morality; a beautiful but unsubstantial idol, raised by human pride, adorned and dressed by human art, and supported by the wisdom of words. And hath it not in this, as in every preceding age, in this, as in every other Christian country, whenever it gained any credit, been the fore-runner, and brought fast at its heels a deluge of profaneness and immorality in practice? Can any of these things be called in question? And are not they, as well as many more which might easily be enumerated, the melancholy proofs of our degenerate and corrupt character?

In the second place, From what hath been said you may see what wrong measures we have hitherto taken for removing these evils, so far as we have been sensible of them. Our gracious Sovereign hath indeed been pleased to point out our duty, by calling

us annually to fasting and humiliation. But with the far greater number it hath been no more than an unmeaning and lifeless form; and they have continued still in the same forgetfulness and contempt of God. You have heard above, that nothing is more contrary to the genuine spirit of intercessory prayer in public calamity, than putting trust in an arm of flesh. And yet, is there any thing with which this nation is at present more justly chargeable? Nothing is more apparent from the very face of our common channels of intelligence. In the case of disappointments, on the one hand, are we not ungovernable and headstrong in our resentment against men? and equally foolish and sanguine on the other, in our hopes of those who are substituted in their place? We give pompous details of armaments, and prophecy, nay, even in a manner describe their victories long before the season of action, and incautiously celebrate the characters of leaders while they are only putting on the harness, and going into the field. What proud and arrogant sentiments do we often express on the subject of our national courage and ancient British fire as it is called! In short, we seem to have got entirely into that vain-glorious, ostentatious system, with which we used to upbraid our neighbour and rival nation; and they seem to have given it up in our favour, and to have adopted the wiser and more profitable method of putting deeds for words.

And how negligent have we been of promoting or praying for the interest of religion! You have heard, that when the arm of the Lord puts on strength, it must be to appoint salvation for walls

and bulwarks to a people. But how few discover any concern upon this subject! The want of public spirit in those who retain any sense of religion, is an evidence of its low and languishing state. When it is lively, it will always be communicative. Love to God and love to man, the two great branches of practical religion, necessarily imply a concern for its progress. And yet, so rare is any thing of this kind, that when it appears as a sort of prodigy, it is looked upon, by most, as romance and extravagance. Let experience tell if this is not often the case. When any one appears, in imitation of the Scripture saints, to grieve for the sins of others, or discovers any more than ordinary concern for their reformation, are not all his endeavours immediately resisted and resented as troublesome, or branded with every name of contempt, as visionary frenzy and enthusiasm?

In the third place, From what hath been said on this subject you may learn what ought to be the great aim of every serious and sensible Christian among us at present, in his intercession at the throne of grace, viz. That the power of the Almighty may appear in behalf of this nation, in such a manner as all may be obliged to say, "This is the doing of the Lord" That, as he useth to do on extraordinary occasions, he may raise up instruments for this purpose, who may be as polished shafts in his own hand, and may have a single eye to his own glory. That not for our sakes, who have deserved to be cast off for ever, but for his own name's sake, he would support those who still adhere to the Protestant cause. And in a particular manner for this

end, that he would discover his power and glory in an eminent and remarkable revival of religion among all ranks. That our blessed Redeemer, the King of Sion, who reigns to all generations, who hath ascended up on high and received gifts for men, would send forth his Spirit in a large and plentiful measure. That his work and power may appear in all his gracious influences, convincing and converting sinners, sanctifying, quickening and comforting believers. That this may be a common blessing on all corners of the land, on persons of every class and denomination, of every rank and degree, from the highest to the lowest, of every station and office, civil and sacred. Above all, that he would "clothe his priests with salvation, that his saints may shout aloud for joy." O when shall the time come, when "the Lord of hosts shall be for a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty to the residue of his people!" when, instead of fine schemes spun for the honour of their makers, those who are called ministers of Christ shall preach the gospel, "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven!" when the truth of God, by its simplicity, majesty, force and efficacy, shall make its way into the hearts of the most obstinate, and Satan's kingdom fall as lightning before it. Plead, my beloved hearers, that Protestants in general may be brought back to their first faith and their first love; that the unhappy divisions among us may be abolished; and that the bond and centre of union may be Christ crucified, the only Author of salvation; that men may be no longer ranked in parties and marshalled under names, but

the great and only strife may be, who shall love our Redeemer most, and who shall serve him with the greatest zeal.

And in this critical conjuncture, when the bloody sword is threatening so many nations, and when there is so general a combination of antichristian powers, be earnest in prayer that it may please God to subvert their schemes, and turn their counsels into foolishness; and that he with whom is terrible majesty, may consume "the man of sin with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming." Pray for our gracious sovereign king George, under whose mild and legal government we have long enjoyed as much happiness as our national guilt would allow; that God, by whom "kings reign and princes decree justice," would give him a wise understanding heart in his fear, protect his person, direct his councils, and prosper his arms; and long preserve his numerous issue, as happy pledges of the security of our civil and religious liberty. Let us also, while we give thanks to God for raising up an eminent prince in Germany as the head of the reformed interest, and signally supporting him hitherto, pray that he may continue his protection to him, encourage his heart, and strengthen his hands, and fight his battles. In fine, let us pray for the speedy accomplishment of the prophecy, whoever shall be the instrument of it, of the downfall of Antichrist, when the cry shall be heard, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and shall arise no more."

In the last place, For our encouragement in this

duty let us remember that we serve an unchangeable God, the Rock of ages. We pray for the appearance of the arm of the Lord "as in ancient days, in the generations of old," when it "cut Rahab and wounded the dragon." Review the history of his conduct to the church and people of Israel, how with a mighty hand and out-stretched arm he delivered them from bondage, and humbled their proud oppressors. And remember how often, in succeeding ages, he has appeared in behalf of his own people, and supported his own cause when at the very lowest, and as it were in an expiring state. How low was the interest of Sion at the Reformation, when all the kings of the earth served the "scarlet whore," and "were drunk with the wine of the wrath of her fornication!" How thick the darkness that overspread the nations, and how universal the dominion of error? And yet, in opposition to all the cunning of earthly policy, in opposition to all the fury of persecuting cruelty, he enabled a few plain men, lovers of the truth, to assert, to defend, and to spread it

The most remarkable times of the revival of religion in this part of the united kingdom, immediately succeeded times of the greatest apostasy, when truth seemed to be fallen in the streets, and equity could not enter. This was the case immediately before the year 1638. Corruption in doctrine, looseness in practice, and slavish submission in politics, had overspread the church of Scotland. And yet, in a little time, she appeared in greater purity and in greater dignity than ever she had done be-

fore, or perhaps than ever she hath done since that period. In the same manner, immediately before the happy Revolution, how desperate in appearance was the situation of this church ! When all the best, as well as many of the noblest persons in the nation, were chased as fugitives from their dwellings, and considered as unworthy of an abode on earth ! when many of our worthy ancestors fell in battle, died on a scaffold, or were murdered in the fields by the unrelenting rage of ecclesiastic tyranny ! and when worshipping the Lord God of our fathers, according to his own word, was a capital crime ! Yet our captivity was brought back, and “ we were as men that dreamed ;” so unexpected was the mercy.

Let no Christian therefore give way to desponding thoughts. Though infidelity unresisted spreads its poison, though profaneness and enmity to religion and seriousness every where abound, though there are few to support the interest of truth and righteousness, though we have seen a new thing on the earth, a minister of Christ leaving the pulpit for the stage, let us not be discouraged. We plead the cause that shall finally prevail. Religion shall rise from its ruins ; and its oppressed state at present should not only excite us to pray, but encourage us to hope for its speedy revival. While every one is diligent in his own sphere, and in his proper duty, and earnestly pleading for the revelation of the arm of the Lord, let us recollect his favour and protection to the church in every time of need, and his faithfulness which is to all gene-

rations. Let us say with the Psalmist, "Walk about Sion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death," Psal. xlviii.

12, 13, 14.

SERMON XIX.

SEASONABLE ADVICE TO YOUNG PERSONS.



Preached at the Laigh Church of Paisley, on Sabbath, February 21. 1762.



To which is prefixed, An authentic Narrative of the disorderly and riotous meeting on the night before the celebration of the Lord's Supper in that place, which gave occasion to the Discourse.

Dedicated to the Bailies and Town-Council of Paisley.



TO THE PUBLIC.

THE publication of the following Sermon is not owing to choice but necessity. A process of scandal was carried on against the persons who gave occasion to its being preached; and they, instead of any submission or penitence, thought proper to make heavy complaints against the author of the sermon; and to give an account of what was said in it, very imperfect and unjust, as may well be supposed. In answer to this, he found it necessary to declare his willingness and resolution to publish the sermon,

and to prefix a distinct narration of the proceedings, so far as they had come to light, of that impious assembly, held within the bounds of his charge, that the Public might judge whether there was not more than sufficient cause given for what was then said. By the following narrative and sermon he now proposes to acquit himself of both parts of this promise.

On Saturday the 6th of February 1762, being the day before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper in Paisley, some young men, who, it is generally believed, had all been at church, dined immediately after sermon in James Chamber's room. After dinner Robert Hunter, who never was a communicant, produced one of the church tokens, well knowing what use it was intended to serve. Being asked where he got it, said he got it from Judas Iscariot; and, as one of the company declares, offered to play odds or evens with him which of them should use it. They were then invited all to a glass in William Wilson's room, which he chose that night to take possession of, and indeed to give it a very dreadful consecration. In the interval of their meeting, Robert Hunter sent the token to a young woman in the place, inclosed in a letter. What were the contents of the letter cannot be known. Common fame said it was inviting her to their sacrament; he himself pretended it was very innocent, but took care, as soon as the rumour broke out, to get the letter and burn it. The reader will immediately reflect what could be the intention, and what might have been the effects of this conduct. It was easy in this way to send the most notorious

profligate to the table of the Lord, to the unspeakable scandal of the congregation, as well as mischief to his own soul.

About six of the clock the same evening, or soon after, there met according to appointment in William Wilson's room, the said Robert Hunter and William Wilson, manufacturers in Paisley, John Snodgrafs, writer there, William M'Crotchet, ensign or serjeant in the army, James and David Chalmers, and Robert Cross junior, merchants in Paisley. By their own confession, and the deposition of several witnesses, they employed a good part of the time in mock preaching, and that not merely imitating the tones or gestures of ministers in indifferent words, but the only expressions that were distinguished by the witnesses who heard them on the street, were the words of Scripture. Two witnesses depone that, to the best of their judgment, they heard them praying in mockery; and when asked if they were sure it was praying and not preaching, persisted in affirming it was praying. The only uncertainty this evidence labours under is, that not hearing the particular words used, the only way by which they distinguished it was by the sound; but it is to be observed, that both witnesses were positive; that they agreed together as to the time when this happened, and that it was not the same time that the other witnesses depone they were preaching, but at a very considerable distance; so that there is little probability of the one being mistaken for the other. By their own confessions, and the depositions of witnesses, they were guilty of profane swearing. The noise of their meeting was

such as alarmed the whole neighbourhood; but what is most tremendous of all, by the declaration of Robert Hunter, one of themselves, William Mac-Crotchet used some of the words of the institution. The same thing is declared by William Wilson of John Snodgrafs; and upon the strictest re-examination he persisted in declaring that he was certain it was done in the company, and he thought it was by that person.

When these facts are laid together, and all the circumstances of the transaction are weighed, is it possible in words to paint the atrociousness of their crime? Is there any ground to wonder at the greatness of the scandal? Is there reason to complain that the minister in whose bounds the offence was committed, and under whose charge almost all the offenders live, should think of preaching on such a subject as it appears he did, and now with concern finds himself obliged to publish? The very choice of such a night for such a merry meeting, and the disturbance given to the place almost to the hour of midnight, though there had been no more in it, were surely highly indecent. But when we add to this the loud profanation of the Almighty's name, and spending the most part, if not the whole of the time in mocking the exercises of piety, how deep and aggravated is the guilt! Above all, when it is considered that this seems to have been without bounds, not sparing even the most solemn and sacred rite of our holy religion! It is true, some of them obstinately deny this last and heaviest part of the charge. It doth not indeed appear, and we hope it

is not true, that there was a formal celebration, and general or common participation in mockery of the sacrament of the Lord's supper; but if there had been no profane allusion to it in the performances of the acting mimics, it is not to be supposed or imagined that it would have been confessed by two of the persons present. Though this should not militate against the rest, it certainly must militate against themselves. The time of the meeting, the token produced before it, the letter with the token sent, the other things which they certainly did, and the unsuspected declaration of two of the guilty, who seemed at first penitent, though afterward they altered their conduct, and joined with the rest in a common defence, are so strong that it is impossible to destroy the belief of it in an impartial mind; the rather when we add, that afterwards David Chalmers confessed it still more fully than any of the other two. This, though it was too late to be in the process, or rather by great art and influence kept out of it, may be safely affirmed, because it was in the presence of three persons. But to cut the matter short, the use of some of the words of the institution with a solemn air as of a minister, and also some of the other words of Scripture, is affirmed by William Wilson of John Snodgrafs, in a voluntary declaration when he was not adduced as an evidence. Let John Snodgrafs, therefore, who considers this as so injurious to him, prosecute William Wilson for slander, and get him punished in the manner he justly deserves if it be false; and if this is not done, he must forgive many, and par-

ticularly the author of the following sermon, for believing it to be true.

PSAL. i. 1.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

THERE is an old and beaten observation, that human nature, in all ages, is the same. To this I add, or rather offer by way of illustration of it, that sin, which bears so much sway in human characters and actions, has been the same, in its operation and influence, in all ages, since the fall of Adam. For this reason the characters drawn in the holy Scriptures, and particularly the observations on human life, contained in the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, and book of Ecclesiastes, are as perfectly adapted to the present age as if they were but of yesterday's date.

As the ten commandments, which are the sum of the moral law, consist mostly of prohibitions, the Psalmist, in this passage, draws the character of the good man in a negative form, by its opposition to the bad. At the same time, the danger to which the unwary are exposed, the enticing and deceitful nature of sin, and its monstrous enormity when arrived at its full height, are couched in the most admirable manner: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

It is not agreed among interpreters who was the author of this psalm; and indeed it is a matter more of curiosity than moment very critically to inquire. Some think it was the Psalmist David, because of the high esteem expressed in it for the law of God, a thing which so remarkably distinguishes his other writings. Others refer it to a later period; and suppose that Ezra, or some other after the captivity who collected the sacred hymns of different authors into one volume, prefixed this as a sort of argument or preface to the whole. It is indeed a summary of all that follow. It plainly contains a character both of good men and bad; the usual course of divine providence towards each of these classes, as well as the final issue of their conduct, in the everlasting happiness of the one, and the everlasting misery of the other.

Even the most cursory reader must observe, that there is a gradation in the expressions of the text, which rise one above another in their strength and energy; nay, it is the opinion of many, that they are chosen with peculiar art, and contain a double, if not a threefold gradation.

1. In the character, beginning with the *ungodly*, who are without proper impressions of religion, and habitually governed by other principles than the fear of God. Next, *sinners*, or those who are more openly flagitious, and visibly guilty of gross crimes. And finally, the *scornful*, who set reproof at defiance, and treat every thing serious and sacred with contempt and disdain.

2. In the communication of others with them, *walking*, which seems to imply occasional, unforeseen,

and tranſient intercourse ; *ſtanding*, which ſeems to indicate a greater degree of approbation and voluntary compliance with their example ; and *ſitting*, which ſignifies being fixed and ſettled in an evil courſe, and refuſing to depart from it.—To this ſome add the other expreſſions, the *counſel*, the *way*, and the *ſeat* ; on which I forbear to inſiſt, but proceed to obſerve,

That we have in this paſſage a moſt uſeful and inſtructive leſſon of great moment in every place and age ; and peculiarly ſuited, on ſeveral accounts, to the preſent circumſtances of this congregation. It is therefore my reſolution to diſcourſe a little, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, on the three diſtinct branches into which it may be naturally divided.

I. The infectious nature of ſin, or the danger of “ walking in the counſel of the ungodly.”

II. The deceitful and hardening nature of ſin, which inſenſibly leads from “ walking in the counſel of the ungodly,” to “ ſtanding in the way of ſinners.”

III. The finiſhing ſtage of wickedneſs, the moſt criminal and moſt pernicious character, viz. of the *ſcornful*, who are bold enough to treat things ſerious and ſacred with deriſion.

Having done this, I ſhall make ſome application of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction.

In the firſt place, Let us conſider the infectious nature of ſin, or the danger of walking in the counſel of the ungodly. That the ſociety of bad men is

highly dangerous to all, but especially to young persons, is indeed a truth which no sober man will deny, and which hath been often set in the strongest light by religious and moral writers ; it may therefore seem unnecessary to insist upon it. But, my brethren, I am persuaded that it fares often with known and common truths, as with common mercies, they are despised for their cheapness. Though their certainty be readily allowed, their use and application is notwithstanding, or perhaps for that very reason, in a great measure neglected. How seldom is it that men make the distinction with care, and act upon it with prudence and resolution, either in their own conduct, or in the disposal of their children ! Bear with me, therefore, while I endeavour to impress your minds with a sense of your obligation to depart from the society of evil doers, and to preserve, with the utmost sollicitude, all young persons under your care from the mortal contagion.

For the importance and necessity of this you have the concurrent testimony of wise and good men, in every age and nation ; experience hath taught it to the most barbarous, as well as most improved and polished people. There is no nation of which history hath preserved us any account, but in their proverbial sayings, which are the product of time, we find a warning against the infection of corrupt society. What dying parent, in his last or parting adieu to his children, ever omitted to caution them against the society of bad men ? nay, doth not daily experience prove this, beyond dispute, to every one who hath the least degree either of memory or reflection ? Is there among you any person who has

arrived at the unhappy distinction of being known for a profligate? Whenever this happens, those about him are able to mark the progress of his corruption, and can even point out the persons or societies where he was first taught the rudiments of vice, and initiated in the principles of licentiousness and riot. I am none of those who either deny or conceal the original, inherent, universal corruption of human nature; and yet I scruple not to affirm, that example, instruction, and assistance, are necessary to our improvement even in vice. Without this, no single person is capable of arriving at that degree of depravity which we have sometimes occasion to observe.

Whoever would examine into the reasons, and impress his mind with a sense of the danger of corrupt society, especially to youth, may just reflect upon the following particulars.

1. We are all by nature prone to sin. It is the growth of the soil, as weeds of the cursed ground. If weeds can hardly be restrained by the utmost diligence and care of the husbandman, what an enormous product might he expect if he would directly apply himself to their encouragement and cultivation! Just so, if by the utmost care and attention parents can hardly restrain the irregularities of their children, and form them to true piety and goodness, what wickedness may they not arrive at if they are delivered over to schools of profanity, and suffered to form their sentiments and manners from those who have long "walked in the ways of their own hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes," without "fearing God, or regarding man!"

2. Young persons are ignorant and unsuspecting ; strangers to the world, they are alike ignorant of the characters of men and the effects of vicious courses. What a prey must such be to the artful and insinuating language of those who, enslaved by habit, and wearing the chains of vice, find their chief remaining pleasure in seducing others into the same miserable state? Justly is the great enemy of mankind called the deceiver, because he betrayed our first parents into rebellion by a lie ; and in the same way he and all his servants continue to paint and varnish over sin with false colours, that it may be embraced without reluctance by those who know not that afterwards “ it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.” Need I tell you in what a decent garb sin is often clothed, and what honourable names it often assumes in the world to gain the easier admission? Sensuality and intemperance is social affection and good fellowship ; filthy obscene conversation is but harmless mirth and freedom ; anger and resentment are but honour, resolution, and dignity of mind. In short, the whole tenor and strain of fashionable conversation is often little else than a strong illusion put upon the mind to pervert the dictates of reason, and evade the reproofs of conscience. How dangerous such intercourse to young unwary minds, who are often deeply penetrated with the poison, before they so much as suspect the design of its being administered ! It requires no common degree of fortitude and resolution, as well as no small measure of spiritual wisdom, to resist the importunity of sinners, and unravel the subtilty with which they lie in wait to deceive,

3. Vice is usually baited with pleasure, of which young persons are peculiarly sensible; their affections of every kind are in the most lively and vigorous state. One of the first and most important lessons which parents and guardians must teach them, is moderation and restraint; whereas the immediate effect of associating with the profane, is not only to strengthen their passions by indulgence; but to instruct them how to plead in their defence; and, above all, to inspire them with an abhorrence of confinement and rule. From these unhappy attachments, these most pernicious friendships it is, that instruction, however excellent, is unwillingly listened to; and the most wise and gentle government is esteemed harsh and severe. It has been sometimes observed, that persons strictly and piously educated, when they have come into the world, have run headlong into the most vicious and abandoned course of life. This has been commonly ascribed to the rigour of their former confinement, and an advice grafted upon it, that parents should be less severe to their children, lest they should more than compensate this early restraint, by the liberties which they afterwards assume. But though I willingly admit that every parent should temper his authority with gentleness and love, yet I am far from thinking the effect just now mentioned is ascribed to its proper cause; it is not owing so much to the rigour of parental authority, as to young persons getting into the society of men without principle, and there secretly imbibing these vicious desires which afterwards they rejoice in an opportunity of gratifying to the full. However strict and severe any person's

education may be, if he comes to maturity of age before he contracts an intimacy with those who justify the commission of sin, conscience will have acquired so great authority, that all sollicitation to gross wickedness will be received with abhorrence. This opinion is supported by a fact which I imagine I have observed, that the children of pious parents, who are betrayed into vicious courses, are almost always such as have been most early removed from their immediate inspection.

4. The danger of corrupt society to young persons, appears from their being exposed to ridicule and scorn, which is, of all other trials, hardest for them to bear. I shall have occasion, on the third general head, to speak more fully on this subject; but in the mean time it is certain, that a sense of shame is strong in young persons in general, and that ridicule is the usual weapon by which adepts in vice assault the cause of truth and piety; by which indeed they commonly endeavour to destroy all regard to decency and order. It is lamentable to think how often persons of excellent capacity and admirable dispositions have been led astray by the abuse of this most amiable quality, a sense of shame.

From all these considerations we need not be surpris'd at the frequent and strong cautions given in the word of God upon this subject. Prov. xiii. 20. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."—Chap. xxviii. 7. "Who so keepeth the law is a wise son; but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father." But there is nothing more moving than that earnest and pathetic exhortation,

chap. iv. 14, 15. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; avoid it; pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away." The wise man's insisting upon his important counsel, and the reiteration of the expressions, serve to convey in the strongest manner, a sense of the certain ruin of those who neglect to observe it.

II. Let us now proceed to consider the hardening nature of sin, which leads from "walking in the counsel of the ungodly, to standing in the way of sinners." Upon this, as on the former particular, I may observe it is a known and beaten subject, on which it is easy to say things strong, but difficult to say any thing new. There are several just remarks upon it, or striking similitudes, which have been handed down from the earliest ages, and were probably the first fruits of human experience. The little that I am at present to repeat or add shall be divided into two parts: 1. The gradual and insensible progress of sin, which leads the sinner on from one step to another, till he is irrecoverably lost. 2. The strength and power of inveterate habit.

1. The insensible progress of sin. It is wonderful by what artful methods, what plausible pretences, and what slow degrees, sin makes its first approaches. Let some of those persons who are now lost to all sense of duty or of shame, reflect, if possible, with what horror they would once have thought of the practices which at present they are not able to forsake. Every sin, how small soever, opens a passage for the admission of multitudes of others, breaks the restraint of conscience, habituates and emboldens the sinner. The ancients were wont to

say, That the way of sin is down-hill; every step a man takes on this declivity accelerates his motion, so that it becomes more and more difficult, and at last impossible to stop his course. This is what the apostle Paul had in his view, when he gave this excellent precept to the Christian Hebrews, Heb. iii. 13. "But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." We may say of sin, in general, what Solomon says of strife, "The beginning of it is like the letting out of water." If you watch against the beginning of sin, you may hope to prevail; but if you once grant it indulgence, it will establish and increase its own power. To attempt then to stop its progress, is like endeavouring to gather together a flood of water, after you have, with your own hands, opened the sluices which have caused it to overflow.

2. To the insensible progress of sin, add the strength and power of inveterate habit. This is represented to us in the strongest terms in Scripture, where the changing of an inveterate habit is compared to a natural impossibility, Jer. xiii. 23. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

As we may receive many useful moral lessons from the visible creation and the course of nature, so this in particular, of the force of habit, is, if I may speak so, written in the most legible characters, and repeated in every page of both. A stone which has long continued in one place makes itself a bed, and is with great difficulty removed; a plant or tree

that has long been confined to one position, or made to grow in a particular shape, will seldom ever receive any other. This is also the case with our own bodily frame. Particular postures or motions to which we have been early habituated, can scarcely be altered by the utmost attention, and the strongest inclination of the will; the obstinacy is still greater in all habits where desire and affection have place. It is easy to see every day the violent attachment men have to employments and pleasures, however trifling in themselves, to which they have been long accustomed. But it is greatest of all in sinful habits, because in them the force of custom is added to the original strength of natural corruption.

Both the above particulars may be illustrated, by observing how much habit and example together operate to the improvement and perfection of guilt in large and populous cities. There we may often find so astonishing a degree of wickedness of every sort, as it is mortifying to think that human nature should be capable of; there we may find persons who will perpetrate calmly and sedately what would surprize a less knowing sinner so much as to hear of. And what pity is it that there should be found some who, during their occasional residence in places of great resort, lay down their innocence instead of their rusticity, and bring home no other accomplishment but an insolence and boldness of countenance in the commission of sin! that, instructed in the principles, as well as habituated to the practice of impiety, they are not content with doing evil, but discover an incredible industry and assiduity in deceiving

and seducing others ! And shall I not add, what pity is it that some, instead of improving and adorning their minds by application to study, or storing them with useful knowledge, do more than lose their time by drinking in the poison of infidel writings ! Instead of sitting themselves to discharge the duties of public or private life with propriety and dignity, they only acquire the unhappy talent of setting their minds at ease in the commission of sin, and make large additions to their own natural depravity of heart.

III. Let us consider the finishing stage of wickedness, the most criminal and the most pernicious character, viz. that of the scornful, who are bold enough to treat things serious and sacred with derision.

This part of the subject, my brethren, merits your particular attention, and naturally divides itself into these two branches : First, The sin and danger of it to the persons who are guilty of it. Secondly, The unhappy influence it hath in polluting others.

I. The sin and danger of it to the guilty persons. Whoever will consider the state of mind from which such derision must flow, will immediately perceive that it implies the highest degree of profaneness and impiety. It is such an audacious attack upon the majesty of the living God, as must strike every thinking person with astonishment and horror. One of the first principles of all religion is reverence for the Deity, and for every thing that hath a visible relation to him. This we find written upon the conscience, in general, even of the most blinded hea-

thens. The common and trivial use of the name of God is prohibited under the severest sanctions in the oracles of truth. We find also some instances there of mere irreverence being punished in a very terrible manner. The angelic hosts, though perfectly pure and holy, are yet represented as deeply penetrated with a sense of the extreme disproportion between uncreated excellence and created weakness, and filled with the highest veneration of him who only is holy. Isaiah vi. 1, 2, 3. "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." It may seem unnecessary or improper to add, and yet it gives me pleasure that I can do it with truth, the same thing has evidently distinguished some of the best and greatest men on earth. We are well informed, that some of the greatest inquirers into nature, as they grew in years, and increased in the knowledge of the works of God, did also visibly grow in an awe and reverence of their almighty Maker. Of one in particular it is said, that he never mentioned the name of God without a sensible pause in his discourse. After this, what can we think of any poor creature, whose breath is in his nostrils, being guilty of contempt and scorn of the name, attributes, works or worship of God!

There is a remarkable difference between sins of this kind, and many other sins which are, notwith-

standing, very heinous and aggravated in the sight of God. Into many other sins of a very gross nature, a man may be hurried by the violence of passion, or betrayed by the suddenness of temptation; but, if I mistake not, scorn of things sacred must always be a deliberate crime; the sin cannot be committed without a good deal of composure and presence of mind; reason is not over-borne, as in other cases, by appetite, but reason itself (if the perverted gift of God in such persons may be called so) is principal in the guilt. A scorner is never tempted, properly speaking, but by these acts and exercises of religion which should excite the veneration of all, and do excite the veneration of many, not excepting some of the most profligate.

Contempt of things sacred is an entire victory over conscience. In many cases men sin with some reluctance. It is not so much their choice, as they are over-borne by the strength of corruption, and vitiate the peace of their minds to gratify the demands of lust; hence remorse often succeeds the indulgence, and though real reformation does not take place, yet it lays the sinner under frequent and considerable restraints. But in treating things sacred with scorn, the mind is wholly at ease, and finds its pleasure in the very impiety itself. The truth is, so entire is the victory over conscience, that nothing but settled atheism and infidelity can be guilty of it, according to that just expression of the Psalmist, Psal. x. 13. "Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, thou wilt not require it."

It is also an entire victory over shame; this is

commonly the last restraint that sinners overthrow. Many are confined and kept in awe by the fear of man, long after they have cast off the fear of God. From the shamefulneſs of ſin, religion preſerves ſome degree of credit, even where a great plurality is in the oppoſite intereſt. For this reaſon the prophet Jeremiah mentions it as a great aggravation of the ſins of his countrymen, that they were loſt to all ſenſe of ſhame. Jer. vi. 15. "Were they aſhamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh; therefore they ſhall fall among them that fall: at the time that I viſit them they ſhall be caſt down, ſaith the Lord." But is it not evident that ſcorners are deſtitute of ſhame? They have indeed not only extinguished it in themſelves, but the manifeſt deſign of their converſation is to deſtroy it in the minds of others.

I need add nothing further to ſhew the guilt and danger of perſons of this character, but putting you in mind of the rank which it holds in ſeveral catalogues of crying ſins in the holy Scriptures, and the awful judgments of God which are denounced againſt it. The prophet Ezekiel, in enumerating the ſins of Jeruſalem, among many enormities hath this, Ezek. xxii. 8. "Thou haſt deſpiſed mine holy things, and profaned my Sabbaths." And the prophet Iſaiah, Iſa. xxviii. 14, 21, 22. "Now therefore hear the word of the Lord, ye ſcornful men that rule this people which is in Jeruſalem.—For the Lord ſhall riſe up as in mount Perazim, he ſhall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may

do his work, his strange work ; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore be not mockers, lest your hands be made strong ; for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts, a consumption even determined upon the whole earth." See also the state of things in Jerusalem, immediately before the Babylonish captivity, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. " But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

2. How unhappy is the influence of this character upon others ! As it is highly criminal, it is pernicious in the same proportion. Considered only as an example, it must have dangerous effects ; many sins shun the light, and are, by those that commit them, concealed with the utmost care. When that is the case, whatever they may be to the guilty person, they are far from being so dangerous to the Public, as those crimes that are not only often visible, but done on purpose to be seen. Now scoffers at things sacred must always be an example, as the crime cannot be committed alone ; and indeed they often aspire at a kind of character for despising religion, and would be greatly mortified were their accomplishments of this kind hidden from the world.

Neither is it merely a common example. Scoffers are not only barely sinners, they are advocates for sin ; it is their constant study to break the restraints of conscience, and weaken every moral obligation in others as well as in themselves. This too they endeavour to effect in the most agreeable man-

ner. Contempt of religion makes a part of their social mirth; and these two things are soon looked upon by the unwary youth as so inseparable, that the one is quite tasteless and insipid, unless it is seasoned by the other.

It deserves particular consideration on this subject, that scoffing at things sacred is apt to give natural modesty, and the sense of shame in young persons, a wrong and contrary turn. Modesty is the strongest natural fence to virtue. We find notwithstanding, very frequently, that persons of great natural modesty have not courage sufficient to profess or practise what conscience dictates to be their duty. How unhappy is it when so excellent a preservative from vice is thus quite perverted, and has an opposite effect! All history is full of the powerful effects of a sense of shame, both in doing good and evil. It breaks the strongest of all natural attachments; it is not to be overcome by the severest laws, though fortified with the most terrible sanctions. Now, as it needs no proof that scoffing at sacred things tends to pervert the sense of shame, it must have the greatest and most immediate effect in bringing on a general dissolution of manners.

The malignant influence of profane scorn is not confined to young persons, there being very few of any character who are not hurt by it in a most sensible manner. Would you be convinced of this? How rarely do we find any possessed of a determined courage and resolution in opposing fashionable crimes! How unwilling are the best to suffer shame for adhering to their duty! What a variety of efforts will be made to escape it! Contempt is disagreeable at

any rate, and it is intolerable to pride, some remains of which, capable of being irritated, are to be found in the very best men on earth. For this reason, the most established Christians do carefully shun all unnecessary society with wicked men, knowing how difficult it is to avoid sin in one shape or other. If such is the case with the best, how dangerous must the society of scorners be to all who are able to bear them, but especially to those who "have pleasure in them!"

It will not be improper here to observe, that one great reason why scorn and ridicule is so hurtful to religion is, that it attacks things sacred through the medium of human weakness. True piety and virtue is in itself so venerable an object, that it is not possible to render it ridiculous but by misrepresentation; however, as it is always in this world attended with human infirmity, this affords a handle to profane persons to load it with reproach. Their success in this unhappy design is no greater than may naturally be expected; few are able to distinguish between a person and his cause, nor indeed is it possible to attack the one without wounding the other. It evidently appears, that it is impossible to treat religious persons in general, or the expressions, forms and rites commonly appropriated to religious worship with scorn, and not, at the same time, bring religion itself into contempt.

I do not mean by this to plead for approbation, or even indulgence to any indecency by which folly or vanity may abuse or disgrace the worship of God; far from it. I think every thing of that kind ought to be reprov'd with severity, and oppos'd with re-

olution; but I contend that it is infinitely more proper to treat it with abhorrence and detestation, than with scorn. Whoever will give himself this liberty, may easily find an opportunity, from the weakness inseparable from humanity, to throw off that reverence for God and his service which it ought to be his chief solicitude to preserve and improve. There are many whose visible weakness is to be lamented; and, perhaps, there is no human character at all so perfectly decent in every respect, but, by imitation and a little aggravation, it may be rendered ridiculous.

Let it also be considered, that it requires far less comprehension of mind to expose the folly and weakness of others, or even to invent plausible falsehoods and misrepresent them, than to reason with justice and propriety on the most common subjects. A very small degree of ability is sufficient to accomplish a scoffer, who is not restrained by any sense of duty. Nor is this to be wondered at; for there is always a sufficient number to whose understandings the most vile and miserable performance is perfectly adapted.

In support of all this I could adduce many examples, abundantly known and familiar; but, for certain reasons, I shall only mention a very celebrated instance from antiquity. Socrates was certainly the wisest and the best man of all the heathens, whose characters have been transmitted to us. His behaviour was such as not only deserved, but seemed fit to command the esteem and veneration of all who knew him; yet was this worthy man successfully turned into ridicule by a person whose writings,

which have come down to us, are to the last degree mean and contemptible. Nor was the effect merely transient; for, in the opinion of many, this contempt paved the way for the hatred which his enemies soon raised against him, and which brought him to his death.

I proceed now, in the last place, to make some improvement of what has been said; and I think I can discover, in the aspect of the audience, that you already suppose I have been led to the choice of this subject, by the late atrocious and flagrant offence committed in the near neighbourhood of where I now stand; and which hath affected every thinking and well-disposed person in the place, with a mixture of indignation and concern. That this is indeed the case, I have no intention either to deny or conceal. Many I know are of opinion, that fidelity to my charge calls for something of this nature on the present occasion; if to others the particular discussion and application of this subject should need any apology, there are two things for which I hope to have the testimony of all my ordinary hearers. 1. That I have never omitted to mention, with all freedom and plainness, the sins and duties of every rank and class of men, as the subject led to it, or the occasion seemed to require it. 2. That in doing this I have generally avoided bringing in particular accidents that have fallen out in the place; being much of opinion, that the less personal any thing of that nature is, it is the more likely to be useful. But though I continue in the same opinion in general, there are some things so flagrant and atrocious in their nature, so dangerous and hurtful in their effects,

that bare silence concerning them would carry in it an imputation of unfaithfulness or partiality in a minister of Christ. And as in the present case the scandal seems loudly to call for some public notice of it, so it is impossible to make the persons more known than they are already by their own folly. If it could make them any more ashamed, it would be an unspeakable benefit both to the public and themselves.

With a view therefore to the scandal just now hinted at, suffer me to apply the truths above illustrated, by giving you some advice and direction under the three following characters, one or more of which will include every person who now hears me.

I. To those who are young; in that lovely, precious, dangerous season of life, of all others the fittest for learning what is good, and unhappily prone to learn or imitate what is evil. My dear children, this is not the first of many times I have addressed instruction particularly to you, and I pray that God may open your hearts to receive it. Let me beseech you, first of all, to learn this important lesson, to distrust yourselves; be sensible of your inexperience, and be persuaded of your danger from the admonitions of others. The greatest evidence you can give of real knowledge, is to be sensible of your ignorance; and of true wisdom, to be willing to learn. The solicitude and concern of your parents or other relations to preserve you from the destructive paths of vice, is from their certain knowledge of what you are now unwilling to believe. Above all things, shun, as the pestilence, the society of profane scorners.

Loſt to all ſenſe of piety, ſeared in their conſciences, and enſlaved to their luſts, they will do all in their power to deſtroy a riſing ſenſe of religion in your minds: “ While they promiſe you liberty, they themſelves are the ſervants of corruption.” Think upon eternity approaching: no man can foreſee or foretel to you now, whether your time on earth ſhall be long or ſhort; whether you ſhall have much proſperity or many trials in the preſent world; but as the bleſſing of God is the beſt ingredient in all temporal mercies, ſo being at peace with him is the beſt ſupport under ſuffering, and the only preparation for death.

But as all the deluſive arguments in favour of ſin are drawn from this preſent life, ſuffer me to plead the cauſe of piety and truth in this reſpect. Be aſſured that true religion is the way to health, peace, opulence and public eſteem. Hear the wiſeſt of mere men: Prov. iii. 16, 17. “ Length of days is in wiſdom’s right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.” Do not look only on thoſe libertines who are in the beginning or middle of their courſe, whoſe ſpirits are lively, and their vigour yet unimpaired; look on the few older practitioners. Theſe were the good fellows and ſocial ſpirits of a former period. Their companions were cut off in the middle of their days, and they remain as beacons for your inſtruction and warning. Do you ſee them ſullen in their deportment, mean in their attire, and deſiſed by the world itſelf; their faces bloated with intemperance, and their miſerable offspring pale with hunger or crippled by neglect?

these are the terrible fruits of midnight rioting. They were once as merry in their cups, as ready with their jests, and as great despisers of Sabbaths and sermons, of whining and praying, as any of their more sprightly successors, who are in the high road to the same despicable end.

My dear friends, when you perceive any one stirring up your aversion to parental authority, and teaching you to despise the troublesome admonitions of ministers and mothers, know that he is enticing you to the ruin of soul, body and estate. Hear again the wise man, or rather the Spirit of God speaking by him: Prov. xxiii. 19, &c. "Hear then, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way: be not amongst wine bibbers, amongst riotous eaters of flesh; for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowfiness shall clothe a man with rags. Harken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." Prov. xxx. 17. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

Do you indeed think that any of your loose companions, with all their professions of friendship and attachment, have the same concern for your true interest that a parent has, or the same judgment to discern it? You may esteem it as a favour when you are assisted in the indulgence of your pleasures, and your irregular courses are concealed from the knowledge of your relations, but it is in truth the greatest injury that can possibly be done you. It is

often distressing to those of riper years and more experience, to observe how difficult it is to persuade young persons of easy tempers and warm affections, of the danger of associating with profligates. We reckon it hard that you will not believe that they are worthless upon our testimony, but must learn it from your own fatal experience. Believe it, there is no true friendship but what is founded on the principles of piety and virtue; and if you confide in those of a different character, you will, sooner or later, be rewarded with treachery and falsehood; and indeed the sooner the better, for their friendship is infinitely more hurtful than any effects of their displeasure. Again, therefore, let me beseech the younger part of my audience, who have not yet themselves thrown off all regard to decency, to give up all friendship with, and avoid the society of those who have. It is usually a hard sacrifice I confess, but necessary to your preservation from the most destructive courses. What signifies the scorn or resentment of a few hardened wretches, compared to the peace of your own minds, the heart-felt pleasure you will give to every real friend, your comfort and happiness in this life, and the well-grounded hope of a blessed immortality?

2. Let me shortly address myself to parents, or others who are intrusted with the education of youth. And O that I could make you sensible of the importance and difficulty of your charge! There are many directions which might be given you with respect to education in general, but I chuse to confine my thoughts at present to what is suggested by the occasion and subject of this discourse. Let it

therefore be your care to preserve your children, as much as possible, from the company and conversation of profane persons, especially those who are tainted with infidelity ; and who, as its natural consequence, treat the exercises of piety with contempt and scorn. To suffer this, when you can hinder it, is treating their souls in the same manner as you would do their bodies, if you placed doses of sweetened poison in every corner of the house. You will daily perceive how children are formed by imitation, in their temper and manners ; they must bear a resemblance to those from whom they receive their first impressions. But if this is the case in general, how much more must they embrace the principles, and imitate the practice of their companions in pleasure !

This caution is so necessary, that where counsel and intreaty are not sufficient to procure compliance; authority ought to be interposed. Mere authority indeed will be very ineffectual, and therefore I must particularly recommend to you an early attention to your children's opinion and judgment. They soon form a judgment, and will give early marks of approbation and aversion of persons and characters. Do your utmost to make them esteem religion, as the greatest happiness to every person, and the most amiable part of every character. Make them sensible, from your conduct, that it is not only your sincere choice but greatest delight. It is very fatal to them when they are led to look upon it as a burden and constraint. Habituate them early to consider all other qualities as good for nothing, when piety is wanting, and a person of a truly Christian

conversation as worthy of the highest esteem, whatever be his station or circumstances in other respects. Remember it makes a part of the character of a good man, as drawn by the Psalmist David, Psal. xv. 4. "In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord." I am persuaded that many who truly fear God themselves, are inadvertently guilty of a great mistake in this particular; they discover unhappily too much of their admiration or envy of the natural advantages of others, independent of their moral character. Dress, furniture and wealth, are looked upon as distinguishing advantages, and children are often suffered to indulge themselves in mockery and derision, even where deformity, poverty, awkwardness, and things perfectly innocent in themselves, are the only objects of their scorn. Intellectual abilities also, comprehension of mind, and sprightliness of fancy, are commonly much the objects of esteem; and young persons are insensibly led to admire these natural qualities, without at all considering to what purposes they are applied. This must necessarily have a fatal effect; and therefore parents should endeavour, as much as possible, to preserve upon their own minds, and inspire their children with an esteem of true piety, and a horror and aversion at a vicious character, whatever advantage may happen to accompany it.

If due care is taken betimes in this respect, I am persuaded it will, in a great measure, prevent the danger arising from the example or sollicitation of the patrons of impiety. Their chief success depends on their real characters lying concealed, till it is safe

and proper to avow it. They instil the principles of irreligion as a wise man would do the most sacred truths, by little and little, as their disciples are able to bear them, and always do it under the disguise of pleasure. There is nothing more different than the conversation and carriage of a libertine in the presence of those of whom he stands in awe, and among his select companions; and even these last are but gradually initiated into the concluding and horrid mysteries of profanity and blasphemy. Young minds therefore should be early formed to such a taste, as to look for piety and virtue before they will give their approbation or affection to any human accomplishments. Were this the case, they would not be so often betrayed by specious appearances, and drawn in by degrees, first to suffer, then to imitate, and at last to delight in the most vicious practices.

While I am giving you these directions, I cannot help observing, that you may see the great necessity of wisdom and prudence in the religious education of children. Apply yourselves to it with diligence. It is an extensive and difficult, but at the same time a noble, useful, delightful study. "And if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."

I shall now close this discourse with a few words to professing Christians in general.

My brethren, when vice rears up its head, and appears with insolence and boldness, as it will certainly affect every good man with concern, so it is of great importance what treatment it meets with from the public. If it passes without notice, we

may conclude that corruption hath deeply infected the whole mass. If men are afraid or ashamed to express their indignation at it, we may conclude the conspiracy is formidable, and that the interest of truth and piety is greatly on the decline. There are many who, in cases of gross scandal, rather chuse to keep themselves at ease by forbearance and indulgence to the guilty, than run the hazard of provoking their resentment by an honest declaration of their real sentiments. Nor is it seldom to be observed, that the very persons who do least in their own sphere for stemming the tide of profanity, are the first and loudest in complaining of the negligence of magistrates or pastors in inflicting public punishments or censures.

Whilst therefore I am endeavouring, in some measure, to discharge my own duty, I must also put you in mind of yours. It is evidently the duty of all who profess to fear God, to abstain from the society of those who are grossly profane, without discovering any sense of penitence or sorrow. The truth is, I ought rather to make this a mark of true religion, and affirm that all good men will do so, than inform them that they should. There must be a likeness of disposition among familiar friends. Had you that abhorrence of impiety that you ought to have, you would count the society of impious persons a stain and reproach to your own characters. Of this I am able to give a very strong, and at the same time a plain and familiar proof. Were any person known to be guilty of theft and dishonesty, or any fault that is odious and disgraceful in the world, every one would reckon his intimate compa-

nions almost, if not to the same degree, abandoned as himself. The same thing will certainly hold as to profanity or licentiousness, though indeed it carries in it a melancholy proof, that sins against piety or purity are far from being held in the same abhorrence as what endangers our substance or temporal interest. I must however here beg of you to attend to a singular and very strong passage of the epistle to the Romans. The apostle Paul closes his description of the profane world in the following terms: Rom. ii. 32. "Who knowing the judgment of God, (that they which commit such things are worthy of death) not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." I have looked into the original, and find the words justly translated; and you see, from the construction of the sentence, the apostle represents having pleasure in sensual and wicked men, as implying a depravity of character superior even to that of sensuality itself.

But as associating with the profane is a mark of profanity, so every degree of countenance given to them, by persons of entire character, is a sensible injury to the public. It serves to put honour upon vice, and in part to deliver it from that just reproach which ought to be the punishment of the guilty, and a warning to others not to tread in their steps. I have on several occasions observed, that the present period or state of things in this place and congregation demands the greatest concern for the public interest of religion. Growing in numbers, and growing I hope in wealth, as the effect of your own and your fathers industry, you are in danger of the introduction of a worldly spirit by the rising genera-

tion. This every good man ought, with the utmost prudence and resolution, to oppose ; particularly by doing all in his power to preserve the honour and respect due to true religion, and treating with contempt every open enemy to that important interest. I sincerely wish you improved, and possessed of every accomplishment that is truly valuable ; but beware of that false politeness which consists in little else than an opposition to religion and sobriety. And indeed I am afraid we shall not soon attain to any other, at least not by the help of those, who, as they set religion at defiance, so are equally strangers to that elegance and sense of decency which distinguishes persons of higher rank.

The late riotous meeting was without doubt the most audacious thing of the kind that ever was attempted in this place, and therefore calls for an open and vigorous testimony against it, by every person in his sphere. Regard for the glory of God, love to the souls of men, and solicitude for the rising generation, conspire in requiring you to exert yourselves in such a cause ; and shall I not add, compassion to the persons themselves. Their worst enemies are those who treat them with indulgence, so long as they continue to justify or to palliate their offence. Nothing serves to harden sinners more, than when no notice is taken of their crimes, and they find themselves just as generally, and as well received as if they had done no evil. On the other hand, when they perceive the deep concern of others on their account, it is an excellent mean of bringing them to serious reflection, and inducing them to tremble at themselves. Wherefore, my beloved:

hearers, let me beseech you to preserve your horror of sin, notwithstanding the boldness of sinners. Do every thing in your power to reclaim the offenders. Be earnest in your supplications to almighty God, that he would snatch them as brands from the burning, and raise them up as trophies of his victorious grace. But while they continue in their enmity to God, forget not, on your own account, the apostolic counsel, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

SERMON XX.

MINISTERIAL CHARACTER AND DUTY.

2 COR. iv. 13.

We also believe, and therefore speak.

TO understand what ought to be the character, and what principles should animate the conduct of a minister of the gospel, cannot be without profit, even to a private Christian. It will teach him whom to prefer, when he is called in providence to make a choice. It will teach him to hold such in reputation for their office sake, and to improve the privilege of a regular gospel ministry, if he himself is favoured with it. And I think it must incline him to make daily supplication to the Lord of the harvest, to send forth faithful labourers into his harvest.

But though there were no such general advantage to be derived from it, my particular charge, and the very aspect of this audience, would easily justify me in making this for once the immediate subject of discourse.

Now, if we would know the character of a faithful minister, we cannot better or more immediately reach our purpose, than by looking into the character, and observing the conduct and springs of action of the apostles of our Lord, who received their commissions immediately from himself, and were not only the first, but the best and most successful ministers that ever were employed in the church of Christ.

The apostle Paul, whose call was so singular, and whose labours were so distinguished, has, in his epistles to the several churches planted or watered by him, given us a great light into the chief aims he had in the exercise of the ministry. In this chapter and the preceding part of this epistle, he shews the Corinthians with what visible faithfulness and sincerity he had acted, and what diligence he had used in promoting their eternal happiness.

To save time I forbear going through the connection of his discourse, and only observe, that in the words of our text he shews what kept him faithful, and influenced him to so much diligence in the work to which he was called, by alluding to an expression in the 116th Psalm. It is written, "I have believed, therefore have I spoken. We also believe, and therefore speak." In this he intimates, that our inward persuasion of the great truths of the everlasting gospel, could not but have a powerful influence upon him and others to press the important message, and watch over the souls of those committed to their charge.

In discoursing further at this time, I intend to confine myself to this single truth, which may be

easily deduced from the text : That one of the most essentially necessary, and the most extensively useful qualifications of a good minister is, that he be a good man, that he have a firm belief of that gospel he is called to preach, and a lively sense of religion upon his own heart. After I shall have explained and confirmed this observation, I will conclude with some practical reflections.

Though I have mentioned real religion as one of the most essentially necessary qualifications, I am not ignorant, that taking the words in a strict sense, gifts are more necessary to the being of a ministry than even grace itself. To make the efficacy of the ordinances to depend upon the inward state of the administrator, is a popish error, and is expressly guarded against by the Assembly of Divines in our Shorter Catechism, in the following words : “ The sacraments,” and it is equally true of every other ordinance, “ become effectual to salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them.”

But some degree of capacity is evidently necessary in the most absolute sense. A man who is altogether void of knowledge and utterance, or who is deaf and dumb, may be a saint, but cannot be a minister. This concession, however, takes nothing from the force of the observation, that real religion is of the greatest importance, and most absolutely necessary to the faithful discharge of a minister's sacred trust. That I may set this in as clear and strong a light as I am able, let me intreat your attention to the following observations.

I. Real religion in a minister will make him knowing and able for his work. It is necessary for any one who intends himself for the office of the ministry, by diligent study, and the use of those means with which God in his providence hath furnished him, to improve his understanding, and acquire a stock of knowledge, that he may be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. In this he can have no such incitement as concern for his Master's glory. Nay, he that is truly religious is taught of God, the best of masters, and will have some of his most profitable lessons from his own experience.

Let me the rather intreat your attention to this, that those who are most apt to disparage piety, are also apt to speak in terms of high approbation on the subject of literature and science. Observe, therefore, that true religion serves both to give a man that knowledge which is necessary to a minister, and to direct and turn into its proper channel the knowledge which he may otherwise acquire. It is an approved maxim in every science, that practical and experimental knowledge far exceeds that which is merely speculative; at least, though the last may make the prettiest show, the first is by much to be preferred for use. Any wise man, if he was to go a dangerous voyage, would readily prefer as his pilot one who had much experience, and had failed often that way himself, to one who had studied navigation in the most perfect manner ashore. So, my brethren, every man who regards his soul would chuse for his spiritual guide one who appears to have

the wisdom to save his own, and would expect by him to be best directed how to avoid the rocks and shelves in his passage through this dangerous and tempestuous ocean of life.

But if this maxim holds true in other sciences, it holds yet more strongly in religion, which cannot be truly known unless it be felt. There is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty; and therefore he that is a stranger to the one, is ignorant of the other. I am not insensible that a bad man may espouse, and plead for a great part of the system of divine truth, but as he cannot cordially embrace it, so I am inclined to think that he never truly understands it. The apostle Paul declares, that it is only by the Spirit of God, which is given to every real Christian, and more especially to every faithful minister, that a man is enabled to treat rightly of divine things. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God; which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned" As the real Christian from that character is best disposed to seek after, so he is by the same means best fitted to improve and apply his knowledge of spiritual things. This will appear if we consider what ought to be the great work of a minister. He hath to do chiefly with the hearts and consciences of his people. His business

is to convince the ungodly, to awaken the secure, to enlighten the ignorant, to direct and strengthen the weak in the faith, and in general, as a wise physician, to administer the medicine proper to the various conditions and disorders of his hearers. Now it must at first sight appear, that he who is a stranger to the power of godliness, and knows nothing of the spiritual life himself, must be utterly unfit for discerning how it thrives, or assisting and promoting it in others. That man must surely be most powerful in searching, and most skilful in guiding the consciences of others, who has been accustomed to examine and direct his own.

I only farther observe upon this particular, that true religion will purify, and direct into its proper channel, the knowledge he may otherwise acquire. It is a great mistake to think sound learning is an enemy to religion, and to suppose that an ignorant ministry is the best or safest. There is no branch of human knowledge of which a divine may not be the better, or which a good man will not improve to the glory of God and the good of others, though some of them are more important than others; and it is necessary to give to any of them only such proportion of our time as is consistent with our great and principal aim. Now true religion is the great preservative against mistake or abuse of any kind on this subject. A bad man is apt to study merely to gratify his own fancy; and there is a false luxury and delicacy in feeding the mind as well as the body. A bad man is also exceedingly prone to intellectual pride and self-sufficiency, than which there is not a vice more dangerous in itself, or more con-

trary to the character of a minister of the New Testament. But he who is sanctified by divine grace, as he has every motive to diligence in acquiring knowledge, so the single purpose to which he will wish to apply it is to serve God in the gospel of his Son.

II. Real religion in a minister will make him happy and cheerful, ready and willing to do his duty. There is a great difference between the prompt and speedy obedience of a servant who loves his master and his work, and the reluctant labour of him who only deceives him that he may eat of his bread. A truly pious man undertakes the office of the ministry from love to God, with a view to promote his glory, and what he hath counted his interest in the world, viz. the welfare of the souls of men. An unholy minister undertakes this employment only as a trade to earn by, and has it at least as his highest aim to promote his own worldly advantage. It is easy to see in what a different manner these different persons will act, and in what different light they will view the sacred duties of their function. He who truly believes the gospel, and loves its Author, will reckon it his highest honour when he is called to recommend it to the belief of others. He will be apt to teach, and will find a pleasure in carrying his message, besides the reward he expects from him who employs him, and will undergo with cheerfulness every fatigue he is subjected to in the execution of his office. On the other hand, he who is actuated by a contrary principle, though he is obliged, that he may raise his wages, in some sort to do his duty, yet how heavily must

it go on, how tedious and burdensome must it be, both in preparation and performance! He will count his service at the altar, and his work among his people, as a toil and drudgery, and reckon all that redeemed time that he can save for himself from the duties of his office.

Perhaps it may be thought that there lies a strong objection against this observation from experience, as it appears that such ministers as have least of religion commonly go most lightly under the charge, and are far from feeling any burden in what is committed to them; whereas the most pious and faithful ministers seem to have a weight upon their spirits, and such a concern for the salvation of their people, as cannot but take much from their cheerfulness in the work to which they are called. In answer to this, observe, that an unfaithful minister is not easy and cheerful because his work is agreeable to him, but because he takes as little of it as may be, and seeks his pleasure more than his duty. Certain it is, that the work of the ministry must be irksome and uneasy to him that believes not, except so far as he makes it subservient to ambition, and displays his own talents when he should be feeding his people's souls. This, I confess, which the apostle justly calls preaching ourselves, may be abundantly gratifying to the most corrupt heart. On the other hand, that concern for his people which is upon the heart of every faithful pastor, is far from being inconsistent with the most solid peace and desirable pleasure, arising from the discharge of his duty. It is like the exercise of pity and compassion.

to the distressed in him who is acting for their relief, which, though in some sense painful, is yet accompanied with the approbation of God and conscience, as flowing from a rightly disposed mind, and therefore to be cherished and cultivated rather than suppressed. There is a time for every good man to mourn, and a time to rejoice, and perhaps the one is even more salutary than the other; for we are told, that God will appoint unto them that mourn in Sion, "to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

III. Real religion in a minister will make him faithful and impartial in the discharge of his trust. The God in whose presence we stand, and in whose name we speak, is no respecter of persons, and neither should we be in doing his work. There is commonly a great variety of persons, of different stations and of different characters, committed to the inspection of a minister; the pleasing or displeasing of whom has a considerable influence on his worldly ease and interest. This is a great temptation to be unfaithful, and often leads to speak unto them *smooth things*, and *prophecy deceit*; or at least not to deal with all that freedom and impartiality that his duty to God requires. In every unregenerate man, worldly interest in one shape or another, either vanity or gain, is the supreme motive of action; and therefore, as most men are impatient of reproof, it cannot be supposed that an un sanctified minister will venture to provoke their displeasure, or to gall them with unacceptable truths. The favour of the great or the applause of the multitude, he certainly will

seek more than the edification of any. On the other hand, he who truly fears God, and believes what he teaches, will act with faithfulness and boldness. He will remember, that if he seeks to please men, he cannot be the servant of Christ. He will therefore no farther obtain, and indeed no farther wish to obtain their favour, than as a diligent discharge of his duty approves him to their consciences in the sight of God, or forces the approbation of the impartial, notwithstanding the resentment of particular offenders. It is only the fear of God can deliver us from the fear of man. I do not pretend that all who fear God are wholly delivered from it, but surely bad men must be far more under the government of this sinful principle. The one may fail occasionally, the other is corrupted wholly. There are two reasons which incline me particularly to insist on that faithfulness which can only flow from true piety.

1. That preaching, in order to be useful, must be very particular and close in the application. General truths and abstract reasoning have little or no influence upon the hearers, as the ignorant cannot, and the wise will not apply them to themselves.

2. The other reason is, that private admonition and personal reproof are a great part of a minister's duty, and a duty that cannot be performed by any man who hath not a steady regard to the presence and command of that God who hath set him to watch for the souls of his people, as one that must give an account.

IV. Real religion in a minister will make him active and laborious in his work. Diligence is ab-

folutely necessary to the right discharge of the pastoral duties, whether public or private. It requires no small attention and labour to seek out fit and acceptable words, as the preacher expresses it, to stir up the attention of the inconsiderate, to awaken secure, and convince obstinate sinners, to unmask the covered hearts of hypocrites, to set right the erring, and encourage the fearful. An unbelieving minister must be careless and slothful. As he is unconcerned about the success of his work, he cannot have any great concern about the manner of performance. But he who believes the unspeakable importance of what he is employed about, both to himself and to his people, cannot fail to be diligent. He knows that he himself must answer to God for the care he has taken of the souls committed to his charge, and that if he does not faithfully warn the wicked to turn from their ways, their blood will be required at his hand.

O, my brethren, what a striking consideration is this, to suppose ourselves interrogated by the supreme Judge concerning every sinner under our charge! Did you earnestly warn this unhappy soul, by earnest exhortations in public, and by serious affectionate expostulations in private, to consider his ways? It is an easy thing, by a partial or cursory performance of our duty, to screen ourselves from the censure of our fellow men, but to stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, and answer there for our diligence, is a more awful trial.

Will not also a concern for his people's interest animate a pious minister to diligence? If he is truly pious, as he loves God he loves his brother also.

The apostle Paul says, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." If a man in good earnest believes that everlasting misery must be the portion of all who die in an unrenewed state, what pains will he not take to prevent sinners from going to that place of torment !

One who could see a fellow-creature, in the rage of a fever, rushing to the brink of a precipice, and not restrain him, would fall under lasting infamy. Must not the same compassion move the heart of a serious person, who sees his fellow-sinners going blindfold to the pit of perdition ?

It is their not believing these things that makes them so fearless in sinning: if you truly believe them, will you not make an effort to alarm them ? There are no motives like these to diligence—he that believes will certainly speak.

V. In the last place, Real religion will make a minister successful in his work. This it does, both as it fits him for doing his duty to his people, which has been illustrated above, and as it adds to his precepts the force of his example. First, it makes him successful as it fits him for his duty. It is true indeed, that God only can give the blessing upon a minister's labours, and that he can save by many or by few, by the weakest as well as by the ablest instrument ; yet we see from experience, that in all ordinary cases he proportions the success to the propriety or sufficiency of the means. Neither is there any surer mark that God intends effectual benefit to any part of the world or the church, than when he raises and commissions men eminently qualified to plead his cause. Therefore real piety, even in this

respect, contributes to a minister's success. If diligence in all other things produces success, it must be so also in the ministry. If he that lays out his ground with the greatest judgment, prepares and dresses it with the greatest care, has the most plentiful crop; if the shepherd that waits most diligently upon his flock, feeds them in the best pasture, and leads them to the safest shelter, has the most increase, then that minister who does his duty most wisely and most powerfully, will also see most of the fruit of his labours.

But real and unaffected, yet visible seriousness, has also its own proper additional influence on a minister's success. An apparent and visible impression upon the speaker's mind of what he says, gives it an inexpressible weight with the hearers. There is a piercing heat, a penetrating force in that which flows from the heart, which distinguishes it not only from the coldness of indifference, but also from the false fire of enthusiasm or vain glory. Besides all this, the example of a pious minister is a constant instruction to his people. It ratifies his doctrine, while he not only charges them to do what he says, but to be what he is. This will receive much illustration from its contrary.

A minister who has a careless untender walk, defeats, by his life, the intent of his preaching. Though in reason it cannot justify any one in disobeying wholesome instructions, that the instructor despises them himself, yet it is one of the most common excuses men make for themselves, and few excuses seem to set their consciences more at ease. Loose and careless persons think themselves quite

at liberty to despise the reproofs of their pastor, if, while he teaches others, he teaches not himself.

Nay, not only is it thus with the profane, but even those who have the greatest regard for religion, are not so much affected with the same truths when spoken by one they think indifferent about them, as when spoken by one who seems to feel what he speaks, and who lives as he teaches.

Experience greatly confirms the whole of this reasoning; for wherever an eminently pious minister has lived and laboured long, there is commonly to be found the most knowing, serious, sober-minded, and judicious people; nay, the very memory of such a minister is often long continued after he is gone, and his example is proposed by his hearers to their children's children.

From all these considerations I conclude, that the most important qualification of a good minister is to be a *believing preacher*; and that if he saves his own soul, he will be the probable mean of saving them that hear him.

I proceed now to make some improvement of the subject.

Reverend Fathers and Brethren,

As we would wish our people to do, let us take heed how we hear, and make a faithful application to ourselves of what hath been said upon the subject. Let it engage us to a serious examination of ourselves, lest while we preach the gospel to others we ourselves should be reprobates. This ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious thoughts, for several reasons. We are in danger of thinking

ourselves too easily safe, by comparing that outward regularity to which our office itself, even from secular motives, obliges us, with the licentious extravagance of profane sinners. We are in danger of mistaking our frequent thinking and speaking of the things of God, in the way of our calling, for an evidence of true religion in ourselves. We may also perhaps mistake those gifts with which God hath furnished us for the benefit of his own people, as the fruits of the Spirit, and of gracious dispositions in our hearts. A minister is as much liable to self-deceit as others, and in some respects more so. We have therefore much need often to make trial of our state, as well as to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure.

But let us beware of imagining that this discourse is only applicable to such as have no real faith in Christ. God forbid that there were any minister among us a complete unbeliever, counting the gospel a fable. But faith, and every other gracious disposition grafted upon it, are capable of many degrees of improvement and strength; and in proportion to the strength of our faith, and the impression we have of divine things, will be our diligence, and consequently our success in the work of the ministry. Let us therefore impress our minds with a more and more lively sense of the important truths which we teach and hear. Let us not starve ourselves while we are feeding others; but study to arrive at a greater degree of love to God and delight in him, a greater conformity to his blessed image, in purity of heart and integrity of life. Let us, in a special manner, study to attain to more and more intimate com-

munion with God in secret, which is the sign of our dependence upon him, and the very exercise of love to him, which is the mean of constancy, and the source of joy in religion.

Above all, let us set our affections upon the things that are above, where our Redeemer sits at his Father's right hand. As our profession is to be pilgrims and strangers in the earth, to live by faith and not by sight, let us study to raise our hopes of, and desire after the heavenly inheritance. By this we shall not only believe, but know and feel the value of true religion, which cannot fail to make us diligent in seeking the good of others.

O, my brethren, what reason have we to be inwardly ashamed at the weakness of our faith and the coldness of our love, as they show themselves by our indifference in the duties of our office! We are often ready both to complain and wonder that our hearers are so little affected with the most awful considerations, that they can hear with indifference of everlasting happiness, and sit without fear under the denunciations of eternal wrath; that we cannot persuade them it is of importance to think what shall become of them for ever. But is it not also to be wondered at, that we ourselves can often speak of these things with so little emotion? Can we ever be sufficiently affected with the danger of our hearers, when we consider that we must either save them by convincing and converting them now; or deliver our own souls by witnessing, justifying, and perhaps pleading for their condemnation at the last day! However plain and simple these truths are, of the

final judgment of ministers and people, they are quite unfathomable in their meaning and importance to both. It is strange that we can think of them without the deepest concern, or even speak of them without tears.

Let us pray that the Lord would increase our faith, that believing we may speak, and that our speech may be with such efficacy, by the blessing of God, as many sinners may be thereby brought to everlasting life; that we may approve ourselves to him that sent us; and that when Christ the chief Shepherd shall appear, we may receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

SERMON XXI.

THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL ENTIRELY
OF GOD.

I COR. iii. 5, 6, 7.

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.

MY BRETHREN,

I HAVE been led to the choice of this subject by that dispensation of providence which, though contrary to all human probability, hath brought me to this new charge of presiding over the instruction of youth in the liberal arts. I find also, that in the course of my attendance on it, I shall have frequent opportunities of preaching the glorious gospel of the blessed God to you of this congregation and neighbourhood. Let me therefore beg your attention to the instructive passage which I have just now read,

that both teachers and scholars, ministers and hearers, may preserve a just sense of their relation to one another, and the common relation we all stand in to God. And particularly that in the discharge of our mutual duty of preaching and hearing, we may preserve on our minds a deep sense of our dependence on superior strength, and may look for a blessing from the Father of lights, from whom alone it can possibly flow.

The text of itself, and independent of its connection, is so full of useful matter, that I am unwilling to spend your time by a long deduction of the particular circumstances of the church of Corinth which led the apostle to express himself in the language contained in it. Let it suffice therefore to observe, that a spirit of pride and faction prevailed very much in that church, which had rent them into parties denominated from this or the other principal teacher who was or had been among them. Thus in the 12th verse of the first chapter, "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ." And in the verse immediately preceding the text, "For while one saith I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" Possibly the converts from among the Jews counted themselves the disciples of Peter, and held him in the highest esteem, while those of the Gentiles supported the name and credit of the apostle Paul, who first planted the Christian faith among the idolatrous heathens; and perhaps others, who were much addicted to learning and philosophy, admired and extolled the eloquence of Apollos. And yet after all, perhaps the fierce and

unchristian contentions that prevailed in that church were not owing to their divided attachment to particular apostles, but to the ambitious and corrupt teachers which were among themselves. If this was the case, the apostle Paul only mentioned himself, Apollos and Cephas, by way of supposition, instead of naming the guilty heads of the contending parties, that the reproof being administered with so much prudence and delicacy, might be carried home with the greater evidence and force. This interpretation receives a good deal of countenance from what we find in chap. iv. 6. "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sake, that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another."

Such a division and factious temper does infinite mischief wherever it prevails. It proceeds from people being much under the power of a carnal mind, and exceedingly increases carnality by that envy, strife, and dissimulation which it always produces. But the chief way in which it hinders the success of the gospel is, by leading men into the fatal mistake of seeking, or expecting to find in ministers what can only be had in God, or ascribing to instruments and servants what is due only to their Lord and Master. Would you perceive the greatness of this sin? It is sacrilegiously robbing God of his own honour and glory, in order to invest a weak sinful creature with the sacred spoils.

I only add one other preliminary remark. You

may see the perfect consistency and propriety of the apostle's conduct, according to the different circumstances in which he was engaged. For this purpose we must compare his expressions here with those used by him when attempts were made to lessen his character, and detract from the dignity of his office as an apostle of Christ. On these occasions he shews, that he knows very well what belonged to his station in the church, and is so far from speaking of himself in affected strains of humility, that he freely vindicates his own conduct, and magnifies the honourable trust that was committed to him by his Saviour. Chap. ix. 1, 2. "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." Thus the apostle speaks in vindication of his authority when unjustly attacked. But when the question is changed, and some are disposed to extol him or any other, to the prejudice of his Lord and Master, he changes his style too, and speaks in the humblest manner of himself, and any thing he had contributed, or could contribute to the success of the gospel. As a faithful servant he could not endure that any should put him in his Master's place, and rejected with indignation all that false honour which flowed only from the mistakes and weakness of his fellow Christians.

In this, as in many other instances, the occasional directions given to the different Christian churches in the early ages, carry the most important and useful admonitions to us who live in the latter days.

From the passage before us we learn, that ministers should consider themselves, and be considered by their people, as entirely subordinate to God, and expect assistance in their labours, and success in their endeavours only from himself. What I further propose, in dependence on divine grace, is first to illustrate and support the proposition just now laid down, and then to make a practical improvement of the subject for your instruction and direction.

I. First, then, I am to illustrate and support this proposition, That ministers ought to consider themselves, and to be considered by their people, as entirely subordinate to God, and expect assistance in their labours, and success in their endeavours only from himself. In the course of this illustration it is my intention, at once to point out the meaning and import of the proposition, and to establish its truth from Scripture and experience. For this purpose I beg your attention to the following observations.

1. The success of the gospel depends wholly upon God, and to him alone must the glory of it be ascribed, as it is he who not only sends and employs, but who furnishes and qualifies all whom he employs for promoting his service. He not only gives the commission to undertake, but he imparts the ability to discharge the trust. This truth is manifestly included in the apostle's words: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" He considers himself and others only as ministers; that is, as servants subject to the direction and authority

of Christ their Lord and Master, unto whom they are to be instrumental in carrying on the conversion of sinners, and the edification and comfort of believers. This similitude, however, of itself does not fully come up to the truth the apostle would inculcate. A man who is but a servant, and does every thing by the authority, and under the direction of his Master, may yet have real and just ground for valuing himself upon what he performs; in case, for instance, he is possessed of uncommon talents, and an extraordinary capacity to do his work to the best advantage. On this supposition he is a treasurer to his Master, the success of whose direction may in a great measure be ascribed to the servant's skill and ability in the execution. But to exclude every pretence of this sort, the apostle subjoins what brings the allusion fully up to his purpose, "even as the Lord gave to every man." Ministers are not only servants, but their very capacity and ability to serve God are received from himself, who divides to every man severally as he will. From this it is evident, that the glory and honour of the whole work, and the success of every particular servant employed in it, is entirely owing to Christ their great Lord and Master: 1 Cor. iv. 7. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"

Let us, my brethren, consider and dwell upon this truth a little, for it is full of instruction both to ministers and people. That we may view it with the greater clearness and precision, let me observe, that there are two distinct kinds of qualities, which are

each in their place of great importance in the work of the ministry. (1.) The endowments of the mind, whether original and natural, or acquired by industry; these last being only the former improved and perfected by education and exercise. (2.) Holy dispositions, which are of the utmost importance and necessity to turn the other into their proper channel, and to give them force and influence in the application. Now both these are equally and entirely the gift of God, the first being indeed in Scripture most commonly, in all their extent and diversity, called gifts; but the others are the effect of the gracious and sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost.

(1.) All the endowments of mind which fit a man for common or special service, are the gift of God. Whatever capacity of talents, whatever natural advantages of any kind ministers enjoy, it is plain that they received them from God, and depend upon him for the continuance and use of them. He only endows them with knowledge and comprehension to understand his sacred truths. He only endows them with the talent of speaking well, and enables them to communicate their knowledge to others, in an agreeable and acceptable manner. Exod. iv. 11, 12. "And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." There is something very noble, as well as instructive in these passages of Scripture, which represent even the skill of the tradesmen to be employed in adorning the visible sanctuary, as the gift of God, and the inspira-

tion of his Spirit: Exod. xxxi. 1, 2, 3, 4. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass." And again, Exod. xxxvi. 1. "Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding, to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the Lord had commanded."

Further, as it is the inspiration of the Almighty that giveth understanding, both in a general and comparative view, so the improvement of natural parts by acquired learning is no less to be ascribed to him. As he gives the disposition and ability, so it is he who, by the course of his providence, furnishes the means, and presents the opportunity of making progress. Let human efforts be what they will, if God do not smile upon them they will infallibly be blasted. An all-seeing and sovereign God has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of our habitation, and every person who will seriously reflect, may be sensible how all his purposes have been controuled and over-ruled by the invisible direction of the great Disposer of every event, who hath pointed out the paths in which he was to walk.

(2.) Let us also remember, that it is God who endows his ministers with their brightest ornaments, viz. holy and gracious dispositions, which serve to

turn their other talents into the proper channel, and to give them force and influence in the application. I am sensible, my brethren, that gifts may be considered as more assistant to the being of the ministry than even grace itself. We justly renounce the Popish doctrine, that the efficacy of the sacraments, or other ordinances, depends upon the intention or inward state of the administrator. In opposition to this the Assembly's Shorter Catechism says justly, "The sacraments (and it is equally true of every other ordinance) become effectual to salvation, not from any virtue in them, nor in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them." A hypocrite cannot be a faithful, but he may be in some degree a successful minister. I am persuaded there are not a few now in heaven, who were converted and edified by the ministry of those who have taken up their abode in the place of torment. An awful reflection this indeed to those who are intrusted with the office of the ministry. It brings to my mind a saying of an eminent and pious writer: Ministers are in as great danger of deceiving themselves as others, and in some respects greater, for they may be apt to mistake their readiness in thinking and speaking of holy things, and those gifts which God bestows upon them for the benefit of his chosen, for the fruit and evidence of gracious dispositions in their own hearts.

But notwithstanding all this, it is beyond all controversy, that one of the most essential qualifications of a good minister is, that he be a good man. It is a very difficult, as well as it is a very dreadful thing,

to preach an unknown Saviour. But where the love of Christ dwells and reigns in the heart, it gives such attachment to his cause, so much love to his people, so much clearness and comprehension in understanding his truths, so great willingness, or rather desire to communicate them, as cannot fail to have the greatest influence on a minister's diligence, and at the same time gives reason to hope that he will speak from faith to faith. Thus the apostle expresses himself, 2 Cor. iv. 13. "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I have believed, therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak."

Now to whom is a minister indebted for his holy dispositions? Who implanted in him that love to Christ which inspires him with zeal and fidelity in his service? Take the answer in the words of the apostle, 2 Cor. iv. 5, 6. "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." It was the power of God that brought him again from the dead, and it is by the Spirit of God dwelling in him, that he is daily sanctified and enabled to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things. So that the fire of his ministrations, and the light of his example, and the joint influence of both, are to be ultimately referred, and will by him be most willingly and thankfully attributed to the power and grace of God his Redeemer, of whose fulness we all have received, and grace for grace.

2. But in the second place, the success of the gospel depends entirely on God, as it is he who gives efficacy to the instructions even of the most eminent and best qualified ministers, by the immediate supernatural operation of his Spirit and grace. Let us suppose a minister endued with the finest natural parts, and these improved and cultivated by all the advantages of human learning; let him have the most acute and penetrating genius, the most lively imagination, the most solid judgment, the most charming and persuasive eloquence; in fine, let him have what alone is of more value than all these, an eminently pious and devout heart—with so many advantages he shall not be able to make one sincere convert, unless almighty God be pleased to open the way by his divine grace into the heart and conscience of the sinner. It is not then merely by furnishing the proper means, and by the disposition of his providence, giving them an opportunity of exerting their influence, that God promotes the success of the gospel, but by an immediate and powerful agency, distinct from, and superior to every second cause.

I have endeavoured to express this with the greatest fulness, and the greatest clearness, as a truth of the utmost importance. While we believe the use and necessity of means and second causes, we ought never to separate them from, or forget their subordination to God. There can hardly be a nobler illustration of this truth than the apostle has given us in the text by a natural similitude: “I have planted,” says he, “Apollos watered, but God gave the

increase." His expressions are taken from husbandry, or gardening, which is a particular branch of it. By an allusion to these arts, he explains his subject in a manner level to the capacity of every thinking person. The husbandman or gardener may manure, dig up, and mellow the soil; he may sow his seed and dress his field with the greatest diligence and care; but what a little way has he gone, or rather, indeed, he hath not so much as begun the great process of growth and vegetation, that daily miracle, may I not call it, before our eyes. How many things must necessarily concur which are beyond the reach of his power! The enlivening heat of the sun, the refreshing dews and rain from the bottles of heaven, are wholly under the direction and disposal of the omnipotent Jehovah. Cannot he, when he will, make the heavens over your heads as brass, and the earth under your feet as iron? Nay, not only so, but the power of growing in the seed, by striking out its roots and opening its bud, and the natural disposition in the earth to nourish it, are derived, not from any virtue inherent in the things themselves, but only from that almighty word, "Let the earth bring forth every tree bearing fruit, and every herb bearing seed after its kind." Just so in that spiritual husbandry of which the apostle is speaking; ministers may sow the good seed of the word of God, but it is his own prerogative to give it a regenerating and sanctifying efficacy, and make it productive of faith in the heart, and good works in the life. Ministers may continue to water the seed already sown, with suitable instructions and exhortations, and the diligent use of all those means which God hath ap-

pointed for the establishment and growth of believers; but it is only the influence of his own Spirit that makes these means productive of the desired effect. Therefore the apostle concludes, in language drawn from the similitude, "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

This important truth, my brethren, is capable of a very full and clear proof from the sacred oracles. Every thing we find recorded there concerning the mission of the prophets, and the success of their message, carries this truth as it were in its bosom. Nay, the great prophet of the church gives us this very view of his own ministry as the Son of man. John vi. 44, 45. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." You see that, to the commission which our Lord gives to his apostles, is annexed a promise of his presence and power to accompany their ministrations. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you alway, even to the end of the world. Amen."

But instead of multiplying passages of Scripture, I shall direct you to one which will set this part of my argument in the clearest light. It is that passage which gives an account of the conversion of

Lydia, recorded Acts xvi. 14. "And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul." Now if we attend to the circumstances of this conversion, we shall find that if any thing could have been effectually done without the direct and immediate concurrence of the grace of God, it might have been expected here. The case was every way promising. The hearer was one who had renounced idolatry, and embraced the worship of the true God. She was, it is not improbable, a devout woman, so far as her knowledge reached, and wanted only to be instructed in the faith of Christ. Here was for a preacher the great apostle of the Gentiles. I need say no more to shew how well qualified he was to do his part; and yet we find that even in this most favourable case, the immediate concurrence of divine grace was necessary to complete the work. The Lord must by his own good Spirit open the heart of Lydia, else even the apostle Paul, with all his divine accomplishments, and a heart glowing with the warmest zeal for the glory of Christ and the salvation of souls, will be but an unsuccessful preacher.

I need not make use of any separate arguments to convince you, that this holds equally true of the growth and comfort of believers, as of the conversion of sinners. Whether ministers are employed in planting or watering, the instrument is nothing; success flows only from God. Let me therefore request and beseech you to hear and adore the striking truth, a Paul or Apollos in the pulpit will be alto-

gether unsuccessful without the almighty power and grace of God. The most clear and distinct illustration of divine truths, without inward and spiritual illumination, will leave the hearer in ignorance, or lead him into error. The most awful denunciations of a son of thunder, without divine power, will leave the sinner hardened, or even increase the fearedness of conscience. The most melting and tender application to the affections, without divine energy, will be treated with contempt and scorn. In one word, the most lively administration of ordinances, without the blessing from above, will be but, in the language of the prophet, as a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

My brethren, you may not only be convinced of this truth, because it is recorded in the word of God, but may see it daily exemplified in every part of the visible church. You may see the same ordinances acceptable, delightful, and profitable to some, deserted, despised, and resisted by others. Under the very same administration, you may see some effectually persuaded to turn to the living God, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and daily multiplied; some, on the other hand, caring for none of these things, but sleeping in security; nay, some whose corruptions are irritated, swelling with rage, contradicting and blaspheming: all which is well described by the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. "For we are unto God a sweet favour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the favour of death unto death; and to the other, the favour

of life unto life; and who is sufficient for these things?"

3. The third and last observation I am to make for the illustration of this truth is, that success in the gospel depends wholly upon God, as he exercises much of his own sovereignty in the manner of bestowing it. He takes care, if I may speak so, to shew that it is from himself, by the measure in which he proportions the success to the nature and sufficiency of the means he sees proper to employ. All is from God, as you have already heard, because the disposing and commissioning his ministers is originally his own work—again, because however well qualified they may be, his own almighty agency is necessary to give them success. But when there is a regular proportion always observed between the means and the end, men are ready to overlook or forget the great and first cause of all. For this reason he sees it often meet to manifest his sovereignty, in order to command our attention, by working without means, or by the weakest means, or even contrary to means, and blasting the effect of those that were most excellent and promising in human judgment. Just as the beautiful and regular order of the natural world, the mutual dependence of one part upon, and its subserviency to another, is a proof of the wisdom and omnipotence of the Creator. Yet he sees it necessary sometimes to interpose in an extraordinary way, and to controul the course of nature, to shew that it is absolutely at his command.

Remember, however, my brethren, that in carrying on the work of the gospel, God usually propor-

tions the success to the propriety and sufficiency of the means. When he has much work to do, he commonly raises up some persons eminently qualified; he draws from his quiver some polished shafts to pierce the ranks of opposing hosts. Yet he often presents to our view such circumstances as serve to shew the dependence of all means upon himself. When the gospel was first preached, the apostles were indeed fully fitted and furnished for their work, but it was by a miracle. They were originally poor illiterate fishermen, quite unequal in themselves to the astonishing undertaking of producing a revolution in the state of religion, and the sentiments of mankind over the whole earth. Such persons seem to have been employed for this wise purpose, "that our faith might not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God." I have often considered this matter with a mixture of reverence and admiration.

That proper respect might still be had to the qualifications of ministers, and that none might be justified in pouring contempt on human science, the apostle Paul, a man of eminent learning and ability, was the most active, useful, and successful of all the apostles; and one third part, at least, of the whole canon of the New Testament was written by him. At the same time there were such circumstances in his calling and conversion, as made him one of the most illustrious monuments of the sovereignty and riches of divine grace, that any age has produced.

In the same manner we see every day the clearest proofs of the power, wisdom, and sovereignty of God. We see that he many times gives extraordi-

nary and sensible assistance to those whom he employs in his own work. So that they both perceive and confess that it is not they, but the grace of God that is with them. Sometimes those of very moderate, or even of the weakest natural abilities, have an unction from the Holy One, and by their piety and diligence become workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. This may be considered as an accomplishment of what Isaiah says of himself, Isa. l. 4. "And the Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." See also the expression of the Psalmist, Psal. xxv. 14. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." Our Lord promises to his disciples extraordinary assistance in time of extraordinary trials and suffering: Luke xxi. 14, 15. "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." And to name one more passage, it is prophesied by Isaiah of the gospel times, chap. xxxii. 4. "The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly."

In a former part of this discourse I have admitted, that gifts may be considered as more necessary to the being of the ministry, than even grace itself. Yet certainly true religion in the heart is of far greater importance to the success and efficacy of the ministry, than eminence or gifts. It seems often the very purpose of divine providence, to pour contempt

upon un sanctified talents. The humble pastor of meaner rank, who loves his Master, his work, and his people, shall often have many seals of his ministry, while the person of superior parts is urged by ambitious views into the unprofitable paths of worldly honours, or instigated by unmortified passion to mar the success of his ministry, by launching out into the tempestuous ocean of political contest and faction. But besides the unfruitfulness of un sanctified talents, there are also many proofs of the sovereignty of God, in refusing his blessing, and making the best ministers in a great measure unprofitable to a people, in righteous judgment for their past sins. Even Isaiah could say, chap. liii. 1. "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Our blessed Lord himself upbraided many of the cities where his mighty works were done, because of their unbelief, and indeed upon many of his hearers his ministry, instead of a saving, had a hardening effect: John iii. 19. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The same thing is elsewhere resolved into the lively and righteous judgment of God. John xii. 39, 40. "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."

I proceed now to make some practical improvement of what hath been said. And in the

First place, A deep and lively impression of the truth I have endeavoured to illustrate and support, will be to those who preach the gospel, an excellent preservative from many temptations. It will preserve them from trusting in themselves, it will keep them still looking upward, and engage them to maintain a continual intercourse with the Father of lights, and the Author of every good and perfect gift. It will also particularly be an excellent mean of preserving them from the dangerous extremes of ostentation and sloth. Oh, how unbecoming a minister is a vain-glorious display of human art, burning incense to his own vanity, and preaching himself when he is called to preach Christ Jesus the Lord! It is no wonder that God should, in his providence, pour disgrace and disappointment on that ministry that is carried on in such a manner as to aim more at promoting the credit of the servant than the honour of the Master. On the other hand, with what countenance can they look up to God for a blessing, who have been at no pains to qualify themselves for his service. As ostentation provokes the divine jealousy, so negligence is disobedience, presumption, and precisely what the Scripture calls tempting God. I would never desire to be considered as one who would encourage men to rush into a pulpit unprepared, and disgrace their honourable calling by rude, undigested, disorderly effusions, or such mean, slovenly, indecent language, as lays the hearers under the strongest temptation to treat it with an insolence of indignation and contempt. Let me commend this to the attention of such young persons as may have an eye to the sacred office.

My dear fellow students, how happy they who can unite together the simplicity of the gospel and the dignity of the pulpit; who are, on the one hand, not ashamed of the cross, and the ignominy that attends it, and, on the other, as devoted servants, are resolved to comply with the counsel given by the apostle Paul to Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. "Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."

2. A deep impression of the truth I have endeavoured to illustrate, will be an excellent preservative to the hearers of the gospel from many temptations which often render their attendance on ordinances, as fruitless as pernicious. It will purify their views and motives in attending on ordinances. It will deliver them from a sinful and unreasonable attachment to men, and carry them more immediately into the presence of the living God. It will save them from that giddy, unsettled disposition, of running with unbounded curiosity from one to another, not that they may be built up in holiness and comfort, but that their imagination and fancy may be gratified. It will preserve them from hearing the gospel merely as critics, in order to pass their judgment on the soundness or ability of their teachers, which, with whatever pride or self-sufficiency it may be done, is as empty and unprofitable a manner of hearing as any that can be named. It will settle their esteem of, and attachment to their pastors, upon the best and most immovable foundation. They

will then love them for their work's sake, they will love them for their Master's sake, they will love them for their own souls sake, and for their subserviency to their daily edification. It will carry them to the throne of grace, and incline them to make continual and fervent supplication to God for his assistance and countenance to his ministers in his own work ; and this will bring them to his house in the best and happiest temper for hearing with profit. In one word, it will make them in a great measure lose view of the creature, and hear the gospel, not " as the word of man, but as it is indeed, and in truth, the word of God."

3. Let me intreat the prayers of this congregation for the ministers of the gospel in general, and for us who minister among you in holy things, that we may be abundantly qualified for the discharge of our important trust in all its parts. The apostle Paul, though extraordinarily called, though singularly qualified, and eminently assisted, never fails to ask the prayers and intercessions of the faithful in his behalf : Eph. vi. 19. " And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." After this approved example, I hope you will forgive me if I put in a particular claim in my own behalf, for your interest at the throne of grace. I make no merit at all of having left country, and kindred, and connexions of the dearest kind, in order to serve the interest of the church of Christ in this part of the globe ; for I consider with pleasure the oneness of his body, and the extent of the catholic church, that there shall come from the east, and

from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of their Father. Could we but think as we ought of the great removal which we are making from time to time into an eternal state, the removal of our bodies, and the change of our scene of service from Europe to America, would appear altogether unworthy of notice. But when I consider the respect and affection, so much above my desert, that have been shewn to me since my arrival in this place, and the testimonies of joy and satisfaction which have been given by all ranks, I am filled with the greatest concern: I say I am filled with the greatest concern, because it plainly implies an expectation of duty and service from me, which I fear I shall be ill able to perform. Let me, therefore, on so just a foundation, not solicit only, but demand an interest in your prayers. Pray that an all sufficient God may give strength from above, and may pour down his blessing on the public institution in this place, which, upon the best information, I think I may say has been founded in faith; and therefore why should not we continue to serve it in hope? Pray that success may attend the ministry of the gospel in this place; and that, if it please God, the esteem and affection shewn to me by all to whom I stand now related, may not be less than it is; for I have not the least reason to desire, nor indeed the courage to hope that it can possibly be greater. Once more, pray that my beloved charge whom I left in Scotland, and will never forget, may, by the special conduct of divine providence, be supplied

with a faithful pastor, who may feed them with knowledge and understanding.

4. In the last place, Suffer me to conclude by addressing a few words to those in this assembly, who are, or who have reason to suspect themselves to be in a state of distance from God. I know that he himself only can change your hearts. Yet he hath given it in charge to his ministers that you should receive warning. And be assured, that if you despise the message, if you trample upon the divine mercy, and resist the Spirit of God when pleading with you in his word, or striving and bearing witness against you in your consciences, your everlasting perdition will lie entirely at your own door. God will be just when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth. Consider, I beseech you, that there is certainly, to all of us here present, one thing that is needful. It signifies very little, whether you pass the little uncertain time that you shall yet be in the body, in abundance or in penury, in honour or in shame, compared to what shall become of you for ever. Lay these things to heart then, in this day of your merciful visitation. There is but one way to escape: "Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that believing you may have life through his name."

A

PASTORAL LETTER

FROM THE

SYNOD OF NEW-YORK AND PHILADELPHIA,

*To the Congregations under their care ; to be read
from the Pulpits on Thursday, June 29. 1775,
being the day of the General Fast.*

VERY DEAR BRETHREN,

THE Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, being met at a time when public affairs wear so threatening an aspect, and when (unless God in his sovereign providence speedily prevent it) all the horrors of a civil war throughout this great continent are to be apprehended, were of opinion, that they could not discharge their duty to the numerous congregations under their care, without addressing them at this important crisis. As the firm belief and habitual recollection of the power and presence of the living God, ought at all times to possess the

minds of real Christians, so in seasons of public calamity, when the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth, it would be an ignorance or indifference highly criminal, not to look up to him with reverence, to implore his mercy by humble and fervent prayer, and, if possible, to prevent his vengeance by unfeigned repentance.

We do therefore, brethren, beseech you in the most earnest manner, to look beyond the immediate authors either of your sufferings or fears, and to acknowledge the holiness and justice of the Almighty in the present visitation. "He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.—Affliction springeth not out of the dust.—He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men;" and therefore it becomes every person, family, city, and province, to humble themselves before his throne, to confess their sins by which they have provoked his indignation, and intreat him to pour out upon all ranks a spirit of repentance and of prayer. Fly also for forgiveness to the atoning blood of the great Redeemer, "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel." Remember and confess, not only your sins in general, but those prevalent national offences which may be justly considered as the procuring causes of public judgments; particularly profaneness and contempt of God, his name, Sabbaths, and sanctuary;—pride, luxury, uncleanness, and neglect of family religion and government, with the deplorable ignorance and security which certainly ought to be imputed to this as their principal cause. All these are among us highly aggravated by the inestimable privileges which we

have hitherto enjoyed without interruption since the first settlement of this country. If in the present day of distress we expect that God will hear our supplications, and interpose for our protection or deliverance, let us remember what he himself requires of us is, that our prayers should be attended with a sincere purpose, and thorough endeavour after personal and family reformation: "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thy hand towards him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles," Job xi.

13, 14.

The Synod cannot help thinking that this is a proper time for pressing all of every rank seriously to consider the things that belong to their eternal peace. Hostilities, long feared, have now taken place, the sword has been drawn in one province, and the whole continent, with hardly any exception, seem determined to defend their rights by force of arms. If, at the same time, the British ministry shall continue to enforce their claims by violence, a lasting and bloody contest must be expected. Surely then it becomes those who have taken up arms, and profess a willingness to hazard their lives in the cause of liberty, to be prepared for death, which to many must be the certain, and to every one is a possible or probable event.

We have long seen with concern the circumstances which occasioned, and the gradual increase of this unhappy difference. As ministers of the gospel of peace we have ardently wished that it could, and often hoped that it would have been more early ac-

commodated. It is well known to you (otherwise it would be imprudent indeed thus publicly to profess) that we have not been instrumental in inflaming the minds of the people, or urging them to acts of violence and disorder. Perhaps no instance can be given on so interesting a subject, in which political sentiments have been so long and so fully kept from the pulpit, and even malice itself has not charged us with labouring from the press; but things are now come to such a state, that as we do not wish to conceal our opinions as men and citizens, so the relation we stand in to you seemed to make the present improvement of it to your spiritual benefit an indispensable duty. Suffer us then to lay hold of your present temper of mind, and to exhort, especially the young and vigorous, by assuring them, that there is no soldier so undaunted as the pious man, no army so formidable as those who are superior to the fear of death. There is nothing more awful to think of, than that those whose trade is war should be despisers of the name of the Lord of hosts, and that they should expose themselves to the imminent danger of being immediately sent from cursing and cruelty on earth, to the blaspheming rage and despairing horror of the infernal pit. Let therefore every one who, from generosity of spirit or benevolence of heart, offers himself as a champion in his country's cause, be persuaded to reverence the name, and walk in the fear of the Prince of the kings of the earth, and then he may, with the most unshaken firmness, expect the issue either in victory or death.

Let it not be forgotten, that though for the wise

ends of his providence, it may please God for a season to suffer his people to lie under unmerited oppression, yet in general we may expect, that those who fear and serve him in sincerity and truth, will be favoured with his countenance and strength. It is both the character and the privilege of the children of God, that they "call upon him in the day of trouble," and he who keepeth covenant and truth for ever has said, that "his ears are always open to their cry." We need not mention to you in how many instances the event in battles and success in war have turned upon circumstances which were inconsiderable in themselves, as well as out of the power of human prudence to foresee or direct, because we suppose you firmly believe, that after all the counsels of men, and the most probable and promising means, the Lord will do "that which seemeth him good;" nor hath his promise ever failed of its full accomplishment: "The Lord is with you while ye be with him, and if ye seek him he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you," 2 Chron. xv. 2.

After this exhortation, which we thought ourselves called upon to give you at this time, on your great interest, "the one thing needful," we shall take the liberty to offer a few advices to the societies under our charge, as to their public and general conduct; and,

First, In carrying on this important struggle, let every opportunity be taken to express your attachment and respect to our sovereign king George, and to the revolution principles by which his august family was seated on the British throne. We recom-

mend, indeed, not only allegiance to him from duty and principle, as the first magistrate of the empire, but esteem and reverence for the person of the prince, who has merited well of his subjects on many accounts, and who has probably been misled into the late and present measures by those about him; neither have we any doubt, that they themselves have been in a great degree deceived by false information from interested persons residing in America. It gives us the greatest pleasure to say, from our own certain knowledge of all belonging to our communion, and from the best means of information, of the far greatest part of all denominations in this country, that the present opposition to the measures of administration does not in the least arise from disaffection to the king, or a desire of separation from the parent state. We are happy in being able with truth to affirm, that no part of America would either have approved or permitted such insults as have been offered to the Sovereign in Great Britain. We exhort you, therefore, to continue in the same disposition, and not to suffer oppression or injury itself easily to provoke you to any thing which may seem to betray contrary sentiments. Let it ever appear, that you only desire the preservation and security of those rights which belong to you as freemen and Britons, and that reconciliation upon these terms is your most ardent desire.

Secondly, Be careful to maintain the union which at present subsists through all the colonies. Nothing can be more manifest, than that the success of every measure depends on its being inviolably preserved; and therefore we hope that you will leave nothing

undone which can promote that end. In particular, as the Continental Congress, now sitting at Philadelphia, consist of delegates chosen in the most free and unbiaſſed manner, by the body of the people, let them not only be treated with reſpect, and encouraged in their difficult ſervice—not only let your prayers be offered up to God for his direction in their proceedings, but adhere firmly to their reſolutions ; and let it be ſeen that they are able to bring out the whole ſtrength of this vaſt country to carry them into execution. We would alſo adviſe for the ſame purpoſe, that a ſpirit of candour, charity, and mutual eſteem, be preſerved and promoted towards thoſe of different religious denominations. Perſons of probity and principle, of every profeſſion, ſhould be united together as ſervants of the ſame Maſter, and the experience of our happy concord hitherto in a ſtate of liberty, ſhould engage all to unite in ſupport of the common intereſt ; for there is no example in hiſtory, in which civil liberty was deſtroyed, and the rights of conſcience preſerved entire.

Thirdly, We do earneſtly exhort and beſeech the ſocieties under our care, to be ſtrict and vigilant in their private government, and to watch over the morals of their ſeveral members. It is with the utmoſt pleaſure we remind you, that the laſt Continental Congress determined to diſcourage luxury in living, public diverſions, and gaming of all kinds, which have ſo fatal an influence on the morals of the people. If it is undeniable, that univerſal profligacy makes a nation ripe for divine judgments, and is the natural mean of bringing them to ruin, reformation of manners is of the utmoſt neceſſity in

our present distress. At the same time, as it has been observed by many eminent writers, that the censorial power, which had for its object the manners of the public in the ancient free states, was absolutely necessary to their continuance, we cannot help being of opinion, that the only thing which we have now to supply the place of this, is the religious discipline of the several sects with respect to their own members; so that the denomination or profession which shall take the most effectual care of the instruction of its members, and maintain its discipline in the fullest vigour, will do the most essential service to the whole body. For the very same reason, the greatest service which magistrates or persons in authority can do with respect to the religion or morals of the people, is to defend and secure the rights of conscience in the most equal and impartial manner.

Fourthly, We cannot but recommend, and urge in the warmest manner, a regard to order and the public peace; and as in many places, during the confusions that prevail, legal proceedings have become difficult, it is hoped that all persons will conscientiously pay their just debts, and to the utmost of their power serve one another, so that the evils inseparable from a civil war may not be augmented by wantonness and irregularity.

Fifthly, We think it of importance at this time, to recommend to all of every rank, but especially to those who may be called to action, a spirit of humanity and mercy. "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood." It is impossible to appeal to the sword without be-

ing exposed to many scenes of cruelty and slaughter; but it is often observed, that civil wars are carried on with a rancour and spirit of revenge much greater than those between independent states. The injuries received or supposed in civil wars wound more deeply than those of foreign enemies; it is therefore the more necessary to guard against this abuse, and recommend that meekness and gentleness of spirit which is the noblest attendant on true valour. That man will fight most bravely, who never fights till it is necessary, and who ceases to fight as soon as the necessity is over.

Lastly, We would recommend to all the societies under our care, not to content themselves with attending devoutly on general fast, but to continue habitually in the exercise of prayer, and to have frequent occasional voluntary meetings for solemn intercession with God on the important trial. Those who are immediately exposed to danger need your sympathy; and we learn from the Scriptures, that fervency and importunity are the very characters of that prayer of "the righteous man which availeth much."

We conclude with our earnest prayer, that the God of heaven may bless you in your temporal and spiritual concerns, and that the present unnatural dispute may be speedily terminated by an equitable and lasting settlement on constitutional principles.

SERMON XXII.

THE DOMINION OF PROVIDENCE OVER THE
PASSIONS OF MEN.



Preached at Princeton, on the 17th of May 1776,
being the General Fast appointed by the Congress
through the United Colonies.

*Dedicated to the Honourable JOHN HANCOCK, Esq.
President of the Congress of the United
States of America.*



To which is added, An Address to the Natives of
Scotland residing in America.

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PSAL. lxxvi. 10.

*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee ; the re-
mainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*

THERE is not a greater evidence, either of the
reality or the power of religion, than a firm
belief of God's universal presence, and a constant
attention to the influence and operation of his pro-
vidence. It is by this means that the Christian

may be said, in the emphatical Scripture language, “to walk with God, and to endure as seeing him who is invisible.”

The doctrine of divine providence is very full and complete in the sacred oracles. It extends not only to things which we may think of great moment, and therefore worthy of notice, but to things the most indifferent and inconsiderable: “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing,” says our Lord, “and one of them falleth not to the ground without your heavenly Father;” nay, “the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” It extends not only to things beneficial and salutary, or to the direction and assistance of those who are the servants of the living God, but to things seemingly most hurtful and destructive, and to persons the most refractory and disobedient. He overrules all his creatures, and all their actions. Thus we are told, that “fire, hail, snow, vapour, and stormy wind, fulfil his word,” in the course of nature; and even so the most impetuous and disorderly passions of men that are under no restraint from themselves, are yet perfectly subject to the dominion of Jehovah. They carry his commission, they obey his orders, they are limited and restrained by his authority, and they conspire with every thing else in promoting his glory. There is the greater need to take notice of this, that men are not generally sufficiently aware of the distinction between the law of God and his purpose. They are apt to suppose, that as the temper of the sinner is contrary to the one, so the outrages of the sinner are able to defeat the other; than which nothing can be

more false. The truth is plainly asserted, and nobly expressed by the Psalmist in the text, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

This Psalm was evidently composed as a song of praise for some signal victory obtained, which was at the same time a remarkable deliverance from threatening danger. The author was one or other of the later prophets, and the occasion probably the unsuccessful assault of Jerusalem, by the army of Sennacherib king of Assyria, in the days of Hezekiah. Great was the insolence and boasting of his generals and servants against the city of the living God, as may be seen in the thirty-sixth chapter of Isaiah. Yet it pleased God to destroy their enemies, and, by his own immediate interposition, to grant them deliverance. Therefore the Psalmist says, in the fifth and sixth verses of this psalm, "The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep. None of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and the horse are cast into a deep sleep." After a few more remarks to the same purpose, he draws the inference, or makes the reflection in the text, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain:" which may be paraphrased thus—The fury and injustice of oppressors shall bring in a tribute of praise to thee; the influence of thy righteous providence shall be clearly discerned; the countenance and support thou wilt give to thine own people shall be gloriously illustrated; thou shalt set the bounds which the boldest cannot pass.

I am sensible, my brethren, that the time and occasion of this psalm may seem to be, in one respect, ill suited to the interesting circumstances of this country at present. It was composed after the victory was obtained, whereas we are now but putting on the harness, and entering upon an important contest, the length of which it is impossible to foresee, and the issue of which it will perhaps be thought presumption to foretel. But as the truth, with respect to God's moral government, is the same and unchangeable; as the issue, in the case of Sennacherib's invasion, did but lead the prophet to acknowledge it, our duty and interest conspire in calling upon us to improve it. And I have chosen to insist upon it on this day of solemn humiliation, as it will probably help us to a clear and explicit view of what should be the chief subject of our prayers and endeavours, as well as the great object of our hope and trust in our present situation.

The truth then asserted in this text, which I propose to illustrate and improve is—That all the disorderly passions of men, whether exposing the innocent to private injury, or whether they are the arrows of divine judgment in public calamity, shall, in the end, be to the praise of God. Or, to apply it more particularly to the present state of the American Colonies, and the plague of war—The ambition of mistaken princes, the cunning and cruelty of oppressive and corrupt ministers, and even the inhumanity of brutal soldiers, however dreadful, shall finally promote the glory of God; and in the meantime, while the storm continues, his mercy and kind-

ness shall appear in prescribing bounds to their rage and fury.

In discoursing on this subject it is my intention, through the assistance of divine grace,

I. To point out to you in some particulars, how the wrath of man praises God.

II. To apply these principles to our present situation, by inferences of truth for your instruction and comfort, and by suitable exhortations to duty in the important crisis.

In the *first* place, I am to point out to you in some particulars, how the wrath of man praises God. I say in *some* instances, because it is far from being in my power either to mention or explain the whole. There is an unsearchable depth in the divine counsels, which it is impossible for us to penetrate. It is the duty of every good man to place the most unlimited confidence in divine wisdom, and to believe that those measures of providence that are most unintelligible to him, are yet planned with the same skill, and directed to the same great purposes as others, the reason and tendency of which he can explain in the clearest manner. But where revelation and experience enable us to discover the wisdom, equity, or mercy of divine providence, nothing can be more delightful or profitable to a serious mind, and therefore I beg your attention to the following remarks.

In the first place, The wrath of man praises God as it is an example and illustration of divine truth, and clearly points out the corruption of our nature, which is the foundation-stone of the doctrine of re-

demption. Nothing can be more absolutely necessary to true religion, than a clear and full conviction of the sinfulness of our nature and state. Without this there can be neither repentance in the sinner nor humility in the believer. Without this, all that is said in Scripture of the wisdom and mercy of God in providing a Saviour, is without force and without meaning. Justly does our Saviour say, "The whole have no need of a physician, but those that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Those who are not sensible that they are sinners, will treat every exhortation to repentance, and every offer of mercy with disdain or defiance.

But where can we have a more affecting view of the corruption of our nature, than in the wrath of man, when exerting itself in oppression, cruelty, and blood? It must be owned, indeed, that this truth is abundantly manifest in times of the greatest tranquillity. Others may, if they please, treat the corruption of our nature as a chimera; for my part, I see it every where, and I feel it every day. All the disorders in human society, and the greatest part even of the unhappiness we are exposed to, arises from the envy, malice, covetousness, and other lusts of man. If we and all about us were just what we ought to be in all respects, we should not need to go any further for heaven, for it would be upon earth. But war and violence present a spectacle still more awful. How affecting is it to think, that the lust of domination should be so violent and universal! that men should so rarely be satisfied with

their own possessions and acquisitions, or even with the benefit that would arise from mutual service, but should look upon the happiness and tranquillity of others as an obstruction to their own! that, as if the great law of nature were not enough, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return," they should be so furiously set for the destruction of each other! It is shocking to think, since the first murder of Abel by his brother Cain, what havock has been made of man by man in every age. What is it that fills the pages of history, but the wars and contentions of princes and empires? What vast numbers has lawless ambition brought into the field, and delivered as a prey to the destructive sword?

If we dwell a little upon the circumstances, they become deeply affecting. The mother bears a child with pain, rears him by the laborious attendance of many years, yet in the prime of life, in the vigour of health, and bloom of beauty, in a moment he is cut down by the dreadful instruments of death. "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood;" but the horror of the scene is not confined to the field of slaughter. Few go there unrelated, or fall unlamented. In every hostile encounter what must be the impression upon the relations of the deceased? The bodies of the dead can only be seen, or the cries of the dying heard for a single day, but many days shall not put an end to the mourning of a parent for a beloved son, the joy and support of his age, or of the widow and helpless offspring for a father taken away in the fulness of health and vigour.

But if this may be justly said of all wars between

man and man, what shall we be able to say that is suitable to the abhorred scene of civil war between citizen and citizen? How deeply affecting is it, that those who are the same in complexion, the same in blood, in language, and in religion, should, notwithstanding, butcher one another with unrelenting rage, and glory in the deed! that men should lay waste the fields of their fellow-subjects, with whose provision they themselves had been often fed, and consume with devouring fire those houses in which they had often found a hospitable shelter.

These things are apt to overcome a weak mind with fear, or overwhelm it with sorrow, and in the greatest number are apt to excite the highest indignation, and kindle up a spirit of revenge. If this last has no other tendency than to direct and invigorate the measures of self-defence, I do not take upon me to blame it, on the contrary I call it necessary and laudable.

But what I mean at this time to prove by the preceding reflections, and wish to impress on your minds, is the depravity of our nature. James iv. 1. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even from your lusts that war in your members?" Men of lax and corrupt principles take great delight in speaking to the praise of human nature, and extolling its dignity, without distinguishing what it was at its first creation, from what it is in its present fallen state. These fine speculations are very grateful to a worldly mind. They are also much more pernicious to uncautious and unthinking youth, than even the temptations to a dissolute and sensual life, against which

they are fortified by the dictates of natural conscience, and a sense of public shame. But I appeal from these visionary reasonings to the history of all ages, and the inflexible testimony of daily experience. These will tell us what men have been in their practice, and from thence you may judge what they are by nature while unrenewed. If I am not mistaken, a cool and candid attention, either to the past history or present state of the world, but, above all, to the ravages of lawless power, ought to humble us in the dust. It should at once lead us to acknowledge the just view given us in Scripture of our lost state; to desire the happy influence of renewing grace each for ourselves; and to long for the dominion of righteousness and peace, when "men shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Micah iv. 3.*

* I cannot help embracing this opportunity of making a remark or two upon a virulent reflection thrown out against this doctrine, in a well known pamphlet, *Common Sense*. The author of that work expresses himself thus: "If the first king of any country was by election, that likewise establishes a precedent for the next; for to say, that the right of all future generations is taken away by the act of the first electors, in their choice not only of a king, but of a family of kings for ever, hath no parallel in or out of Scripture, but the doctrine of original sin, which supposes the free will of all men lost in Adam; and from such comparison, and it will admit of no other, hereditary succession can derive no glory. For as in Adam all sinned, and as in the first electors all men obeyed; as in the one all mankind were subjected to Satan, and in the other to sovereignty; as our innocence

2. The wrath of man praiseth God, as it is the instrument in his hand for bringing sinners to repentance, and for the correction and improvement of

was lost in the first, and our authority in the last; and as both disable us from re-assuming some former state and privilege, it unanswerably follows, that original sin and hereditary succession are parallels. Dishonourable rank! Inglorious connection! Yet the most subtle sophist cannot produce a juster simile*." Without the shadow of reasoning, he is pleased to represent the doctrine of original sin as an object of contempt or abhorrence. I beg leave to demur a little to the candour, the prudence, and the justice of this proceeding.

1. Was it *modest* or *candid* for a person without name or character, to talk in this supercilious manner of a doctrine that has been espoused and defended by many of the greatest and best men that the world ever saw, and makes an essential part of the established creeds and confessions of all the Protestant churches without exception? I thought the grand modern plea had been freedom of sentiment, and charitable thoughts of one another. Are so many of us, then, beyond the reach of this gentleman's charity? I do assure him that such presumption and self-confidence are no recommendation to me, either of his character or sentiments.

2. Was it *prudent*, when he was pleading a public cause, to speak in such opprobrious terms of a doctrine which he knew, or ought to have known, was believed and professed by, I suppose, a great majority of very different denominations. Is this gentleman ignorant of human nature, as well as an enemy to the Christian faith? Are men so little tenacious of their religious sentiments, whether true or false? The prophet thought otherwise who said, "Hath a nation changed their gods which yet are no gods?" Was it the way to obtain the favour of the public, to despise what they hold sacred? Or shall we suppose this author so astonishingly ignorant, as to think that all men now, whose favour

* *Common Sense*, p. 11. *Bradford's Edition*.

his own children. Whatever be the nature of the affliction with which he visits either persons, families, or nations; whatever be the disposition or intention of those whose malice he employs as a scourge; the design on his part is, to rebuke men for iniquity, to bring them to repentance, and to promote their holiness and peace. The salutary nature and sanctifying influence of affliction in general, is often taken notice of in Scripture, both as making a part of the purpose of God, and the experience of his saints. Heb. xii. 11. "Now, no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." But what we are particularly led to observe by the subject of this discourse is, that the wrath of man, or the violence of the oppressor that praiseth God in this respect, has a peculiar tendency to alarm the secure conscience, to convince and humble the obstinate sinner. This is plain from the na-

is worth asking, have given up the doctrine of the New Testament? If he does, he is greatly mistaken.

3. In fine I ask, where was the *justice* of this proceeding? Is there so little to be said for the doctrine of original sin, that it is not to be refuted but despised? Is the state of the world such as to render this doctrine not only false but incredible? Has the fruit been of such a quality as to exclude all doubts of the goodness of the tree? On the contrary, I cannot help being of opinion, that such has been the visible state of the world in every age, as cannot be accounted for on any other principles than what we learn from the word of God, that "the imagination of the heart of man is only evil from his youth, and that continually," Gen. vi. 5. viii. 21.

ture of the thing, and from the testimony of experience. Public calamities, particularly the destroying sword, is so awful that it cannot but have a powerful influence in leading men to consider the presence and the power of God. It threatens them not only in themselves, but touches them in all that is dear to them, whether relations or possessions. The prophet Isaiah says, Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." He considers it as the most powerful mean of alarming the secure and subduing the obstinate. Isa. xxvi. 11. "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see, but they shall see and be ashamed for their envy at the people, yea the fire of thine enemies shall devour them." It is also sometimes represented as a symptom of a hopeless and irrecoverable state, when public judgments have no effect. Thus says the prophet Jeremiah, Jer. v. 3. "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return." We can easily see in the history of the children of Israel, how severe strokes brought them to submission and penitence. Psal. lxxviii. 34, 35. "When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God, and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer."

Both nations in general, and private persons, are apt to grow remiss and lax in a time of prosperity

and seeming security ; but when their earthly comforts are endangered or withdrawn, it lays them under a kind of necessity to seek for something better in their place. Men must have comfort from one quarter or another. When earthly things are in a pleasing and promising condition, too many are apt to find their rest, and be satisfied with them as their only portion. But when the vanity and passing nature of all created comfort is discovered, they are compelled to look for something more durable as well as valuable. What therefore can be more to the praise of God, than that when a whole people have forgotten their resting-place, when they have abused their privileges, and despised their mercies, they should by distress and suffering be made to hearken to the rod, and return to their duty ?

There is an inexpressible depth and variety in the judgments of God, as in all his other works ; but we may lay down this as a certain principle, that if there were no sin there could be no suffering. Therefore they are certainly for the correction of sin, or for the trial, illustration, and perfecting of the grace and virtue of his own people. We are not to suppose, that those who suffer most, or who suffer soonest, are therefore more criminal than others. Our Saviour himself thought it necessary to give a caution against this rash conclusion, as we are informed by the evangelist Luke : Luke xiii. 1. " There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things ?

I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." I suppose we may say with sufficient warrant, that it often happens that those for whom God hath designs of the greatest mercy, are first brought to the trial, that they may enjoy in due time the salutary effect of the unpalatable medicine.

I must also take leave to observe, and I hope no pious humble sufferer will be unwilling to make the application, that there is often a discernible mixture of sovereignty and righteousness in providential dispensations. It is the prerogative of God to do what he will with his own, but he often displays his justice itself, by throwing into the furnace those who, though they may not be visibly worse than others, may yet have more to answer for, as having been favoured with more distinguished privileges, both civil and sacred. It is impossible for us to make a just and full comparison of the character either of persons or nations, and it would be extremely foolish for any to attempt it, either for increasing their own security, or impeaching the justice of the supreme Ruler. Let us therefore neither forget the truth, nor go beyond it. "His mercy fills the earth." He is also "known by the judgment which he executeth." The wrath of man, in its most tempestuous rage, fulfils his will, and finally promotes the good of his chosen.

3. The wrath of man praiseth God, as he sets bounds to it, or restrains it by his providence, and sometimes makes it evidently a mean of promoting and illustrating his glory.

There is no part of divine providence in which a greater beauty and majesty appears, than when the Almighty Ruler turns the counsels of wicked men into confusion, and makes them militate against themselves. If the Psalmist may be thought to have had a view in this text to the truths illustrated in the two former observations, there is no doubt at all that he had a particular view to this, as he says in the latter part of the verse, "the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." The Scripture abounds with instances in which the designs of oppressors were either wholly disappointed, or in execution fell far short of the malice of their intention, and in some they turned out to the honour and happiness of the persons or the people whom they were intended to destroy. We have an instance of the first of these in the history to which my text relates *. We have also an instance in Esther, in which the most mischievous designs of Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, against Mordecai the Jew, and the nation from which he sprung, turned out at last to his own destruction, the honour of Mordecai, and the salvation and peace of his people.

From the New Testament I will make choice of that memorable event on which the salvation of believers in every age rests as its foundation, the death and sufferings of the Son of God. This the great adversary, and all his agents and instruments, persecuted with unrelenting rage. When they had blackened him with slander, when they scourged him with shame, when they had condemned him in judg-

* The matter is fully stated and reasoned upon by the prophet Isaiah, chap. x. from the 5th to the 19th verse.

ment, and nailed him to the cross, how could they help esteeming their victory complete? But O the unsearchable wisdom of God! they were but perfecting the great design laid for the salvation of sinners. Our blessed Redeemer by his death finished his work, overcame principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross. With how much justice do the apostles and their company offer this doxology to God: "They lift up their voice with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done," Acts iv. 24. 28.

In all after ages, in conformity to this, the deepest laid contrivances of the prince of darkness, have turned out to the confusion of their author; and I know not but, considering his malice and pride, this perpetual disappointment, and the superiority of divine wisdom, may be one great source of his suffering and torment. The cross hath still been the banner of truth, under which it hath been carried through the world. Persecution has been but as the furnace to the gold, to purge it of its dross, to manifest its purity, and increase its lustre. It was

taken notice of very early, that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of Christianity; the more abundantly it was shed, the more plentifully did the harvest grow.

So certain has this appeared, that the most violent infidels, both of early and later ages, have endeavoured to account for it, and have observed, that there is a spirit of obstinacy in man which inclines him to resist violence, and that severity doth but increase opposition, be the cause what it will. They suppose that persecution is equally proper to propagate truth and error. This, though in part true, will by no means generally hold. Such an apprehension, however, gave occasion to a glorious triumph of divine providence of an opposite kind, which I must shortly relate to you. One of the Roman emperors, Julian, surnamed the apostate, perceiving how impossible it was to suppress the gospel by violence, endeavoured to extinguish it by neglect and scorn. He left the Christians unmolested for some time, but gave all manner of encouragement to those of opposite principles, and particularly to the Jews, out of hatred to the Christians; and that he might bring public disgrace upon the Galileans, as he affected to style them, he encouraged the Jews to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem, and visibly refute the prophecy of Christ, that it should lie under perpetual desolation. But this profane attempt was so signally frustrated, that it served, as much as any one circumstance, to spread the glory of our Redeemer, and establish the faith of his saints. It is affirmed by some ancient authors, particularly by Ammianus Marcellinus, a heathen hi-

storian, that fire came out of the earth, and consumed the workmen when laying the foundation. But in whatever way it was prevented, it is beyond all controversy, from the concurring testimony of Heathens and Christians, that little or no progress was ever made in it, and that in a short time it was entirely defeated.

It is proper here to observe, that at the time of the Reformation, when religion began to revive, nothing contributed more to facilitate its reception, and increase its progress, than the violence of its persecutors. Their cruelty, and the patience of the sufferers, naturally disposed men to examine and weigh the cause to which they adhered with so much constancy and resolution. At the same time also, when they were persecuted in one city, they fled to another, and carried the discoveries of popish fraud to every part of the world. It was by some of those who were persecuted in Germany, that the light of the Reformation was brought so early into Britain.

The power of divine providence appears with the most distinguished lustre, when small and inconsiderable circumstances, and sometimes the weather and seasons, have defeated the most formidable armaments, and frustrated the best concerted expeditions. Near two hundred years ago, the monarchy of Spain was in the height of its power and glory, and determined to crush the interest of the Reformation. They sent out a powerful armament against Britain, giving it ostentatiously, and in my opinion profanely, the name of the Invincible Armada. But it

pleased God so entirely to discomfit it by tempests, that a small part of it returned home, though no British force had been opposed to it at all.

We have a remarkable instance of the influence of small circumstances in providence in the English history. The two most remarkable persons in the civil wars had earnestly desired to withdraw themselves from the contentions of the times, Mr Hampden and Oliver Cromwell. They had actually taken their passage in a ship for New England, when, by an arbitrary order of Council they were compelled to remain at home. The consequence of this was, that one of them was the soul of the republican opposition to monarchical usurpation during the civil wars, and the other in the course of that contest, was the great instrument in bringing the tyrant to the block.

The only other historical remark I am to make is, that the violent persecution which many eminent Christians met with in England from their brethren, who called themselves Protestants, drove them in great numbers to a distant part of the world, where the light of the gospel and true religion were unknown. Some of the American settlements, particularly those in New England, were chiefly made by them; and as they carried the knowledge of Christ to the dark places of the earth, so they continue themselves in as great a degree of purity, of faith, and strictness of practice, or rather a greater, than is to be found in any Protestant church now in the world. Does not the wrath of man in this instance praise God? Was not the accuser of the brethren, who stirs up their enemies, thus taken in his

own craftiness, and his kingdom shaken by the very means which he employed to establish it*.

II. I proceed now to the second general head, which was to apply the principles illustrated above to our present situation, by inferences of truth for your instruction and comfort, and by suitable exhortations to duty in this important crisis. And,

In the first place, I would take the opportunity on this occasion, and from this subject, to press every hearer to a sincere concern for his own soul's salvation. There are times when the mind may be expected to be more awake to divine truth, and the conscience more open to the arrows of conviction than at others. A season of public judgment is of this kind, as appears from what has been already said. That curiosity and attention at least are raised in some degree, is plain from the unusual throng of this assembly. Can you have a clearer view of the sinfulness of your nature, than when the rod of the oppressor is lifted up, and when you see men putting on the habit of the warrior, and collecting on every hand the weapons of hostility and instruments of death? I do not blame your ardour in preparing for the resolute defence of your temporal rights; but

* Left this should be thought a temporising compliment to the people of New England, who have been the first sufferers in the present contest, and have set so noble an example of invincible fortitude, in withstanding the violence of oppression, I think it proper to observe, that the whole paragraph is copied from a sermon on Psal. lxxiv. 22. prepared and preached in Scotland, in the month of August 1758.

consider, I beseech you, the truly infinite importance of the salvation of your souls. Is it of much moment whether you and your children shall be rich or poor, at liberty or in bonds? Is it of much moment whether this beautiful country shall increase in fruitfulness from year to year, being cultivated by active industry, and possessed by independent freemen, or the scanty produce of the neglected fields shall be eaten up by hungry publicans, while the timid owner trembles at the tax-gatherer's approach? And is it of less moment, my brethren, whether you shall be the heirs of glory or the heirs of hell? Is your state on earth for a few fleeting years of so much moment? And is it of less moment what shall be your state through endless ages! Have you assembled together willingly to hear what shall be said on public affairs, and to join in imploring the blessing of God on the counsels and arms of the United Colonies, and can you be unconcerned what shall become of you for ever, when all the monuments of human greatness shall be laid in ashes, for "the earth itself, and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up."

Wherefore, my beloved hearers, as the ministry of reconciliation is committed to me, I beseech you in the most earnest manner, to attend to "the things that belong to your peace, before they are hid from your eyes." How soon, and in what manner a seal shall be set upon the character and state of every person here present, it is impossible to know; for he who only can know, does not think proper to reveal it. But you may rest assured, that there is no time more suitable, and there is none so safe as that

which is present, since it is wholly uncertain whether any other shall be yours. Those who shall first fall in battle, have not many more warnings to receive. There are some few daring and hardened sinners, who despise eternity itself, and set their Maker at defiance; but the far greater number, by staving off their convictions to a more convenient season, have been taken unprepared, and thus eternally lost. I would therefore earnestly press the apostle's exhortation, 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain: For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Suffer me to beseech you, or rather to give you warning, not to rest satisfied with a form of godliness, denying the power thereof. There can be no true religion, till there be a discovery of your lost state by nature and practice, and an unfeigned acceptance of Christ Jesus, as he is offered in the gospel. Unhappy they who either despise his mercy, or are ashamed of his cross. Believe it, "There is no salvation in any other." "There is no other name under heaven given amongst men by which we must be saved." Unless you are united to him by a lively faith, not the resentment of a haughty monarch, but the sword of divine justice hangs over you, and the fulness of divine vengeance shall speedily overtake you. I do not speak this only to the heaven-daring profligate or grovelling sensualist, but to every insensible, secure sinner; to all those, how-

ever decent and orderly in their civil department, who live to themselves, and have their part and portion in this life ; in fine, to all who are yet in a state of nature, for “ except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The fear of man may make you hide your profanity ; prudence and experience may make you abhor intemperance and riot ; as you advance in life one vice may supplant another and hold its place ; but nothing less than the sovereign grace of God can produce a saving change of heart and temper, or fit you for his immediate presence.

2. From what has been said upon this subject, you may see what ground there is to give praise to God for his favours already bestowed on us, respecting the public cause. It would be a criminal inattention not to observe the singular interposition of Providence hitherto, in behalf of the American colonies. It is however impossible for me, in a single discourse, as well as improper at this time, to go through every step of our past transactions ; I must therefore content myself with a few remarks. How many discoveries have been made of the designs of enemies in Britain, and among ourselves, in a manner as unexpected to us as to them, and in such season as to prevent their effect ! What surprising success has attended our encounters in almost every instance ! Has not the boasted discipline of regular and veteran soldiers been turned into confusion and dismay, before the new and maiden courage of freemen, in defence of their property and right ? In what great mercy has blood been spared on the side of this injured country ! Some important victories

in the south have been gained with so little loss, that enemies will probably think it has been dissimulated, as many even of ourselves thought, till time rendered it undeniable. But these were comparatively of small moment. The signal advantage we have gained by the evacuation of Boston, and the shameful flight of the army and navy of Britain, was brought about without the loss of a man. To all this we may add, that the counsels of our enemies have been visibly confounded, so that I believe I may say with truth, that there is hardly any step which they have taken, but it has operated strongly against themselves, and been more in our favour than if they had followed a contrary course.

While we give praise to God, the supreme Disposer of all events, for his interposition in our behalf, let us guard against the dangerous error of trusting in, or boasting of an arm of flesh. I could earnestly wish, that while our arms are crowned with success, we might content ourselves with a modest ascription of it to the power of the Highest. It has given me great uneasiness to read some ostentatious, vaunting expressions in our newspapers, though happily, I think, much restrained of late. Let us not return to them again. If I am not mistaken, not only the Holy Scriptures in general, and the truths of the glorious gospel in particular, but the whole course of providence, seem intended to abase the pride of man, and lay the vain-glorious in the dust. How many instances does history furnish us with of those who, after exulting over and despising their enemies, were signally and shamefully de-

feated *. The truth is, I believe, the remark may be applied universally, and we may say, that through the whole frame of nature, and the whole system of human life, that which promises most, performs the least. The flowers of finest colour seldom have the sweetest fragrance. The trees of quickest growth or fairest form, are seldom of the greatest value or duration. Deep waters move with least noise. Men who think most are seldom talkative. And I think it holds as much in war as in any thing, that every boaster is a coward.

Pardon me, my brethren, for insisting so much upon this, which may seem but an immaterial circumstance. It is in my opinion of very great moment. I look upon ostentation and confidence to be a sort of outrage upon providence, and when it becomes general, and infuses itself into the spirit of a people, it is a forerunner of destruction. How does Goliath the champion, armed in a most formidable manner, express his disdain of David the stripling, with his sling and his stone: 1 Sam. xvii. 42, 43, 44, 45. "And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog that thou comest to me with slaves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods; and the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto

* There is no story better known in British history, than that the officers of the French army, the night preceding the battle of Agincourt, played at dice for English prisoners before they took them, and the next day were taken by them.

the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." But how just and modest the reply! "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." I was well pleased with a remark of this kind thirty years ago in a pamphlet*, in which it was observed, that there was a great deal of profane ostentation in the names given to ships of war, as the Victory, the Valiant, the Thunderer, the Dreadnought, the Terrible, the Firebrand, the Furnace, the Lightning, the Infernal, and many more of the same kind. This the author considered as a symptom of the national character and manners very unfavourable, and not likely to obtain the blessing of the God of heaven †.

* Britain's Remembrancer.

† I am sensible that one or two of these were ships taken from the French, which brought their names with them. But the greatest number had their names imposed in England, and I cannot help observing, that the Victory, often celebrated as the finest ship ever built in Britain, was lost in the night without a storm, by some unknown accident, and about twelve hundred persons, many of them of the first families in the nation, were buried with it in the deep. I do not mean to infer any thing from this, but that we ought to live under the practical persuasion of what no man will doctrinally deny, that there is no warring with the elements, or him who directs their force; that he is able to write disappointment on the wisest human schemes, and by the word of his power to frustrate the efforts of the greatest monarch upon earth.

3. From what has been said you may learn what encouragement you have to put your trust in God, and hope for his assistance in the present important conflict. He is the Lord of hosts, great in might, and strong in battle. Whoever hath his countenance and approbation, shall have the best at last. I do not mean to speak prophetically, but agreeably to the analogy of faith, and the principles of God's moral government. Some have observed that true religion, and in her train dominion, riches, literature and arts, have taken their course in a slow and gradual manner, from east to west, since the earth was settled after the flood, and from thence forbode the future glory of America. I leave this as a matter rather of conjecture than certainty, but observe, that if your cause is just, if your principles are pure, and if your conduct is prudent, you need not fear the multitude of opposing hosts.

If your cause is just, you may look with confidence to the Lord, and intreat him to plead it as his own. You are all my witnesses, that this is the first time of my introducing any political subject into the pulpit. At this season, however, it is not only lawful but necessary, and I willingly embrace the opportunity of declaring my opinion without any hesitation, that the cause in which America is now in arms, is the cause of justice, of liberty, and of human nature. So far as we have hitherto proceeded, I am satisfied that the confederacy of the colonies has not been the effect of pride, resentment, or sedition, but of a deep and general conviction that our civil and religious liberties, and consequently in a great measure the temporal and eternal

happinefs of us and our pofterity, depended on the iffue. The knowledge of God and his truths have from the beginning of the world been chiefly, if not entirely confined to thofe parts of the earth where fome degree of liberty and political juftice were to be feen, and great were the difficulties with which they had to ftuggle, from the imperfection of human fociety, and the unjuft decifions of ufurped authority. There is not a fingle inftance in hiftory, in which civil liberty was loft, and religious liberty preferved entire. If therefore we yield up our temporal property, we at the fame time deliver the confcience into bondage.

You fhall not, my brethren, hear from me in the pulpit, what you have never heard from me in converfation, I mean railing at the king perfonally, or even his minifters and the parliament, and people of Britain, as fo many barbarous favages. Many of their actions have probably been worfe than their intentions. That they fhould defire unlimited dominion, if they can obtain or preferve it, is neither new nor wonderful. I do not refufe fubmiffion to their unjuft claims, becaufe they are corrupt or profligate, although probably many of them are fo, but becaufe they are men, and therefore liable to all the felfifh bias infeperable from human nature. I call this claim unjuft, of making laws to bind us in all cafes whatfoever, becaufe they are feparated from us, independent of us, and have an intereft in oppofing us. Would any man who could prevent it, give up his eftate, perfon and family, to the difpofal of his neighbour, although he had liberty to chufe the wifeft and the beft mafter? Surely not. This

is the true and proper hinge of the controversy between Great Britain and America. It is however to be added, that such is their distance from us, that a wise and prudent administration of our affairs is as impossible as the claim of authority is unjust. Such is and must be their ignorance of the state of things here, so much time must elapse before an error can be seen and remedied, and so much injustice and partiality must be expected from the arts and misrepresentation of interested persons, that for these colonies to depend wholly upon the Legislature of Great Britain, would be like many other oppressive connexions, injury to the master, and ruin to the slave.

The management of the war itself on their part would furnish new proof of this, if any were needful. Is it not manifest with what absurdity and impropriety they have conducted their own designs? We had nothing so much to fear as dissention, and they have by wanton and unnecessary cruelty forced us into union. At the same time, to let us see what we have to expect, and what would be the fatal consequence of unlimited submission, they have uniformly called those acts *lenity*, which filled this whole continent with resentment and horror. The ineffable disdain expressed by our fellow subject in saying, 'That he would not hearken to America till she was at his feet,' has armed more men, and inspired more deadly rage, than could have been done by laying waste a whole province with fire and sword. . Again, we wanted not numbers but time, and they sent over handful after handful, till we were ready to oppose a multitude greater than they

have to fend. In fine, if there was one place stronger than the rest, and more able and willing to resist, there they made the attack, and left the others till they were duly informed, completely incensed, and fully furnished with every instrument of war.

I mention these things, my brethren, not only as grounds of confidence in God, who can easily overthrow the wisdom of the wise, but as decisive proofs of the impossibility of these great and growing states being safe and happy, when every part of their internal polity is dependent on Great Britain. If, on account of their distance and ignorance of our situation, they could not conduct their own quarrel with propriety for one year, how can they give direction and vigour to every department of our civil constitutions, from age to age? There are fixed bounds to every human thing. When the branches of a tree grow very large and weighty, they fall off from the trunk. The sharpest sword will not pierce when it cannot reach. And there is a certain distance from the seat of government, where an attempt to rule will either produce tyranny and helpless subjection, or provoke resistance and effect a separation.

I have said, if your principles are pure—The meaning of this is, if your present opposition to the claims of the British ministry does not arise from a seditious and turbulent spirit, or a wanton contempt of legal authority; from a blind and factious attachment to particular persons or parties; or from a selfish rapacious disposition, and a desire to turn public confusion to private profit—but from a con-

cern for the interest of your country, and the safety of yourselves and your posterity. On this subject I cannot help observing, that though it would be a miracle if there were not many selfish persons among us, and discoveries now and then made of mean and interested transactions, yet they have been comparatively inconsiderable, both in number and effect. In general there has been so great a degree of public spirit, that we have much more reason to be thankful for its vigour and prevalence, than to wonder at the few appearances of dishonesty or disaffection. It would be very uncandid to ascribe the universal ardour that has prevailed among all ranks of men, and the spirited exertions in the most distant colonies, to any thing else than public spirit. Nor was there ever perhaps in history so general a commotion, from which religious differences have been so entirely excluded. Nothing of this kind has as yet been heard, except of late in the absurd, but malicious and detestable attempts of our few remaining enemies to introduce them. At the same time I must also, for the honour of this country, observe, that though government in the ancient forms has been so long unhinged, and in some colonies not sufficient care taken to substitute another in its place, yet has there been, by common consent, a much greater degree of order and public peace, than men of reflection and experience foretold or expected. From all these circumstances I conclude favourably of the principles of the friends of liberty, and do earnestly exhort you to adopt and act upon those which have been described, and resist the influence of every other.

Once more, If to the justice of your cause, and the purity of your principles, you add prudence in your conduct, there will be the greatest reason to hope, by the blessing of God, for prosperity and success. By prudence in conducting this important struggle, I have chiefly in view union, firmness, and patience. Every body must perceive the absolute necessity of union. It is indeed in every body's mouth, and therefore, instead of attempting to convince you of its importance, I will only caution you against the usual causes of division. If persons of every rank, instead of implicitly complying with the orders of those whom they themselves have chosen to direct, will needs judge every measure over again, when it comes to be put in execution; if different classes of men intermix their little private views, or clashing interest with public affairs, and marshal into parties, the merchant against the landholder, and the landholder against the merchant; if local provincial pride and jealousy arise, and you allow yourselves to speak with contempt of the courage, character, manners, or even language of particular places, you are doing a greater injury to the common cause, than you are aware of. If such practices are admitted among us, I shall look upon it as one of the most dangerous symptoms, and if they become general, a presage of approaching ruin.

By firmness and patience I mean a resolute adherence to your duty, and laying your account with many difficulties, as well as occasional disappointments. In a former part of this discourse I have cautioned you against ostentation and vain-glory,

Be pleased farther to observe, that extremes often beget one another ; the same persons who exult extravagantly on success, are generally most liable to despondent timidity on every little inconsiderable defeat. Men of this character are the bane and corruption of every society or party to which they belong, but they are especially the ruin of an army, if suffered to continue in it. Remember the vicissitude of human things, and the usual course of providence. How often has a just cause been reduced to the lowest ebb, and yet when firmly adhered to, has become finally triumphant ! I speak this now while the affairs of the colonies are in so prosperous a state, lest this prosperity itself should render you less able to bear unexpected misfortunes.—The sum of the whole is, that the blessing of God is only to be looked for by those who are not wanting in the discharge of their own duty. I would neither have you to trust in an arm of flesh, nor sit with folded hands and expect that miracles should be wrought in your defence. This is a sin which is in Scripture styled tempting God. In opposition to it, I would exhort you as Joab did the host of Israel, who, though he does not appear to have had a spotless character throughout, certainly in this instance spoke like a prudent general and a pious man. 2 Sam. x. 12. “ Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God, and let the Lord do that which is good in his sight.”

I shall now conclude this discourse by some exhortations to duty, founded upon the truths which

have been illustrated above, and suited to the interesting state of this country at the present time; and,

1. Suffer me to recommend to you an attention to the public interest of religion, or, in other words, zeal for the glory of God and the good of others. I have already endeavoured to exhort sinners to repentance; what I have here in view is to point out to you the concern which every good man ought to take in the national character and manners, and the means which he ought to use for promoting public virtue, and bearing down impiety and vice. This is a matter of the utmost moment, and which ought to be well understood, both in its nature and principles. Nothing is more certain, than that a general profligacy and corruption of manners make a people ripe for destruction. A good form of government may hold the rotten materials together for some time, but beyond a certain pitch, even the best constitution will be ineffectual, and slavery must ensue. On the other hand, when the manners of a nation are pure, when true religion and internal principles maintain their vigour, the attempts of the most powerful enemies to oppress them, are commonly baffled and disappointed. This will be found equally certain, whether we consider the great principles of God's moral government, or the operation and influence of natural causes.

What follows from this? That he is the best friend to American liberty, who is most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion, and who sets himself with the greatest firmness to bear down profanity and immorality of every kind.

Whoever is an avowed enemy to God, I scruple not to call him an enemy to his country. Do not suppose, my brethren, that I mean to recommend a furious and angry zeal for the circumstantial of religion, or the contentions of one sect with another about their peculiar distinctions. I do not wish you to oppose any body's religion, but every body's wickedness. Perhaps there are few surer marks of the reality of religion, than when a man feels himself more joined in spirit to a truly holy person of a different denomination, than to an irregular liver of his own. It is therefore your duty, in this important and critical season, to exert yourselves, every one in his proper sphere, to stem the tide of prevailing vice, to promote the knowledge of God, the reverence of his name and worship, and obedience to his laws.

Perhaps you will ask what it is that you are called to do for this purpose, farther than your own personal duty? I answer, this itself, when taken in its proper extent, is not a little. The nature and obligation of visible religion is, I am afraid, little understood, and less attended to.

Many, from a real or pretended fear of the imputation of hypocrisy, banish from their conversation and carriage, every appearance of respect and submission to the living God. What a weakness and meanness of spirit does it discover, for a man to be ashamed in the presence of his fellow-sinners to profess that reverence to almighty God which he inwardly feels. The truth is, he makes himself truly liable to the accusation which he means to avoid. It is as genuine, and perhaps a more culpable hy-

pocrisy, to appear to have less religion than you really have, than to appear to have more. This false shame is a more extensive evil than is commonly apprehended. We contribute constantly, though insensibly, to form each other's character and manners; and therefore the usefulness of a strictly holy and conscientious deportment is not confined to the possessor, but spreads its happy influence to all that are within its reach. I need scarcely add, that in proportion as men are distinguished by understanding, literature, age, rank, office, wealth, or any other circumstance, their example will be useful on the one hand, or pernicious on the other.

But I cannot content myself with barely recommending a silent example. There is a dignity in virtue which is entitled to authority, and ought to claim it. In many cases it is the duty of a good man, by open reproof and opposition, to wage war with profaneness. There is a Scripture precept delivered in very singular terms, to which I beg your attention: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, but shalt in any wise rebuke him, and not suffer sin upon him." How prone are many to represent reproof as flowing from ill-nature and furliness of temper! The Spirit of God, on the contrary, considers it as the effect of inward hatred, or want of genuine love, to forbear reproof, when it is necessary or may be useful. I am sensible there may in some cases be a restraint from prudence, agreeably to that caution of our Saviour, "Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Of

this every man must judge as well as he can for himself; but certainly, either by open reproof, or expressive silence, or speedy departure from such society, we ought to guard against being partakers of other mens sins.

To this let me add, that if all men are bound in some degree, certain classes of men are under peculiar obligations to the discharge of this duty. Magistrates, ministers, parents, heads of families, and those whom age has rendered venerable, are called to use their authority and influence for the glory of God and the good of others. Bad men themselves discover an inward conviction of this, for they are often liberal in their reproaches of persons of grave characters or religious profession, if they bear with patience the profanity of others. Instead of enlarging on the duty of men in authority in general, I must particularly recommend this matter to those who have the command of soldiers enlisted for the defence of their country. The cause is sacred, and the champions for it ought to be holy. Nothing is more grieving to the heart of a good man, than to hear from those who are going to the field, the horrid sound of cursing and blasphemy; it cools the ardour of his prayers, as well as abates his confidence and hope in God. Many more circumstances affect me in such a case than I can enlarge upon, or indeed easily enumerate at present; the glory of God, the interest of the deluded sinner, going like a devoted victim, and imprecating vengeance on his own head, as well as the cause itself committed to his care. We have sometimes taken the liberty to forebode the downfall of the British empire, from the corrup-

tion and degeneracy of the people. Unhappily the British soldiers have been distinguished among all the nations in Europe, for the most shocking profanity. Shall we then pretend to emulate them in this infernal distinction, or rob them of the horrid privilege? God forbid. Let the officers of the army in every degree remember, that as military subjection, while it lasts, is the most complete of any, it is in their power greatly to restrain, if not wholly to banish this flagrant enormity.

2. I exhort all who are not called to go into the field, to apply themselves with the utmost diligence to works of industry. It is in your power by this mean, not only to supply the necessities, but to add to the strength of your country. Habits of industry prevailing in a society, not only increase its wealth, as their immediate effect, but they prevent the introduction of many vices, and are intimately connected with sobriety and good morals. Idleness is the mother or nurse of almost every vice; and want, which is its inseparable companion, urges men on to the most abandoned and destructive courses. Industry, therefore, is a moral duty of the greatest moment, absolutely necessary to national prosperity, and the sure way of obtaining the blessing of God. I would also observe, that in this, as in every other part of God's government, obedience to his will is as much a natural mean, as a meritorious cause of the advantage we wish to reap from it. Industry brings up a firm and hardy race. He who is inured to the labour of the field, is prepared for the fatigues of a campaign. The active farmer, who rises with

the dawn, and follows his team or plough, must in the end be an overmatch for those effeminate and delicate soldiers, who are nursed in the lap of self-indulgence, and whose greatest exertion is in the important preparation for, and tedious attendance on a masquerade or midnight ball.

3. In the last place, Suffer me to recommend to you frugality in your families, and every other article of expence. This the state of things among us renders absolutely necessary, and it stands in the most immediate connexion, both with virtuous industry, and active public spirit. Temperance in meals, moderation and decency in dress, furniture, and equipage, have, I think, generally been characteristics of a distinguished patriot. And when the same spirit pervades a people in general, they are fit for every duty, and able to encounter the most formidable enemy. The general subject of the preceding discourse has been the wrath of man praising God. If the unjust oppression of your enemies, which withholds from you many of the usual articles of luxury and magnificence, shall contribute to make you clothe yourselves and your children with the works of your own hands, and cover your tables with the salutary productions of your own soil, it will be a new illustration of the same truth, and a real happiness to yourselves and your country.

I could wish to have every good thing done from the purest principles and the noblest views. Consider, therefore, that the Christian character, particularly the self-denial of the gospel, should extend

to your whole deportment. In the early times of Christianity, when adult converts were admitted to baptism, they were asked among other questions, Do you renounce the world, its shews, its pomp, and its vanities? I do. The form of this is still preserved in the administration of baptism, where we renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. This certainly implies not only abstaining from acts of gross intemperance and excess, but a humility of carriage, a restraint and moderation in all your desires. The same thing, as it is suitable to your Christian profession, is also necessary to make you truly independent in yourselves, and to feed the source of liberality and charity to others, or to the public. The riotous and wasteful liver, whose craving appetites make him constantly needy, is, and must be subject to many masters, according to the saying of Solomon, "The borrower is servant to the lender." But the frugal and moderate person, who guides his affairs with discretion, is able to assist in public councils by a free and unbiassed judgment, to supply the wants of his poor brethren, and sometimes, by his estate and substance, to give important aid to a sinking country.

Upon the whole, I beseech you to make a wise improvement of the present threatening aspect of public affairs, and to remember that your duty to God, to your country, to your families, and to yourselves, is the same. True religion is nothing else but an inward temper and outward conduct suited to your state and circumstances in providence at any time. And as peace with God and conformity to

him, adds to the sweetness of created comforts while we possess them, so in times of difficulty and trial, it is in the man of piety and inward principle, that we may expect to find the uncorrupted patriot, the useful citizen, and the invincible foldier.—God grant that in America true religion and civil liberty may be inseparable, and that the unjust attempts to destroy the one, may in the issue tend to the support and establishment of both.

A D D R E S S

TO THE

N A T I V E S O F S C O T L A N D

RESIDING IN

A M E R I C A.

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COUNTRYMEN AND FRIENDS,

**A**S soon as I had consented to the publication of the foregoing sermon, I felt an irresistible desire to accompany it with a few words addressed to you in particular. I am certain I feel the attachment of country as far as it is a virtuous or laudable principle; perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say, as far as it is a natural and pardonable prejudice. He who is so pleased may attribute it to this last when I say, that I have never seen cause to be ashamed of the place of my birth; that since the revival of arts and letters in Europe, in the close of the fourteenth, and beginning of the fifteenth cen-

ture, the natives of Scotland have not been inferior to those of any other country, for genius, erudition, military prowess, or any of those accomplishments which improve or embellish human nature. When to this it is added, that since my coming to America, at an advanced period of life, the friendship of my countrymen has been as much above my expectation as desert, I hope every reader will consider what is now to be offered, as the effect not only of unfeigned good will, but of the most ardent affection.

It has given me no little uneasiness to hear the word *Scotch* used as a term of reproach in the American controversy, which could only be upon the supposition that strangers of that country are more universally opposed to the liberties of America than those who were born in South Britain, or in Ireland. I am sensible that this has been done in some newspapers and contemptible anonymous publications, in a manner that was neither warranted by truth, nor dictated by prudence. There are many natives of Scotland in this country, whose opposition to the unjust claims of Great Britain has been as early and uniform, founded upon as rational and liberal principles, and therefore likely to be as lasting as that of any set of men whatever. As to Great Britain itself, time has now fully discovered, that the real friends of America, in any part of that kingdom, were very few, and those whose friendship was disinterested, and in no degree owing to their own political factions, still fewer. The wise and valuable part of the nation were, and as yet are in a great measure ignorant of the state of things in this coun-

try ; neither is it easy for the bulk of a people to shake off their prejudices, and open their eyes upon the great principles of universal liberty. It is therefore at least very disputable, whether there is any just ground for the distinction between Scots and English on this subject at all.

This dispute, however, I do not mean to enter upon, because it is of too little moment to find a place here ; but supposing that, in some provinces especially, the natives of Scotland have been too much inclined to support the usurpations of the parent state, I will first endeavour to account for it, by assigning some of its probable causes ; and then offer a few considerations which should induce them to wipe off the aspersions entirely, by a contrary conduct.

As to the first of these, I will mention what I suppose to have been the first and radical cause, and which gave birth to every other, of the disaffection of some of the natives of Scotland to the just privileges of America. What I have in view was the friends of liberty in many places of America taking the part of, and seeming to consider themselves as in a great measure engaged in the same cause with that very distinguished person, John Wilkes, Esq. of London. This was done not only in many writings and newspaper dissertations, but one or two colonies, in some of their most respectable meetings, manifested their attachment to him, and seemed to consider him as their patron and friend. No. 45, which was the most offensive Number of a worthless paper, was repeated and echoed, by the most silly and ridiculous allusions to it, through every part of the country,

and by many who could not tell what was signified by the term.

It will not be necessary to say much on the prudence of such conduct, because I suppose those who expected Wilkes's mob would pull down the Parliament-house, or that there would be insurrections all over the kingdom in behalf of America, are by this time fully satisfied of their mistake. It appears now in the clearest manner, that, till very lately, those who seemed to take the part of America in the British Parliament, never did it on American principles. They either did not understand, or were not willing to admit the extent of our claim. Even the great Lord Chatham's bill for reconciliation would not have been accepted here, and did not materially differ from what the ministry would have consented to. The truth is, the far greatest part of the countenance given in Britain to the complaints of this country, was by those who had no other intention in it, than to use them as an engine of opposition to the ministry for the time being. It is true, some of them have now learned to reason very justly, and upon the most liberal principles; but their number is not great, and it was not the case with any one speaker or writer whose works I have had the opportunity of perusing, till the very last stage of the quarrel.

What effect this Wilkism (if I may speak so) of many Americans may be supposed to have had upon the minds of gentleman from Scotland, it is not difficult to explain. That gentle an and his associates thought proper to found the whole of their opposition to the then ministry, upon a contempt

and hatred of the Scots nation ; and by the most illiberal methods, and the most scandalous falsehoods, to stir up a national jealousy between the northern and southern parts of the island. There was not a vile term or hateful idea, which ancient vulgar animosity had ever used, though long union had made them scarcely intelligible, which he did not rake up and attempt to bring into credit by writing and conversation. The consequence of this is well known. Wilkes and some others were burnt in effigy in Scotland, and it produced so general an attachment to the king and ministry, as has not yet spent its force. In these circumstances is it to be wondered at, that many who left Scotland within the last fifteen years, when they heard Wilkes and those who adhered to him, extolled and celebrated by the sons of liberty, should be apt to consider it as an evidence of the same spirit, and that they were engaged in support of the same cause? Perhaps we may go a little higher with this remark, in tracing political appearances to their source. It is generally said that the king himself has discovered a violent rancorous personal hatred against the Americans. If this be true, and I know nothing to the contrary, it may be easily accounted for upon the very same principles.

I am far from supposing that this was a good reason for any man's being cool to the American cause, which was as different from that of Wilkes as light is from darkness. It was indeed doing great dishonour to the noble struggle, to suppose it to have any connection with who should be in or out of court-favour at London ; and therefore it was always my

opinion, that those who railed against the king and ministry only, did not carry the argument home, nor fully understand the nature of their own plea. In order to justify the American opposition, it is not necessary to shew that the persons in power have invaded liberty in Britain; it is sufficient to say that they, with the concurrence of the whole nation, have refused to suffer it to continue in the colonies.—This leads me to the second part of my design, which was to lay before you the reasons which I think should induce every lover of justice and of mankind, not only to be a well-wisher, but a firm and stedfast friend to America, in this important contest.

It has been often said, that the present is likely to be an important era to America. I think we may say much more; it is likely to be an important era in the history of mankind. In the ancient migrations, a new country was generally settled by a small, unconnected, and often an ignorant band. The people and the soil were alike uncultivated, and therefore they proceeded to improvement by very slow degrees; nay, many of them fell back, and degenerated into a state vastly more savage than the people from whence they came. In America we see a rich and valuable soil, and an extensive country, taken possession of by the power, the learning, and the wealth of Europe. For this reason it is now exhibiting to the world a scene which was never seen before. It has had a progress in improvement and population so rapid, as no political calculators have been able to ascertain. I look upon every thing that has been said upon this subject to be mere conjecture, except in such places as there

has been an actual numeration. When men say that America doubles its number in fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years, they speak by guess, and they say nothing. In some places that may be under or over the truth; but there are vast tracts of land that fill every year with inhabitants, and yet the old settled places still continue to increase.

It is proper to observe, that the British settlements have been improved in a proportion far beyond the settlements of other European nations. To what can this be ascribed? Not to the climate, for they are of all climates; not to the people, for they are a mixture of all nations. It must therefore be resolved singly into the degree of British liberty which they brought from home, and which pervaded more or less their several constitutions. It has been repeated to us, I know not how often, by the mercenary short-sighted writers in favour of submission to, or re-union with Great Britain, that we have thriven much in past times by our dependence on the mother country, and therefore we should be loath to part. These writers forget that the very complaint is, that she will not suffer us to enjoy our ancient rights. Can any past experience shew that we shall thrive under new impositions? I should be glad any such reasoners would attempt to prove that we have thriven by our dependence, and not by the degree of independence which we have hitherto enjoyed. If we have thriven by our dependence, I conceive it is a necessary consequence, that those provinces must have thriven most which have been most dependent. But the contrary is self-evident. Those which have hitherto enjoyed the freest form

of government, though greatly inferior in soil and climate, have yet outstripped the others in number of people and value of land, merely because the last were more under the influence of appointments and authority from home.

When this is the undeniable state of things, can any person of a liberal mind wish that these great and growing countries should be brought back to a state of subjection to a distant power? And can any man deny, that if they had yielded to the claims of the British Parliament, they would have been no better than a parcel of tributary states, ruled by lordly tyrants, and exhausted by unfeeling pensioners, under the commission of one too distant to hear the cry of oppression, and surrounded by those who had an interest in deceiving him? It ought therefore, in my opinion, to meet with the cordial approbation of every impartial person, as I am confident it will of posterity, that they have united for common defence, and resolved that they will be both free and independent, because they cannot be the one without the other.

As this measure, long foreseen, has now taken place, I shall beg leave to say a few things upon it, in which I mean to shew—

1. That it was necessary.
2. That it will be honourable and profitable. And,
3. That in all probability it will be no injury, but a real advantage to the island of Great Britain.

1. It had become absolutely necessary. All reconciliation, but upon the footing of absolute unconditional submission, had been positively refused by Great Britain; unless, therefore, the colonies had resolved to continue in a loose and broken state, with

the name of a government which they had taken arms to oppose, the step which they have now taken could not have been avoided. Besides, things had proceeded so far, and such measures had been taken on both sides, that it had become impossible to lay down a scheme by which *they* should be sure of our dependence, and *we*, at the same time, secured in our liberties. While things continued in their ancient state, there was perhaps a power on the part of each, of which they were hardly conscious, or were afraid and unwilling to exert. But after the encroachments had been made and resisted, to expect any thing else than a continual attempt to extend authority on the one hand, and to guard against it on the other, is to discover very little knowledge of human nature. In such a situation, though every claim of America should be yielded, she would soon be either in a state of continual confusion, or absolute submission. The king of England, living in his English dominions, would not, and indeed durst not assent to any act of an American legislature that was, or was supposed to be hurtful to his English subjects. This is not founded on conjecture, but experience. There is not (at least Dean Swift affirms it) any dependence of Ireland upon England, except an act of the Irish Parliament, that the king of England shall be king of Ireland. This last has a separate independent legislature, and in every thing else but the above circumstance seems to be perfectly free; yet if any man should assert that the one kingdom is not truly subject to the other, he would in my opinion know very little of the state and history of either.

2. A state of independency will be both honourable and profitable to this country. I pass over many advantages in the way of commerce, as well as in other respects, that must necessarily accrue from it, that I may dwell a little on the great and leading benefit which is the foundation of all the rest. We shall have the opportunity of forming plans of government upon the most rational, just, and equal principles. I confess I have always looked upon this with a kind of enthusiastic satisfaction. The case never happened before since the world began. All the governments we have read of in former ages were settled by caprice or accident, by the influence of prevailing parties or particular persons, or prescribed by a conqueror. Important improvements indeed have been forced upon some constitutions by the spirit of daring men, supported by successful insurrections. But to see government in large and populous countries settled from its foundation by deliberate counsel, and directed immediately to the public good of the present and future generations, while the people are waiting for the decision with full confidence in the wisdom and impartiality of those to whom they have committed the important trust, is certainly altogether new. We learn indeed from history, that small tribes and feeble new settlements did sometimes employ one man of eminent wisdom to prepare a system of laws for them. Even this was a wise measure, and attended with happy effects. But how vast the difference, when we have the experience of all past ages, the history of human society, and the well known causes of

prosperity and misery in other governments to assist us in the choice.

The prospect of this happy circumstance, and the possibility of losing it, and suffering the season to pass over, has filled me with anxiety for some time. So far as we have hitherto proceeded, there has been great unanimity and public spirit. The inhabitants of every province, and persons of all denominations, have vied with each other in zeal for the common interest. But was it not to be feared that some men would acquire over-bearing influence? that human weakness and human passions would discover themselves, and prevent the finishing of what had been so happily begun? In the time of the civil wars in England, had they settled a regular form of government as soon as the Parliament had obtained an evident superiority, their liberties would never have been shaken, and the Revolution would have been unnecessary. But by delaying the thing too long, they were broken into parties, and bewildered in their views, and at last tamely submitted without resistance to that very tyranny against which they had fought with so much glory and success. For this reason I think that every candid and liberal mind ought to rejoice in the measures lately taken through the States of America, and particularly the late declaration of independence; as it will not only give union and force to the measures of defence while they are necessary, but lay a foundation for the birth of millions, and the future improvement of a great part of the globe.

I have only further to observe, 3. That I am confident the independence of America will, in the end,

be to the real advantage of the island of Great Britain. Were this even otherwise, it would be a weak argument against the claim of justice. Why should the security or prosperity of this vast country be sacrificed to the supposed interest of an inconsiderable spot? But I cannot believe that the misery and subjection of any country on earth is necessary to the happiness of another. Blind partiality and self-interest may represent it in this light, but the opinion is delusive, the supposition is false. The success and increase of one nation is, or may be a benefit to every other. It is seldom indeed that a people in general can receive and adopt these generous sentiments, they are nevertheless perfectly just. It is industry only, and not possessions, that makes the strength and wealth of a nation; and this is not hindered, but encouraged, provoked, and rewarded, by the industry of others\*.

But to leave the general principle, or rather to apply it to the case of Great Britain and America—what profit has the former hitherto received from the latter? and what can it reasonably expect for the future? Only its trade, and such part of that trade as tends to encourage the industry, and increase the number of the inhabitants of that island. It will be said they intend to raise a large, clear, net revenue upon us, by taxation. It has been shewn by many, that all the taxes which they could raise would only serve to feed the insatiable desire of wealth in placemen and pensioners, to increase the influence of the crown, and the corruption of the people. It was by the acquisition of numerous pro-

\* See David Hume's Essay on the Jealousy of Trade.

vinces that Rome hastened to its ruin. But even supposing it otherwise, and that without any bad consequence among themselves, they were to acquire a great addition to their yearly revenue, for every shilling they gained by taxes, they would lose ten in the way of trade. For a trifling addition to the sums of public money to be applied or wasted by ministers of state, they would lose ten times the quantity distributed among useful manufacturers, the strength and glory of a state. I think this has been sometimes compared to the difference between draughts of spirituous liquors to intoxicate the head or weaken the stomach, and cool refreshing food to give soundness, health and vigour, to every member of the body.

The trade, then, of America, as soon as peace is settled, will be as open to them as ever. But it will be said they have now an exclusive trade, they will then but share it with other nations. I answer, an exclusive trade is not easily preserved, and when it is preserved, the restriction is commonly more hurtful than useful. Trade is of a nice and delicate nature; it is founded upon interest. It will force its way wherever interest leads, and can hardly by any art be made to go in another direction. The Spaniards have an exclusive trade, as far as they please to confine it, to their own plantations. Do they reap much benefit from it? I believe not. Has it made their own people more industrious at home? Just the contrary. Does it not, in the natural course of things, make a people less careful to work as well and as cheap as others, to procure voluntary pur-

chasers, when they know they can send their goods to those who are obliged to take them? Does it not both tempt and enable great merchants in the capital, to import from other nations what they can export to such a forced market to advantage? By this means a considerable profit may come into the coffers of a few particulars, while no essential service is done to the people, and the ultimate profit is carried to that country where the goods are produced or fabricated. It has been repeatedly said by political writers in England, that the balance of trade is against that country to every nation, excepting Portugal and their own plantations. I will not answer for the truth or universality of this assertion, but if it is true in any measure, I will venture to affirm, upon the principles of general reason, that the cause which produces it is no other than the exclusive trade they have hitherto enjoyed to the American settlements.

But the circumstance which I apprehend will contribute most to the interest of Great Britain in American independence, is its influence in peopling and enriching this great continent. It will certainly tend to make the American States numerous, powerful and opulent, to a degree not easily conceived. The great and penetrating Montesquieu, in his Spirit of Laws, has shewn in the clearest manner, that nothing contributes so much to the prosperity of a people, as the state of society among them, and the form of their government. A free government overcomes every obstacle, makes a desert a fruitful field, and fills a bleak and barren country with all the conveniencies of life. If so, what must be the

operation of this powerful cause upon countries enjoying in the highest degree every advantage that can be derived from situation, climate, and soil? If the trade of America has hitherto been of so great benefit to England, how much more valuable may it be when these countries shall be still more highly improved, if she shall continue to enjoy it! This argument is liable to no objection but what may arise from the loss of an exclusive trade, which I have already considered. It may be added, however, that there is not now, nor ever has been any aversion in the Americans to the people of Great Britain, so that they may be sure of our trade if they treat us as well as others, and if otherwise, they do not deserve it.

I might illustrate the argument by stating the probable consequences of a contrary supposition. If Great Britain should prevail, or overcome the American States, and establish viceroys with absolute authority in every province, all men of spirit and lovers of freedom would certainly withdraw themselves to a corner, if such could be found, out of the reach of tyranny and oppression. The numbers of the people at any rate would sensibly decrease, their wealth would be speedily exhausted, and there would remain only a nominal authority over a desolate country, in return for a vast expence laid out in the conquest, and in place of a great and profitable trade by which both nations were made happy. One of the arguments, if they may be called so, made use of against this country, and on which an obligation to obedience has been founded, is taken from the expence they have been at in blood and treasure for

our protection in former wars. This argument has been often answered in the fullest manner; but if they shall continue to urge it, how fearful to think of the obligations we shall be under after this war is finished! Then shall we owe them all the sums which they shall have laid out in subduing us, and all that we have spent in attempting to prevent it; all the blood which they shall have shed in attacking us, and all that we shall have spilt in our own defence. There is unquestionably a loss to Great Britain by the one side of the account as well as the other; and it tends to shew, in the clearest manner, the unspeakable folly, as well as great injustice of the promoters of this war.

Thus I have stated to you, though very briefly, the principles on which I think the American cause ought to be pleaded, and on which it ought to be espoused and supported by every lover of justice and of mankind. But though the general plea in justice were less clear than it is, there is a light in which the conduct of the opposers of it has always appeared to me unreasonable and ungenerous to the highest degree. That resistance to Great Britain has been determined on, in the most resolute manner, through all the colonies, by a vast majority, is not only certain but undeniable. In the beginning of the controversy, some writers, with an impudence hardly to be paralleled, called the fact in question, attempted to deceive the people in this country, and effectually deceived the people of England, by making them believe that it was only a few factious

and violent men that had engaged in the contest. It is not very long since a writer had the courage to assert, that "nine-tenths of the people of Pennsylvania were against independence." The falsehood of such misrepresentations is now manifest, and indeed was probably known from the beginning by those who desired to have them believed. Taking this for granted, then, for an inconsiderable minority, whether natives or strangers, to set themselves in opposition to the public councils, is contrary to reason and justice, and even to the very first principles of the social life.

If there is any principle that was never controverted upon the social union it is, that as a body every society must be determined by the plurality. There was a time when it was not only just and consistent, but necessary that every one should speak his mind freely and fully of the necessity or expediency of resisting the authority of Great Britain. But that time is over long ago. The measures being resolved upon, and the conflict begun, one who is barely neuter can scarce be forgiven; a secret plodding enemy must be considered as a traitor. Every person who continued among us after the decisive resolutions formed by all the Colonies, ought to be considered as pledging his faith and honour to assist in the common cause. Let me try to illustrate it by a similar case. Suppose that a ship at sea springs a leak, which exposes the whole company to the most imminent danger of perishing. Suppose a council is called of all the persons on board, to determine what port they shall endeavour to gain.

Then it is not only the right, but the duty of every one to speak his own judgment, and to press it upon others by every argument in his power. Suppose a great majority determines to push for a certain place, and to go to the pump by turns every quarter of an hour; but that two, or three, or one, if you please, is of opinion that they should have gone another course, because of the wind, current, or any other circumstance, and that it would be best to change hands at the pump only every half hour. All this is well. But if, after the determination, this same gentleman, because his advice was not followed, should refuse to pump at all, should silyly alter the ship's course, or deaden her way by every means in his power, or even should only by continual complaints and desponding fears discourage others, on whose activity the common safety depended, I desire to know what treatment he would receive or deserve? Without doubt he would be thrown overboard in less time than I have taken to state the case. I am not able to perceive the least difference between this supposition and what takes place in America at the present time.

If this argument is just with respect to every inhabitant of the country, it ought to have some additional weight with those who are not natives, and whose residence is not certain or has not been long. There is a great degree of indecency in such taking any part against what the majority of the inhabitants think to be their interest, and that of their country. Were they even wrong, their mistake should be lamented, not resisted; on the contrary, it

would be the part both of generosity and justice to support them effectually in a contest which wisdom would have declined. We see indeed every day, melancholy instances of a base and selfish temper operating different ways. Many, when they do not obtain that rank and honour which their pride and partiality think their due, or if their advice is not followed, immediately renounce the service of their country, and it may go to destruction for them. In opposition to this, let me recommend the example of the illustrious Fabius of Rome. He had given strict orders to all his officers not to engage the enemy, but to keep at a distance. Unluckily his lieutenant-general, by his own rashness, got entangled with a part of the army under his command, and was engaged. Fabius, preferring his country's good to fame, rivalry, and safety, came immediately to his support with all expedition, and thereby gained a glorious and complete victory.

I hope you will take in good part the above reflections, which I think contain nothing that is virulent or indecent against any man or body of men. They are the effects of judgment and conviction. The author, as is probably known to many of you, has been personally abused in newspapers at home, for the part he was supposed to have taken in the American cause, which was in some degree indeed the motive to this address. He hopes that an honest and faithful support of liberty and equal government in this part of the world, will be no just reproach to his character, either as a scholar, a minister, or a Christian; and that it is perfectly consistent

236 TO THE NATIVES OF SCOTLAND, &c.

with an undiminished regard for the country which gave him birth.

The above is submitted to your candid perusal  
by,

Gentlemen,

Your sincere friend, and

Obedient humble servant,

The AUTHOR.

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## SERMON XXIII.

DELIVERED AT A PUBLIC THANKSGIVING  
AFTER PEACE.

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PSAL. iii. 8.

*Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.*

MY BRETHREN,

WE are met together in obedience to public authority, to keep a day of solemn thanksgiving to God, for the goodness of his providence to the United States of America, in the course of a war, which has now lasted seven years, with a powerful and formidable nation. We are particularly called upon to give thanks for the signal successes with which it hath pleased him to bless our arms and those of our allies, in the course of the last year, and the campaign which is now drawing to a close. I need say nothing of the importance of the great contest in which we have been so long engaged, or the

interesting alternative which depends upon the issue, as these seem to have been felt in the fullest manner by all ranks in this country, from the beginning. The language even of the common people will convince every man of reflection that they are universally sensible how much is at stake. My proper business, therefore, is to engage every pious hearer to adore the providence of God in general, to offer with sincerity and gratitude the sacrifice of praise for his many mercies, and to make a wise and just improvement of the present promising situation of public affairs.

Many who now hear me are witnesses, that it has never been my practice, for reasons which appear to me to be good, to intermix politics with the ordinary service of the sanctuary, on the weekly returns of the Christian Sabbath, further than fervent supplications to the throne of grace, for divine direction to the public counsels, and assistance to those who are employed in the public service. But on days of this kind it becomes part of a minister's duty to direct the attention of the hearers to events of a public nature. This you know I did with great concern, and at considerable length, six years ago on a public fast day. I would therefore willingly, in this more advanced period, take a view of what is past, and endeavour to direct you in what remains, of your duty to God, to your country, and to yourselves.

For this purpose I have chosen the words of the Psalmist David now read, which are part of a psalm generally thought to have been composed by the

royal author before the war with Absalom, his unnatural son, was wholly finished; but when he had such presages of success as made him speak the language of faith and confidence. "I laid me down and slept: I awaked, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah."

In discoursing upon this subject I propose, through the assistance of divine grace,

I. To explain and state the proper meaning of this expression or sentiment of the inspired Psalmist, "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord."

II. To lay before you a succinct view of what the United States of America owe to divine Providence in the course of the present war.

III. To make a practical improvement of the subject for your instruction and direction.

First, then, I am to explain and state the proper meaning of this expression or sentiment of the inspired Psalmist, "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." This I mean to do by adhering strictly to what appears to be the mind of the Spirit of God in the passage before us, as well as in a manner agreeable to the analogy of faith. As religion is the same in substance in every age, the reflections of pious persons on the course of Providence, arise from

the same examples, and lead to the same end. The words may justly be supposed to contain the Psalmist's thankful acknowledgment of the past mercies of God, as well as the foundation of his future security. They carry in them a general confession of the influence of divine Providence upon every event, and in particular with respect to salvation, or deliverance from impending danger. In this view when he says, "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord," it seems to imply the three following things.

I. That "salvation belongeth unto the Lord," as distinguished from human or created help, and therefore all confidence in man stands opposed to the sentiment expressed by the holy Psalmist in the text. It is not opposed to the use or application of, but to an excessive or undue reliance on human means, or second causes of any kind. It implies, that success in any attempt is to be ultimately attributed to God. That it is he who by his providence provides outward means, who raises up friends to his people, or causes "their enemies to be at peace with them." That it is he who in cases of difficulty and danger directs their hands to war and their fingers to fight, and finally crowns their endeavours with success. Whether therefore the outward advantages are great or small, whether the expectation or the probability of success has been strong or weak, he who confesses that salvation belongeth unto God, will finally give the glory to him. Confidence before, and boasting after the event, are alike contrary to this disposition. If any person desires to have his faith in this truth confirmed or improved, let him read the history of

mankind in a cool and considerate manner, and with a serious frame of spirit. He will then perceive that every page will add to his conviction. He will find that the most important events have seemed to turn upon circumstances the most trivial, and the most out of the reach of human direction. A blast of wind, a shower of rain, a random shot, a private quarrel, the neglect of a servant, a motion without intention, or a word spoken by accident and misunderstood, has been the cause of a victory or defeat which has decided the fate of empires. Whoever, with these facts in his view, believes the constant influence and over-ruling power of divine providence, will know what the Psalmist means when he says, "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord."

2. In this sentiment the Psalmist seems to have had in view the *omnipotence* of Providence; that nothing is impossible with God; that there is no state so dangerous, no enemy so formidable, but he is able to work deliverance. He has not only the direction and government of means and second causes, but is himself superior to all means. The word *salvation*, when it is applied in Scripture to temporal danger, generally signifies a great and distinguished deliverance: Thus it is used by Moses, Exodus xiv. 13. "Stand still and see the salvation of God;" and in the same manner, 1 Sam. xiv. 45. "Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel?" When, therefore, a person or people are threatened with evils of the most dreadful kind; when they are engaged in a conflict very unequal; when they are driven to extremity, and have no re-

source left as means of defence; then, if the cause in which they are engaged is righteous and just, they may cry to God for relief. The sentiment expressed by the Psalmist ought to bear them up against despair, and they may say as the angel to the father of the faithful, "Is there any thing too hard for the Lord?" There are many instances in Scripture of signal deliverance granted to the servants of God, some of them even wholly miraculous, which teach us to set our hope in his mercy, and not to suffer his mighty works to slip out of our minds. This is the exercise of faith in an unchangeable God—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

3. This sentiment has respect to the mercy and goodness of God, or his readiness to hear the cry of the oppressed, and send deliverance to his people. This circumstance is necessary to be taken in, to make him the proper object of faith and trust; and it must be combined with the other, to give us a complete view of the influence of Providence. Power and wisdom alone give an imperfect display of the divine character. It would give little support under the pressure of affliction, to have a general or theoretical persuasion that all things are possible with God; but if we believe his readiness to interpose, and see our title clear to implore his help, we have that hope which is justly called "the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast." In this sense salvation belongeth unto God; it is his prerogative, it is his glory. The promise so often repeated in the same or similar terms, is addressed both to nations and particular persons. "He shall call upon

me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble, to deliver him, and to honour him. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth him out of all his troubles. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

Having briefly stated these known and general truths, I proceed to the *second* and principal thing proposed, which was to lay before you a succinct view of what the United States of America owe to divine providence, in the course of the present war. On considering this part of the subject, a difficulty presents itself as to the manner of handling it. I am desirous of doing it some measure of justice, and at the same time of avoiding excessive prolixity, or a tedious enumeration of particular facts. To unite these two purposes as much as possible, I will divide what I have to say into distinct branches; and after a few words of illustration on each of them, leave it to every hearer to add such further examples as may have fallen within his own observation. The branches I would separately consider are the following: 1. Signal successes, or particular and providential favours to us in the course of the war. 2. Preservation from difficulties and evils which seemed to be in our situation unavoidable, and, at the same time, next to insurmountable. 3. Confounding the counsels of our enemies, and making them hasten on the change which they desired to prevent.

1. Signal successes, or providential favours to us

in the course of the war. Here I must mention what happened at the beginning of the contest, and prevented us from being crushed in the very out-set, although it is now in a manner wholly forgotten. Let us remember our true situation, after we had made the most public and peremptory declarations of our determination to defend our liberties. There was a willing spirit, but unarmed hands. Our enemies have all along charged us with a deliberate concerted purpose of breaking with them, and setting up an independent empire. The falsehood of this accusation might be made to appear from many circumstances; as there being no pre-contract among the states themselves, nor any attempt to engage allies or assistance in Europe, and several others. But though there were no other argument at all, it is sufficiently proved by the total want of arms and ammunition to supply us even during the first stages of resistance. The nakedness of the country in this respect is well known; and our enemies endeavoured to avail themselves of it, by taking every measure to prevent their being brought to us. This difficulty was got over by many providential supplies, without the care or foresight of those who were at the head of affairs, and particularly by many unexpected captures from our enemies themselves.

How contrary to human appearance and human conjectures have many circumstances turned out! It was universally supposed at first, that we should be able to do nothing at all at sea, because of the great naval power of the enemy, yet the success of

our private vessels has been one of the most powerful means of distressing them, and supporting us. I cannot help in particular taking notice, that the eastern states, which were the first objects of their vengeance, were actually in their possession, and seemed to be devoted to pillage and destruction; yet in a short time they were delivered, and have in the course of the war acquired a greater accession of wealth and power, than it is probable they could have done in the same period of security and peace.

It falls to be taken notice of under this branch of the subject, that our most signal successes have generally been when we had the weakest hopes or the greatest fears. What could be more discouraging than our situation at the close of the year 1776; when, after General Howe's arrival with so powerful and well appointed an armament, our army, enlisted but for a few months, was almost entirely dispersed? Yet then did the surprise of the Hessians at Trenton, and the subsequent victory at Princeton, raise the drooping spirits of the country, and give a new turn to our affairs. These advantages redounded greatly to the honour of the commander in chief who planned, and the handful of troops with him who executed the measures, as is confessed by all; yet were they of still greater moment to the cause of America in general, than they were brilliant as military exploits. This place and neighbourhood having been the scene of these actions, cannot but make them and their consequences fresh in the memory of every one who now hears me.

The great victory over General Burgoyne and his

army, (weakened at Bennington, and taken prisoners at Saratoga) which opened the eyes of Europe in general, and in some degree even of Britain, happened at a time when many were discouraged. It happened when after the losses of Brandy-Wine and Germantown, the British were in possession of Philadelphia, and the Congress of the United States were obliged to fly to a distant part of the country. It happened not long after our disgraceful flight from Ticonderoga, and the scandalous loss of that post, which was every where said and thought to be the key of the continent, and the possession of it essential to our security. We must not omit to observe, that this victory over a numerous army of British regulars, was obtained by an army composed in a great measure of militia suddenly collected, and freemen of the country who turned out as volunteers.

In the same manner our late astonishing success in the south began when our affairs in that part of the continent wore a most discouraging aspect. The year 1781, which began with mutiny in the northern army, and weakness in the southern, produced more instances of gallantry and military prowess than all the former, and was closed with a victory more glorious to us, and more humiliating to the enemy, than any thing that had before happened during the course of the war.

It was surely a great favour of Providence to raise up for us so great and illustrious an ally in Europe. This prince has assisted us, as you all know, in a very powerful and effectual manner, and has grant-

ed that assistance upon a footing so generous as well as just, that our enemies will not yet believe, but there must be some secret and partial stipulations in favour of himself and his subjects, although no such thing exists.

Let me add to all these, the providing for us a person who was so eminently qualified for the arduous task of commander in chief of the armies of the United States. I must make some apology here. None who know me, I think, will charge me with a disposition to adulation or gross flattery of living characters. I am of opinion, and have often expressed it, that the time for fixing a man's character is after death has set his seal upon it, and favour, fear and friendship are at an end. For this reason I do not mean to give a general or full character of the person here in view. But in speaking of the kindness of Providence to the United States, it would be a culpable neglect not to mention that several of his characteristic qualities seem so perfectly suited to our wants, that we must consider his appointment to the service, and the continued health with which he has been blessed, as a favour from the God of heaven. Consider his coolness and prudence, his fortitude and perseverance, his happy talent of engaging the affections of all ranks, so that he is equally acceptable to the citizen and to the soldier—to the state in which he was born, and to every other on the continent. To be a brave man, or skilful commander, is common to him with many others; but this country stood in need of a comprehensive and penetrating mind, which understood the effect of

particular measures in bringing the general cause to an issue. When we contrast his character and conduct with those of the various leaders that have been opposed to him; when we consider their attempts to blast each other's reputation, and the short duration of their command, we must say that Providence has fitted him for the charge, and called him to the service.

This head can hardly be better closed, than with the extraordinary interposition of divine Providence for the discovery of the black treachery of Arnold, who intended to put one of the most important fortresses, and the general himself, into the enemies hands. This design was ripe for execution, and the time of execution was at hand. As there was no suspicion of the traitor, no measures were, or could be taken for preventing it. The meeting of the spy with two friends of America, which was entirely casual, the unaccountable embarrassment of that artful person, when with a little address he might easily have extricated himself, and indeed the whole circumstances of that affair, clearly point out the finger of God.

I might have added many more instances of the favour of Providence in particular events, but what have been mentioned, I think, are fully sufficient for the purpose for which they are adduced, and will lead the hearers to the recollection of others of a similar kind.

The second part of my observations must be on the difficulties and dangers which seemed to be in our situation unavoidable, and, at the same time,

next to insurmountable. The first of this kind which I shall mention is dissension, or the opposition of one colony to another. On this our enemies reckoned very much, from the beginning. Even before the war broke out, reasoners seemed to build their hopes of the colonies not breaking off from the mother country for ages, upon the impossibility of their uniting their strength, and forming one compact body, either for offence or resistance. To say the truth, the danger was great and real. It was on this account foreseen and dreaded, and all true patriots were anxious to guard against it. Great thanks, doubtless, are due to many citizens in every state, for their virtuous efforts to promote the general union. These efforts have not been without effect; but I am of opinion, that union has been hitherto preserved and promoted to a degree that no man ventured to predict, and very few had the courage to hope for. I confess myself, from the beginning, to have apprehended more danger from this than from any other quarter, and must now declare that my fears have been wholly disappointed, and my hopes have been greatly exceeded. In the public councils no mark of dissension, in matters of importance, has ever appeared; and I take upon me further to say, that every year has obliterated colonial distinctions, and worn away local prejudices, so that mutual affection is at present more cordial, and the views and works of the whole more uniform, than ever they were at any preceding period.

Having mentioned the union and harmony of the

United States, it will be very proper to add, that the harmony that has prevailed in the allied army is another signal mercy, for which we ought to be thankful to God. It is exceedingly common for dissension to take place between troops of different nations, when acting together. In the English history we meet with few examples of conjunct expeditions, with sea and land forces, in which the harmony has been complete. Our enemies did not fail to make use of every topic, which they apprehended would be inflammatory and popular, to produce jealousies between us and our allies. Yet it has been wholly in vain. Not only have the officers and soldiers of the American and French armies acted together with perfect cordiality, but the troops of our allies have met with a hearty welcome wherever they have been, from the people of the country; and, indeed, just such a reception as shews they were esteemed to be of the utmost importance and utility to the American cause.

Another difficulty we had to encounter was the want of money and resources for carrying on the war. To remedy this evil an expedient was fallen upon which I do not look upon myself as obliged either to justify or approve. It was, however, embraced by the plurality as necessary, and, upon the whole, less hazardous than any other which in our situation was practicable. The difficulty of raising, clothing, paying and supporting an army, with a depreciated currency, which its own nature, the arts of interested persons, and the unwearied attempts of our enemies were pushing on to annihilation, may be easily perceived. Yet the war has not only

been supported, but we have seen the fall and ruin of the money itself, without the least injury to the public cause. Without injury, did I say? it was to the unspeakable benefit of the public cause. Many private persons, indeed, have suffered such injury as not only merits pity, but calls for redress, and I hope the time will come, when all the redress shall be given that the nature of the thing and the state of the country will admit. In the mean time, when we reflect upon what is past, we have a proof of the general attachment of the country to the cause of liberty, the strongest perhaps that can well be conceived, and we see a circumstance from which we feared the greatest evil, adding its force to many others, in blinding our enemies, misleading their measures, and disappointing their expectations.

Another difficulty we had before us was the being obliged to encounter the whole force of the British nation, with an army composed of raw soldiers, unacquainted with military discipline. The difficulty was increased by our own conduct, viz. filling our army with soldiers enlisted for short periods. The views of those who preferred this method were certainly very honourable, though the wisdom of it is at least very disputable. They hoped it would make every man in America a soldier in a short time. This effect, indeed, it has in a good degree produced, by the frequent calls of the militia wherever the enemy appeared. They also apprehended danger from a standing army, unconnected with civil life, who, after they had conquered their enemies, might give cause of jealousy to

their friends. The history of other countries in general, and in particular that of the civil wars in England against Charles the First, seemed to give plausibility to this reason, though from several circumstances there was less cause of fear in America, than would have been in one of the European states. However, the measure was resolved upon by the plurality at first, and we felt the inconvenience of it very severely; but it pleased God to preserve us from utter destruction, to set bounds to the progress of our enemies, and to give time to the states to make better and more effectual provision for their final overthrow.

The only other danger I shall mention was that of anarchy and confusion, when government under the old form was at an end, and every state was obliged to establish civil constitutions for preserving internal order, at the very same time that they had to resist the efforts of a powerful enemy from without. This danger appeared so considerable, that some of the king of Great Britain's governors ran off early, as they themselves professed, in order to augment it. They hoped that universal disorder would prevail in every colony, and not only defeat the measures of the friends of liberty, but be so insupportable to the people in general, as to oblige them to return to their subjection, for their own sakes, and to be rid of a still greater evil. This danger, through the divine blessing, we happily, and indeed entirely escaped. The governors by their flight ripened every measure, and hastened on the change by rendering it visibly necessary. Provincial

conventions were held, city and county committees were every where chosen, and such was the zeal for liberty, that the judgment of these committees was as perfectly submitted to, and their orders more cheerfully and completely executed, than those of any regular magistrates, either under the old government or since the change. At the same time every state prepared and settled their civil constitutions, which have now all taken place, and, except in very few instances, without the least discord or dissatisfaction. Happily for us in this state, our constitution has now subsisted near seven years, and we have not so much as heard the voice of discontent. I speak on this head of what is known to every hearer, and indeed to the whole world; and yet I am persuaded, that to those who reflect upon it, it will appear next to miraculous. Although so much was to be done in which every man was interested, although the colonies were so various and extensive, and the Parliament of Great Britain was threatening, and its army executing vengeance against us, yet the whole was completed in little more than a year, with as much quietness and composure as a private person would move his family and furniture from one house, and settle them in another.

The third branch of my observations shall consist of a few instances in which the counsels of our enemies have been confounded, and their measures have been such as to hasten on the change which they desired to prevent. As to the first of these, nothing can be more remarkable than the ignorance and error in which they have continued from the first

rise of the controversy to the present time, as to the state of things, and the dispositions of men in America. Even those at the head of affairs in Great Britain, have not only constantly given out, but in my opinion have sincerely believed, that the great body of the people were upon their side, and were only misled into rebellion by a few factious leaders. At the same time, the very same persons, without being sensible of the absurdity, have affirmed that this country was groaning under the oppression of its rulers, and longed to be delivered from it. Now these things could not both be true. If the first had been true, these leaders must have been popular and acceptable in a high degree, and have had the most extensive influence. If the last had been true, they must have been inwardly and universally detested. But how many circumstances might have convinced them of the falsehood of both these assertions? The vast extent of the states, and the concurrence of all ranks and classes of men, which was so early, so uniform, and so notorious, plainly prove that no such thing could have happened, without a strong and rooted inclination in the people themselves, and such as no address or management of interested persons could have produced. Besides, those who know how fluctuating a body the Congress is, and what continual changes take place in it, as to men, must perceive the absurdity of their making or succeeding in any such attempt. The truth is, the American Congress owes its existence and its influence to the people at large. I might easily shew, that there has hardly any great or important step

been taken, but the public opinion has gone before the resolutions of that body ; and I wish I could not say, that they have been sometimes very slow in hearing and obeying it.

As to the other assertion, it was still more manifestly false, and they had greater opportunities of perceiving it to be so. If Congress, or those in public trust in any state, had tyrannized over the people, or wantonly oppressed them, the usurpation would, in the nature of things, have come to a speedy period. But what if I should say, that this pretence of our enemies, in an equivocal sense, is indeed true ; and yet this truth doth but the more clearly demonstrate their error and delusion. It is true that Congress has, in many instances, been obliged to have recourse to measures in themselves hard and oppressive, and confessed to be so, which yet have been patiently submitted to, because of the important purpose that was to be served by them. Of this kind was the emission of paper money, the passing of tender laws, compelling all into the militia, draughting the militia to fill the regular army, pressing provisions and carriages, and many others of the like nature. Two things are remarkable in this whole matter : one, that every imposition for the public service fell heaviest upon those who were the friends of America ; the lukewarm or contrary minded always finding some way of shifting the load from their own shoulders ; the other, that from the freedom of the press in this country, there never were wanting the boldest and most inflammatory publications, both against men and measures. Yet

neither the one nor the other, nor both united, had any perceptible influence in weakening the attachment of the people. If this account is just, and I am confident it is known to be so by almost all who now hear me, what less than judicial blindness could have made our enemies so obstinate in the contrary sentiments? Such, however, we know has been the case, and as the whole of their proceedings have been grounded on mistakes, it is no wonder that they have been both injudicious and unsuccessful.

This matter may be explained in the following manner. They supposed that they had only a few discontented particulars to apprehend and punish, and an army to conquer in no respects comparable to their own; but in addition to this they had the lost affections of a whole people to recover. The first, which was almost of no consequence at all, they bent their whole force to effect, in council and in the field. The other they supposed was already done, or not worth the doing; and therefore every measure they took had a quite different intention, and a quite opposite effect. In all this they were fortified and confirmed by the sentiments, discourse, and conduct of the disaffected in America. These unhappy people, from the joint influence of prejudice, resentment and interest, were unwearied in their endeavours to mislead their friends. Their prejudice deserves to be mentioned first. This was great indeed. They had generally such an exalted idea of the power of Britain, that they really considered it as madness to resist. I could mention many sentiments uttered by them, which could hardly fail

of making the hearers to smile at their gross ignorance, and more than childish timidity. Resentment also joined its force. They were sometimes roughly handled by the multitude at the beginning of the controversy. This led them to wish for revenge, and as they could not inflict it themselves, to call for it from their friends in England. To these two circumstances we may add, that the road to favour was plainly that of flattery; and therefore their opinions and intelligence were generally such as they supposed would be most acceptable to those who had it in their power to provide for them, or promote them. Such was the effect of these circumstances united, that time will constrain every body to confess, that the partizans and friends of the English in America, have done more essential injury to their cause, than the greatest and boldest of their enemies.

The above distinction between overcoming the armed force of the states, and regaining the people's hearts, is the true key to explain the proceedings, and account for the events of the war. Every measure taken by Great Britain, from the beginning, instead of having the least tendency to gain the affections of the people of this country, had, and one would think must have been seen to have the most powerful influence in producing the contrary effect. Without mentioning every separate particular, I will only consider a little the cruelty and severity with which the war has been carried on; because I am firmly of opinion, that the spirit and temper of our enemies in this contest, has been the principal

cause of the disappointment of their attempts. In this the cabinet and counsellors in Great Britain, and the officers and soldiers of their armies in America, have nothing to reproach each other with. If the barbarity of the army has ever equalled, certainly it has never exceeded the cruelty of several of the acts of parliament. I will not enumerate these acts which are so well known, and which some years ago were so often mentioned in every publication; but shall only tell you with what view I desire you to recollect them. Every one of these acts, on their being known in America, served to increase the union of the states, to fill the hearts of the citizens with resentment, and to add vigour to the soldier's arm.

After the example of their employers at home, the commanders of the British armies, their officers and soldiers, and indeed all their adherents, seemed to have been animated with a spirit of implacable rancour, mingled with contempt, towards the Americans. This is to be understood of the general run or greatest number of every class, always admitting that there were particular exceptions, whose honour and principle controuled or overcame the national prejudice. Neither perhaps is it in any of them to be ascribed so much to the national character, as to the nature and subject of the quarrel. It has been long observed, that civil wars are carried on with much greater fury, and attended with acts of greater barbarity, than wars between independent nations. The fact, however, of their barbarity is certain; and no less so is the powerful influence which this con-

duct has had in defeating their expectations, either of reconciliation or submission.

The barbarous treatment of the American prisoners through the whole war, but especially at the beginning, when their enemies were confident of success, is a melancholy subject indeed, and will be a stain upon the British name to future ages. No part of America can be ignorant of this, having witnesses in every state, in the few that returned alive out of their hands. But we in this state, through which they passed to their homes, can never forget the appearance of the emaciated spectres who escaped, or were exchanged from British dungeons or prison-ships. Neither was it possible for the people in general not to be struck with the contrast when exchanges took place, and they saw companies of British prisoners going home hale and hearty, bearing every mark of their having been supplied with comfortable provisions, and treated with humanity in every other respect. I am not to enlarge upon these known and fertile subjects. The only reason of their being introduced, is to shew the effect which spectacles of this kind must have had upon the public mind, and their influence in rendering the return of the people of this country to submission to the parent state altogether impossible.

The inhuman treatment of the American prisoners by the British, was not more remarkable than their insolence and rapacity towards the people of the country wherever their power extended. The abuse and contempt poured upon the inhabitants in discourse, and the indiscriminate plunder of their pro-

perty, could not but in the most powerful manner alienate their affections. Many who hear me at present have had so full conviction of this truth in their own experience, that it is unnecessary to offer any proof of it. It is of importance however to observe, that this impolitic oppression was the true and proper cause of the general concurrence of the inhabitants of this State to the American standard, in the beginning of the year 1777, and their vigorous exertions ever since against the incursions of the enemy from New York. I confess I was not so much surpris'd at such conduct when they possess'd this part of the country, because they were then flush'd with victory, and had scarcely an idea that they would fail of final success. But when we consider that their conduct has been the same, or even worse, in the southern States, we can hardly help wondering at their infatuation. Surely there was time enough before the year 1780, to have convinced them that insolence and cruelty were not the means of bringing back a revolted people; and yet by all accounts their treatment of the inhabitants in Georgia, South and North Carolina, in that year, was even more barbarous than had been experienced by the people here three years before.

I shall only further mention, that it seems plainly to have been not by accident, but in consequence of general orders or a prevailing disposition, that they treated, wherever they went, places of public worship (except those of the Episcopal denomination) with all possible contempt and insult. They were in general used, not only for hospitals, but store-

houses, barracks, riding schools and prisons, and in many places they were torn to pieces wantonly, and without any purpose to be served by it, but wreaking their vengeance on the former possessors. What influence must this have had upon the minds of the people! What impression must have been made upon the few who remained, and were witnesses to these acts of profanation, when in those places where they had been accustomed to hear nothing but the word and the worship of God, their ears were stunned with the horrid sound of cursing and blasphemy! This was done very early in Boston, and repeated in every part of the continent with increasing rage.

I have chosen on this part of the subject to insist only on what was general, and therefore must be supposed to have had an extensive influence. It would have been easy to have collected many particular acts of barbarity, but as these might be accounted for from the degeneracy and savage disposition of the persons who were severally guilty of them, they would not have been so conclusive for the purpose for which they were adduced. I shall therefore omit every thing of this kind, except one of the earliest instances of their barbarity, because it happened in one of the streets of this place, viz. massacring in cold blood a minister of the gospel, who was not, nor ever had been in arms, and received his death wound while on his knees begging mercy.

Upon the whole, nothing appears to me more manifest, than that the separation of this country from

Britain has been of God ; for every step the British took to prevent, served to accelerate it, which has generally been the case when men have undertaken to go in opposition to the course of Providence, and to make war with the nature of things.

I proceed to make some practical improvement of the subject, for your instruction and direction. And,

In the first place, it is our duty to give praise to God for the present happy and promising state of public affairs. This is what we are called to, and making profession of, by our meeting together at the present time. Let it then be more than a form. Let the disposition of your hearts be correspondent to the expressions of your lips. While we who are here alive before God this day, recollect with tenderness and sympathy with surviving relations, the many valuable lives that have been lost in the course of the war, let us give thanks to God who hath spared us as monuments of his mercy, who hath given us the satisfaction of seeing our complete deliverance approaching, and those liberties, civil and religious, for which we have been contending, established upon a lasting foundation. It will be remembered by many, that I have early and constantly expressed my disapprobation of self-confidence, and vain-glorious boasting. To many American soldiers I have said, Seldom boast of what you have done, but never of what you only mean to do. This was not occasioned by any doubt or hesitation I ever had as to the probable issue of the war, from the appa-

rent state of things, and the course of human events, but by a deep conviction of the sinfulness of this practice, either in a nation or person. Now, therefore, that we have come so far in opposition to a formidable enemy, it is certainly our duty to say, that "salvation belongeth unto the Lord." This indeed is not only the duty of every person with respect to what is past, but is the way to support and animate us in what remains of the warfare, and dispose us to make a suitable improvement of the settlement which we hope is not very distant.

2. We ought to testify our gratitude to God for the many signal interpositions of his providence in our behalf, by living in his fear, and by a conversation such as becometh the gospel. This is not only a tribute we owe to him for every mercy, and therefore for those of a public nature, but it is the only way by which public prosperity can become a real mercy to us. Eternity is of yet greater moment than any earthly blessing. Their state is little to be envied, who are free as citizens, but slaves as sinners. All temporal comforts derive their value from their being the fruits of divine goodness, the evidence of covenant love, and the earnest of everlasting mercy. It is therefore our indispensable duty to endeavour to obtain the sanctified improvement of every blessing, whether public or personal. There is the greater necessity of insisting on this at present, that though a time of national suffering or jeopardy has some advantages for alarming the consciences of the secure, it hath also some disadvantages, and frequently occasions such distraction of mind as is little

favourable to the practice of piety. We know by sad experience, that the regular administration of divine ordinances, the observation of the Sabbath, and the good order of the country in general, have been much disturbed by the war. The public service seemed many times to justify what would otherwise have been highly improper. This contributed to introduce a licentiousness of practice, and to protect those from restraint or reproof, who I am afraid in many cases rather yielded to inclination than submitted to necessity. Now, therefore, when by the blessing of God our distresses are removed, we ought to return to punctuality as to public order, as well as conscientious strictness in every part of our practice.

3. In the third place, it is our duty to testify our gratitude to God, by usefulness in our several stations; or in other words, by a concern for the glory of God, the public interest of religion, and the good of others. This is the duty of every person, even of the lowest station, at all times. Even the meanest and most unconnected hath still some small bounds within which his influence and example may be useful. But it is especially the duty of those who are distinguished from others by their talents, by their station, or by office and authority. I shall at present consider it chiefly as the duty of two sorts of persons, ministers and magistrates, those who have the direction of religious societies, and those who are vested with civil authority. As to the first of these, they are under the strongest obligations to holiness and usefulness in their own lives, and dili-

gence in doing good to others. The world expects it from them, and demands it of them. Many of this class of men have been peculiarly the objects of the hatred and detestation of the enemy, in the course of this war. Such, therefore, as have been spared to see the return of peace and security, are bound by the strongest ties to improve their time and talents in their Master's service. But what I have peculiarly in view is, strictness in religious discipline, or the inspection of the morals of their several societies. By our excellent constitution they are well secured in their religious liberty. The return which is expected from them to the community is, that by the influence of their religious government, their people may be the more regular citizens, and the more useful members of society. I hope none here will deny, that the manners of the people in general are of the utmost moment to the stability of any civil society. When the body of a people are altogether corrupt in their manners, the government is ripe for dissolution. Good laws may hold the rotten bark some longer together, but in a little time all laws must give way to the tide of popular opinion, and be laid prostrate under universal practice. Hence it clearly follows, that the teachers and rulers of every religious denomination are bound mutually to each other, and to the whole society, to watch over the manners of their several members.

(2.) Those who are vested with civil authority ought also, with much care, to promote religion and good morals among all under their government. If we give credit to the holy Scriptures, he that

ruleth must be just, ruling in the fear of God. It is a truth of no little importance to us in our present situation, not only that the manners of a people are of consequence to the stability of every civil society, but that they are of much more consequence to free states, than to those of a different kind. In many of these last, a principle of honour, and the subordination of ranks, with the vigour of despotic authority, supply the place of virtue, by restraining irregularities and producing public order. But in free states, where the body of the people have the supreme power properly in their own hands, and must be ultimately resorted to on all great matters, if there be a general corruption of manners, there can be nothing but confusion. So true is this, that civil liberty cannot be long preserved without virtue. A monarchy may subsist for ages, and be better or worse under a good or bad prince; but a republic once equally poised, must either preserve its virtue or lose its liberty, and by some tumultuous revolution, either return to its first principles, or assume a more unhappy form.

From this results a double-duty, that of the people themselves, who have the appointment of rulers, and that of their representatives, who are intrusted with the exercise of this delegated authority. Those who wish well to the State, ought to chuse to places of trust, men of inward principle, justified by exemplary conversation. Is it reasonable to expect wisdom from the ignorant, fidelity from the profligate, assiduity and application to public business from men of a dissipated life? Is it reasonable to commit the

management of public revenue, to one who hath wasted his own patrimony? Those, therefore, who pay no regard to religion and sobriety in the persons whom they send to the legislature of any state, are guilty of the greatest absurdity, and will soon pay dear for their folly. Let a man's zeal, profession, or even principles as to political measures, be what they will, if he is without personal integrity and private virtue as a man, he is not to be trusted. I think we have had some instances of men who have roared for liberty in taverns, and were most noisy in public meetings, who yet have turned traitors in a little time. Suffer me on this subject to make another remark. I have not yet heard of any Christian State in which there were not laws against immorality. But with what judgment will they be made, or with what vigour will they be executed, by those who are profane and immoral in their own practice? Let me suppose a magistrate on the bench of justice administering an oath to a witness, or passing sentence of death on a criminal, and putting him in mind of a judgment to come: With what propriety, dignity, or force, can any of these be done by one who is known to be a blasphemer or an infidel, by whom in his convivial hours every thing that is serious and sacred is treated with scorn?

But if the people in general ought to have regard to the moral character of those whom they invest with authority, either in the legislative, executive, or judicial branches, such as are so promoted may perceive what is, and will be expected from them. They are under the strongest obligations to do their

utmost to promote religion, sobriety, industry, and every social virtue, among those who are committed to their care. If you ask me, what are the means which civil rulers are bound to use for attaining these ends, further than the impartial support and faithful guardianship of the rights of conscience? I answer that example itself is none of the least. Those who are in high station and authority, are exposed to continual observation, and therefore their example is both better seen, and hath greater influence than that of persons of inferior rank. I hope it will be no offence in speaking to a Christian assembly, if I say that reverence for the name of God, a punctual attendance on the public and private duties of religion, as well as sobriety and purity of conversation, are especially incumbent on those who are honoured with places of power and trust.

But I cannot content myself with this. It is certainly the official duty of magistrates to be "a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well." That society will suffer greatly; in which there is no care taken to restrain open vice by exemplary punishment. It is often to be remarked, in some of the corrupt governments of Europe, that whatever strictness may be used, or even impartiality in rendering justice between man and man, yet there is a total and absolute relaxation as to what is chiefly and immediately a contempt of God. Perhaps a small trespass of a poor man on property, shall be pursued by a vindictive party, or punished by a tyrannical judge with the utmost severity, when all the laws against swearing, Sabbath breaking, lewd-

ness, drunkennes and riot, shall be a dead letter, and more trampled upon by the judges themselves, than by the people who are to be judged. Those magistrates who would have their authority both respected and useful, should begin at the source, and reform or restrain that impiety towards God, which is the true and proper cause of every disorder among men. O the short-sightedness of human wisdom, to hope to prevent the effect, and yet nourish the cause! Whence come dishonesty and petty thefts? I say, from idleness, Sabbath-breaking, and uninstructed families. Whence come deceits of greater magnitude, and debts unpaid? from sloth, luxury, and extravagance. Whence come violence, hatred, and strife? from drunkennes, rioting, lewdness, and blasphemy. It is common to say of a dissolute liver, that he does harm to none but himself; than which I think there is not a greater falsehood that ever obtained credit in a deceived world. Drunkards, swearers, profane and lascivious jesters, and the whole tribe of those who do harm to none but themselves, are the pests of society, the corrupters of the youth, and, in my opinion, for the risk of infection, thieves and robbers are less dangerous companions.

Upon the whole, my brethren, after we have contended in arms for liberty from foreign domination, let us guard against using our liberty as a cloke for licentiousness, and thus poisoning the blessing after we have attained it. Let us endeavour to bring into, and keep in credit and reputation, every thing that may serve to give vigour to an equal republican constitution. Let us cherish a love of piety, order,

industry, frugality. Let us check every disposition to luxury, effeminacy, and the pleasures of a dissipated life. Let us in public measures put honour upon modesty and self-denial, which is the index of real merit. And in our families let us do the best by religious instruction, to sow the seeds which may bear fruit in the next generation. We are one of the body of confederated States. For many reasons I shall avoid making any comparisons at present, but may venture to predict, that whatsoever State among us shall continue to make piety and virtue the standard of public honour, will enjoy the greatest inward peace, the greatest national happiness, and in every outward conflict will discover the greatest constitutional strength.

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## SERMON XXIV.

### CHRISTIAN MAGNANIMITY.

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Preached at Princeton, September 1775, the Sabbath preceding the Annual Commencement of Princeton College; and again, with additions, September 23. 1787.

I THESS. ii. 12.

That you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you into his kingdom and glory.

THE present state was intended to be, and I think must, by every person of reflection, be admitted to be a continual trial of the faith and constancy of a Christian. It is therefore a duty we owe to others in general, but in a special manner, the elder to the younger, to give them faithful

warning of the temptations and dangers to which they must of necessity be exposed, if they mean to walk in the paths of piety and virtue. It hath often occurred to me, in meditating on this subject, that as false money is most dangerous when it is likest to the true, so those principles, and that character which approach the nearest to true religion, if, notwithstanding, they are essentially different from it, will be most ready to impose on an uncautious and unsuspecting mind. Therefore, if there is such a thing as *a worldly virtue*, a system of principles and duty, dictated by the spirit of the world, and the standard of approbation or blame with the men of the world, and if this is at bottom essentially different from, and sometimes directly opposed to the spirit of the gospel, it must be of all others the most dangerous temptation, to persons of a liberal education and an ingenious turn of mind.

This, if I am not mistaken, is really the case. There are some branches of true religion which are universally approved, and which impiety itself cannot speak against; such as truth and integrity in speech, honesty in dealing, humanity and compassion to persons in distress. But there are other particulars, in which the worldly virtue and the Christian virtue seem to be different things. Of these I shall select one as an example, viz. Spirit, dignity, or greatness of mind. This seems to be entirely of the worldly cast; it holds a very high place in the esteem of all worldly men; the boldest pretensions are often made to it by those who treat religion with neglect, and religious persons with disdain or defiance.

It is also a virtue of a very dazzling appearance, ready to captivate the mind, and particularly to make a deep impression on young persons, when they first enter into life. At the same time, the gospel seems to stand directly opposed to it. The humility of the creature, the abasement and contrition of the sinner, the dependence and self-denial of the believer, and, above all, the shame and reproach of the cross itself, seem to conspire in obliging us to renounce it.

What shall we say then, my brethren? Shall we say that magnanimity is no virtue at all, and that no such excellence belongs to human nature? Or shall we admit that there is beauty and excellence in it—confessing at the same time, that it does not belong to religion, and only say, that though we want this, we have many other and better qualities in its place? To this I can never agree; for every real excellence is consistent with every other; nay, every real excellence is adorned and illustrated by every other. Vices may be inconsistent with each other, but virtues never can. And, therefore, as magnanimity is an amiable and noble quality, one of the greatest ornaments of our nature, so I affirm that it belongs only to true and undefiled religion, and that every appearance of the one, without the other, is not only defective but false.

The holy Scriptures, it is true, do chiefly insist upon what is proper to humble our pride, and to bring us to a just apprehension of our character and state. This was wise and just, because of that corruption and misery into which we are fallen; the

contrary would have been unjust. It is evidently more necessary, in the present state of human nature, to restrain pride than to kindle ambition. But as the Scripture points out our original dignity, and the true glory of our nature, so every true penitent is there taught to aspire after the noblest character, and to entertain the most exalted hopes. In the passage which I have chosen as the subject of my discourse, you see the apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to walk suitably to the dignity of their character, and the importance of their privileges, which is a short but just description of true and genuine greatness of mind.

My single purpose from these words at this time, is to explain and recommend magnanimity as a Christian virtue; and I wish to do it in such a manner, as neither to weaken its lustre, nor admit any degree of that corrupt mixture by which it is often counterfeited and greatly debased. Some infidels have in terms affirmed, that Christianity has banished magnanimity, and by its precepts of meekness, humility, and passive submission to injury, has destroyed that nobleness of sentiment which rendered the ancients so illustrious, and gives so much majesty and dignity to the histories of Greece and Rome. In opposition to this I hope to be able to shew, that real greatness is inseparable from sincere piety; and that any defect in the one, must necessarily be a discernible blemish in the other. With this view I will, first, give you the principles of magnanimity in general, as a natural quality; secondly, I will shew what is necessary to give it real value, as a

moral virtue ; thirdly, shew that it shines with the most perfect brightness as a Christian grace ; and afterwards improve the subject by a practical application of what may be said, for your instruction and direction.

First, then, let me state the principles of magnanimity in general, as a natural quality. I think it must be admitted, that as there is a real difference between bodies, as to size and bulk, as well as other sensible qualities, so there is a real character of greatness, or meanness, applicable to the mind, distinct from its other qualities or powers. It is, however, I apprehend, a simple impression, which cannot be explained or further analysed, but may easily be felt, and is best illustrated by its effects. These may be summed up in the following particulars : To magnanimity it belongeth to attempt, 1. Great and difficult things. 2. To aspire after great and valuable possessions. 3. To encounter dangers with resolution. 4. To struggle against difficulties with perseverance ; and, 5. To bear sufferings with fortitude and patience.

1. It belongs to magnanimity to attempt great and difficult things. Those who, from a love of sloth and ease, neglect the exercise or improvement of their powers, and those who apply them with ever so great assiduity and attention, to things mean or of small consequence, are plainly destitute of this quality. We perceive a meanness and want of spirit in this respect, when particular persons fall below their rank in life ; or when, as is too frequently

the case in any rank, they fall below human nature itself. When a prince, or other person of the first order and importance in human life, busies himself in nothing but the most trifling amusements, or arts of little value, we call it mean; and when any man, endowed with rational powers, loses them through neglect, or destroys them by the most grovelling sensuality, we say he is acting below himself. The contrary of this, therefore, or the vigorous exertion of all our powers, and particularly the application of them to things of moment and difficulty, is real magnanimity.

2. It belongs to magnanimity to aspire after great and valuable possessions. It is more difficult properly to illustrate this as a branch of magnanimity, because of its frequent perversion, which will be afterwards explained. It seems, however, to be necessarily included in the general character. A great mind has great capacities of enjoyment as well as action. And as there is a difference between the blessings in our view, both in point of dignity and extent, such a man will not be easily satisfied, or put up with what is either mean or scanty, while he can acquire and possess a better and more extensive portion. The large and increasing desires of the human mind, have often been made an argument for the dignity of our nature, and our having been made for something that is great and excellent.

3. It belongs to magnanimity to encounter dangers with resolution. This is inseparable from, and constitutes a leading part of the character. Even

the most excellent and valuable services to mankind, if they are attended with no difficulty at all, or meet with no opposition, though they retain the character of utility, yet, for want of this circumstance, they lose that of greatness. Courage is always considered as a great quality; it has had the admiration, or rather adoration, of mankind in every age. Many, when they speak of magnanimity, mean nothing else but courage, and when they speak of meanness, have little other idea but that of timidity. Neither is there, I think, any human weakness that is more the object of contempt and disdain than cowardice, which, when applied to life in general, is commonly called pusillanimity.

4. It belongs to greatness to struggle against difficulties with steadiness and perseverance. Perseverance is nothing else but continued and inflexible courage. We see some persons, who shew the greatest activity and boldness for a season, but time and opposition weakens their force, and seems, if I may speak so, to exhaust their courage, as if they wasted the power by the exertion. Perseverance, therefore, is necessary to greatness. Few things are more contrary to this character, than fickleness and unsteadiness. We commonly join together the characters of weak and changeable.

5. In the last place, it belongs to greatness to bear sufferings with fortitude and patience. This is a kindred quality to the former, and is necessary to complete the character of magnanimity. Such is the state of human things, that suffering is, in one way or another, wholly unavoidable. It often hap-

pens, that difficulties cannot be removed, or enemies cannot be conquered; and then it is the last effort of greatness of mind, to bear the weight of the one, or the cruelty of the other, with firmness and patience. This virtue has always been of the greatest reputation. It is a well known saying of a heathen philosopher, that a great man suffering with invincible patience, under a weight of misfortunes, is a sight which even the gods must behold with admiration.

Having thus pointed out the principles, or rather enumerated the chief effects of magnanimity, as a natural quality, let us now, in the *second* place, consider what is necessary to give it real value, as a moral virtue. This is of the utmost importance, and must appear so to all who will consider the subject with attention. That I may set the matter in as clear a light as possible, observe, that to render magnanimity a valuable quality, it must further have the following characters.

1. The object of our desires must be just as well as great. Some of the noblest powers of the human mind have often been exerted in invading the rights, instead of promoting the interest and happiness of mankind. As the history of the world is little else than the history of human guilt, so many of the most illustrious names transmitted down to us, have been those of the most active and successful destroyers of their fellow creatures. There may be, and there have been in such persons, many or most of the ingredients of natural greatness of mind; but these

have only served to make the characters, in the eye of reason, more hideous and detestable.

2. Our desires ought to be governed by wisdom and prudence, as well as justice. If any person either forms difficult projects, or aspires after great possessions, and in prosecution of his purposes exerts ever so much courage, fortitude and patience; yet, if these designs are less useful, or these possessions less valuable than others to which he might have applied the same talents, it cannot deserve the name of true magnanimity. If any person, for example, forms a resolution of exerting his skill in such feats or performances as have nothing or very little valuable in them, but that they are difficult and uncommon, I think no man will pretend that he has any title to the character of greatness of mind, otherwise a rope-dancer might be a hero: or, if any person should spend a whole life in the most unwearied application to the single purpose of accumulating wealth, however vast his desires, or however astonishing his success, his merit would be very small. Nay, we must be sensible that he has lost many opportunities of doing signal service to mankind, and of acquiring more valuable and durable enjoyments while in pursuit of this, which after all will disappoint his hopes.

3. The principle of action must be honourable as well as the achievements illustrious. If a person does things ever so extraordinary in their nature, overcomes the greatest difficulties, or braves the most formidable dangers, merely to make his name famous, we must at once perceive how much it de-

tracts even from his name itself. This is not the language of religion only, it is the language of reason, and the dictate of the human heart. An insatiable thirst for praise, is so far from being amiable, that it is hateful or contemptible. I am sensible that a thirst for fame is not only apparent in, but seems to have been confessed by many of the most distinguished heroes of antiquity; but as it certainly does abate, in a good degree, the lustre of their good actions, so the indulgence that is given them upon this head, is wholly owing to the disadvantages they lay under in a state of heathenism, and their ignorance of a better and nobler principle. "Nothing," says an eminent author, "can be great, the contempt of which is great;" and therefore, if a contempt of riches, a neglect of fame, and a readiness to sacrifice both to duty and usefulness, is one of the most glorious characters we can conceive, it is plain, that not the deeds, but the principle is the evidence, and not the head nor the hands of man, but the heart is the seat of genuine greatness.

4. In the last place, in order to real greatness, every attempt must be possible and rational, perhaps probable. Nothing is more common than to find persons, under the pretence of great and illustrious designs, prosecuting what is not of any value when obtained, and at the same time scarcely possible, and no way probable to be obtained at all. This is declining altogether from the line of greatness, and going into the path of extravagance. Again, should any man undertake what he was altogether unable to perform, however excellent the design were in

itself, we would not dignify it even with the name of ambition; he would acquire and deserve the character, not of greatness, but of folly or madness.

On the whole, it is plain that these moral principles must enter into the composition of true greatness, and that, when they are wanting, the natural characters mentioned before degenerate into vice, and assume the names of pride, ambition, temerity, ferocity and obstinacy.

This leads me, in the *third* place, to shew, not only that there is nothing in real religion contrary to magnanimity, but that there, and there only, it appears in its beauty and perfection. Let me briefly run over, and apply to religion, the above mentioned ingredients of magnanimity.

1. It is to attempt great and difficult things. Religion calls us to the greatest and most noble attempts, whether in a private or a public view. In a private view it calls us to resist and subdue every corrupt and sinful passion, however strongly the indulgence is solicited by the tempting object, or recommended by the artful seducer. The importance and difficulty of this struggle, appears not only from the holy Scriptures, but from the experience and testimony of mankind in every age. What cautions are given by Solomon upon this subject! "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." The wisest heathens have inculcated the necessity of self-government, and the danger of surrounding temptation, by many instructive images. But why

should I extend this part of the subject? How few are successful in this attempt? This alone is a sufficient proof that it is great and difficult, and every person exercised to godliness will be abundantly sensible of it, from the state of his own heart.

In a public view, every good man is called to live and act for the glory of God and the good of others. Here he has as extensive a scene of activity as he can possibly desire. He is not indeed permitted to glory or to build an altar to his own vanity; but he is both permitted and obliged to exert his talents, to improve his time, to employ his substance, and to hazard his life in his Maker's service, or his country's cause. Nor am I able to conceive any character more truly great, than that of one, whatever be his station or profession, who is devoted to the public good under the immediate order of Providence. He does not seek the bubble reputation in the deadly breach, but he complains of no difficulty, and refuses no service, if he thinks he carries the commission of the King of kings.

2. The truly pious man aspires after the greatest and most valuable possessions. He despises, indeed, the uncertain and the unsatisfying enjoyments of time. His desires after present enjoyments are subjected to the will of God. He has given them up without reserve, yet his heavenly Father knoweth that he hath need of these things, and therefore he both asks and hopes to receive what is suitable and necessary, and believes that a little that a just man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked. But the glorious object of the Christian's ambition, is

the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The honourable relation he stands in to God, as his adopted child in Christ Jesus, inclines and authorises him to hope for this purchased possession, and enables him to look down with becoming indifference, on all the glory of this transitory world. Let the rich man glory in his riches, and the wise man glory in his wisdom; he only glories in this, that he knoweth the Lord, and shall be with him for ever.

3. True piety encounters the greatest dangers with resolution. The fear of God is the only effectual mean to deliver us from the fear of man. Experience has abundantly shewn, that the servants of Christ have adhered to his cause, and made profession of his name, in opposition to all the terrors which infernal policy could present to them, and all the sufferings with which the most savage inhumanity could afflict them. But as this belongs to the case of persecution for conscience sake, which, by the peculiar kindness of Providence, is exceedingly rare among us, it is proper to observe, that every Christian has frequent opportunities of manifesting a holy resolution in encountering the reproach and derision of worldly men, for adhering to his duty. And when we consider how hard it is to bear reproach and scorn, called in Scripture, "the trial of cruel mockings," there will appear to be no small measure of dignity and heroism in him who can calmly submit to it from every quarter, rather than depart from his duty. There are not a few who are apt to boast of their spirit and resolution, who

are yet unable to bear reproach, and meanly make the sentiments of others, and the caprice of fashion, the rule of duty, in place of the clear dictates of conscience and the word of God. How contemptible is this, compared to the conduct of that man who seeks no fame but by honest means, and fears no reproach for honest actions, but contents himself with a silent and believing regard to him who seeth in secret, and who shall at last bring every work into judgment.

4. True piety perseveres with constancy in opposition to continual trial. This is indeed what distinguishes the Christian warfare from that of every other. It continues through life, and the last enemy to be overcome is death. In all the conflicts between men on earth, the issue may be speedily expected, and the reward immediately bestowed; but in religion, it is only he who shall endure to the end that shall be saved. This adds greatly to the difficulty, and seems to shew, not only the excellence and beauty, but the real dignity and magnanimity of the Christian character.

5. In the last place, true piety endures suffering with patience and fortitude. If we reflect upon the number of suffering martyrs, whose testimonies are upon record, we shall see with what calmness and composure, with what undaunted firmness, and sometimes with what exultation and triumph, they have gone to a scaffold, or been tied to a stake. Can any person, think you, who hath gone to the field of battle in quest of glory, or who hath braved the danger of the seas in quest of wealth or power, be

once compared with those who have cheerfully given up the precious life, or submitted their bodies to the torture, to keep their consciences undefiled? But, my brethren, Christian patience is much more frequently tried in another manner. The believer has made an unreserved surrender of himself and his all to the disposal of Providence. His faithfulness to this promise is brought almost every day to the trial. For the Christian, then, to suffer reproach, without rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; to be submissive under the loss of substance, and to say with Job, Job i. 21. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;"—to yield up relations, and to say with David, 2 Sam. xii. 23. "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me;"—to look forward to approaching death, and say with the apostle Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 6. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand:"—this is magnanimity indeed; this is the most solid glory to which any child of Adam can possibly attain.

I proceed, in the last place, to make some practical improvement of what hath been said.

1. You may learn, from what hath been said, that whenever honour differs from conscience, it is a treacherous guide; wherever spirit and dignity of mind, as a worldly virtue, differs from true religion, and even from the simplicity of the gospel, it is false and spurious. The gospel, it is true, will not suffer

men to seek revenge, or to delight in it. It will humble them in the sight of God, and make them self-denied in the presence of men, yet it will constrain them not to refuse any duty to the one, or any useful service to the other. It will not suffer them to be ambitious of higher places of honour and trust, but it will make them active and zealous in the duties of that place in which they already are. It will not suffer them to resent injuries and gratify revenge, but it will make them withstand a king upon his throne, if he presume to interfere in the matters of their God. What is there here that is not noble?

After all, the testimony in favour of true piety is universal, if carefully attended to. Every one must acknowledge that ostentation, and love of praise, and whatever is contrary to the self-denial of the gospel, tarnishes the beauty of the greatest actions. Courage and modesty, merit and humility, majesty and condescension, appear with ten-fold glory when they are united; it is impossible to separate them; to divide is to destroy them. They are like light and shade in a picture, which are necessary to each other, and which by their union constitute the beauty, and augment the lustre of the piece. So true is this, that the highest polish that any person can receive in commerce with the world, is to have an apparent disposition to prefer the interest of others to his own, to guard against every degree of offence, and to be always ready to oblige. I have often been pleased with that observation of

a foreigner of high rank *, that worldly politeness is only an imperfect imitation of Christian charity ; it is nothing else but a studied appearance of that deference to the judgment, and attention to the interest of others, which a true Christian hath as the rule of his duty, and the disposition of his heart.

2. Suffer me to observe, that as Christian magnanimity is more excellent than that of the world, it is also more practicable, and, in fact, more universal. Worldly magnanimity is what always requires such talents as do not fall to the lot of many, and such opportunities for its exercise as seldom occur. The road to heroism is not open to every man. But that magnanimity which is the fruit of true religion being indeed the product of divine grace, is a virtue of the heart, and may be attained by persons of mean talents and narrow possessions, and in the very lowest stations of human life. In fact there have been, and are daily examples of it in every rank. We see the heroic fortitude of the martyrs, as manifest in those of early years, and the weaker sex, as in any other ; and whoever will visit the solitary walks of life, may find, in the lowest stations, humility, thankfulness, patience under affliction, and submission to Providence, such as would do honour to the most approved virtue, and the most enlightened mind. To despise riches, and restrain the motions of envy and impatience, in a needy state, is perhaps as truly noble as to improve them wisely in a higher.

Thus the honour which is chiefly desirable, is

* The Prince of Conti.

equally open to the rich and to the poor, to the learned and to the unlearned, to the wise and to the unwise, as it cometh from God, who is no respecter of persons. One of the best and happiest effects of serious reflection is to bring us, in a great measure, all upon a level; as, indeed, in one most important respect, the magistrate with his robes, the scholar with his learning, and the day-labourer that stands unnoticed, are all upon the same footing—for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

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