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S E R M O N S

ON THE

Most USEFUL and IMPORTANT

S U B J E C T S,

ADAPTED TO THE

FAMILY and CLOSET.

By the Rev. SAMUEL DAVIES, *A.M.*
Late President of the College at *Princeton* in *New-Jersey*.

In THREE VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

To which are prefixed,

A SERMON on the Death of Mr DAVIES,
By SAMUEL FINLEY, *D.D.*

A N D

Another DISCOURSE on the same Occasion,
together with an ELEGIAC POEM
to the Memory of Mr DAVIES,
By THOMAS GIBBONS, *D.D.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for the Benefit of the AUTHOR's Widow, and sold by
J. BUCKLAND, and J. PAYNE, in *Pater-noster-row*, and E. and
C. DILLY in the *Poultry*, near the Mansion-house.


M.DCC.LXVI.





P R E F A C E

By the EDITOR.

 AN epistolary correspondence commenced between the Rev. Mr *Samuel Davies* and myself in the year 1752, and was continued till the time of his decease.

When I began the intercourse with him I could not entertain any very probable hopes that we should ever have an interview in our world, but Mr *Davies's* visit to *Great Britain* in the Year 1753, with that venerable man the Rev. Mr *Gilbert Tennent* of *Philadelphia*, to solicit benefactions for the college of *New-Jersey*, gave me a pleasure beyond all reasonable expectation; and the friendship which was kindled at the distance

of several thousand miles from each other was increased by free and frequent converses during the time, almost a year, of Mr *Davies's* residence on this side the *Atlantic*.

After his departure from our country to *America* I received several letters from Mr *Davies*, and had the honour of being numbered among his particular friends to whom he communicated the very secrets of his bosom.

In a letter dated *September 12, 1757*, Mr *Davies* (at that juncture scarce recovered from a violent and dangerous fever) thus writes to me. “ I want to live
 “ after I am dead, not in name, but in
 “ public usefulness: I was therefore
 “ about to order in my will that all
 “ my notes, which are tolerably full,
 “ might be sent to you to correct and
 “ publish such of them as you might
 “ judge conducive to the public good.
 “ Pray, what do you think of the pro-
 “ ject,

“ject, if the like occasion should return while you are among mortals?”

What answer I gave to my friend's proposal I cannot exactly recollect, but I am persuaded that my affection to him would not permit me to put a negative upon his request.

On the 4th of *February*, 1761, this excellent man was by a violent fever removed from our world: and, though he died universally lamented, yet as he had an uncommon interest in my affection while living, so his decease opened the springs of the most afflicting sorrow in my breast, and perhaps I may truly apply with a little variation the words of the poet,

*Multis ille flebilis occidit,
Nulli flebilior quàm mihi.—*

HORAT. Od. Lib. I. Od, 24.

But, though the prophet is ascended, his mantle is left behind. A very considerable number of his SERMONS has been transmitted to me, and thence

I have selected what were sufficient to compose the ensuing volumes.

As the Sermons which I now lay before the public were Mr *Davies's* usual popular discourses, it may naturally be supposed that they required patient and accurate revival in order to their publication; and that the *Editor*, if he would discharge his duty as he ought, must find himself under the necessity of making some occasional alterations and amendments as to the language, and especially of adjusting the pointing. These liberties I have taken, and have endeavoured to execute my trust in the same manner which I have reason to think Mr *Davies*, if he had been living, would have approved and commended; and in which I should wish my own Sermons, should I leave any behind me worthy of the public view, might be corrected and sent into the world.

They who knew and heard Mr *Davies* will need no further proof than the perusal

rufal of the difcourfes themfelves that they are the real productions of the author to whom they are afcribed. The fun fhews himfelf to be the fun by the very beams with which he irradiates and enlivens mankind, and is eafily diftinguifhed from other luminaries by his furpaffing luftre.

The *Sermons* I have chofen for publication ftrictly answer the *Advertisement* in the PROPOSALS for printing them; namely, *Sermons on the moft USEFUL and IMPORTANT Subjects, adapted to the FAMILY and CLOSET.* The reader will meet with no difcourfes in thefe volumes but what are calculated for general ufe, or fuch as relate to the common conditions, duties, and interefts of mankind in one form or another; and in how many of them has both the Saint and the Sinner a *portion of meat* provided for him? may it prove a portion in due feafon! and may both the one and the other rife

from the sacred feast divinely strengthened and blessed!

Amidst an attention to the very numerous and important duties of my several departments in life, the additional weight of a due preparation of Three Volumes of posthumous discourses for the eye of the public, and of the careful reviews of the proof-sheets as they came from the press, has taken up no small portion of my time, and been no inconsiderable accession to my constant labours; but I have most cheerfully devoted both my hours and my toils to the very valuable purposes---of fulfilling the desires of my dear friend Mr *Davies*, which I own have a kind of irresistible power over me;---of contributing, as I would hope, to the spiritual benefit of my fellow-heirs of immortality, by putting into their hands a collection of very pious and useful Sermons;—and of assisting and comforting the mournful widow and orphans

phans of a friend who was as dear to me as a brother.

I take the liberty of returning Thanks in the name of *Mrs Davies* (for to her *only* the profits of the publication shall be applied) to the numerous SUBSCRIBERS to the work ; and I hope they will find themselves amply recompenced for their benevolence to the widow and fatherless, by the sacred advantage and pleasure they and their families will receive in the perusal of these discourses ; in which piety and genius seem to have vied with each other which should excel, and triumph in the superior glory.

Notwithstanding all the time and pains the present work has cost me, and the strong sense I have that a like proportion of both would be required in the execution of a like undertaking, yet I beg leave to assure the public, that, as I have a large number of *Mr Davies's* manuscript Sermons still in my hands,

* P R E F A C E.

hands, I shall be ready (health being continued to me) to revise and publish the Author's remaining discourses, whenever there shall be an encouraging prospect of benefit to Mrs *Davies* or her orphans by a fresh publication. *As to visit, or relieve, the fatherless and the widow in their affliction* * is an essential branch of christian duty, so it is a duty I trust will never be wanting, whenever an opportunity offers for exemplifying it, from my first regards and practice.

Mr *Davies* annexed to some of his Sermons HYMNS of his own composition. Had this been uniformly the case they might have accompanied his Discourses to the press, but as it is not, I have omitted them; but, if death or incapacity prevent not my design, I intend hereafter to collect what HYMNS of his have fallen into my hands, and publish them
to-

* James i. 27.

together with some of my own on the like occasions.

I have prefixed to these Volumes a SERMON upon the death of our Author by that excellent man the Reverend Dr *Samuel Finley*, Mr *Davies's* successor to the presidency of *New-Jersey* College: I have also republished the Discourse I preached to my people the next LORD'S day after I received the distressing news of Mr *Davies's* decease; and have ventured to add an Elegiac Poem to the memory of my dear friend; in which if the reader finds not a vein of poetry worthy of the subject, yet he will not, I presume, be displeas'd at the efforts, however languid and inadequate, of bereaved mourning friendship to do honour to the character of a person so amiable and deserving.

The idea I have given of our Author in my Sermon, and particularly in my Poem, and above all, the just and lively, the strong and elegant picture which

which Dr *Finley* has exhibited of him in his discourse upon his death, render it unnecessary to enlarge this Preface with an account of Mr *Davies's* merit and accomplishments; I shall therefore only add, that I most sincerely wish that young ministers more especially would peruse these Volumes with the deepest attention and seriousness, and endeavour, in conjunction with earnest prayer for divine illumination and assistance, to form their discourses according to the model of our Author; in which, if I mistake not, a critical Scrutiny into the sacred Texts which he chooses for his subjects, a natural Education and clear Representation of their genuine meaning, an elaborate and satisfactory Proof of the various heads of doctrine, a steady Prosecution of his point, together with an easy and plain, but yet strong and pertinent Enlargement, and a free, animated, and powerful Application and Improvement, wonderfully adapted to
awaken

awaken the consciences, and strike the hearts of both faints and finners, mingle the various excellencies of learning, judgment, eloquence, piety, and seraphic zeal, in one uncommon glory; not unlike the beams of the sun collected by a burning-glass, that at once shine with a most dazzling brightness, and set fire, wherever the blaze is directed, to objects susceptible of their celestial influence, and a transformation into their own nature.

Hoxton-square,
Nov. 14, 1765.

Thomas Gibbons.



The disinterested and devoted CHRISTIAN :

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT

Nassau-Hall, Princeton,

MAY 28, 1761.

Occasioned by the DEATH of the

Rev. SAMUEL DAVIES, *A. M.*

Late President of the College of *New-Jersey.*

By SAMUEL FINLEY, *D. D.*

President of the said College.

To which are added,

Some MEMOIRS of Mr DAVIES,

By another Hand.

Qui considerat qualis erit in Morte, semperque pavidus erit in operatione, atque inde in Oculis sui Conditoris vivet, nil quod transeat, appetit: cunctis vitæ presentis desiderii contradicit, et penè mortuum se considerat, quia moriturum se minime ignorat. GREGOR. L. 12. Moral.

T O

Mrs. MARTHA DAVIES the Mother,

A N D

Mrs JEAN DAVIES the Widow

Of the late

Rev. PRESIDENT DAVIES, deceased,

The following SERMON,

Preached on Occasion of his lamented Death,

I S,

With the tenderest Respect,

PRESENTED BY

Their sincere and affectionate Friend,

and humble Servant,


SAMUEL FINLEY.

VOL. I.

a

ROMANS XIV. 7,8.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the LORD; or whether we die, we die unto the LORD: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the LORD's.

 S the very dear and reverend man, whose premature and unexpected death, we, amongst thousands, this day lament, expressed his desire, that, upon this mournful event, a Sermon should be preached from these words, he plainly intimated his expectation, that the audience should be entertained, not with an ornamented funeral Oration, but with such an instructive discourse as the text itself naturally suggests. The subject being his own choice, I cannot doubt but this friendly audience will the more closely and seriously attend, as conceiving him, *though dead, yet speaking* to them the solemn truths it contains. For having been admitted into the full knowledge of his religious principles, I may presume on speaking many of the sentiments he intended from this text, though not in his more sublime and oratorical manner.

When I reflect on the truly christian, generous, yet *strict Catholicism* that distinguishes this whole chapter, and how deeply it was imprinted on Mr *Davies's* own spirit; and influenced the course of his life, I am ready to conclude, that perhaps no text could be more aptly chosen on the occasion. It expresses the very temper that should be predominant in all, and which actually is so in every pious breast.

That we may apprehend the scope and genuine sense of the words, it is necessary to observe, that warm debates at that time arose between the *Jewish* and *Gentile* converts, about the difference of *meats* and *days* established by the *Mosaic* law; and, so sharp was the contention, that they were mutually disposed to exclude each other from christian communion. The *Gentile*, being under no bias from the powerful prejudices of education and custom, was sooner and easier convinced of his freedom from that *yoke of bondage*, and despised the *Jew* as weak to admiration, and scrupulous to a fault. The *Jew*, on the other hand, persuaded that these ancient divine institutions were still obligatory, censured and condemned the *Gentile* as inconscientious, and profanely regardless of God's awful authority.

The Apostle, in order to quell the growing strife, maturely determines that though the *Gentile* held the right side of the question, yet both parties were wrong as to their temper of mind, and the manner in which they managed the

the controversy; and that they laid an undue stress on the matters of difference, and carried their censures higher than the merits of the cause would at all justify. He therefore recommends moderation to both, and sets before them sufficient reasons why they should judge of each other more charitably, since they agreed in all those principal points that would justly denominate them "the servants of the LORD." For if they would reckon it a bold intrusion to call before their tribunal, condemn, and punish *another man's servant*, over whom they had no legal authority; how much more arrogant and presumptuous must it be so to treat *a servant of the LORD*? *ver. 4.*

Again, let them be so candid as to persuade themselves, that, unless the contrary be evident, they who differ from them, mistaken or not, are influenced by a conscientious regard to the divine glory, *ver. 6.* This admitted, their personal censures will necessarily be milder, even though their judgment of the points in debate continue unaltered; and *this* must be admitted, if they can charitably judge, that their respective opponents are real christians: for in *all such* the governing principle is, "not to live to themselves, but to the LORD. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the LORD; or whether we die, we die unto the LORD: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the LORD'S." Now if no pious person

lives merely to please himself, we ought not to judge that his aversion from, or attachment to certain meats and days, arises *only* from a selfish humour : but, on the contrary, since his whole life is governed by an honest regard to the will of God, it is altogether credible that, in his different conduct respecting meats and days, he acts from the same principle ; for whatever is true of the general, is also true of all the particulars contained under it. Suppose a man to be a real Christian, you then suppose him to be of an upright heart, of a tender conscience, and one who dares not to neglect, nor live in contradiction to known duty. He makes it his main business to please God, and shall we be implacably disgusted because he does not rather endeavour to please us? God forbid.

Thus, while our text affords a convincing argument for moderation in judging of other Christians, who differ from us in circumstances, it teaches us what should be the *principle* and *end* of our life, and that both *negatively* and *positively*. We may not live nor die to ourselves, but to the LORD.

I. " We may not live to ourselves."

This proposition supposes, what is a demonstrable truth, that we are not the absolute proprietors, and therefore have not the rightful disposal of our lives. For since we could exert no kind of efficiency in bringing ourselves from

from nothing into existence, we could not possibly design ourselves for any end or purpose of our own. Hence it is evident, that, whose property soever we are, we belong not to ourselves; consequently, it is the highest indecency to behave as though we were accountable to none other. As rationally may we claim self-existence and independence. It will, therefore be an eternal solecism in action to aim chiefly at our own glory, seek only our *own things*, or pursue most eagerly our own pleasures. Right reason itself peremptorily denies that the dictates of our own minds are our supreme rule of conduct, or that our own will is our law; much less may we subject ourselves to the government of blind passions, or indulge to irregular appetites.

We are not at liberty, nor have we any authority to employ either the members of our bodies, or powers of our souls at pleasure, as if we had originally designed their use. Hence it will appear criminal, on the one hand, to waste our time, or expend our strength in useless exercises; and on the other, to allow an idle negligence of necessary business. Our *tongues* themselves, those *unruly members*, must be patient of restraint; for it is the language only of haughty rebels to say, "Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us (a)?" Our very thoughts are to be confined within prescribed limits, and all our rational powers *statedly* exercised, not in

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merely

(a) Psalm xii. 4.

merely curious and amusing researches; but in matters the most useful and important.

It also follows, that the product of our activity, whatever is acquired by the exertion of these powers, ought not to terminate in ourselves. Are we in pursuit of learning, that ornament of human minds, it should not be with a view only to shine more conspicuous, but that we may serve our generation to better advantage. Has GOD blessed "the hand of the diligent" with abundant riches? We are not to consider them as the means of gratifying vanity, or "fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind;" for we must "honour the LORD with our substance (b)." Has GOD clothed any of us with power? This is not a discharge from his service, nor a freedom from subjection to his laws, but a stronger obligation to duty, as it gives us an opportunity of more extensive usefulness.

Finally, since we were not the authors of our lives, we can have no right to take them away. We have no power to determine, either the time or kind of death, any more than we can ward off, or suspend its blow when commissioned to destroy. Therefore, amidst all the miseries that can make life itself an insupportable burden, and all the glorious prospects that can make us impatiently pant for dissolution, it must be our determinate purpose, that "all the days of our appointed time, we will wait till our change come (c)."

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(b) Prov. iii. 9.

(c) Job xiv. 14.

As these particulars, examined by the strictest reason, will all appear to be immediate consequences from self-evident principles, and must all be confessed by him, who acknowledges that "he is not his own lord and master;" it will follow, as an evident truth, that "the evangelical duty of self-denial is founded on the everlasting reason of things."

Reflecting farther on the preceding observations, they force upon us the disagreeable conviction, that our whole race has revolted from GOD, and risen up in rebellion against him. "The world evidently lies in wickedness," for the allowed practice of men supposes principles, which, they themselves being judges, must confess to be palpably false and absurd. They act as if they believed they were made for themselves, and had no other business in life but the gratification of their respective humours. One exerts all his powers, and spends all his time in nothing else but endeavouring to amass heaps of worldly treasure: another, by riotous living, disperses what had been collected with anxious care and assiduous labour. Some live in malice and envy, whose favourite employ is calumny and wrathful contentions, as if they had been created for no other end but to be the pests of society: others blaspheme the name of GOD, despise his authority, mock at religion, and ridicule serious persons and things. One has no other purpose in life but sport and merriment: another eats to gluttony, and drinks

to

to befottedness. Yet all these, and nameless ranks of other daring offenders, would be ashamed in a christian country to profess it as their serious belief, that they were made by a most wise, holy, and righteous God, preserved, blessed, and loaded with benefits every day, on purpose that they "might work all these abominations," or, in order to live just as they do.

If, then, it is confessedly impious and unreasonable to live to *ourselves*, it necessarily follows that we are the property of another, for it will ever be "lawful for one to do what he will with his own." And whose can we be but *his* who gave us existence? Or, if ties of gratitude can more powerfully influence ingenuous minds than even those of nature, who can so justly claim us as He "who, as we hope, loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood (d)?" This leads me to observe,

II. That we should "live and die to the LORD." This can admit of no debate; for if our Maker and Redeemer be our rightful owner, then whatever we are, or have, or can do, must be for him. Being his servants, we must "shew all good fidelity" in his business. The talents with which he has entrusted us, more or fewer, or of whatever kind, may not be returned without improvement; for, as is fit and proper, he "requires his own with usury (e)." He is our King, whose prerogative

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(d) Rev. i. 6.

(e) Matt. xxv. 27.

it is to direct our course of action, and propose the end at which we are to aim; to "mete out" the bounds of our habitation," and carve our portion; and it becomes us to give the most ready and chearful obedience to his commands, and submit to all his disposals.

Our living thus to the LORD plainly supposes our being sensible of our entire dependance on him, and that we devote ourselves to his service. We must "present our bodies a living sacrifice (*f*)," without reserve or hesitation; and "avouch the LORD to be our GOD, to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and judgments, and commandments, and to hearken to his voice (*g*)." We bind ourselves to him in a firm covenant, not for a limited term of months and years, but forever and ever, and acquiesce in *Him* as our chief good.

The solemnity of such an infinitely important transaction between the glorious majesty of heaven, and such mean creatures as we, who are "but dust and ashes," cannot but strike us with reverential awe. And what will make it yet more humbling is the consideration of our guilt. We not only *as Creatures* take upon us to speak unto the LORD our Maker, but *as Criminals* approach to the seat of our offended and most righteous Judge. Dare we then trifle, and not rather be most serious and deliberate? Reflecting that we are in the presence of the heart-

(*f*) Rom. xii. 1.

(*g*) Deut. xxvi. 17.

heart-searching GOD will naturally make us watchful over every thought and motion of our spirits, and engage us to the greatest sincerity in surrendering to him our all. We will give him our hearts themselves; keep nothing back; nor except against any terms he shall please to propose, but yield at discretion.

On this occasion a consciousness of our having revolted from him, neglected his service, purloined his goods, and, in every respect, behaved most ungratefully and undutifully, will affect us with the most genuine sorrow. Therefore, when repentant we return to him, we shall, covered with shame, approach with the *Prodigal's* self-abasing confession, "Father! I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son (b)." He will "surely hear us bemoaning ourselves, like *Ephraim*," that we have too long wrought the will of the flesh, and suffered other usurping lords to have dominion over us; but now we humbly beg forgiveness, his gracious acceptance of our persons, and admission into his family, should it be only on trial, "as hired servants."

But though our sins have made us vile, and the view of their odious nature makes us "loath ourselves in our own sight," yet a conviction of the free grace and mercy of GOD in CHRIST will comfort and encourage our dejected and diffident hearts. The cords of love will draw

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(b) Luke xv. 18.

us nearer and nearer, until we shall assume an humble "boldness, to enter into the holiest of "all by the blood of JESUS (i)." Sacred love, and a grateful sense of the unmerited favours of our GOD will now dispose us to, and animate us in the performance of every duty. Religion will be our chosen course, and the commandments of GOD will be so far from being burdensome to us, that we shall rejoice in them, and delight in "doing the things that please "him." Our whole time will be consecrated to his service: no part of it can be spared for fleshly indulgencies, or sinful pleasures, but will be employed either in some positive duty, or in preparation for it in the proper season.

This religious bent of mind will manifest itself in all our conduct, and give even common actions a different direction. If we attend our ordinary callings, we shall be active and diligent, not in order to gratify an earthly temper, but from an obediential regard to supreme authority. When our spirits flag through intense application to business, and recreation becomes necessary, our very diversions will be considered as our duty, and so as a branch of our religion: and as they will always be innocent in their nature, so they will be no otherwise regarded than as means to fit us for the repetition of our work. If our friends or country demand our service, we shall not give place to selfishness and indolence, but, as lovers of GOD and men, generously

(i) Heb. x. 19.

generously exert ourselves for the common good. Thus will our whole life be religion, upon such a sincere, entire, and affectionate dedication of ourselves to the LORD. And such as is our course so will be its end. When the date of time is concluded we shall also "die to the LORD." This in general imports, our living under the rational, affecting impression of our dissolution, and appearing before God, and our constant endeavours after actual preparation to enjoy him forever. Then, upon the approach of death, we shall confidently "commit our spirits into his hands," recommend his ways to survivors, and glorify him with our dying breath.

But, on the other hand, if our lives are not thus consecrated to our God, we cannot be supposed to perform any duty in an acceptable manner, as the requisite principle and end are wanting. He to whom the secret springs of action are all obvious, will not, cannot accept pretended services; nor be pleased with "the blind and the lame for sacrifice," when the best are esteemed too good for him. To compliment him with our lips, when we refuse to give him our hearts, will be judged similar to the conduct of those, who "bowed the knee in derision," and in derision said, "Hail! King of the Jews!" He "with whom we have to do," cannot be deceived, nor will be mocked. He requires "Truth in the inward parts," which cannot subsist without an honest

nest and upright *design* to serve him all the days of our lives.

Now to live wholly to the LORD, will appear to be our *reasonable service*, if we consider, 1. That "such a life is most worthy of rational and immortal creatures." From the powers and faculties given us it may naturally be concluded that we are created for some very important purpose; but what can be so important, or bear so just a correspondence to our capacities, as to live to the glory of our great Creator? This being our ultimate end, to which we refer all our actions, and perform each of them in such a manner as may best answer it, will influence our hearts, and frame our whole conversation agreeable to the divine approving will. And what can so ennoble the soul as conformity to the pattern of perfection? But to neglect this, and chiefly regard our temporal affairs, would be infinitely unworthy of beings capable of the highest pursuits, and formed for immortality. Why should we have been "wiser than the beasts of the field, or the fowls of heaven," if we are to have no sublimer aims than they? In a word, we could never vindicate the wisdom of God in our formation, if he intended us for meaner things than those for which we are qualified. Therefore,

2. "Such a life is most worthy of God our "Maker." Nothing can appear more decent and proper, than that he who is *the beginning*, should also be the *end*; that as all are of *him*,

him, all should be *to him*. And if his glory be the most excellent thing, and He the most perfect Being; it will necessarily follow, that he *cannot* ultimately design what is less excellent. Therefore the scripture speaks agreeable to everlasting truth, when it asserts, that " he made all things for himself ;" and, that " for his pleasure they are, and were created (*k*). " And can it be rationally supposed, that he allows us, whom he made for his own glory, to act for a different, or opposite end ? It cannot. We must therefore peremptorily affirm that he cannot, in consistency with his perfections, require less, than that " whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to his glory (*l*). " And this he does require, not because he needs our service, or can be happier, or more glorious in himself by our praises, but because it is fit and right, and results as our duty from the eternal reason of things.

3. " Such a life is our own happiness : " for, acting as prescribed, we move in our proper sphere, and tend to our native centre. We live as near the fountain of blessedness as our present state can admit, and nothing can be so animating as the glorious and blissful prospects our course affords. Our hearts being fixed on *the chief good* are at rest, and no more tortured with anxious hesitation, and uneasy suspense, as to what we shall choose for our portion, nor do our desires wander in quest of a more suitable

(k) Rev. iv. 11.

(l) 1 Cor. x. 31.

able object. We can wish for no more but the full enjoyment of GOD, whom we "serve with our spirits;" whose "peace, that passeth all "understanding, rules in our hearts;" and for whose glory we hope, secure from confounding disappointment in the day of the LORD.

Now methinks every attentive hearer prevents my improvement of the subject, being ready, of his own accord to make such reflections as these.—How serene and placid is the life and how triumphant must be the death of a true Christian!—How reasonable a service do we perform, when we consecrate ourselves to the LORD, and receive him, freely offering himself to be our portion, our father, and our friend! None can plausibly urge, that some things unfit, or detrimental are required. None can pretend a conscientious scruple about complying with the proposal, nor dare any, however secretly reluctant, openly avow their dissent. Every mouth is stopped, and all acknowledge their obligation to this plain duty. What then should hinder the unanimous agreement of this whole assembly to so advantageous an overture? Why may we not join ourselves, this day, to the LORD in an everlasting covenant? Would it not seem uncharitable to suppose, that any one in this christian audience rejects a proposal so infinitely just and kind? How pleasing is the very imagination of an universal concurrence! Not only would each of our hearts who are

here present exult, but unnumbered hosts of angels, and all "the spirits of just men made perfect" would rejoice.

Since therefore all things that pertain to our present, or future happiness, conspire to urge this point, let us with one accord, in the most affectionate and reverent manner, approach the throne of our august Sovereign, and cheerfully resign ourselves to him for ever; spend our lives in his service, and expect his compensating approbation at our end.

In some such strain, but more diffusive and sublime, would our reverend and dear deceased Friend have addressed us on such a subject. We may imagine how fervent his desire was of "living to the LORD" himself, and persuading others to the same course, when he fixed on this for the subject of his Funeral Sermon. Now, as it is generally agreed that example has the most powerful influence, perhaps a few sketches of his own Life and Character may best recommend the preceding discourse, as they will prove the life described to be practicable. And though he on whom this task is devolved owns himself inferior to it, yet he is encouraged to undertake it from a persuasion, that a simple and unornamented narrative of what he knows, either personally or by certain information, concerning President *Davies*, will set him in a very agreeable point of light. He is now disinterested in all the praises and censures of mortals, and can neither receive benefit, or suffer
detriment

detriment by them, but his example may profit the living, as it tends to excite a laudable emulation; and some brief hints of the dispensations of divine providence towards him may not be without very useful instruction.

He was an only son, and, which is more, was a son of prayers and vows; was given in answer to fervent supplications, and, in gratitude, wholly devoted to GOD from the womb by his eminently pious mother, and named *Samuel*, on the like occasion as the ancient Prophet. The event proved, that GOD accepted the consecrated Boy, took him under his special care, furnished him for, and employed him in the service of his church, prospered his labours with remarkable success, and not only blessed him, but made himself a blessing.

The first twelve years of his life were wasted in the most entire negligence of GOD and Religion, which he often afterwards bitterly lamented, as having too "long wrought the will of "the flesh." But about that time, the GOD to whom he was dedicated by his Word and Spirit awakened him to solemn thoughtfulness, and anxious concern about his eternal state. He then saw sufficient reason to dread all the direful effects of divine displeasure against sin. And so deeply imprinted was the rational sense of his danger, as to make him habitually uneasy and restless, until he might obtain satisfying

ing scriptural evidence of his interest in the forgiving love of God.

While thus exercised he clearly saw the absolute necessity, and certain reality of the gospel-plan of salvation, and what abundant and suitable provision it makes for all the wants of a sinner. No other solid ground of hope, or unfailing source of comfort could he find, besides the merits and righteousness of him, "whom God set forth to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood (*m*)."¹ On this righteousness he was enabled confidently to depend; by this blood his conscience was purged from guilt; and "believing, he rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory (*n*)."² Yet he was afterwards exercised with many perplexing doubts for a long season, but at length, after years of impartial repeated self-examination, he attained to a settled confidence of his interest in redeeming Grace, which he retained to the end.

A diary, which he kept in the first years of his religious life, and continued to keep as long as his leisure would permit, clearly shews how intensely his mind was set on heavenly things; how observant he was of the temper of his heart; and how watchful over all his thoughts, words, and actions. Did any censure his foibles, or juvenile indiscretions? They would have done it compassionately, had they known how severely he censured them himself. The

tribunal

(*m*) Rom. iii. 25.

(*n*) 1 Peter i. 8.

tribunal daily erected in his own bosom was more critical in scrutinizing, and more impartial and severe in passing sentence, than either his friends or enemies could be.

His love to God, and tender concern for perishing sinners, excited his eager desire of being in a situation to serve mankind to the best advantage. With this view he engaged in the pursuit of learning, in which, amidst many obvious inconveniences, he made surprising progress, and, sooner than could have been expected, was found competently qualified for the ministerial office. He passed the usual previous trials with uncommon approbation; having exceeded the raised expectations of his most intimate friends and admirers.

When he was licensed to preach the gospel, he zealously declared the counsel of God, the truth and importance of which he knew by happy experience; and did it in such a manner as excited the earnest desires of every vacant congregation, where he was known, to obtain the happiness of his stated ministrations. But far from gratifying his natural inclination to the society of his friends, or consulting his ease, moved by conscience of duty, he undertook the self-denying charge of a dissenting congregation in *Virginia*, separated from all his Brethren, and exposed to the censure and resentment of many. But the more he was known in those parts, the more were prejudices removed; contempt was gradually turned into reverence;

the number of his enemies daily diminished, and his friends increased.

Nor did he there labour in vain, or " spend his strength for nought. The " LORD, who " counted him faithful, putting him into the " ministry," succeeded his faithful endeavours, so that a great number, both of *whites* and *blacks*, were hopefully converted to the living God; for the proof of this, I must refer you to his own narrative sent to the reverend Mr *Bellamy*, and by him published, and to his letters to some Gentlemen of *the Society in London for propagating Religion among the Poor*.

As to his natural genius, it was strong and masculine. His understanding was clear; his memory retentive; his invention quick; his imagination lively and florid; his thoughts sublime; and his language elegant, strong, and expressive. And I cannot but presume that true and candid critics will readily discern a great degree of true poetic fire, stile, and imagery in his poetical compositions; and will grant that he was capable to have shone in that way, had his leisure permitted the due cultivation of his natural talent.

His appearance in company was manly and graceful; his behaviour genteel, not ceremonious; grave, yet pleasant; and solid, but sprightly too. In a word, he was an open, conversable, and entertaining Companion, a polite Gentleman, and devout Christian at once.

In

In the sacred Desk, zeal for God, and love to men animated his addresses, and made them tender, solemn, pungent, and persuasive; while at the same time they were ingenious, accurate, and oratorical. A certain dignity of sentiment and style, a venerable presence, a commanding voice, and emphatical delivery concurred both to charm his audience and overawe them into silence and attention.

Nor was his usefulness confined to the Pulpit. His comprehensive mind could take under view the grand interests of his Country and of Religion at once; and these interests, as well as those of his Friends, he was ever ready zealously to serve. It is known what an active instrument he was in stirring up a patriot spirit, a spirit of courage and resolution in *Virginia*, where he resided during the late barbarous *French and Indian* ravages.

His natural temper was remarkably sweet and dispassionate; * and his heart was one of the tenderest towards the distressed. His sympathetic soul could say, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" Accordingly his charitable disposition made him liberal to the poor, and that often beyond his ability. He was eminently obliging to all, and very sensible of favours conferred; which he could receive without fer-

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tility,

* The Rev. Mr *John Rodgers*, one of his most intimate friends, in a letter to me since his death, says, "I never saw him angry during several years of unbounded intimacy, though I have repeatedly known him to have been ungenerously treated."

vility, and manifest his grateful sense of them with proper dignity.

To his friend he was voluntarily transparent, and fully acted up to the *Poet's* advice :

Thy friend put in thy bosom : wear his eyes
Still in thy heart, that he may see what's there.

And perhaps none better understood the ingenuities and delicacies of friendship, or had an higher relish for it, or was truer and more constant in it than he. He was not easily disgusted : his knowledge of human nature in its present state, his candid heart, and enlarged soul both disposing and enabling him to make allowances for indiscretions, which narrower and more selfish minds could not make. He readily and easily forgave offences against himself, whilst none could be more careful to avoid offending others ; which, if he at any time inadvertently did, he was forward and desirous to make the most ample satisfaction.

He was amongst the first and brightest examples of filial piety ; a very indulgent parent, and humane master. As an husband he was kind, tender, cordial, and respectful, with a fondness that was manly and genuine. In a word, think what might rationally be expected, in the present imperfect state, in a mature Man, a Christian in minority, a Minister of *JESUS* of like passions with others, in a Gentleman, Companion, and cordial Friend, and you conceive of President *Davies*.

It

It would hardly be expected, that one so rigid with respect to his own faith and practice, could be so generous and catholic in his sentiments of those who differed from him in both, as he was. He was strict, not bigoted; conscientious, not squeamishly scrupulous. His clear and extensive knowledge of religion enabled him to discern where the main stress should be laid, and to proportion his zeal to the importance of things, too generous to be confined to the interests of a party as such. He considered the visible kingdom of CHRIST as extended beyond the boundaries of *this* or *that* particular denomination, and never supposed that his declarative glory was wholly dependant on the religious community which he most approved. Hence he gloried more in being a Christian, than in being a *Presbyterian*, though he was the latter from principle. His truly catholic address to the established Clergy of *Virginia* is a demonstration of the sincere pleasure it would have given him, to have heard that "CHRIST was preached," and substantial religion, common christianity, promoted by those who "walked not with him," and whom he judged in other points to be mistaken. His benevolent heart could not be so soured, nor his enlarged soul so contracted, as to value men from circumstantial distinctions, but according to their personal worth.

He sought truth for its own sake, and would profess his sentiments with the undisguised openness

openness of an honest Christian, and the inoffensive boldness of a manly spirit : yet, without the least apparent difficulty, or hesitation, he would retract an opinion, on full conviction of its being a mistake. I have never known one, who appeared to lay himself more fully open to the reception of truth, from whatever quarter it came, than he; for he judged the knowledge of truth only to be real learning, and that endeavouring to defend an error was but labouring to be more ignorant. But, until fully convinced, he was becomingly tenacious of his opinion.

The unavoidable consciousness of native power made him bold and enterprising. Yet the event proved that his boldness arose not from a partial, groundless self-conceit, but from true self-knowledge. Upon fair and candid trial, faithful and just to himself, he judged what he could do; and what he could, when called to it, he attempted; and what he attempted he accomplished.

It may here be properly observed, that he was chosen by the Synod of *New-York*, at the instance of the Trustees of *New-Jersey College*, as a fit person to accompany the reverend Mr *Gilbert Tennent* to *Great-Britain and Ireland*, in order to solicit benefactions for the said college. As this manifested the high opinion which both the Synod and Corporation entertained of his popular talents and superior abilities, so his ready compliance to undertake that service, hazardous

zardous and difficult in itself, and precarious in its consequences, which required him to overlook his domestic connexions, however tender and endearing, manifested his resolution and self-denial. How well he was qualified as a solicitor is witnessed by the numerous and large benefactions he received. His services, as was meet, were gratefully accepted by his constituents, and to the pious, generous, and public-spirited charity of the friends of Religion and Learning in *Great-Britain*, received on that occasion, does the college of *New-Jersey*, in a great degree, owe its present flourishing condition.

As his light shone, his abilities to fill the President's chair in this College, then vacant, was not doubted by the honourable board of Trustees. He was accordingly chosen, and earnestly invited to accept the charge of this Society. Yet he once and again excused himself, not being convinced that he was called in duty to leave his then important province. But repeated application at length prevailed to make him apprehend that it was the will of God he should accept the call; yet, lest he should mistake in so important a case, he withheld his express consent, until the Reverend Synod of *New-York* and *Philadelphia* gave their opinion in favour of the College. This determined his dubious mind. He came, and undertook the weighty charge.

And

And what were the consequences? had his incessant labours in travelling and preaching the gospel, his disadvantageous situation, and want of opportunity for improvement made some of his best friends diffident of his capacity and acquirements for moving with honour in this unaccustomed sphere? He agreeably disappointed their friendly fears, and convinced them that strength of genius, joined to industrious application, had surmounted all other disadvantages. Had any such raised expectations as seemed hard to answer? they were fully satisfied: so that from being highly approved he came to be admired.

His manner of conducting the College did honour to himself, and promoted its interests. Whatever alterations in the plans of education he introduced were confessedly improvements on those of his predecessors. Had I never had other means of intelligence, save only my knowledge of the man, I should naturally have expected that all his public appearances would have been conducted with spirit, elegance, and decorum; that his government would be mild and gentle, tempered with wisdom and authority, and calculated to command reverence while it attracted love, and that his manner of teaching would be agreeable and striking.

But I propose not these as mere conjectures. The learned Tutors of the College, the partners of his counsels and deliberations for its good, and these young Gentlemen, once his
care

care and charge, who judged themselves happy under his tuition, all know more than I shall speak.

You know the tenderness and condescension with which he treated you; the paternal care with which he watched over you; the reluctance with which he at any time inflicted the prescribed punishment on a delinquent; and how pleased he was to succeed in reforming any abuse by private and easy methods. You felt yourselves voluntarily confined by the restraints of love, and obliged to subjection, not from slavish fear, but from principle and inclination. You have yet fresh in memory his instructive Lectures, and can tell with what ease he communicated his sentiments, and impressed his ideas on your minds, and the entertaining manner in which he would represent even a common thought.

But his persuasive voice you will hear no more. He is removed far from mortals, has taken his *aerial flight*, and left us to lament, that "a great man is fallen in Israel!" He lived much in a little time; "he finished his course," performed sooner than many others his assigned task, and, in that view, might be said to have died mature. He shone like a light set in a high place, that burns out and expires.

He went thorough every stage of honour and usefulness, compatible to his character as a dissenting Clergyman: and, while we flattered

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ed our fond hopes of eminent services from him for many years to come, the fatal blow was struck: our pleasing prospects are all at an end, and he is cut down like a tree that had yielded much fruit, and was loaden with blossoms even in its fall.

This dispensation, how mysterious! how astonishing! nay how discouraging does it seem! Why was he raised, by divine providence, in the prime of life, to so important a station, and, amidst useful labours, whilst he was fast increasing in strength adapted to his business, quickly snatched away? This is a perplexing case; and the more so that it so soon succeeded the yet shorter continuance of the venerable *Edwards*. Were they set in so conspicuous a point of view, only that their imitable excellencies might be more observable? or, was *Nassau-Hall* erected by divine providence for this, among other important purposes, that it might serve to adorn the latter end of some eminent servants of the living God, itself being adorned by them? In this view, the short Presidency of a *Dickinson*, a *Burr*, an *Edwards*, and a *Davies*, instead of arguing the displeasure of the Almighty, will evidence His peculiar favour to this institution; which I know was planned, and has been carried on with the most pious, benevolent, and generous designs. These designs God's goodness has hitherto amazingly prospered amidst apparent frowns; and, if we may infer any thing from what he has already done,

done, it is an encouraging expectation that he will continue to bless this Society, and make it an honour and happiness to this venerable Board to have been engaged in so noble and successful an undertaking.

Now one more shining orb is set on our world. *Davies* is departed, and with him all that love, zeal, activity, and benevolence, for which he was remarkable. This the Church, and this the bereaved College mourns. For this we hang our once cheerful harps, and indulge to plaintive strains. Yet we are not to lament as those who are hopeless, but rather with humble confidence to "pray the LORD of "the harvest," with whom is "the residue of "the Spirit," that he would send forth another *Davies* to assist our labour and forward his work.

Nor should the decease of useful labourers, the extinction of burning and shining lights, only send us to the throne of grace for supplies, but excite us to greater diligence and activity in our business, as we have for the present the more to do. And, instead of being dispirited by the loss of such eminent assistants, we should be animated by their example, and hope for the same divine aids that carried them through all the duties and dangers of life with safety, success, and honour.

Finally, this dispensation should lessen our esteem of this transitory disappointing world, and raise our affections to Heaven, that place
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and state of permanent blessedness. Thither ascends, as to its native home, all the goodness that departs from earth: and the more of our pious friends that go to glory, so many more secondary motives have we to excite our desires of "departing and being with CHRIST; " which is far better" than any state under the sun: for there, in addition to superior felicity, " we shall come to the general assembly, and " church of the first-born who are written in " Heaven, — and to the spirits of just men " made perfect. (o)" *Amen.*

(o) Heb. xiii. 23.





A N

A P P E N D I X.

TH E following facts drawn up by a gentleman, who was Mr *Davies's* intimate Friend, and lived in the same town with him, while he was President of the College, were collected partly from Mr *Davies's* private papers, and partly from the gentleman's personal knowledge, and, as they illustrate several things just hinted in the preceding discourse, and contain some anecdotes not before mentioned, may be properly subjoined to the narrative already given.

The Rev. Mr. *Samuel Davies*, late President of the College of *New-Jersey*, was born on the 3d day of *November*, *A. D.* 1724, in the county of *Newcastle on Delaware*. His father was a Planter; who lived with great plainness and simplicity, and supported the character of an honest and pious man to his death; which happened about two years ago. His mother, who is still living*, and greatly distinguished

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* The reader is desired to observe that the following account was drawn up some years ago, since which time I find it has pleased Providence to remove from our world the Mother of Mr *Davies*, who is mentioned as living by the writer of the *Appendix*.

for her eminent piety, some time before the conception of this favourite only son, earnestly desired such a blessing; and as she then had only borne a daughter, who was near five years old, she had special occasion for the exercise of her faith, in waiting for the divine answer to her petition. In this situation she took example from the mother of the prophet *Samuel*, and "Vowed a vow unto the LORD; that if he would indeed give her a man-child, she would devote him to his service all the days of his life (p)."

It may well be supposed that the parents received this child as from God, and that the mother especially, who had reason to look upon him as a token of the divine favour, and an express answer to her prayers, would, with the greatest tenderness, begin the rearing of this beloved plant. As there was no school in the neighbourhood, she herself taught him to read: and, although he was then very young, he is said to have made such proficiency as surprised every person who heard it.

He continued at home with his parents till he was about ten years old; during which time he appeared to have no remarkable impressions of a religious kind; but behaving himself as is common for a sprightly towardly child, under the influence of pious example and instruction. He was then sent to an English school, at some distance from his father's, where

(p) 1 Sam. i. 11.

where he continued two years, and made great progress in his learning, but, for want of the pious instruction with which he was favoured at home, he grew somewhat more careless of the things of religion.

It appears, that about this time of life, careless as he was, he made a practice of secret prayer, especially in the evening. The reasons (as he tells it in his diary) why he was so punctual in the evening was, that "he feared lest he should perhaps die before morning." What is farther observable in his prayers at this time is, that "he was more ardent in his supplications for being introduced into the gospel-Ministry, than for any other thing."

It is here presumed that Dr *Finley's* Sermon, preached on occasion of his Death, by desire of the Trustees, contains sufficient Memorials of his Life, from the time in which it pleased God more deeply to impress his mind with the important realities of another world, until he was elected President of the College.

It may perhaps not be amiss to mention that when he returned home from his voyage to *Great Britain*, he entered again on his laborious and beloved task of preaching the Gospel to his several Congregations; and continued in this work until the year 1759, when he was elected President of the College of *New-Jersey*, in the room of the Rev. Mr *Jonathan Edwards*. The College, before he came, had been in an unhappy situation; partly owing to the length

of that melancholy period between the death of President *Burr*, and his accession, and partly to the evil dispositions and practices of a few members of the Society. President *Burr* died in *September*, 1757: and although Mr *Edwards* was elected a few days after he did not take upon himself the government of the College till *February*, 1758; and about a fortnight after took the small-pox, of which he died in *March* following. Mr *Davies* was not initiated in his office till the latter end of *July*, 1759. So that the College lay under the obvious disadvantages of a bereaved condition for almost two years. But the prudent measures taken by President *Davies* soon surmounted these disadvantages; so that in a few months, a spirit of emulation in Learning and Morality, as had been usual; evidently characterized the Students of *Nassau-Hall*.

While he continued President his labours were great, and his application to study was necessarily more intense than that of his predecessors. For he came to this seat of the Muses, when its learning, by the eminent abilities of President *Burr*, was advanced to a very considerable degree; and he had just emerged from a sea of ministerial labour in various places, wherein a common Genius would have been able to have made but little improvement in academical learning. Besides, the speedy passage he made through the course of his studies previous to his entering into the ministry made his

his after application the more necessary for so important and elevated a situation. He was determined not to degrade his office, but to be in reality what his station supposed him, and accordingly exerted himself to the utmost. The labours of the day seemed to him rather an incentive to study than to rest in the night: for he commonly sat up till twelve o'clock, and often later, although he rose by break of day. The success was proportionable; for by the mighty efforts of his great genius, and by dint of industry, he left the College of *New-Jersey* at his death in as high a state of literary merit as it ever had been in since its first institution.

It is a piece of justice due to his memory to remark that the few innovations he made in the academical exercises were certainly improvements upon the plans of his predecessors. Among other things the monthly Orations he instituted deserve particular notice. In order to give his Pupils a taste for composition, and to form them for public speaking, he directed the members of the senior class each to choose his subject, and compose a popular harangue to be delivered publicly in the College-Hall before the Masters and Students, and as many of the inhabitants of the town as chose to attend. When each had written his discourse he brought it to the President, who made such observations and corrections as he judged proper, and, after their discourses were spoken, they feverally attended him again for his remarks on their

their delivery. About six of the young Gentlemen usually delivered their Orations in the afternoon of the first *Wednesday* in every Month to crowded audiences; and it is hard to say, whether the entertainment of the hearers, or the improvement of the students, was the greater.

There is reason to believe that the intense application with which Mr *Davies* attended to the duties of his office was one great cause of his death. The habit of his body was plethoric, and it is not to be doubted but that his health for some years had very much depended upon the exercise of riding, to which he was necessarily obliged while he lived in *Virginia*, though even then he had several severe fevers, supposed to arise principally from his application to study in the intervals of riding abroad. When he came to the College he scarcely used any bodily exercise, save what was required in going from his own house to *Nassau-Hall*, which is a space about ten rods, five or six times a day.

In the latter end of *January*, A. D. 1761, a bad cold seized him, and for his relief he was bled. The same day he transcribed for the press the Sermon, which was soon after published, on the death of the late King, and the day after preached twice in the College-Hall; by all which the arm, in which he was bled, became much inflamed, and increased his former indisposition. On the *Monday* morning after at breakfast he was seized with a violent chilly fit,

fit, which was succeeded by an inflammatory fever, and, in ten days brought on the period of his important life.

Although premonitions of Death in the present state of the world are seldom, if ever, given to mankind; and they who are disposed to interpret ordinary occurrences into such premonitions, when, by something similar in the event those occurrences would seem as if predictive, generally discover their weakness; yet the circumstances of the death of an eminent person are commonly very acceptable to the public, and for this reason it may not be amiss to mention an anecdote which Mr *Davies* more than once took notice of in his last sickness.

An intimate Friend of his, a few days before the beginning of the year in which he died, in conversation told him that a Sermon would be expected from him on the new year's day; and, among other things, happened to mention that the late President *Burr*, on the first day of the year wherein he died, preached a Sermon on *Jer. xxviii. 16. Thus saith the LORD, This year thou shalt die*; and that after his death, the people took occasion to say it was premonitory; upon which Mr *Davies* observed, that "although it ought not to be viewed in that light, yet it was very remarkable." When new year's day came he preached; and the congregation were not a little surprized at his taking the same text of scripture. Upon his being taken with his last sickness, about three

weeks after, he soon adverted to this circumstance, and mentioned it as remarkable that he had been undesignedly led to preach, as it were, his own Funeral Sermon.

It is much to be lamented that the violence of the disorder, of which this excellent man died, deprived him of the regular exercise of his reason the greater part of the time of his sickness; otherwise the public would undoubtedly have been gratified with his remarks on the views of an approaching eternity, and would have received another evidence of the superior excellency and power of that Religion, which alone can support the soul, and make the, otherwise gloomy, prospect of death chearful. For the issues of this decisive period his life had been eminently calculated from his youth. It abundantly appears that from twelve or fourteen years of age he had continually maintained the strictest watch over his thoughts and actions, and daily lived under a deep sense of his own unworthiness, of the transcendent excellency of the Christian Religion, of the great importance of a public spirit, and the necessity of exerting it in promoting the general good. Even in his *delirium* his mind discovered the favourite objects of its concern, the prosperity of CHRIST'S Church, and the good of mankind. His bewildered brain was continually imagining, and his faltering tongue expressing some expedient for these important purposes. Alas! for us that so great a light could no longer continue in this dark world!

Divine

*Divine Conduct vindicated, or the Operations of
GOD shown to be the Operations of Wisdom:*

IN THE SUBSTANCE OF TWO

DISCOURSES,

PREACHED AT

HABERDASHERS-HALL,
LONDON, MARCH 29, 1761;

Occasioned by the DECREASE of the

Rev. SAMUEL DAVIES, *A. M.*

And President of the College of *Nassau-Hall*
In *New-Jersey*.

By *THOMAS GIBBONS, D.D.*

Sive tribulemur & angustemur, sive lætemur, & exulemus, Deus laudandus est, qui & in Tribulationibus erudit, & in Lætitia consolatur. Laus enim Dei à Corde & Ore Christiani recedere non debet, non ut laudet in prosperis, & maledicat in adversis: sed quemadmodum Psalmus ille scribit, semper Laus ejus in Ore meo. Gaudes, agnosce Patrem blandientem: tribularis, agnosce Patrem emendantem: sive blandiatur, sive emendet, eum erudit, cui parat Hæreditatem.

AUGUSTIN. in Psal. liv.

EPHES. I. 11.

— *Who works all things after the counsel of his own will.*

THE last week gave me the awful assurance of the sudden and unexpected death of that most excellent and amiable man and minister of JESUS CHRIST, the Rev. Mr *Samuel Davies*, President of the college of *Nassau-Hall* in *New-Jersey*, by a most moving and melting letter from a gentleman of *Philadelphia*, an acquaintance of Mr *Davies*, and who well knew his worth, to a correspondent of the gentleman's here in *London*.

A greater loss, all things considered, could not perhaps befall the church of God in the death of a single person. The God of nature had endowed Mr *Davies* with extraordinary talents. Perhaps in sublimity and strength of genius there were very few, if any, who surpassed him. To the brightest and richest intellects Mr *Davies* had superadded the improvements of science, and a large acquaintance with books, and possibly, had he lived, there would have been scarcely a man in our world who had been a more accomplished Divine, or a more eminent Scholar. His character in life
was

was wonderfully accommodated both to his natural and acquired abilities. He was President of *New-Jersey* college, in the discharge of which office there would have been a demand for the exertion of his amazing talents, and the exhibition of all his treasures of literature and knowledge. Thus as he was a star of the first magnitude, so he was placed in a situation where he might have shone without any waste of his distinguished and supereminent glories.

But what crowned all, or advanced his distinction as a man and a scholar into the highest value and lustre, was, that his pious character appeared not at all inferior to his great intellects, and acquired accomplishments. Nay, (let me not be thought, for I intimately knew him, to exceed the limits of truth in the ardor of my friendship) his pious character as much surpassed all else that was remarkable in him, as the sparkling eye in the countenance of a great genius does all the other features of the face. If Mr *Davies's* good sense and learning were *the pictures of silver*, his graces and virtues were *the apples of gold* (a).

Here let me stay awhile; and, though I shall only give you a few outlines of his piety and amiable disposition, yet let me be allowed to present you with such a view of him as shall not only be sufficient to demonstrate him to be the best of men and ministers, but as shall leave room for you to conclude that great ad-
ditions

(a) *Prov. xxv. 11.*

ditions might be made to his character by persons who had a longer acquaintance with him than myself, and the collected testimonies of the friends who were favoured with his intimate correspondence.

He informed me in one of his letters, for I was honoured with a close intimacy with him several years, “that he was blessed with a mother whom he might account, without filial vanity or partiality, one of the most eminent saints he ever knew upon earth. And here, says he, I cannot but mention to my friend an anecdote known but to few, that is, that I am a son of prayer, like my name-sake *Samuel* the prophet; and my mother called me *Samuel* because, she said, I have asked him of the LORD, *1 Sam. i. 20*. This early dedication to God has always been a strong inducement to me to devote myself to Him by my own personal act; and the most important blessings of my life I have looked upon as immediate answers to the prayers of a pious mother. But, alas! what a degenerate plant am I! How unworthy of such a parent, and such a birth!”

From the accounts Mr *Davies* gave of himself in the conversation that passed between us when he was here in *England*, I learnt, as the inference from related fact, that he must have been very assiduous in his studies. When he was about entering the ministry, or had not long entered upon it, if I remember right, he was

judged

judged to be in a deep and irrecoverable consumption. Finding himself upon the borders of the grave, and without any hopes of recovery, he determined to spend the little remains of an almost exhausted life, as he apprehended it, in endeavouring to advance his master's glory in the good of souls. Accordingly he removed from the place where he was to another about an hundred miles distance, that was then in want of a minister. Here he laboured in season and out of season; and, as he told me, preached in the day, and had his hectic fever by night, and that to such a degree as to be sometimes delirious, and to stand in need of persons to sit up with him. Here God gave him some glorious first-fruits of his ministry, for two instances of the conversion of two gentlemen he related to me were very remarkable, and he had the Satisfaction, as he informed me, to find in the after-accounts of them, that there was good reason to believe that they were faints indeed: their goodness being by no means "like the grass upon the house-tops, which withers afore it grows up, and with which the mower filleth not his hand (b)," but yielding the fruits meet for repentance in an holy and well-ordered conversation.

Afterwards he settled in *Virginia*, a colony where profaneness and immorality called aloud for his sacred labours. His patience and perseverance, his magnanimity and piety, together with

(b) P^{sa}. cxxix. 6, 7.

with his powerful and evangelical ministrations, were not without success. The wilderness and the solitary places, in the course of his stay there, bloomed and blossomed before him. His tract of preaching, if I remember right, for some time was not less than sixty miles, and by what I have learnt, though not from himself, he had but little of this world's goods to repay his zealous and indefatigable labours; but his reward, as he well knew, was in Heaven; and he felt, I doubt not, the animated joy that every negroe-slave, which under his ministrations became the LORD's freeman, would furnish an additional jewel to his eternal crown.

Upon the decease of that excellent man the Rev. Mr *Jonathan Edwards*, President of the college of *Nassau-Hall* in *New-Jersey*, Mr *Davies* writes me word, that Mr *Lockwood* in *New-England*, a gentleman of worthy character, was chosen to fill up the vacancy. "I have not yet heard," says Mr *Davies*, "whether he has accepted the place. The Trustees were divided between him; another gentleman, and myself, but I happily escaped." But so it was ordered, by Mr *Lockwood's* not accepting the invitation, that Mr *Davies* was afterwards elected President of the college; and what concern, and indeed what consternation this choice gave him, his letters to me amply testify; and I could particularly relate to you what views he had of things, and what steps he took to determine what was his duty. At last he accepted the call

call to his important office of presiding in the college; and tells me in a letter, dated *June 6, 1759*, "That the evidence of his duty was so plain, that even his sceptical mind was satisfied; and that his people saw the hand of providence in it, and dared not to oppose."

Here he was settled for about eighteen months; and as he could exercise his ministry as well as preside over the college, great things might have been expected from that rare and remarkable union there was in him of what was great and good; and with pleasure I have received the information from his friends how well he supported and adorned his character, and what high expectations were formed as to the benefit and blessing he was likely to prove to that seminary of religion and learning. "His whole soul, says the letter that gives the news of his death, was engaged for the good of the youth under his care." And again, "*Nassau-Hall* in tears, disconsolate, and refusing to be comforted."

But, alas! in the midst of his days, (little more than thirty-six years of age) he was called away from this but opening scene of large and extraordinary usefulness to the invisible world, the world of glory and blessedness; never to sojourn in mortal clay, or to irradiate and bless the church militant more. He is dead, he is departed — *America* in groans proclaims her inexpressible loss, and we in *Great-Britain* share the distress, and echo groan for groan.

Thus

Thus ended the days on earth of this truly great and good man; having in his little circle of life shed more beams, and done more service than many a languid and less illuminated soul, even in a public sphere, in the revolution of sixty or fourscore years.

Truly great and good I may stile him without the suspicion of flattery, and without the flight of hyperbole. Let me call to your remembrance, as proofs of what I say, the excellent discourses he has delivered in this pulpit, and the several Sermons of his which have been published, strong in manly sense, loaden with full ideas, rich with evangelical truth, and animated with the most sacred fervor for the good of souls. And to these evidences of the admirable spirit that dwelt in him, let me add a few paragraphs from the many letters with which, in the course of about nine years correspondence, he has favoured me.

Speaking in one of his letters concerning his children, he says; " I am solicitous for them
" when I consider what a contagious world
" they have entered into, and the innate infection of their natures. There is nothing that
" can wound a parent's heart so deep, as the
" thought that he should bring up children to
" dishonour his God here, and be miserable
" hereafter. I beg your prayers for mine, and
" you may expect a retaliation in the same
" kind."

In another letter he says, “ We have now
 “ three sons and two daughters ; whose young
 “ minds as they open I am endeavouring to
 “ cultivate with my own hand, unwilling to
 “ trust them to a stranger ; and I find the bu-
 “ siness of education much more difficult than
 “ I expected. — My dear little creatures sob and
 “ drop a tear now and then under my instruc-
 “ tions, but I am not so happy as to see them
 “ under deep and lasting impressions of reli-
 “ gion ; and this is the greatest grief they af-
 “ ford me. Grace cannot be communicated
 “ by natural descent, and, if it could, they would
 “ receive but little from me. I earnestly beg
 “ your prayers for them.”

In another letter ; “ I desire seriously to de-
 “ vote to God and my dear country all the la-
 “ bours of my head, my heart, my hand and
 “ pen ; and if he pleases to bless any of them I
 “ hope I shall be thankful, and wonder at his
 “ condescending grace.— Oh ! my dear brother,
 “ could we spend and be spent all our lives in
 “ painful, disinterested, indefatigable service
 “ for God and the world, how serene and
 “ bright would it render the swift approach-
 “ ing eve of life ! I am labouring to do a little
 “ to save my country, and, which is of much
 “ more consequence, to save souls — those pre-
 “ cious, immortal things, souls — from death
 “ — from that tremendous kind of death, which
 “ a *soul* can die. I have but little success of late,
 “ but blessed be God, it surpasses my expecta-
 “ tion,

“ tion, and much more my desert. Some of
 “ my brethren labour to better purpose. The
 “ pleasure of the LORD prospers in their hands.”

Another epistle tells me, “ As for myself, I
 “ am just striving not to live in vain. I enter-
 “ ed the ministry with such a sense of my un-
 “ fitness for it, that I had no sanguine expecta-
 “ tions of success. And a condescending GOD
 “ (O, how condescending!) has made me much
 “ more serviceable than I could hope. But,
 “ alas! my brother, I have but little, very lit-
 “ tle true religion. My advancements in holi-
 “ ness are extremely small: I feel what I con-
 “ fess, and am sure it is true, and not the rant
 “ of excessive or affected humility. It is an
 “ easy thing to make a noise in the world, to
 “ flourish and harangue, *to dazzle the crowd, and*
 “ *set them all agape*; but deeply to imbibe the
 “ spirit of christianity, to maintain a secret
 “ walk with GOD, to be holy as he is holy, this
 “ is the labour, this the work. I beg the
 “ assistance of your prayers in so grand and
 “ important an enterprize.—The difficulty of
 “ the ministerial work seems to grow upon my
 “ hands. Perhaps once in three or four months
 “ I preach in some measure as I could wish;
 “ that is, I preach as in the sight of GOD, and
 “ as if I were to step from the pulpit to the su-
 “ preme tribunal. I *feel* my subject. I melt
 “ into tears, or I shudder with horror, when I
 “ denounce the terrors of the LORD. I glow,
 “ I soar in sacred extasies, when the love of

LXVIII *The Operations of GOD shown*

“ JESUS is my theme, and, as Mr *Baxter* was
“ wont to express it, in lines more striking to me
“ than all the fine poetry in the world,

“ *I preach as if I ne'er should preach again ;*
“ *And as a dying man to dying men.*

“ But, alas ! my spirits soon flag, my devotions
“ languish, and my zeal cools. It is really an
“ afflictive thought that I serve so good a
“ Master with so much inconstancy ; but so it
“ is, and my soul mourns upon the account.”

In another letter he says, “ I am labouring
“ to do a little good in the world. But, alas !
“ I find I am of little use or importance. I
“ have many defects, but none gives me so
“ much pain and mortification as my slow pro-
“ gress in personal holiness. This is the grand
“ qualification of the office we sustain, as well
“ as for that heaven we hope for, and I am
“ shocked at myself when I see how little I
“ have of it.”

In another of his letters he acquaints me,
“ That he indeed feels an union of hearts
“ which cannot bear without pain the inter-
“ vention of the huge *Atlantic*, nor even the
“ absence of a week. But our condescending
“ LORD, adds he, calls his ministers *Stars*, and
“ he knows best in what part of the firmament
“ of the church to fix them : and (O the de-
“ lightful thought !) they can never be out of
“ the reach of his beams, though they shine in
“ different hemispheres with regard to each
“ other.

“ other. This leads me, undefignedly, to a
 “ criticism on *Jude* 13, on which perhaps an
 “ astronomer would be the best commenter.
 “ Ἀστέρες πλαῦται, εἰς ὃ ζῶσθαι τῷ σκότειε εἰς τον αἰῶνα
 “ πλῆρουται. *Wandering stars, to whom is reserved*
 “ *the blackness of darkness for ever.* Perhaps an
 “ astronomical critic would observe that false
 “ teachers are represented as *planetary* or *wand-*
 “ *ering* stars that in their eccentricities run out
 “ into an eternal *Apbelion* from the sun of righte-
 “ ousness, beyond the system which he warms,
 “ illuminates, and beatifies, and are constantly
 “ receding from the fountain of light, life, and
 “ bliss, and therefore must wander through the
 “ blackness of darkness for ever; a darkness
 “ unpierced by one ray from the great sun and
 “ center of the moral world — *blackness of dark-*
 “ *ness*, an abstract predicated of an abstract.
 “ How gloomy and strong the expression!”

Let me give you another quotation from his
 letters. “ I am very much pleased and affect-
 “ ed, says he, with the subject of this week’s
 “ study, and next LORD’S day’s entertainment,
 “ namely, *A bruised reed shall be not break, and*
 “ *the smoking flax shall be not quench.* Such a
 “ *bruised reed* at best am I: a weak, oppressed,
 “ usefess thing: a *stridens stipula* that can make
 “ no agreeable melody to entertain my great
 “ Shepherd. Yet this *bruised reed* I have reason
 “ to hope he will not break, but bind up and
 “ support. This shattered pipe of straw he will
 “ not cast away, but repair and tune to join in

“ the angelic concert on high. I am at best
 “ but *smoking flax*; a dying snuff in the candle-
 “ stick of his church; a wick just put out in
 “ the lamp of his sanctuary. The flame of
 “ divine love, sunk deep into the socket of a
 “ corrupt heart, quivers, and breaks, and catch-
 “ es, and seems just expiring at times. The
 “ devil and the world raise many storms to
 “ blow upon it. And yet this *smoking flax*,
 “ where the least spark of that sacred passion
 “ still remains which renders it more susceptible
 “ of his love, as a candle just put out but still
 “ smoking, is easily rekindled.— This *smoking*
 “ *flax* he will not quench, but blow it to a
 “ flame, which shall shine brighter and bright-
 “ er till it mingle with its kindred flames in the
 “ pure element of love.”

I shall conclude my extracts from his episto-
 lary correspondence with a part of a letter dated
Hanover, September 12, 1757.

“ My ever dear Friend,

“ I am just beginning to creep back from
 “ the valley of the shadow of death, to which
 “ I made a very near approach a few days ago.
 “ I was seized with a most violent fever, which
 “ came to a crisis in a week, and now it is
 “ much abated, though I am still confined to
 “ my chamber. In this shattered state my trem-
 “ bling hand can write but little to you, and
 “ what I write will be languid and confused,
 “ like its author. But as the *Virginia*-fleet is
 “ about

“ about to fail, and I know not when I shall
“ have another opportunity, I cannot avoid
“ writing something. I would sit down on the
“ grave’s mouth, and talk awhile with my fa-
“ vourite friend; and from my situation you
“ may foresee what subjects my conversation
“ will turn upon—Death—Eternity—the su-
“ preme Tribunal.

“ Blessed be my Master’s name, this disorder
“ found me employed in his service. It seized
“ me in the pulpit, like a soldier wounded in
“ the field. This has been a busy summer
“ with me. In about two months I rode
“ about five hundred miles, and preached about
“ forty Sermons. This affords me some plea-
“ sure in the review. But, alas! the mixture
“ of sin and of many nameless imperfections
“ that run through and corrupt all my services,
“ give me shame, sorrow, and mortification.
“ My fever made unusual ravages upon my
“ understanding, and rendered me frequently
“ delirious, and always stupid. But, when I
“ had any little sense of things, I generally felt
“ pretty calm and serene, and death, that
“ mighty terror, was disarmed. Indeed the
“ thought of leaving my dear family destitute,
“ and my flock shepherdless, made me often
“ start back and cling to life; but in other
“ respects death appeared a kind of indiffer-
“ ency to me. Formerly I have wished to live
“ longer that I might be better prepared for
“ Heaven, but this consideration had but very

“ little weight with me, and that for a very
 “ unusual reason, which was this. After long
 “ trial I found this world is a place so unfriend-
 “ ly to the growth of every thing Divine and
 “ Heavenly, that I was afraid, if I should live
 “ longer, I should be no better fitted for Hea-
 “ ven than I am. Indeed I have hardly any
 “ hopes of ever making any great attainments
 “ in holiness while in this world, though I
 “ should be doomed to stay in it as long *Metbu-*
 “ *selab*. I see other christians indeed around
 “ me make some progress, though they go on
 “ with but a snail-like motion: but when I
 “ consider that I set out about twelve years old,
 “ and what sanguine hopes I then had of my
 “ future progress, and yet that I have been almost
 “ at a stand ever since, I am quite discouraged.
 “ — O my good Master, if I may dare to call
 “ thee so, I am afraid I shall never serve thee
 “ much better on this side the region of perfec-
 “ tion. The thought grieves me: it breaks my
 “ heart, but I can hardly hope better. But if I
 “ have the least spark of true piety in my breast I
 “ shall not always labour under this complaint.
 “ No, my LORD, I shall yet serve thee — serve
 “ thee through an immortal duration — with
 “ the activity, the fervour, the perfection of
 “ *the rapt seraph that adores and burns*. — I very
 “ much suspect this desponding view of the
 “ matter is wrong, and I do not mention it
 “ with approbation, but only relate it as an
 “ unusual reason for my willingness to die;
 “ which

“ which I never felt before, and which I could
“ not suppress.

“ In my sickness I found the unspeakable im-
“ portance of a Mediator in a religion for sin-
“ ners. O! I could have given you the word
“ of a dying man for it, that that JESUS whom
“ you preach is indeed a necessary, and an all-
“ sufficient Saviour. Indeed he is the only
“ support for a departing soul. *None but*
“ CHRIST, *none but* CHRIST. Had I as many
“ good works as *Abraham* or *Paul*, I would not
“ have dared to build my hopes upon such a
“ quicksand, but only on this firm eternal
“ rock.

“ I am rising up, my brother, with a desire
“ to recommend him better to my fellow sin-
“ ners, than I have done. But, alas! I hardly
“ hope to accomplish it. He has done a
“ great deal more by me already than ever I
“ expected, and infinitely more than I deserved.
“ But he never intended me for great things.
“ He has beings both of my own and of superior
“ orders that can perform him more worthy ser-
“ vice. O! if I might but unty the latchet
“ of his shoes, or draw water for the service
“ of his sanctuary, it is enough for me. I am
“ no angel, nor would I murmur because I am
“ not —

“ My strength fails me, and I must give over
“ —pray for me — write to me — love me living
“ and

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“ and dying, on earth, and in Heaven — and
“ hope the same from, Dear Sir,

*Your heart-united Friend
and Servant*.*

Judge you from these passages, wrote in the freedom of friendship, and to one to whom he scrupled not to lay open the secrets of his bosom, what a loss the church has sustained, and how much our world is impoverished by the death of dear Mr *Davies*, in the vigour of his days, and in the meridian of his usefulness.

With how much justice may we apply to him, with a little alteration, an epitaph which he composed for a most beloved friend of his, and an eminent christian (z)!

“ The colours of expression are too faint,

“ Let thought describe what thought alone can paint :

“ Think what the christian, preacher, friend should be,

“ You’ve then his character : for such was He.

Such

* If there should be some passages in this letter that may do so much honour to the Editor as might have induced him in prudence to have suppressed them, he frankly acknowledges, in the words he made use of in a marginal Note to the Dedication of a Sermon which Mr *Davies* inscribed to him, (*The vessels of Mercy, and the vessels of Wrath*, printed in London, 1758.) “ that he is “ unwilling to deny himself the pleasure of its being known, “ wherever these Sermons may be read, that he was honoured with “ Mr *Davies*’s intimate friendship.”

(z) Captain Grant of Philadelphia.

Such a blow, such an uncommon and distressing blow has been given in the death of Mr *Davies*. And now what shall we do? to what shall we recur, or to what quarter shall we look for help under such an awful providence? My advice is, that we should seriously and attentively turn our minds to the passage of sacred writ which I mentioned at the beginning of my Discourse.

Who (that is, GOD) *works all things after the counsel of his own will.*

Without enquiring into the context, the words may be regarded as a distinct proposition. He, that is, GOD, *works*. *He works*, or he works with energy and irresistible power, in such a manner as none besides Him either has ability or right to work. He works like himself, he works with the omnipotence that belongs to Him, and which is his essential and distinguishing attribute*. Farther, not only does GOD work, but he works *all things*, all things done by Him in Heaven and earth, in all the provinces of his vast empire, all things in nature, providence, and grace, all things
in

* That the word (*Ενεργῶν*) here translated *who works*, contains in it that forcible meaning which I have here ascribed to it, we may learn from what the critics have said upon it. "Hac voce significatur actio conjuncta cum efficacia, & quidem summa, quæ prohiberi nullo modo possit. LXX utuntur, *Isai. xli. 4.*" LEIGHIUS in verb. "At Græca vox magis sonat, *ejus cujus vi & virtute fiunt omnia*, h. e. omnia agentis ac moderantis." ERASMUS in loc. Could we admit of such an English word, the original might be rendered *who energizes* all things, &c.

in time, and all things in eternity. And He works all things after the counsel of his *own will*, that is, as He pleases. His will is the source of his action. He gives an account of his matters to none. None in the army of Heaven, or among the inhabitants of the earth have any authority to say unto Him, What dost Thou? He depends upon none, but all, all worlds and beings depend upon Him, and therefore none are to presume to dictate to Him, or direct Him what is or what is not to be done by Him. But observe, that though He works, and works all things, and all this as He pleases, yet it is *after the counsel* of his own will. We are to consider GOD indeed as a great sovereign, as LORD of all, higher than the highest, supreme and unrivalled in perfection and glory, who is not to be called to the tribunal of his creatures, or to be questioned by them as to what He pleases to perform. We are not to snatch the sceptre or the balance from his hands. But yet this we may be assured of, that whatever GOD does is done not from a kind of blind though omnipotent necessity, or done in a kind of random, or by an unguided or unmeaning exertion of power; but that he works all things after the *counsel*, the *design*, or *wisdom* of his own Will*. Survey

* The word (*Βουλή*) here translated *counsel* may, according to the learned Stephens in his *Thesaurus Græcæ Linguae*, be rendered a *decree* or *resolution*, a *counsel* or *advice*, whether good or bad, or a

vey the great JEHOVAH as he is indeed in his own nature, and in the revelation he has made of himself. If He is sovereign, and accountable to none, yet He is wise, and infinitely wise.

We are not to view GOD partially, but as far ye we can compleatly, as the fountain of all perfection; as containing in his nature an harmony of all that is excellent and glorious. He has a right to do, and He can do whatsoever He pleases in all his wide-extended dominions, yet what He pleases is always worthy of himself. He is the aggregate, the system of excellence, and one attribute never displays itself to the diminution or eclipse of another. As He
is

consultation or deliberation. If we understand the word here of *decree or resolution* as applied to GOD, we are certain that such a decree or resolution in Deity had its birth in wisdom, or in no way derogatory to it. If we interpret the word of *counsel or advice*, who sees not that wisdom is taken into the account? it is the *counsel*, it is the *advice* of the God of unerring wisdom. But if we take the word, and what forbids that we should not so translate it? as denoting *consultation or deliberation*, then we are led in the strongest manner to conclude that the will of GOD proceeds upon wisdom. Not that there is properly or strictly any such thing as *consultation or deliberation* in the divine mind; but we may hereby conceive, speaking of GOD after the manner of men, that GOD, when he wills, wills in such a wise manner, and upon such worthy reasons, as if he had first *consulted and deliberated* with himself what was proper to be done. Liberè quidem, quia ex voluntate, sed tamen etiam sapienter & justè quia ex consilio voluntatis, ZANCH. "But because, says the great Howe, he orders all things according to the counsel of his will, we must conceive some weighty reason did induce hereto." Howe's *Redeemer's Dominion over the invisible world*, p. 72. Folio Edition, Vol II.

lxxviii *The Operations of God shown*

is the greatest, so He is the best of beings. Wisdom dwells eternally and essentially in the divine Will, and who possessed of so much reason as its unoriginated and indefectible source? though none can limit God, yet He, with reverence be it spoken, limits himself, limits himself by the rule which infinite wisdom prescribes to infinite power. Hear the accounts scripture gives of Him. *He is the rock, his works are perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he (a). He is wise in heart, as well as mighty in strength (b). His judgments are a great deep (c), but they are judgments, the children of wisdom and counsel still. If clouds and darkness are round about him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne (d). His works are truth, and his ways judgment (e). The Almighty will not pervert judgment (f). His ways are equal (g),* directed by the straight unerring line of infinite wisdom. Be this then an established truth with us, that, whatever perplexity and darkness may encompass the divine proceedings, there is nothing which God does, that God *who works all things after the counsel of his own Will*, but what is just and right and good, and that his every action is no other than the birth of consummate counsel, or that the plan of wisdom

(a) Deut. xxxii. 4.

(b) Job ix. 4.

(c) Psal. xxxvi. 6

(d) Psal. xcvi. 2.

(e) Dan. iv. 37.

(f) Job xxxiv. 12.

(g) Ezek. xviii. 25.

dom is laid as the foundation of all his government. And particularly in such an event as we are now considering, the removal of such an excellent and worthy person as Mr *Davies* from our world, in the prime of life, and at such a juncture as this, when there are so few surviving persons of such ability and character, we are to believe and own that, as the blow was unquestionably given by God, it was perfectly right, and that not the least shadow or suspicion of blame or wrong is to be ascribed to the most high, most holy, most wise, most faithful, and most merciful God. And even though we could not discern one reason, one end of wisdom or goodness answered by such an awful providence we are now considering, yet still we are not to doubt but that the All-wise as well as Almighty God has proceeded upon motives, though absolutely impenetrable by us, worthy of himself; that he dwells in the thickest darkness, and that the glories of his perfections are introned at the center, though not a ray of them penetrates and breaks through the external veil. But perhaps upon a careful and steady survey of this most afflictive providence we may attain to some discovery of the purposes or counsels of Deity in the decease of such an excellent person as Mr *Davies* in the prime of his days, and in the very height of his usefulness. And, though we are not to call the LORD of all to our tribunal, yet perhaps we may not venture beyond our line, or deviate from the path of duty, nay we

we may on the other hand be glorifying GOD, as well as composing and comforting ourselves, if, with profound humility and reverence, we make the enquiry, Wherefore it is that GOD, *who works all things after the counsel of his own Will*, is pleased to call away by death the excellent of the earth in the vigour of life, and in the meridian of their services for the glory of GOD, and the good of his Church? These hard mysteries may not upon a diligent research be altogether inexplicable, and these dark passages of providence upon a close survey may appear illuminated with evident and illustrious beams of wisdom and love. Accordingly I shall endeavour, I trust with a decency becoming a poor imperfect creature examining into the ways of the most high and glorious GOD, to resolve this problem of providence, “ Why the
 “ excellent of the earth should be taken away
 “ in the flower or prime of their age, and
 “ from the most enlarged spheres of usefulness,
 “ or what instructions and improvement we
 “ may gather from such seemingly unkind and
 “ undesirable dispensations?” If *Job* said to his GOD, and we do not find he was blamed for it, “ Shew me wherefore thou contendest
 “ with me (*b*)? If we are to hear the rōd, and
 “ that GOD, who has appointed it (*i*)? And if
 “ in the day of adversity we are to consider (*k*),” certainly we are so far from wandering out of the
 the

(*b*) *Job* x. 2.(*i*) *Micah* vi. 9.(*k*) *Eccl.* vii. 14.

the path of duty, that we are on the contrary found in it, when, with a due deference to Deity, we not only acknowledge his righteousness, "but talk with him concerning his judgments (l)." And,

(1.) In the removal of the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the height of their usefulness, we may be taught the wonderful Majesty and independent glories of the great God over all blessed for evermore. "God will have it known, says the venerable Mr *Howe* on an occasion not unlike that which has given rise to our discourse*, that though he uses instruments, he needs them not. It is a piece of divine royalty and magnificence, that when he hath prepared and polished such an utensil, so as to be capable of great service, he can lay it by without loss." God can maintain and carry on his own cause, and answer his counsels, without the interposition of his creatures, or, if he pleases, he may employ only meaner instruments, and may call home from the vineyard the ablest and best of his servants, to shew his Church he can accomplish his pleasure without them.

(2.) God may cut off the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the height of their usefulness, to endear and

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(A) Jer. xii. 1.

* *Howe's Redeemer's Dominion over the Invisible World, on the Death of John Houghton, Esq;*

magnify his power and grace in unexpectedly raising up others amidst the desponding fears and sorrows of his people. When GOD takes away the excellent of the earth, such as were most eminently formed for service, in the midst of their days, the Church of GOD, the friends of *Zion*, are apt to sink into great anxiety and distress, and to say with *Zion* of old, "The LORD has forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me (*m*);" or with *Jacob*, "All these things are against me (*n*)."
 Now at the very juncture when the people of GOD are thus dejected, when their hearts are trembling for the Ark of the LORD, for GOD then to arise and to make the time of his Church's extremity the time of his mercy in raising up others, and pouring out his Spirit upon them in a plentiful effusion of gifts and graces, how does he hereby most wonderfully illustrate his power and love? His light, his favour towards *Zion* appears as it were with a double brightness, thus breaking out from amidst a night of thick darkness; and the people of GOD with a most lively and powerful sense of the divine goodness, acknowledge that GOD has done great things for them which they looked not for, and that nothing but his own arm, and his own love, could have helped them in such a distressing season. Hereby GOD is more eminently seen, and glorified, and the work appears to be the LORD's, and is wonderful in his people's eyes.

(3.) GOD

(m) Isa. xlix. 14

(n) Gen. xlii. 35.

(3.) GOD may take away the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the meridian of their usefulness, to shew us more powerfully and affectingly the vanity of the present state. GOD shews us the vanity of the present state when he takes away persons in old age, when they have reached their threescore years and ten, or fourscore years, for by such instances we are taught what a mere hands-breadth of being this life is, even in its utmost extent, and how soon our existence in this world will be terminated, even though it is protracted to its farthest limit. But when death, usurping, as it were, by violence the sickle from the delaying hands of time, cuts off persons in the bloom or in the prime of life, then is the vanity of the present state preached to us in the most striking, affecting manner. And if with the bloom of youth or prime of manhood great intellectual abilities and superior acquired accomplishments, distinguished piety and most enlarged usefulness are cut off, then, in the most solemn awful accents, is the vanity of the present state proclaimed to us, and our ears receive the lesson, not in soft whispers, not in a common voice, but in peals of thunder. Then we hear the cry sounding, as it were, in an overwhelming and irresistible energy, " All flesh is grass, and all the goodli-
" nefs thereof is as the flower of the field : the
" grass withers, the flower fades, because the

" Spirit of the LORD blows upon it (o)." I see a man in the vigour and strength of constitution, a man ennobled beyond the common multitude by a bright and lively imagination, by a clear and piercing judgment, by a manly and commanding eloquence: I see a man superior to his fellow-christians and his fellow-ministers, by a most sublime, steady, rational, and uniform piety, and by an unextinguishable zeal, and unwearied labour for the glory of GOD and the good of souls; this man, thus richly furnished and qualified, is taken away by a sudden stroke, or after a few days illness, and an end, an utter end is put to all his lustre and benefit in our world. What inference results from all this, but that all is vanity here below? If the best we meet with on earth is thus fugitive and uncertain, if it may so soon be gone, for ever gone from us, then " verily every man at his best " estate," and the best of men too, " are altogether vanity (p). The pearls and jewels of our world may be as soon taken from it as the dirt and dross. There is mortality, there is death in my choicest enjoyments. I see that the tall cedar may be cut down as well as the humble plant. Stars of the first magnitude, as well as the smaller orbs, may quit the skies, and vanish from my sight. Death makes no distinction between good and bad, between the greatest and meanest, the best and worst. Now he hurls his dart at the poor peasant, and now he

(o) Isa. xl. 6, 7.

(p) Psal. xxxix. 5.

he lanches it at the monarch on his throne. Now his shaft smites the christian in his private walks of life, and now his unerring stroke lays the eminent genius, scholar, and minister in the dust. "All things," in this sense, "come alike to all (q)." And is this the case, do the floods of death alike overwhelm the stately and richly freighted ship, as the small bark or boat, then why should I doat upon the creature? If I build my fond expectations of peace and comfort upon the best of men, I build upon the sand. My dearest friendships, and richest joys on earth may be dashed in pieces in an hour, in a moment. All on earth is shadow, and when I look even to the very best it can afford, I see the same vanity and frailty there, which are common to lower and meaner things.

(4.) GOD may cut off the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the height of their usefulness, to bring our hearts into a nearer and more intimate dependence upon himself. How pleased are we apt to be with our enjoyments here below, and especially with our pious friendships and connexions? And it may be that we are in such cases the less aware of danger, and the less upon our guard as to excess, as we are certain that it is no way sinful, but on the other hand acceptable in the sight of GOD, to value the excellent of the earth, and to be delighted with their converse and company. But even here

(q) Eccl. ix. 2.

we may exceed, and by an inordinate regard to only creatures and instruments we may be led astray from our God, or may not so much consider, adore, and enjoy Him in them as we ought. The creature, the instrument therefore of which we were too fond, and on which we relied too much, may be removed from us in order to prevent that sacrilege of our best affections, or that unwarrantable withdrawal of a great part of them from Heaven, which we were before too apt to indulge. God has a right to our entire hearts, and, unless we look to him, and own him in all our best enjoyments, we may provoke him to remove them from us, and this he may do that he may bring us into more intimate union with himself, and dependence upon him, that the creature may be shewn to be nothing better than a creature, and that he may be honoured and acknowledged as all in all. *Peter*, upon the mount of transfiguration, says, that it "was good for them to be there, and was for making three tabernacles, one for his LORD, one for *Moses*, and one for *Elias* ; but it is told us, he knew not what he said (r)," and the bright vision was soon concluded. God may righteously, and indeed graciously remove creatures, the best of creatures from us, if they draw off too much of the current of our affections from himself : the cistern breaking may endear to us the living fountain : the reed sinking may recommend

(r) Luke ix. 33.

mend us to the Rock of ages. God may take away this and the other created excellency that our weakness has set up as a veil between Him and our souls, that we may lie the more open to his immediate communications, and that we may better remember and practise our duty, "to love the LORD our GOD with all our heart, "with all our soul, with all our mind, and with "all our strength (s)."

(5.) As by the death of the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, we are taught that no strength of constitution, or eminency, or usefulness, are securities from death, so we may hereby be excited the more diligently to attend to our work, and prepare for our dismissal. If we see others taken away younger and stronger than ourselves, then what is the inference, but that we may be cut off as well as they, and indeed more easily than they? If we observe others more eminent and more serviceable than ourselves called away from life, if their brighter splendors and more extensive benefit to mankind were no protection from the arrest of death, then what may we their inferiors expect? We have no exemption from sickness, pain, or sudden death, or death in the midst of our days, any more than others. If we had the wisdom of *Solomon*, or the zeal and usefulness of *St Paul*, still, like them, we should be no better than mortal. Hear then the voice of God to you, speaking from the

(s) Mark xii. 30.

lxxxviii *The Operations of God shown*

athes of the young, the strong, the learned, the eminently pious and useful: "Stand with your loins girded, and your lamps burning. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Work while it is day; the night comes when no man can work. Whatsoever thine hand finds to do, do it with thy might." Do not think that because you are a tree, even a palm, or a vine "whose fruit cheers both God and man (t)," that therefore the order will not be issued out, Hew down the tree, cut off its branches, and even pluck up its roots. Flatter not yourself because you are a saint and servant of God, or a minister of some considerable influence and importance in the Church, that death can have no power over you; dream not of an abiding-place here; you dwell in a tabernacle that may be soon taken down, even though it is a tabernacle which is Holiness to the LORD. Attend then to your work; every day look out for death, and view yourself as at the brink of the grave, and at the door of eternity.

(6.) By the death of the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the midst of their services to God and his Church, we may be led to inquire, whether there is no anger expressed against us by their sudden, and in respect of the common age of man, untimely removal.

As,

(t) Judges ix. 13.

As, (1.) We may do well to consider whether there may not be some judgments impending over us. If ambassadors are called home, it may become the nation, where they were, to consider whether a rupture is not likely to ensue. Every good man that is taken away from our world is a loss to it, a deduction from its worth, in proportion to his goodness. There is a loss of his instructions, his example, and his prayers. And if the best of men are cut off, the loss grows so much the greater, and our apprehensions of the divine resentment may very justly be so much the more awakened. Doves fly home to their windows at the coming storm. "The Righteous perishes and no man lays it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the Righteous is taken away from the evil to come (u)." *Lot leaves Sodom*, and when he is gone the floodgates of vengeance are set open, and the city is turned into destruction. Do not let us think lightly of the matter, that we see the best of men, men that were holy wrestlers with God, and stood in the breach to plead with him to turn away his wrath, removed from our world in the midst of their days, especially when so few servants and saints of God remain behind, and the world is so generally filled with impiety, and all manner of wickedness. Good *Hezekiah*, and after him good *Josiah*, must go to their graves

(u) Isaiah lviii. 1.

gravcs before the destruction comes upon *Ju-
dab* and *Jerusalem*.

(2). And as we know not but the deaths of the excellent of the earth in the midst of their days, and in the midst of their usefulness, may portend some judgments from God coming upon us, so let us hence be excited the more earnestly to deprecate them, and pray for his merciful regards to us. If the excellent of the earth are taken away, and taken away in the midst of their usefulness, and if, in such dispensations of Providence, we may hear, as it were, the first alarms of the Almighty's anger from his secret place of thunder, let us be the more fervent in our supplications that he would turn away his anger, and not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities. The more gloomy apprehension, the more apparent danger, the more should we be excited to prayer, lively and importunate prayer. Let us beg of God, and beg the more earnestly, that he would have compassion upon us, and that the tokens of his judgments may proceed no farther, and not continue upon us till the judgments themselves descend upon us in a storm of resistless and overwhelming vengeance. And,

(3.) As we know not but the deaths of the excellent of the earth, in the midst of their days and usefulness, may be the forerunners of some judgments from God at the door, let us prepare to meet our God if he should come out against us in the way of his judgments. Do we hear the
the

the sound of his anger, and are there some awful flashes, though at present at a distance, that seem to signify an approaching tempest, then let us prepare to meet our God. "Prepare to meet thy God, O *Israel* (*w*)."
 Let us gird our christian armour close about us. Let us strengthen ourselves in our God, and abound in the exercises of a dependence upon him whose "grace only is sufficient for us, and whose strength alone can be perfected in our weakness (*x*)."
 Let us be in a readiness to follow our God at his call either through the waters or fires of affliction, being as willing magnanimously to suffer for him, as we are chearfully to serve him, and not being at all shaken in mind or spirit by the most grievous calamities and trials of life; having an inviolable connexion with, and a sure interest in him "who will make all things work together for our good (*y*)," and who has promised us a better life and a better world, after we have suffered a while, "even an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, (*z*)," and an admission into his palace and presence, where "there is fulness of joy, and a place at his right hand where are pleasures for evermore (*a*)."

(7.) By the deaths of the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and
 in

(*w*) Amos iv. 12.

(*x*) 2 Cor. xii. 9.

(*y*) Rom. viii. 28.

(*z*) 1 Peter i. 4.

(*a*) Psal. xvi. 11.

in the midst of their usefulness, let us be excited to exert ourselves more vigorously and constantly to glorify God, and serve our generation, than hitherto we have done. Their removal shews us that we may be removed, and so quickens us to our duty; and their loss likewise, their loss to the world, should also excite us to duty, since, though there is as much work as ever, yet there are fewer labourers to perform it. The more the world is impoverished, the more let us endeavour to enrich it. If an army is thinned of its numbers, let the officers, the soldiers that remain, not be unwilling to go through double service, and to exert themselves with a double activity and vigour.

(8.) By the removal of the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the height of their usefulness, we are sure that we have lost by their departure from our world one tie to earth, and gained one attachment more to Heaven. The excellent of the earth are taken away; our friends, our companions with whom we took sweet counsel. In every such instance one more bond to earth and time is consequently broken. We are in one more degree detached from the charms of the creature, and hereby may come nearer, if we rightly improve the providence, to a deliverance from this world, that may have had too fast an hold of our hopes and affections. Had our pious and excellent friends stayed behind us, the thought of parting from them, though but

but for a time, might have thrown a gloom upon our expiring moments, and sharpened the sting of death. But they are gone, and life has lost by the departure of each of them one of its strongest engagements. And as we have dropt one tie to earth by their removal, so we have gained one more argument for Heaven. Heaven lets down one more attractive, and a sweet and powerful attractive it is, to draw up our hearts and hopes to it; Heaven, where our immortal treasure lies, and whither our pious friends are gone. Let us feel the attachment, and the more Heaven enlarges its glorious and blessed company of Saints made perfect, the more let us look by faith within the veil, and the more ready let us be to follow our brethren that have died in CHRIST to the world of glory, that we may share with them in their eternal blessedness, and in the joys of an intimate, perfect, and indissoluble friendship.

(9.) And lastly, Let the removal of the excellent of the earth, in the flower or prime of their days, and in the meridian of their usefulness, quicken us to importunate and incessant prayer that God would pour out his Spirit upon such of his servants as remain, and upon our rising ministry, and rising generation. The residue of the Spirit is with God, and it is a residue copious enough to qualify and consecrate such as survive, or such as are entering into life, and service, with as eminent gifts and as eminent graces, as those who are gone

gone before us. O for the Spirit of the ascending *Elijahs* to rest upon our young *Elijahs*! "The harvest truly is great, but
 "the labourers are few; let us earnestly and
 "incessantly beseech the LORD of the har-
 "vest that he would send forth labourers into
 "his harvest (b)." O that GOD would kindle
 by his Almighty Breath, and a rich Unction
 from himself, bright and burning Lamps, to
 fill up the places of those which are removed
 from his sanctuary below to shine in his Tem-
 ple above! Let the death of such an eminent
 servant of CHRIST as Mr *Davies*, in the prime
 of his age, and in the height of his usefulness,
 excite us to importunate and abundant prayer
 that GOD would be pleased, in compassion to
 our world, to raise up like instruments of his
 glory both in our land, and wherever his Name
 is known, or there are any opportunities to
 preach his gospel! O for the descent of a double
 portion of the Spirit upon surviving Ministers,
 and upon all other nurseries of Religion and
 Learning at home and abroad! "Where is the
 "LORD GOD of *Elijah*?" He lives, he is still
 with us, though *Elijah* is gone. To him there-
 fore let us look, to him let us pray with holy
 importunity and zeal, that the time, even the set
 time to favour his *Zion*, may come. Let but
 the LORD "give the word, and pour out of his
 "Spirit, and great shall be the number of those
 "that publish it (c). Let him but clothe his
 "Priests

(b) Matt. ix. 37,38.

(c) Psal. lxxviii. 11.

" Priests with Salvation, and his people shall
" shout aloud for joy (*d*)."

And thus have I endeavoured, from various considerations, to resolve this problem in providence, " Why the excellent of the earth
" should be taken away in the flower or prime
" of their age, and from the most enlarged
" spheres of usefulness, or what instructions
" and improvement we may gather from such
" seemingly unkind and undesirable dispensations." I pretend not to assign all the reasons of such a conduct in Deity, in that " God who
" works all things after the counsel of his own
" will," but yet possibly I may have assigned some, and some such as may convince us that even these afflictive, and perhaps frequently supposed impenetrable proceedings, are not without evident traces of the divine wisdom, righteousness, and mercy upon them to a duly observing eye, so that we may not only as the voice of faith, but as the confession of experience, say, " I know, O LORD, that thy
" judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me (*e*)."

I shall only add, that whether we can or cannot investigate the motives in the counsels of a holy, wise, and merciful God, why such providences should take place, as the removal of the excellent of the earth in the flower or
prime

(*d*) P^sal. cxxxii. 16.

(*e*) P^sal. cxix. 75.

prime of their days, and in the height of their usefulness, yet two things methinks are indispensable duties upon us in such dispensations, *Congratulation* and *Submission*. *Congratulation* that our pious friends are gone to a better world, for as one says *, “ Was not self-love too pre-
 “ dominant, and our faith of invisible realities
 “ too weak, we should rejoice at a pious rela-
 “ tive (or friend’s) admission into the Society
 “ of the Blessed. We congratulate them upon
 “ some petty advantage gained in this low
 “ state of being, and again we mourn their
 “ advancement to the highest degree of honour
 “ and felicity, because out of our ken! such
 “ awkward and preposterous creatures are
 “ we!”

The other duty is *Submission*. *Submission* to the high and holy, though awful will of Heaven. Patience has its hour of exertion and effulgence in the darkness of providence, and the season of our greatest trials. “ Father, not my
 “ will but thine be done,” how glorious, how pleasant to hear from a soul under the pressures of the forest afflictions! I have often thought of the noble speech of the Archbishop of *Cambray*, who, when he heard the news of the Duke of *Burgundy’s* death, to whom he had been Preceptor, and for whom he had the most tender affection, burst into tears, but yet presently
 said,

* Extracts of the letters of *Samuel Holden*, Esq; preserved in a Funeral Discourse of Dr *Benjamin Colman’s* for that worthy Gentleman.

said, " If I knew that by the turn of a straw
" I could recover him to life, and yet at the
" same time was assured that it was contrary
" to the will of God, I would not do it." O
for a complacential acquiescence in the divine
disposals! O for the meek and chearful sur-
render of our wills to the will of our God!
This temper how loyal and dutiful, and how
comfortable and happy! May this be our ex-
perience till faith is turned into sight, and hope
and patience shall be swallowed up in boundless
and everlasting fruition and joy!





A N

ELEGIAC POEM

To the MEMORY of the

Rev. SAMUEL DAVIES, *A. M.*

By THOMAS GIBBONS, *D. D.*

*Te Apollinari nuper in agmine,
Florentis ævi robore vidimus
Stantem magistrum, lacrymoso
Præcipitem cecidisse Fato.*

*Mox ut caducis artubus ingruit
Mors æstuosa torrida febribus,
Ferocientes devoluta
Stamina diripuere Parcæ.*

*Candente bysso pensa fluentia
Rupere nodos: occidis, occidis,
Ornate, ceu quondam procellis
Exanimis cecidere Nardi:*

*Ceu dum per Hortos cœruleâ manu
Desœvit udus Jupiter, imbribus
Sterni reluctantes Acanthi
Lassa solo posuere colla.*

CASIM. Lyric. Lib. iii. Od. 26.

THE voice of inspiration oft proclaims
In various stile, but in unvarying sense,
THAT VAIN ARE ALL THINGS HERE: and oft the
Muse,

c *An* ELEGIAC P O E M

In echos to the Oracles of God,
 Has sung how VANITY corrodes the root,
 And blasts the bloom of sublunary bliss.
 But scarce the awful verity has glanc'd,
 Has touch'd the mental surface, ere it di'd,
 And left this foolish heart intrench'd in earth,
 Enamour'd with its shows, and rich in dreams
 Of joys below immaculate and sure.
 But what the Scripture taught, and what the Muse
 Confess'd without sensation or effect,
 I now in Thunders from experience feel.
 How my heart heaves in anguish and despair!
 O'erpower'd by demonstration, storm'd by facts,
 Redoubling facts, THAT ALL ON EARTH IS VAIN.

My *Father* (a), whom my memory recalls
 Vig'rous in life, and arm'd with manly strength,
 That prophesi'd a date of *four score* years,
 Stabb'd by that dire remorseless Murderer
 THE STONE, at *sixty* sunk into the grave.
 My other *Parent* (b) too had not attain'd
 To *seventy* years before her house of clay,
 Sapp'd by resistless premature decays,
 Fell all precipitate in ruins down,
 And now is mould'ring with its kindred dust.
 My *Bretbren* too, each younger than myself,

In

(a) The Rev. Mr THOMAS GIBBONS, many years Pastor of the Church at *Roydon, Herts.* He deceased *April 12, 1757.*

(b) Mrs GRACE GIBBONS, who died *February 4, 1764,* in the *Sixty-sixth* year of her age.

on the Death of Mr DAVIES.

ci

In their gay prime were hurri'd to the tomb :
Thrice, thrice I wept that dear *relation* slain (c).

But not within my Family alone
Has Death his fickle thrust ; his cruel stroke
Alike has cut my choicest *Friendships* down,
WATTS, NOTCUTT, GROV'NOR, GUYSE, are all
inlum'd.

No more with them shall I the social hour
Enjoy, with pleasure and improvement crown'd.

But they were *ancients*, and had pass'd the bounds
The *threescore years and ten* of human life :
Nor can we hope the adamantine laws
Of nature, that commission Death to seize
On age, and laws so rigidly fulfill'd
In boundless havoc through the human race,
That not one mortal rises from the wreck
Through the long race of time, should be repeal'd
To gratify our wish. As Autumn yields
To Winter's desolation ; or as Night
Ends the long sunshine of a Summer's day
In rayless glooms, so Death sits close behind
Protracted life, and claims it as his prey.
Here we resign ; and though we wail our loss,
And mourn a dark'ned and impoverish'd world,
Yet not one murmur mingles with our sighs.

But when a noble *Genius*, scarce beneath
An Angel's tow'ring intellect, refin'd
To all the lustre *science* can impart,

f 3

And

(c) The author was the eldest of five Brethren, three of whom
are gone to their graves before him.

And fraught with all her stores, a Genius purg'd
 From nature's dross, cast in the mould of Heav'n,
 And stamp'd with the full image of its God,
 In life's meridian blazes on the world,
 How our joys kindle? How our hopes presume
 That this illustrious orb for num'rous years
 In wide-extended usefulness shall shine,
 And gild and gladden nations with its beams?
 But, while we gaze with wonder and delight,
 Down drops the luminary from its sphere;
 Hopes, lustres, blessings, raptures, all expire
 In blank oblivion's midnight of despair
 Irreparably lost. Then bursts our grief
 Tumultuous, as the hurricane that bears
 The tempest on its wings, or as the sea
 Lash'd into fury by the warring winds,
 And in huge billows thund'ring to the shore.
 Wild in our agony we scarce forbear
 T'expostulate with Heav'n; "O why should souls,
 " Superlatively good and great, enrich'd
 " With all that nature, art, and grace can give,
 " That vi'd in gen'rous contest which should shed
 " The strongest beams; O why should these display
 " Their matchless treasures, and begin to bless
 " Our wretched world with their celestial light,
 " And swift in endless darkness be expung'd?
 " Shall sinners, execrations of mankind,
 " Imperial Butchers, that delight to wade
 " To pow'r, to empire through a sea of blood,
 " Grow hoary in enormous wickedness,

“ While

“ While Saints of GOD, while cherubs cloth’d with
“ clay,
“ Must perish in their strength, perhaps their
“ bloom ?

“ Shall suns ascending to their noon rush down
“ Precipitate, quench’d in the eastern main,
“ While comets stay to glare in terrors round,
“ And scatter wars and poisons o’er our globe ?
“ What strange, mysterious, painful labyrinths ?
“ Who shall unfold them ? who explain their sense,
“ Involv’d in tenfold night, who thence educe
“ The honours of the Deity, and show
“ His ways are wisdom, equity, and love ?”

But is th’ imagin’d case attested truth ?
Am I not cheated with the sable hues
That *Fancy* weaves in *Melancholy*’s loom
To dress a frightful dream, when *Midnight* reigns ?
’Tis truth, ’tis clear indubitable truth,
Inscrib’d in all the registers of Time,
From ABEL downward to the present hour.

And O! I feel the fact. DAVIES is dead!
Not all his native intellectual store,
Not all th’ accomplishments that learning gave,
Not all th’ angelic graces of his soul,
Could turn th’ inevitable dart aside ;
But in the midst of life, in high career
Of glory to his GOD, of good to men,
He fell : ah ! never to arise again
Till these inferior skies shall be no more.

Devoted by thy Parent to thy GOD,

Fav'rite of Heav'n! who gave the gracious sign
 Of his acceptance, when thy tender age
 Kindl'd with strong importunate desires
 To sound his honour, and extend his reign,
 How didst thou, on commencing man, commence
 A minister of JESUS (d)? Though thy flesh
 Was weak, and seem'd a victim of the grave
 In hopeless irretrievable decay,
 Thy spirit was all life, was wing'd with fire,
 To rescue souls from death, that bitter death
 Which souls alone can die: nor did th' attempt,
 The brave attempt, abortive prove, but Heav'n
 Thy labours with distinguish'd blessing crown'd.

The

(d) I cannot exactly ascertain when Mr *Davies* began his ministry, but he speaks (letter to the Rev. Mr. *Joseph Bellamy* on the State of Religion in *Virginia*, p. 38.) of a glorious display of divine grace in and about *Somerset* county in *Maryland*, of its beginning, as he thinks, in the year 1745 by the ministry of Mr *Robinson*, and of its being carried on by sundry ministers that preached transiently there. "I was there, says he, about two months, when
 " the work was at its height, and I never saw such a deep and
 " spreading concern among people in my life as then appeared
 " among them. The assemblies were numerous, though it was
 " in the extremity of a cold winter, and frequently there
 " were very few among them that did not give some plain
 " indications of distress or joy. O! these were the happiest
 " days that ever my eyes saw, or are, I fear, like to see."
 If Mr *Davies* was there, (and I suppose he was there as a minister) in the year 1745, he was but twenty-one years of age. However, he was sent by the Presbytery of *Newcastle* to *Virginia* in the year 1747, when he was but twenty three years of age. See the above-mentioned letter, p. 18.

Th' impious scoffer (e), hard as adamant,
And fenc'd around with pride's obdurate scales,
Feels the resistless arrow, feels his heart
Transfixt with pains, and dying in despair.
The dark, bewilder'd, doubtful, anxious soul,
In thee a kind, a sure conductor found
To JESUS, whose atoning blood relieves
The pang of guilt, and cures its burning wounds.
EMANUEL's worth was then thy charming theme,
How able, how omnipotent to save,
And how immeasurably great his love,
What a firm rock his merits, where our souls
May build, build for eternity, nor dread
The storms of vengeance, nor th' assaults of hell.

Not ease, nor worldly riches were thine aim,
Thy low ambition, O thou man of God!
Thy spirit kindled with seraphic flame
Soar'd high beyond this little scene of things,

Like

(e) One of the Gentlemen whose conversion I have mentioned in my Sermon, and to whom I here refer in my Poem, came into the assembly where Mr *Davies* preached, with the greatest signs of contempt imaginable, but before the assembly was broken up, appeared to be indeed pricked to the heart under a Sermon from these words, *Matt. xxii. 5. But they made light of it.* The other Gentleman whose conversion I have also mentioned in my Sermon, and whose case I regard under the character of a *dark, bewildered, doubtful, anxious soul* in my Poem, had been for some time in such a condition as I have described, but Mr *Davies's* endeavours for his illumination and comfort were not only employed on his behalf, but, as Mr *Davies* had reason to hope, *were not in vain in the LORD.* From circumstances I conclude that these events happened during his stay in *Maryland* mentioned in the foregoing note.

cvi *An* ELEGIAC POEM

Like some young eagle tow'ring to the skies,
Plains, hills, and mountains less'ning to the sight.

VIRGINIA (*f*), barren, dreary spot, enjoy'd

Thy

(*f*) Dr *Finley* observes in his Sermon, “ that Mr *Davies*'s
“ preaching excited the earnest desires of every vacant congrega-
“ tion where he was known to obtain the happiness of his
“ stated ministrations; but that he undertook the self-denying
“ charge of a dissenting congregation in *Virginia*, &c.” Mr
Davies says, in the above cited letter to Mr *Bellamy*, p. 20.
when three other calls were before him, “ that he was fully
“ convinced *Hanover* (a county in *Virginia*) stood in greater need
“ of a minister than any place he knew, and that if his health
“ permitted, and none of his Brethren could be prevailed on to set-
“ tle there, he could not refuse the call of the people consistently
“ with duty.— And again, on the arrival of a messenger from
“ *Hanover* (being then in a poor state of health) I put my life
“ in my hand, and determined to accept of their call, willing to
“ expire under the fatigues of duty, rather than in voluntary neg-
“ ligence.” In a letter to a friend (see collection of his letters
printed 1757, p. 23.) Mr *Davies* says, “ *Virginia* was for five
“ or six years a melancholy solitude to me, separated from my
“ Brethren, and surrounded with enemies in Church and State.
“ —I divided my labours among seven congregations, fifteen or
“ twenty miles apart.” — And yet this excellent Servant of the
LORD in his farewell Sermon to his people, *July* 1, 1759. upon
his removal to the College of *New-Jersey*, tells them, “ that when
“ after many an anxious conflict he accepted their call, he fully
“ expected he was settled among them for life.— I did not fore-
“ see, says he, nor seek for, nor ever desire an occasion to re-
“ move, notwithstanding the fatigues and various difficulties at-
“ tending my situation: and whatever advantageous offers have
“ been made to me on either side the *Atlantic*, they have not had
“ the force of a temptation. It was in my heart to live and
“ die with you: and such of you as best know my circum-
“ stances, and how little I shall carry from *Virginia*, after
“ eleven

Thy sacred toils: here with-divine success
 Didst thou eradicate the thorn and brier,
 And plant the fir and myrtle in their room,
 Wide to diffuse their fragrancy, and grow
 In ever-verdant beauty, to the praise
 Of that all-gracious, all-creating hand,
 That paints the sandy waste with EDEN'S bloom (g).

Sublimity and energy of thought,
 Enliven'd with devotion's fervid vein,
 And inextinguishable zeal to save
 Immortals from immortal misery,
 Characteriz'd, ennobled, and refin'd
 Thine ev'ry Sermon. Now methinks I hear,
 I feel thee speaking from the sacred desk
 With aspect, action, accent that enforc'd
 Thy great ideas, rend'ring more sublime
 Sublimity, Devotion more devout.
 Sinners, the aliens from the life of God,
 And rebels to his sceptre, o'er whose heads
 The sword of vengeance flames, while they, reclin'd
 On

“ eleven years labour in it, must be convinced in your own
 “ consciences, and can honestly assure others, that worldly in-
 “ terest was not the reason of my attachment to you.”

What a noble disinterested spirit did Mr *Davies* discover in
 his choice of *Virginia*, and settlement there! how worthy of a
 disciple of his divine Master, and what a glorious example to
 all who call themselves the ministers of JESUS CHRIST, and the
 servants of souls for his sake!

(g) “ Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and in-
 “ stead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall
 “ be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall
 “ not be cut off,” *Isai*. lv. 13.

cviii *An* ELEGIAC POEM

On beds of roses, and of myrtles, lull'd
 By *Syren* songs to rest, no danger dream,
 In tender pity *DAVIES* strives to rouse,
 With all the moving pow'rs of argument
 That reason and that scripture can inspire,
 From their tremendous sleep. Now *Sinai's* trump
 In deep divine solemnity he sounds,
 And *Sinai's* curses, red with vengeful flame
 And roaring loud in thunders, round he throws
 In most amazing terrors, for he knew
 That, till th' impendent ruin was beheld,
 The gospel must extend its shield in vain.
 Is there a sinner from his slumber starts
 In wild confusion, horror, and despair,
 Like some poor traveller, whose limbs were laid
 To rest in flow'ry meads, and blooming bow'rs,
 That wakes at once amidst a brood of asps,
 Loud-hissing, glaring fierce, denouncing death,
 Our orator assumes a different strain,
 And speaks from *Sion's* gracious mount, where thron'd
 In mercy shines the MAJESTY of Heav'n
 Encircl'd with a rainbow, peaceful sign,
 And reaching out the sceptre of his grace
 To ev'ry humble weeping penitent,
 Who, prostrate in the dust, in *JESUS'* name
 Implores the pardon of his crimson crimes,
 Implores to be inserted in the line
 Of Heav'n, and with its citizens enroll'd.
 With sacred extasy, with melting strains
 How *DAVIES* dwells upon that matchless love

That

That rescues sinners, trembling o'er the pit,
Into th' unbounded plenitude of bliss,
That rolls forever in the realms on high ?
Nor less the medium of this wondrous grace
Our great EMANUEL, Son and Prince of Heav'n,
Who on the tree accurst in groans and blood
Expir'd a sacrifice for human guilt,
The prophet's lips, touch'd with celestial fire,
Proclaim, and show the *rights* of Deity,
Show all its awful attributes, its *truth*,
Its *righteousness*, its *sanctity* severe,
Preserv'd inviolate, while *Mercy* reigns
Triumphant o'er the curse, reigns to redeem
The foulest rebel from the gulph of hell,
And throug him with the Princes of the skies.

The vengeance of the law, and sinner's doom,
In sounds of deep majestic awe denounc'd,
And in the mildest strains the love describ'd
Of the great Father beaming through the Son,
DAVIES exhorts the soul, the soul condemn'd,
But cheer'd with hope's sweet orient beams, and shown
The gate that opens from its dark distress
Into celestial blessedness and day,
T' accept the offer'd grace, and sue for peace
With prostrate shame, but with courageous faith,
Fix'd on EMANUEL's mediatorial love,
And righteousness consummate, absolute,
That hides, forever hides the foulest guilt,
And shields us from the thunders of the skies.
“ Sinners, I hear the ardent preacher cry,

“ Attend

CX *An* ELEGIAC POEM

- “ Attend your welfare ; and in this your day,
“ Your only day, well weigh your state, and choose
“ The things on which eternal weal depends.
“ By all the tender mercies of your GOD,
“ By JESUS’ agonies of pain and love,
“ By the good SPIRIT’S energy divine
“ In inward purity and heav’nly joys,
“ By all the promises, those springs of life,
“ Whose streams perennial quench the burning thirst,
“ And vigour into dying souls inspire,
“ By the great int’rests of this heav’n-born mind,
“ Endow’d with high capacities, and struck
“ With the dread stamp of immortality,
“ And but divided from infernal flames
“ By the thin veil of clay, by bliss above,
“ Immaculate, eternal, infinite,
“ Which angels, natives of the skies, and saints,
“ The colonies transplanted from our world,
“ In full unclouded visions of their GOD
“ Enjoy, and celebrate in endless praise,
“ REPENT, BELIEVE, and be forever BLEST.”

But DAVIES was not only skill’d to strike
The Law’s keen ploughshare into stubborn hearts,
And in the deep-drawn furrows cast the seed
Of evangelic piety and peace,
But, when the seed had sprung, he knew to nurse
The rising growth, to shed the show’r benign,
To kill the weeds insidious, that might drain
The vital juices, or extend their shade
Malignant, and seclude the heav’nly ray.

The

The Convert, as the Sinner, was the care
 Of DAVIES, and alike they shar'd his zeal.
 Hear him exhort, and supplicate, and charge
 All who the Christian's sacred stile assum'd,
 And grounded their salvation on the cross,
 T' abandon ev'ry sin, to seize, to nail
 The hateful monsters to the sacred tree
 On which the Saviour shed his blood, the balm,
 The sov'reign balm, that heals their rankling wounds.
 Not merely from the motives *Pagans* saw,
 Those ancient sages of sublime renown,
 The boast of learned *Greece*, and learned *Rome*,
 In their researches deep, but not divine,
 Nor only from the laws *JEHOVAH* gave
 To *MOSES*, chosen to reveal his will
 To *ISR'EL*'s sons, and bind the mandates fast
 With penal terrors on the human heart,
 But chiefly from the peerless arguments
 The gospel yields, DAVIES devoutly urg'd
 A sanctity of manners, from the soul
 In cloudless lustre o'er the life diffus'd.
 " Behold, he cries, the Father's love, that gave
 " From his own bosom his eternal Son
 " To infamy and pain for guilty men!
 " And can'st thou, Christian, whose exulting heart
 " Feels the full joys of this philanthropy,
 " Pervert, abuse, insult the grace, and blot
 " Its blest effulgence with despight and scorn,
 " And in supreme enormity of guilt
 " Start up a monster, at which hell itself
 " Might

crii *An* ELEGIAC POEM

- " Might gaze aghast? Behold the love of CHRIST,
 " That brought him from the realms of bliss to tread
 " This vale of sin and woe; behold his brows
 " Impurpl'd with the thorny maze! his back
 " Plough'd with the cruel scourge! the murd'rous
 " tree
 " Erected high, behold the LORD of Life
 " There hung, there nail'd with iron tortures
 " through,
 " And bleeding in the keenest pangs of death
 " A victim for thy crimes! Then ask thyself,
 " O Christian, O Believer! if this love
 " Dimensionless, th' amazement of the skies,
 " Claims not responsive love? what heart so cold
 " So frozen, but imbibes th' all-pow'rful rays,
 " Relents, dissolves, to gratitude transform'd?
 " By MERCY and by MERIT thus redeem'd,
 " Both matchless, both stupendous! O present
 " Yourself a living sacrifice to God
 " In all your pow'rs, in all which you enjoy,
 " Holy, acceptable, in flames of love,
 " Ardent, yet unconsuming (*b*): Homage due
 " To unexempl'd, to unbounded Grace:
 " This REASON dictates; REASON this requires."

Thus DAVIES preach'd: a true Evangelist,
 The Envoy of the skies. Not Pagan lore,
 Where dross with gold commingles, where no stamp,

No

(*b*) " I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the mercies of
 " God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,
 " acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Rom. xii. 1.

No sanction of the Deity is found,
 But heav'n-descended, uncorrupted Truth
 This Steward of the mysteries of God
 Dispens'd: despairing indigence grew rich,
 Rich for eternity, and smil'd away
 In transport and in triumph all its pangs.

But not alone in strains seraphic flow'd
 The purest noblest doctrines from his tongue,
 For his own life confirm'd the truths he taught.
 In works of Piety, in Pray'r and Praise,
 In frequent Admonitions to his Flock
 Unweari'd to pursue the road to Heav'n,
 He spent his days: nor were his arduous toils
 A painful drudgery, or lifeless form:
 'Twas choice, 'twas rest, 'twas triumph, 'twas repast
 T'employ his fast-consuming lamp of life
 In guiding souls immortal to the skies.

When fraudulent *France* lands not her own usurpt,
 When *Braddock's* host was vanquish'd by the foe
 With hideous slaughter, and inglorious rout,
 And when *Virginia's* frontiers fell a prey
 To *Indian* savages, incarnate fiends,
 In ravage, in remorseless massacre,
 That with wild consternation and dismay
 Shook the pale Colony, this man of GOD,
 His country's faithful friend, exhorts, excites (i)

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g

The

(i) See an excellent and animated Sermon of Mr. Davies's to this purpose, intitled, *Religion and Patriotism the Constituents of a good Soldier*, preached to Captain *Overton's* independent company of

cxiv *An* ELEGIAC POEM

The sluggish, tim'rous, and irresolute,
 By Liberty, Religion, Love to Men,
 Love to Themselves, to rouse from fear and sloth,
 March to the fighting field, and nobly die
 In the brave enterprise, or live to hail
 Themselves, their Wives, their Children sav'd from
 bonds,

From death, to hail the storm of WAR o'erblown,
 And PEACE returning with her olive-wand
 To smile in sun-beams and celestial charms.

In private and domestic life how bright
 Were DAVIES' virtues? how divinely mild?
 Full from the GOD what heav'nly wisdom shed
 Its radiance? sacred, peaceable, serene,
 Forgiving, merciful, replete with bliss;
 With *Partiakiety's* opprobrious cloud,
 With base *Hypocrisy's* infernal fogs
 Uninjur'd, uneclips'd (k). Not heav'n alone
 But earth proclaim'd his worth in loudest praise.

So have we seen a tree of noblest kind
 In fruits exub'rant lift its topmost boughs
 Sublime, impatient to present the skies

Pro-

of volunteers, raised in *Hanover* county, *Virginia*, *August* 17, 1755, soon after *Braddock's* defeat. I might mention also another Discourse of Mr *Davies's* entitled, *the Curse of Cowardice*, preached to the militia of *Hanover-County* in *Virginia* at a general muster, *May* 5, 1758, to which might be added other proofs of our Author's patriotic spirit, in that time of danger, both from the pulpit and press.

(k) " But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then
 " peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and
 " good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."
James iii. 17.

Propitious with its ripeſt, choicelt ſtores,
 Then bend its lower branches kindly down
 To meet whatever hands beneath might claim
 A ſhare in its autumnal joys, to ſlake
 The parching thirſt, or vig'rous life inſpire.

In him his venerable Mother found
 True filial piety. The Widow's tear
 By the Son's lenient hand was wip'd away,
 And the dark vale of age with pleaſure ſmil'd,
 Illumin'd by his love, that tender love
 Which *Nature* dictates, and which *Grace* ſecures.
 Thrice happy Woman, honour'd with the birth
 Of ſuch a Saint and Prophet of the LORD!
 Not only the obedient pious Son
 Solac'd thine eve of life, but in his toils,
 That bleſt the world around him, thou wert bleſt,
 The Saint and Mother mingling joy with joy.
 How great thy ſorrows when he wing'd his flight
 Away from earth, ah! never to return!
 But ſhort thy ſtay behind, to weep, to wail;
 Already thou haſt trac'd him to the ſkies,
 And join'd the perfect ſpirits of the juſt,
 That, from this atmosphere of ſin and woe
 Aſcended, dwell in glory, love, and joy,
 Angelic life! immortal and divine.

But *Davies* was not more the duteous Son
 Than the kind Husband, and the tender Sire:
 How kind, how tender, Muſe, forbear to tell;
 The Widow (*l*), and the Orphans ſtill ſurvive,

g 2

And

(*l*) The three ſons of Mr *Davies*, the eldeſt about fourteen or fifteen years of age, I find, through the aſſiſtance of benefactors,
 are

cxvi *An* ELEGIAC POEM

And should'st thou paint his worth, their griefs might
rise

Tumultuous, and their wounds might bleed anew.
Father of mercies, God of comfort, hear

The

are at the college at *New-Jersey* for education. Mrs *Davies*, with her two little daughters, is removed to *Virginia*, and lives with her aged mother there. A passage or two from a letter I some time since received from the Rev. Mr *John Todd*, a worthy minister in *Virginia*, may give some Idea of Mrs *Davies*'s character and situation. "Mrs *Davies*, says he, lives now in *Hanover* (a county " in *Virginia*) with her aged mother, who is I think justly esteemed " one of the most eminently pious and amiable christians in our " land. There is also a younger sister in the family, disabled in " one arm, the most remarkable young person I ever have known " for a continued life of piety, her time being chiefly employed " in the exercises of the divine life, &c. There are an uncommon " softness and delicacy in the whole family, abundance of good- " nature, and they are remarkably inoffensive and benevolent " towards all, and eminently modest, self-diffident, and tender in " their walk towards God and mankind. Mrs *Davies* enjoys " pretty good health, yet subject to great despondency and me- " lancholy. She can hardly speak of the dear departed friend " without a sensible commotion and tears. These three females, " with Mrs *Davies*'s two little daughters, make up an amiable " little family, who live together on the *little fortune of the old* " *lady, which keeps them from distress, with proper frugality, retired* " from the noise of the-world, and much taken up with the things " of religion. Dear Mr *Davies* took no care to lay up an estate " for his family; his great soul was full of other things that re- " spected the immortal interests of mankind; and God has re- " markably rewarded him, if I may so say, in inclining others to " contribute to the education of his three sons at the college: and " I hope the same divine hand will appear for the comfort and " relief of his relict and daughters, who are deprived of a most " excellent husband and parent."

The ardent supplication. “ May his mate,
 “ Once happy in his love, but now bereav'd,
 “ Such was thy will, of her best mortal Friend,
 “ In thee a refuge find! O may thy pow'r,
 “ Thy mercy soften her distress, support
 “ Her sinking heart, and gild her mournful gloom
 “ With the glad visions of eternal day;
 “ Till, all her graces purifi'd from dross
 “ By these severe afflictions, like the gold
 “ Refin'd, refulgent from the tort'ring flame,
 “ Her spirit at thy call shall quit her clay,
 “ Shall tow'r triumphant to the world on high,
 “ T' enjoy her SAVIOUR and her GOD, and dwell
 “ With the dear Partner of her soul on earth,
 “ Whose loss her ceaseless sorrows now deplore,
 “ In regions of perennial perfect bliss.
 “ Nor less, O Thou, at once the Widow's Judge,
 “ And Orphan's gracious Father, deign to smile
 “ Upon his helpless infant-progeny,
 “ By this distressing stroke, this providence,
 “ Depriv'd of Benefactor (m), Guardian, Guide

g 3

“ Through

(m) How much Mr *Davies's* tender spirit was concerned for the best interests of his dear children may be observed from some passages quoted from his Letters in the Editor's Discourse on his death, and will further appear from a Poem of Mr *Davies's* on the birth of his third son, *John Rodgers Davies*, which I the rather choose to insert, as it may, at the same time that it shows the pious Father, afford a specimen of Mr *Davies's* poetical talents, of which a just notice is taken by Dr *Finley* in his Sermon on his death.

Thou little wond'rous miniature of man,
 Form'd by unerring wisdom's perfect plan;

Thou

cxviii *An* ELEGIAC POEM

“ Through childhood’s wants and weakness, and
 “ through youth’s
 Enchanting paths, with flow’ry ruin strow’d.

“ O may

Thou little stranger, from eternal night
 Emerging into life’s immortal light,
 Thou heir of worlds unknown, thou candidate
 For an important everlasting state,
 Where this young embryo shall its pow’rs expand,
 Enlarging, rip’ning still, and never stand.
 This glimm’ring spark of being, just now struck
 From nothing by the all-creating Rock,
 To immortality shall flame and burn,
 When suns and stars to native darkness turn ;
 Thou shalt the ruins of the world survive,
 And through the rounds of endless ages live.
 Now thou art born into an anxious state
 Of dubious trial for thy future fate :
 Now thou art lifted in the war of life,
 The prize immense, and O ! severe the strife.

Another birth awaits thee, when the hour
 Arrives that lands thee on th’ eternal shore,
 (And O ! ’tis near, with winged haste ’twill come,
 Thy cradle rocks toward the neighb’ring tomb)
 Then shall immortals say, “ A Son is born,”
 While thee as dead mistaken mortals mourn ;
 From glory then to glory thou shalt rise,
 Or sink from deep to deeper miseries,
 Ascend perfection’s everlasting scale,
 Or still descend from gulph to gulph in hell.

Thou embryo-angel, or thou infant-fiend,
 A Being now begun, but ne’er to end,
 What boding fears a Father’s heart torment,
 Trembling and anxious for the grand event,
 Lest thy young soul, so late by heav’n bestow’d,
 Forget her Father, and forget her God,

Left

“ O may thy servant's living images,
“ Those young editions of himself, to thee
“ Presented by him in their earliest hours,
“ When o'er them pass'd the consecrated stream,
“ Sign of thy grace, and in his fervent pray'rs
“ By him commended to thy special love
“ To sanctify and save, in thee enjoy
“ Far more than they have lost: thy pow'r supreme.
“ Their adamantine shield; thy stedfast truth
“ Their rock; thy wisdom their unerring guide;
“ Thy sanctity their pattern; and thy grace
“ The ocean of their happiness, immense
“ As the unbounded wishes of the soul,
“ And permanent as its immortal age!”

The Preacher, Patriot, Husband, Parent, Son,
In all their characters in all their claims
Adorn'd, accomplish'd in this Man of God,
View him as a Companion and a Friend,
URANIA, for thou knew'st him; might thy strain
But equal his incomparable worth!
On wings of joy th' auspicious moments flew
In his society: no pedant's pride,
No pert loquacity, no stiff reserve,
No mean obsequiousness, no fawning smile,
No fulsome penegyrics show'r'd on all

Left, while imprison'd in this house of clay,
To tyrant-lusts she fall an helpless prey,
And left, descending still from bad to worse,
Her immortality should prove her curse.
Maker of souls! avert so dire a doom,
Or snatch her back to native nothing's gloom!

cxx *An* ELEGIAC POEM

Promiscuous, an hypocrisy of praise,
 No rudeness, no impertinence were seen,
 Were heard in him : but elegance, and ease,
 Freedom, and dignity, and pow'rs to smooth
 The wrinkled brow of care, and entertain
 The soul, fatigu'd in science' thorny maze,
 With a festivity, not foaming high
 Over religion's banks, and foul with stains,
 But like Heav'n's lustres amiably serene ;
 These crown'd his converse as they form'd his soul.

While all mankind his counsels and his pray'rs
 Enjoy'd, a chosen, a distinguish'd few
 Were with his friendship dignifi'd and blest :
 For these his soul collected in a point
 Its gen'rous ardors : scarce the saint above,
 Or seraph glow'd with a diviner flame.
 This friendship once, ah ! once, my soul, was thine,
 Thine honour, and thy blessing. How hast thou
 With transport sitting at the list'ning ear
 Imbib'd the heav'nly music of his tongue,
 As he his miscellaneous life disclos'd ;
 Thick gloomy clouds, skirted with smiling rays,
 Corporeal weakness, hostile frowns, high aims,
 Vast labours, the supports and smiles of Heav'n !

When parted from each other, and the deep,
 The huge *Atlantic* deep, between us roll'd,
 Affection fed its ever-burning flame.
 Th' Epistle oft was wasted o'er the main,
 Where the same friendship met th' enraptur'd eye,
 Full as its current flow'd from line to line,

Whose

Whose silver accents once entranc'd the ear.
 Such noble sentiment, such cordial love,
 Such genuine piety, the breath of Heav'n,
 Inspir'd thy letters, O thou godlike man,
 As angels might have dictated, have own'd
 As theirs, did they with sp'rits in flesh now hold
 Such correspondence as they erst on earth
 Their visits made, and friend convers'd with friend.

Not long before thy vital glafs had run
 The destin'd number of thy fleeting sands,
 Th' esteem of thine high merit call'd thee forth
 Over a young illustrious Nursery
 Of *Virtue* and of *Science* to preside,
 And raise to fragrant bloom and fruits mature
 Successive trees of righteousness, a praise
 To Heav'n, and blessing to mankind. How great
 Thy toils, thy skill, how nobly adequate
 To thine exalted sphere, the sighs, the groans
 Of *Nassau-Hall* (n) at thy decease proclaim'd.

How

(n) As Mr *Davies* was called to the Presidentship of the College of *Nassau-Hall*, and died in that station, it may perhaps be agreeable to the reader to be informed, from an account of the College printed 1764, and which I have now before me, that a charter for founding a College in *New-Jersey* was granted in the year 1748; that by the benefactions received in *Great-Britain* and *Ireland*, as well as in *America*, the Trustees, consisting of Gentlemen of the Clergy and Laity, in number twenty-three, erected a building in which the students might be boarded as well as taught in the little village of *Princeton*, being near the center of *New-Jersey*, on the public road between *New-York* and *Philadelphia*, — that the edifice is denominated *Nassau-Hall*, in honour to king *William*
 the

CXXII *An ELEGIAC POEM*

How happy that a *Finley* soon suppli'd
A *Davies'* loss! So when *ELIJAH* rode

To

the third, prince of *Orange* and *Nassau*; and that it will accommodate about an hundred and forty-seven students, computing three to a chamber.—That the constitution of the College, as appears from its charter, is founded upon a free and catholic bottom, and calculated for the equal and general advantage of every religious denomination of Protestants.—That at present there are three Tutors, besides the President, who is the Rev. *Samuel Finley*, D.D. “ as to the happiness of whose succession to the Presidentship, says “ my account, the present flourishing state of the College, the “ general diligence of the Youth in their literary pursuits, and “ the internal harmony and good order so observable in the Society are sufficient attestations.”— To the honour of the College it is added, “ that many youths who have come to *Nassau-Hall* “ for education, without any just sense of the obligations either “ of natural or revealed Religion, have been there effectually re- “ formed, become men of solid and rational piety, and now ap- “ pear upon the stage of public action employing their talents to “ the honour of the supreme Bestower, and in promoting the good “ of mankind.” So far from the above account.

Was the Editor to speak his sentiments of this Seminary of Religion and Learning from the intelligence he has received concerning it, he should speak in the strongest language of commendation, and especially of its excellent order and management: and therefore, as he is informed from the abovementioned account that the College stands in need of an addition to its Library, which at present consists only of about twelve hundred books, and is but indifferently furnished with mathematical instruments, and apparatus for experimental Philosophy, he should greatly rejoice to find that these deficiencies were supplied by the hand of affluence and liberality; that by these means this newly planted, and valuable nursery of *Virtue* and *Knowledge* might enjoy every possible advantage that might contribute to its growing esteem, and extensive and lasting usefulness.

To Heav'n triumphant in his car of fire,
ELISHA, with the unction of his God
Enrich'd, up-rose the Prophet in his room.
“ Then why these mournful melancholy strains,
Cries FAITH, drest like a cherub of the skies
With starry pinions, and a sun-like blaze,
One hand a telescope advancing high,
The other with th' expanded code of Heav'n ;
“ Why these complaints, since, as one star descends,
“ Another rises in its place to gild
“ The dark'ned hemisphere ? Know that the Church
“ Is with Omnipotence intrench'd around,
“ Nor shall the pow'rs of Hell, nor wastes of Death,
“ Or vanquish, or destroy. Though 'tis decreed
“ That Saints, that Ministers themselves should die,
“ And pay the debt of sin, or in full age,
“ Or in the strength of life, or ev'n its bloom,
“ Yet love immense, and everlasting pow'r
“ Repair the desolations. Soldiers fall,
“ And soldiers to the christian standard crowd,
“ And fill the ranks, the reg'ments thinn'd by death.
“ Thus Heav'n secures the Church, and as the Saints
“ Successive die, the Saints successive rise,
“ Know further, that this world is not design'd
“ To be th' inheritance, the rest, the home
“ Of the immortal spirit: 'tis the school
“ Of education for eternity,
“ And, when the soul is taught celestial truth,
“ And moulded to its nature, at the call
“ Of its all-gracious SIRE it wings its way
“ From this corporeal cell, this vale of night,
“ To

cxxiv *An* ELEGIAC POEM

- “ To infinite perfection, light, and joy,
“ The summit of its wish, the glorious prize
“ That fills its hopes, its ardency inspires.
“ Shall minors of the earth aspire to men,
“ And long t’ enjoy their honours and estates ?
“ And shall their friends congratulate their rise
“ To manhood, and dominion o’er themselves ?
“ And shall not Saints, the heirs of heav’nly crowns,
“ Rejoice to reach maturity, to take
“ Possession of their heritage above,
“ Immortal glories, and unbounded blifs ?
“ What, shall their dignity, their happiness,
“ By their associates, for a little space
“ Detain’d behind, be mourn’d in tears and groans
“ Inconsolable, or shall not their gain
“ Abate your throbbing anguish for their loss,
“ And drown your griefs in joy ? prepost’rous men,
“ Prepost’rous boasters of the Christian name,
“ Your creed and conduct war perversely wage.
“ Henceforward then, desponding mortal, cease
“ Thy causeless wailings, see the gloomy clouds
“ Break into brightness, see the ways of Heav’n
“ Radiant with wisdom, faithfulness, and love.
“ Go, serve thy generation, speak and act
“ Each day, each hour in honour to thy God,
“ And unremitting labours to diffuse
“ Immortal blessings to immortal men :
“ Tread the same path that *Davies* trod, and thou
“ Like him shalt scale the mansions of the sky,
“ Like him shalt hear the plaudit of thy God,
“ Like

on the Death of Mr DAVIES. CXX

“ Like him shalt wear an ever-blooming crown
“ Like him enjoy immensity of bliss,
“ Sin, Satan, Death, to their own native Hell
“ Consign’d, and bound in adamantine chains.”

So spake the radiant daughter of the skies,
And points me to the truths the book of God
Unveils, and lends her telescope t’ explore
The heav’nly Continent, and there behold
The joys, and glories of the Saints on high,
Dismiss’d from flesh, and present with the LORD.
I read, I saw. The darkness, mists, and shades
Dispers’d, dissolv’d in universal day.

So when a Trav’ler, in nocturnal gloom
And hazy fogs involv’d, pursues his way,
Each object scarce discernible appears
With mournful fable hung, and drench’d with tears:
But, when the orient sun reveals his light,
A lovely landscape opens to the sight,
Spring’s gay embroid’ries all the fields adorn,
And sparkling gems embellish ev’ry thorn,
To Heav’n the lark in tuneful ardor springs,
Each grove, each tree with warbling rapture rings,
The Pilgrim joins the joy, and as he journeys
sings. }



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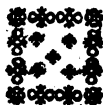
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THE BIBLE



C O N T E N T S

O F

V O L U M E I.

S E R M O N I.

The Divine Authority and Sufficiency of the
Christian Religion.

LUKE XVI. 27—31.

THEN he said, I pray thee therefore, father,
that thou wouldest send him, to my father's
house: for I have five brethren: that he may
testify unto them, lest they also come into this
place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They
have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.
And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one
went unto them from the dead, they will repent.
And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses
and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded
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Erratum.

Page 2. Line 23, read *specious*.

SERMON

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S E R M O N I.

The divine Authority and Sufficiency of the Christian Religion.



LUKE XVI. 27—31.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

W H A T *Micah* said superstitiously, when he was robbed of his idols, "Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more (a)?" may be truly spoken with regard to the religion of JE-
VOL. I. B SUS,

(a) Judg. xviii. 24.

2 *The divine Authority and Sufficiency* Sermon I.

sus; If that be taken from us, what have we more? "If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do. (b)?" The generality of you owe all your hopes of a glorious immortality to this heaven-born religion; and you make it the rule of your faith and practice; confident that in so doing you please God.

But what if after all you should be mistaken? what if the religion of JESUS should be an imposture?—I know you are struck with horror at the thought, and perhaps alarmed at my making so shocking a supposition. But this suspicion, horrid as it is, has probably been suggested to you at times by infernal agency; this suspicion may at times have risen in your minds in their wanton and licentious excursions; or from the false alarms of a melancholy and timorous imagination: and if this suspicion has never been raised in you by the sophistical conversation of loose wits and affected rationalists, it has been owing to your happy retirement from the polite world, where infidelity makes extensive conquests under the spacious name of *Deism*. Since therefore you are subject to an assault from such a suspicion; when you may not be armed ready to repel it, let me this day start it from its ambush, that I may try the force of a few arguments upon it, and furnish you with weapons to conquer it.

Let me also tell you, that that faith in the Christian Religion which proceeds from insufficient

(b) Psal. xi. 3.

icient or bad principles, is but little better than infidelity. If you believe the Christian Religion to be divine, because, you hardly care whether it be true or false, being utterly unconcerned about religion in any shape, and therefore never examining the matter;—if you believe it true, because you have been educated in it; because your parents or ministers have told you so; or because it is the religion of your country; if these are the only grounds of your faith, it is not such a faith as constitutes you true Christians, for upon the very same grounds you would have been *Mahometans* in *Turkey*, disciples of *Confucius* in *China*, or worshippers of the devil among the *Indians*, if it had been your unhappy lot to be born in those countries; for a *Mahometan*, a *Chinese*, or an *Indian*, can assign these grounds for his faith. But sure, I need not tell you, that the grounds of a mistaken belief in an imposture are not a sufficient foundation for a saving faith in a divine revelation. I am afraid there are many such implicit believers among us, who are in the right only by chance: and these lie a prey to every temptation, and may be turned out of the way of truth by every wind of doctrine. It is therefore necessary to teach them the grounds of the Christian Religion, both to prevent their seduction, and to give them a rational and well-grounded faith, instead of that which is only blind and accidental.

4 *The divine Authority and Sufficiency* Sermon. 1.

Nay, such of us as have the clearest conviction of this important truth, had need to have it inculcated upon us, that we may be more and more impressed with it; for the influence of Christianity upon our hearts and lives will be proportioned to the realizing, affecting persuasion of its truth and certainty in our understandings.

If I can prove that Christianity answers all the ends of a religion from G O D; — if I can prove that it is attended with sufficient attestations; — if I can prove that no sufficient objections can be offered against it; — and that men have no reason at all to desire another; but that if this proves ineffectual for their reformation and salvation, there is no ground to hope that any other would prove successful; — I say, if I can prove these things, then the point in debate is carried, and we must all embrace the religion of JESUS as certainly true. — These things are asserted or implied in my text, with respect to the Scriptures then extant, *Moses, and the Prophets.*

My text is a parabolical Dialogue between *Abraham* and one of his wretched posterity, once rioting in the luxuries of high life, but now tormented in infernal flames.

We read of his brethren in his father's house, among these probably his estate was divided upon his decease; from whence we may infer that he had no children; for had he had any, it would have been more natural to represent him

him as solicitous for their reformation by a messenger from the dead, than for that of his brothers. He seems therefore, like some of our unhappy modern rakes, just to have come to his estate, and to have abandoned himself to such a course of debaucheries as soon shattered his constitution, and brought him down to the grave, and alas! to hell, in the bloom of life, when they were far from his thoughts. May this be a warning to all of his age and circumstances!

Whether from some remaining affection to his brethren, or (which is more likely) from a fear that they who had shared with him in sin, would increase his torment if they should descend to him in the infernal prison, he is solicitous that *Lazarus* might be sent as an apostle from the dead to warn them. His petition is to this purpose, "Since no request in my own
 " favour can be granted; since I cannot obtain
 " the poor favour of a drop of water to cool my
 " flaming tongue, let me at least make one re-
 " quest in behalf of those that are as yet in the
 " land of hope, and not beyond the reach of
 " mercy. In my father's house I have five bre-
 " thren, gay, thoughtless, young creatures, who
 " are now rioting in those riches I was forced
 " to leave, who interred my mouldering corps
 " in state, little apprehensive of the doom of
 " my immortal part; who are now treading
 " the same enchanting paths of pleasure I
 " walked in; and will, unless reclaimed, soon
 " descend, like me, thoughtless and unprepar-

6 *The divine Authority and Sufficiency* Sermon. 1.

“ ed, into these doleful regions : I therefore
“ pray, that thou wouldst send *Lazarus* to
“ them, to alarm them in their wild career
“ with an account of my dreadful doom, and
“ inform them of the reality and importance of
“ everlasting happiness and misery, that they
“ may reform, and so avoid this place of tor-
“ ment, whence I can never escape.”

Abraham's answer may be thus paraphrased ;
“ If thy brothers perish, it will not be for want
“ of means ; they enjoy the sacred Scriptures of
“ the Old Testament, written by *Moses and the*
“ *Prophets*, and these are sufficient to inform
“ them of necessary truths to regulate their prae-
“ tice, and particularly to warn them of ever-
“ lasting punishment ! let them therefore hear
“ and regard, study, and obey those writings,
“ for they need no farther means for their sal-
“ vation.”

To this the wretched creature replies ; “ Nay,
“ father *Abraham*, these means will not avail ;
“ I enjoyed them all ; and yet here I am, a lost
“ soul ; and I am afraid they will have as little
“ effect upon them as they had upon me.
“ These means are common and familiar, and
“ therefore disregarded. But if one arose from
“ the dead, if an apostle from the invisible world
“ were sent to them, to declare as an eye-witness
“ the great things he has seen, surely they
“ would repent. The novelty and terror of the
“ apparition would alarm them. Their senses
“ would be struck with so unusual a messenger,
“ and

“ and they would be convinced of the reality of
 “ eternal things, therefore I must renew my re-
 “ quest ; send *Lazarus* to them in all the pomp
 “ of heavenly splendor ; *Lazarus*, whom they
 “ once knew in so abject a condition, and whom
 “ they will therefore the more regard, when
 “ they see him appear in all his present glory.”

Thus the miserable creature pleads, (and it is natural for us to wish for other means, when those we have enjoyed are ineffectual, though it should be through our own neglect) but, alas ! he pleads in vain.

Abraham continues inexorable, and gives a very good reason for his denial : “ If they pay
 “ no regard to the writings of *Moses and the*
 “ *Prophets*, the standing revelation God has
 “ left in his Church, it would be to no pur-
 “ pose to give them another : they would not
 “ be persuaded, though one rose from the dead ;
 “ the same disposition, that renders them deaf
 “ to such messengers as *Moses and the Prophets*,
 “ would also render them imper-suasible by a
 “ messenger from the dead. Such a one might
 “ strike them with a panic, but it would soon
 “ be over, and then they would return to their
 “ usual round of pleasures ; they would pre-
 “ sently think the apparition was but the crea-
 “ ture of their own imagination, or some un-
 “ accountable illusion of their senses. If one
 “ rose from the dead, he could but declare the
 “ the same things substantially with *Moses and*
 “ *the Prophets* ; and he could not speak with

8 *The divine Authority and Sufficiency* Sermon. i.

“ greater authority, or give better credentials,
“ than they ; and therefore they who are not
“ benefited by these standing means; must be
“ given up as desperate; and God for very good
“ reasons will not multiply new revelations to
“ them.”

This answer of *Abraham* was exemplified, when another *Lazarus* was raised from the dead in the very sight of the Jews, and Christ burst the bands of death, and gave them incontestible evidences of his resurrection ; and yet after all they were not persuaded, but persisted in invincible infidelity.

This parable was spoken before any part of the New Testament was written, and added to the sacred Canon ; and if it might be then asserted, that the standing revelation of God's will was sufficient, and that it was needless to demand farther, then much more may it be asserted now, when the Canon of the Scriptures is completed, and we have received so much additional light from the New Testament. We have not only *Moses and the Prophets*, but we have also CHRIST who is a messenger from the dead, and his apostles ; and therefore, surely “ if we do not hear them, neither would we be “ persuaded, though one arose from the dead.” The gospel is the last effort of the Grace of GOD with a guilty world, and if this has no effect upon us, our disease is incurable; that refuses to be healed.

I can-

I cannot insist upon all the important truths contained in this copious text, but only design,

I. To shew the Sufficiency of the standing Revelation of GOD's will in the Scriptures to bring men to repentance: and,

II. To expose the vanity and unreasonableness of the Objections against this Revelation, and of demanding another.

I. I am to shew the Sufficiency of the standing Revelation in the Scriptures to bring men to repentance.

If the Scriptures give us sufficient instructions in matters of faith, and sufficient directions in matters of practice,—if they are attended with sufficient evidences for our faith,—and produce sufficient excitements to influence our practice, then they contain a sufficient revelation; for it is for these purposes we need a revelation, and a revelation that answers these purposes, has the directest tendency to make us truly religious, and bring us to an happy immortality. But that the Revelation in the Scriptures (particularly in the New Testament, which I shall more immediately consider, as being the immediate foundation of Christianity) is sufficient for all these purposes, will be evident from an induction of particulars.

I. The Scriptures give us sufficient instructions what we should believe, or are a sufficient rule of faith.

Religion

Religion cannot subsist without right notions of God and divine things, and entire ignorance or mistakes in its fundamental articles, must be destructive of its nature, and therefore a divine Revelation must be a collection of rays of light, a system of divine knowledge; and such we find the Christian Revelation to be, as contained in the sacred writings.

In the Scriptures we find the faint discoveries of natural reason illustrated, its uncertain conjectures determined, and its mistakes corrected; so that Christianity includes natural religion in the greatest perfection. But it does not rest here; it brings to light things; which "eye" had not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of "man conceived (a);" things, which our feeble reason could never have discovered, without the help of supernatural revelation; and which yet are of the utmost importance for us to know.

In the Scriptures we have the clearest and most majestic account of the nature and perfections of the Deity, and of his being the Creator, Ruler, and Benefactor of the universe, to whom therefore all reasonable beings are under infinite obligations.

In the Scriptures we have an account of the present state of human nature, as degenerate, and a more rational and easy account of the manner of its apostasy, than could ever be given by the light of nature.

In

(a) 1 Corinth. ii. 9;

In the Scriptures too (which wound but to cure) we have the welcome account of a method of recovery from the ruins of our apostasy through the mediation of the Son of GOD: there we have the assurance which we could find no where else, that GOD is reconcilable, and willing to pardon penitents upon the account of the obedience and sufferings of CHRIST. There all our anxious enquiries, "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD?" "or bow myself before the most high GOD?" "shall I come before him with burnt-offerings? &c. (a)" are satisfactorily answered; and there the agonizing conscience can obtain relief, which might have sought it in vain among all the other religions in the world.

In the Scriptures also eternity and the invisible worlds are laid open to our view; and "life" and immortality are brought to light by the "gospel;" about which the heathen sages, after all their enquiries, laboured under uneasy suspicions. There we are assured of the state of future rewards and punishments, according to our conduct in this state of probation; and the nature, perfection, and duration of the happiness and misery, are described with as much accuracy, as are necessary to engage us to seek the one, and shun the other.

I particularize these doctrines of Christianity as a specimen, or as so many general heads, to which many others may be reduced; not intending

(a) Micah vi. 6, 7.

tending a compleat enumeration, which would lead me far beyond the bounds of one sermon, and for which my whole life is not sufficient. I therefore proceed to add,

2. The holy Scriptures give us compleat directions in matters of practice, or are a sufficient Rule of life.

A divine Revelation must not be calculated merely to amuse us, and gratify our curiosity with sublime and refined notions and speculations, but adapted to direct and regulate our practice, and render us better as well as wiser.

Accordingly, the sacred writings give us a compleat system of practical religion and morality. There not only the duties of natural religion are inculcated; but several important duties, as love to our enemies, humility, &c. are clearly discovered, which the feeble light of reason in the heathen moralists did either not perceive at all, or but very faintly. In short, there we are informed, of our duties towards God, towards our neighbours, and towards ourselves. The Scriptures are full of particular injunctions and directions to particular duties, lest we should not be sagacious enough to infer them from general rules; and sometimes all these duties are summed up in some short maxim, or general rule, which we may easily remember, and always carry about with us. Such a noble summary is that which CHRIST has given us of the whole moral law; "Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart, &c. and
" thy

" thy neighbour as thyself." Or that all-comprehending rule of our conduct towards one another, " Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye the same unto them."

What recommends these doctrinal instructions and practical directions is, that they are plain and obvious to common sense. It is as much the concern of the illiterate and vulgar to be religious, as of the few endowed with an exalted and philosophic genius; and consequently, whatever difficulties may be in a revelation to exercise the latter, yet all necessary matters of faith and practice must be delivered in a plain manner, level to the capacities of the former; otherwise it would be no revelation at all to them, who stand in most need of it. Accordingly the religion of JESUS, though it has mysteries equal and infinitely superior to the largest capacity, yet in its necessary articles is intelligible to all ranks who apply themselves with proper diligence to the perusal of them; and I dare affirm, that a man of common sense, with the assistance of the sacred scriptures, can form a better system of religion and morality, than the wisest philosopher, with all his abilities and learning, can form without this help. This I dare affirm, because it has been put to trial, and attested by matter of fact; for whoever is acquainted with the writings of the ancient heathen philosophers, cannot but be convinced, that amidst all their learning and study, amidst all their
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shining thoughts and refined speculations, they had not such just notions of God and his perfections, of the most acceptable way of worshipping him, of the duties of morality, and of a future state, as any common Christian among us has learned from the scriptures, without any uncommon natural parts, without extensive learning, and without such painful study and close application, as the heathen moralists were forced to use to make their less perfect discoveries. In this sense the least in the kingdom of heaven, *i. e.* any common Christian, is greater than all the *Socrates's*, the *Plato's*, the *Cicero's*, and the *Seneca's* of antiquity; as one that is of a weak sight can see more clearly by the help of day-light, than the clearest eye can without it.

And by whom was this vast treasury of knowledge laid up to enrich the world? by whom were these matchless writings composed, which furnish us with a system of religion and morality so much more plain, so much more perfect than all the famous sages of antiquity could frame? why, to our astonishment, they were composed by a company of fishermen, or persons not much superior; by persons generally without any liberal education; persons, that had not devoted their lives to intellectual improvement; persons of no extraordinary natural parts, and who had not travelled, like the ancient philosophers, to gather up fragments of knowledge in different countries, but
who

who lived in *Judea*, a country where learning was but little cultivated in comparison of *Greece* and *Rome*. These were the most accomplished teachers of mankind that ever appeared in the world. And can this be accounted for, without acknowledging their inspiration from heaven? If human reason could have made such discoveries; surely it would have made them by those in whom it was improved to the greatest perfection; and not by a company of ignorant mechanics.

The persons themselves declare that they had not made these discoveries, but were taught them immediately from heaven; (which indeed we must have believed, though they had not told us so.) Now we must believe their declaration; and own them inspired, or fall into this absurdity, That a company of illiterate, wicked, and daring impostors, who were hardy enough to pretend themselves commissioned and inspired from God, have furnished us with an incomparably more excellent system of religion and virtue; than could be furnished by all the wisest and best of the sons of men beside; and he that can believe this, may believe any thing; and should never more pretend that he cannot believe the Christian religion upon the account of the difficulties that attend it.

I have touched but superficially upon the Sufficiency of the scriptures as a Rule of faith and practice, for to dwell long upon this, would be to fight without an antagonist. Our infidels

dels reject the Christian religion, because they suppose it requires them to believe and practise too much, rather than too little. Hence they are for lopping off a great part of its doctrine and precepts, as superfluities, or incumbrances, and forming a meagre skeleton of natural religion. Their intellectual pride will not stoop to believe doctrines which they cannot comprehend; and they cannot bear such narrow bounds as the precepts of Christianity fixes for them in their pursuits of pleasure, and therefore they would break these bands asunder. That which they affect most to complain of, is the want of evidence to convince them of the truth of this ungrateful religion, it will therefore be necessary to prove more largely, that,

3. The scriptures are attended with sufficient evidences of their truth and divinity.

It is certain, that as God can accept no other worship than rational from reasonable creatures, he cannot require us to believe a revelation to be divine without sufficient reason, and therefore, when he gives us a revelation, he will attest it with such evidences as will be a sufficient foundation of our belief.

Accordingly, the scriptures are attested with all the evidences, intrinsic and extrinsic, which we can reasonably desire, and with all the evidences the nature of the thing will admit.

As for *intrinsic* evidences, many might be mentioned; but I must at present confine myself in proper limits. I shall resume the one I have already

already hinted at, namely, that the religion of the Bible has the directest tendency to promote true piety and solid virtue in the world ; it is such a religion as becomes a GOD to reveal ; such a religion as we might expect from him, in case he instituted any ; a religion intended and adapted to regulate self-love, and to diffuse the love of GOD and man through the world, the only generous principles and vigorous springs of a suitable conduct towards GOD, towards one another, and towards ourselves ; a religion productive of every humane, social, and divine virtue, and directly calculated to banish all sin out of the world ; to transform impiety into devotion ; injustice and oppression into equity and universal benevolence ; and sensuality into sobriety ; a religion infinitely preferable to any that has been contrived by the wisest and best of mortals. And whence do ye think could this godlike religion proceed ? does not its nature prove its origin divine ? does it not evidently bear the lineaments of its heavenly parent ? can you once imagine that such a pure, such a holy, such a perfect system, could be the contrivance of wicked infernal spirits, of selfish, artful priests, or politicians, or of a parcel of daring impostors, or wild enthusiasts ? Could these contrive a religion so contrary to their inclination, so destructive of their interest, and so directly conducing to promote the cause they abhor ? If you can believe this, you

may also believe that light is the product of darkness, virtue of vice, good of evil, &c. If such beings as these had contrived a religion, it would have borne the same appearance in the Bible, as it does in *Italy*, or *Spain*, where it is degenerated into a meer trade, for the benefit of tyrannical and voracious priests; or it would have been such a religion as that of *Mahomet*, allowing its subjects to propagate it with the sword, that they might enrich themselves with the plunder of conquered nations; and indulging them in the gratification of their lusts, particularly in polygamy, or the unbounded enjoyment of women. This religion, I fear, would suit the taste of our licentious free-thinkers, much better than the holy religion of *JESUS*. Or if we should suppose Christianity to be the contrivance of visionary enthusiasts, then it would not be that rational system which it is, but a huddle of fanatical reveries and ridiculous whims. If then it could not be the contrivance of such authors as these, to whom shall we ascribe it? it must have had some author; for it could not come into being without a cause, no more than the system of the universe. Will you then ascribe it to good men? but these men were either inspired from heaven, or they were not; if they were not, then they could not be good men, but most audacious liars; for they plainly declared, they were divinely inspired, and stood in it to the last, which no good man would do, if such a declaration

tion was false: if they were inspired from heaven, then the point is gained; then Christianity is a religion from God; for to receive a religion from persons divinely inspired, and to receive it from God, is the same thing.

Another intrinsic evidence is that of prophecy.

Those future events which are contingent, or which shall be accomplished by causes that do not now exist or appear, cannot be certainly foreknown or foretold by man, as we find by our own experience. Such objects fall within the compass of omniscience only; and therefore when short-sighted mortals are enabled to predict such events many years, and even ages before they happen, it is a certain evidence that they are let into the secrets of heaven, and that God communicates to them a knowledge which cannot be acquired by the most sagacious human mind; and this is an evidence that the persons thus divinely taught are the messengers of God to declare his will to the world.

Now there are numberless instances of such prophecies in the sacred writings. Thus a prophet foretold the destruction of *Jeroboam's* altar by *Josiah*, many ages before (a). *Cyrus* was foretold by name as the restorer of the Jews from *Babylon* to rebuild their temple and city about a hundred years before he was born (b). Several of the prophets foretold the destruction of various kingdoms in a very

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(a) 1 Kings xiii. 2.

(b) Isai. xlv. 1, &c.

punctual manner, as of *Jerusalem*, *Babylon*, *Egypt*, *Nineveh*, &c. which prediction was exactly fulfilled. But the most remarkable prophecies of the Old Testament are those relating to the Messiah, which are so numerous and full, that they might serve for materials of his history; they fix the time of his coming, viz. while the sceptre continued in *Judab* (a), while the second temple was yet standing (b), and towards the close of *Daniel's* seventy weeks of years, i. e. four hundred and ninety years from the rebuilding of *Jerusalem* (c). These prophecies also describe the lineage of the Messiah, the manner of his conception, his life and miracles, his death, and the various circumstances of it; his burial, resurrection, ascension, and advancement to universal empire, and the spread of the gospel through the world. In the New Testament also we meet with sundry remarkable prophecies. There CHRIST foretels his own death and the manner of it, and his triumphant resurrection; there, with surprising accuracy, he predicts the destruction of *Jerusalem* by the *Romans*. We find various prophecies also in the apostolic epistles, particularly that of *St Paul* (d), concerning the conversion of the Jews; which though it be not yet accomplished, we see a remarkable providence making way for it, in keeping the Jews, who

(a) Genes. xlix. 10.

(c) Dan. ix. 24, &c.

(b) Hag. ii. 7. Mal. iii. 2.

(d) Rom. xi.

who are scattered over all the earth, distinct from all other nations for about one thousand seven hundred years, though they are hated of all nations, and consequently under the strongest temptation to coalesce with, and lose themselves among them; and though all other nations have in a much shorter time mixed in such a manner, that none of them can now trace their own original; *e. g.* Who can now distinguish the posterity of the ancient *Romans* from the *Goths* and *Vandals*; and others that broke in upon their empire and settled among them; or of the ancient *Angli* from the *Danes*, &c. that mingled with them?

These and many other plain predictions are interspersed through the Scriptures, and prove their original to be from the Father of lights, who alone knows all his works from the beginning, and who declares such distant contingent futurities from ancient times (*a*).

I might, as another intrinsic evidence of the truth of Christianity, mention its glorious energy on the minds of men, in convincing them of sin, easing their consciences, inspiring them with unspeakable joy, subduing their lusts, and transforming them into its own likeness; which is attested by the daily experience of every true Christian. Every one that believeth hath this witness in himself: and this is an evidence level to the meanest capacity, which may be soon lost in a course of sublime

(*a*) *Isai. xlv. 21.*

reasoning. But as the Deists declare, alas! with too much truth, that the gospel hath no such power upon them, it is not to my purpose to insist upon it. I therefore proceed to mention some of

The *extrinsic* evidences of the religion of JESUS, particularly the miracles with which it was confirmed, and its early propagation thro' the world.

Miracles in this case are events above or contrary to the established laws of nature, done with a professed design to attest a Revelation; and as they are obvious and striking to the senses of the most ignorant and unthinking, they are the most popular and convictive evidences, adapted to the capacities of the generality of mankind, who are incapable of a long train of argumentation, or of perceiving the origin of a religion from its nature and tendency.

Now the religion of JESUS is abundantly attested with this kind of evidence. The history of the life of JESUS, and his apostles, is one continued series of miracles. Sight was restored to the blind, the deaf were enabled to hear, the lame to walk, the maimed furnished with new-created limbs, the sick healed, the rage of winds and seas controled, yea, the dead were raised; and all this with an air of sovereignty, such as became a GOD; the apostles were also endowed with miraculous powers, enabled to speak with tongues, and

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communicate the Holy Spirit to others. These miracles were done not in a corner, but in the most public places, before numerous spectators, friends and foes; and the persons that wrought them appealed to them as the evidences of their divine mission; and the account of them is conveyed down to us by the best medium, written tradition, in a history that bears all the evidences of credibility, of which any composure of that kind is capable.

Another extrinsic evidence of the truth of Christianity, is its extensive Propagation thro' the world in the most unpromising circumstances.

The only religion, besides the Christian, which has had any very considerable spread in the world, is that of *Mabomet*; but we may easily account for this, without supposing it divine, from its nature, as indulging the lusts of men; and especially from the manner of its propagation, not by the force of evidence, but by the force of arms. But the circumstances of the propagation of Christianity were quite otherwise, whether we consider its contrariety to the corruptions, prejudices, and interests of men;—the easiness of detecting it, had it been false;—the violent opposition it met with from all the powers of the earth;—the instruments of its propagation;—or the measures they took for that purpose.

24 *The divine Authority and Sufficiency* SerM. I.

Christianity was directly contrary to the corruptions, prejudices, and interests of mankind. It grants no indulgence to the corrupt propensions of a degenerate world; but requires that universal holiness of heart and life, which, as we find by daily observation, is so ungrateful to them, and which is the principal reason that the religion of JESUS meets with so much contempt and opposition in every age.

When Christianity was first propagated, all nations had been educated in some other religion; the Jews were attached to *Moses*, and the Gentiles to their various systems of heathenism; and were all of them very zealous for their own religion: but Christianity proposed a new scheme, and could not take place, without antiquating or exploding all other religions; and therefore it was contrary to the inveterate prejudices of all mankind; and could never have been so generally received, if it had not brought with it the most evident credentials; especially considering that some of its doctrines were such as seemed to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the *Greeks* foolishness; particularly that one of obscure birth and low life, who was publicly executed as a slave and a malefactor, should be worshipped and honoured as God, upon pain of everlasting damnation; that there should be a resurrection of the dead, the last of which was an object of ridicule to all the wits and philosophers of the
heathen

heathen world. Again, as some religion or other was established in all nations, there were many, like *Demetrius* and his craftsmen, whose temporal livings and interest depended upon the continuance of their religion; and if that was changed, they fell into poverty and disgrace. These were a powerful party in every nation, and they would exert themselves to prevent the spread of an innovation so dangerous to their interest, which we find by all histories of these times they actually did. And yet the despised religion of *JESUS* triumphed over all their opposition, and maintained its credit in spite of all their endeavours to detect it as an imposture; and this proves it was not an imposture; for,

In the next place, It was easy to have detected Christianity as an imposture, nay, it was impossible it should not have been detected, if it had been such; for the great facts upon which the evidence of it rested, were said to be obvious and public, done before thousands, and in all countries; for wherever the apostles travelled, they carried their miraculous powers along with them. Thousands must know whether *CHRIST* had fed many thousands with provisions only sufficient for a few; whether *Lazarus* was raised from the dead before the admiring multitude; whether the apostles spoke with tongues to those various nations among whom they endeavoured to propagate their religion, (as indeed they must have done, otherwise they would not have been under-

understood.) These things and many others, upon which the evidence of Christianity depends, were public in their own nature; and therefore, if they had not been matters of fact, the cheat must have been unavoidably detected, especially when so many were concerned to detect it.

Farther; Christianity met with the most strenuous opposition from all the powers of the earth. The *Jewish* rulers and most of the populace were its implacable enemies; and as they lived on the spot where its miraculous attestations were said to be given, it was in their power to crush it in its birth, and never have suffered it to spread farther, had it not been attended with invincible evidence. All the power of the *Roman* empire was also exerted for its extirpation; and its propagators and disciples could expect no profit or pleasure by it, but were assured from the posture of affairs, from daily experience, and from the predictions of their master, that they should meet with shame, persecution, and death itself in its most tremendous shapes; and in the next world, they could expect nothing, even according to their own doctrine, but everlasting damnation, if they were wilful impostors: and yet in spite of all these discouragements they courageously persisted in their testimony to the last, though they might have secured their lives, and helped their fortunes, (as *Judas* did) by retracting it; nay, their testimony pre-

prevailed in defiance of all opposition; multitudes in all nations then known embraced the faith, though they expected tortures and death for it; and in a few centuries the vast and mighty *Roman* empire submitted to the religion of a crucified *J E S U S*. And who were those mighty heroes that thus triumphed over the world? Why, to our surprize,

The instruments of the propagation of Christianity were a company of poor mechanics, publicans, tent-makers, and fishermen, from the despised nation of the Jews. And by what strange powers or arts did they make these extensive conquests?

The measures they took were a plain declaration of their religion, and they wrought miracles for its confirmation. They did not use the power of the sword, no secular terrors, or bribery; they were without learning, without the arts of reasoning and persuasion; and without all the usual artifices of seducers to gain credit to their imposture.

Here I cannot but take particular notice of that matchless simplicity that appears in the history of *CHRIST*, and his apostles. The evangelists write in that artless, calm, and unguarded manner, which is natural to persons confident of the undeniable truth of what they assert. They do not write with that scrupulous caution which would argue any fear that they might be confuted. They simply relate the naked facts, and leave them to stand upon their own evi-

evidence. They relate the most amazing, the most moving things, with the most cool serenity, without any passionate exclamations, and warm reflections; for example, they relate the most astonishing miracles, as the resurrection of *Lazarus*, in the most simple, and as it were, careless manner, without breaking out and celebrating the divine power of CHRIST. In the same manner they relate the most tragical circumstances of his condemnation and death, calmly mentioning matter of fact, without any invectives against the Jews, without any high elogys upon CHRIST's innocence, without any rapturous celebrations of his grace in suffering all these things for sinners, and without any tender lamentations over their deceased master. It is impossible for a heart so deeply impressed with such things, as theirs undoubtedly was, to retain this dispassionate serenity, unless laid under supernatural restraints; and there appears very good reasons for this restraint upon them, *viz.* that the gospel-history might carry intrinsic evidences of its simplicity and artless impartiality; and that it might appear adapted to convince the judgments of men, and not merely to raise their passions. In this respect, the gospel-history is distinguished from all histories in the world; and can we think so plain, so undisguised, so artless a composition, the contrivance of designing impostors? Would not a consciousness that they might be detected keep

keep them more upon their guard, make them more ready to anticipate and confute objections, and take every artifice to recommend their cause, and prepossess the reader in its favour?

It only remains under this head, that I should

4. Shew that the religion of JESUS proposes sufficient excitements to influence our faith and practice.

To enforce a system of doctrines and precepts, two things are especially necessary, — that they should be made duty by competent authority, — and matters of interest by a sanction of rewards and punishments. — To which I may add, that the excitements are still stronger, when we are laid under the gentle obligations of gratitude. — In all these respects the Christian Religion has the most powerful enforcements.

The authority upon which we are required to receive the doctrines, and observe the precepts of Christianity, is no less than the authority of GOD, the supreme lawgiver, and infallible teacher, whose wisdom to prescribe, and right to command, are indisputable; and we may safely submit our understandings to his instructions, however mysterious, and our wills to his injunctions, however difficult they may seem to us. This gives the religion of JESUS a binding authority upon the consciences of men; which is absolutely necessary to bring piety and
virtue

virtue into practice in the world; for if men are left at liberty, they will follow their own inclinations, however wicked and pernicious. And in this respect Christianity bears a glorious preference to all the systems of morality composed by the heathen philosophers; for though there were many good things in them, yet who gave authority to *Socrates*, *Plato*, or *Seneca* to assume the province of lawgivers and dictators to mankind, and prescribe to their consciences? All they could do was to teach, to advise, to persuade, to reason; but mankind were at liberty after all, whether to take their advice or not. And this shews the necessity of supernatural revelation, not merely to make known things beyond human apprehension, but to enforce with proper authority such duties as might be discovered by man; since without it they would not have the binding force of a law.

As to the sanctions of rewards and punishments in Christianity, they are such as become a GOD to annex to his majestic law, such as are agreeable to creatures formed for immortality, and such as would have the most effectual tendency to encourage obedience, and prevent sin; they are no less than the most perfect happiness and misery which human nature is capable of, and that through an endless duration. If these are not sufficient to allure rational creatures to obedience, and deter them from disobedience, then no considerations that can be proposed can

can have any effect. These tend to alarm our hopes and our fears, the most vigorous springs of human activity; and if these have no effect upon us, nothing that God can reveal, or our minds conceive, will have any effect. God by adding the greatest sanctions possible to his law, has taken the best possible precautions to prevent disobedience; and since even these do not restrain men from it, we are sure that less would not suffice. If men will go on in sin, though they believe the punishment due to it will be eternal, then much more would they persist in it, if it were not eternal; or if they say, they will indulge themselves in sin, because they believe it is not eternal, then this proves from their own mouth, that it should be eternal in order to restrain them. The prevalence of sin in the world tends to render it miserable; and therefore, to prevent it, as well as to display God's eternal regard to moral goodness, it is fit that he should annex the highest degree of punishment to disobedience in every individual, for the indulgence of sin in one individual would be a temptation to the whole rational creation; and on the other hand, the threatening of everlasting punishment to all sinners indefinitely, is necessary to deter the whole rational world, and every particular person from disobedience. Thus in civil government it is necessary, that robbery should be threatened indefinitely with death, because, though one robber may take from a man but what

what he can very well spare ; yet if every man might rob and plunder his neighbour, the consequence would be universal robbery and confusion. It is therefore necessary that the greatest punishment should be threatened to disobedience, both to prevent it, and to testify the divine displeasure against it ; which is the primary design of the threatening ; and since the penalty was annexed with this view, it follows, that it was primarily enacted with a view to the happiness of mankind, by preventing what would naturally make them miserable, and but secondarily with a view to be executed ; for it is to be executed only upon condition of disobedience ; which disobedience it was intended to prevent, and consequently it was not immediately intended to be executed, or enacted for the sake of the execution, as though God took a malignant pleasure in the misery of his creatures. But when the penalty has failed of its primary end, restraining from sin, then it is fit it should answer its secondary end, and be executed upon the offender, to keep the rest of reasonable creatures in their obedience, to illustrate the veracity and holiness of the lawgiver, and prevent his government from falling into contempt. There are the same reasons that threatenings should be executed when denounced, as for their being denounced at first ; for threatenings never executed are the same with no threatenings at all.

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Let me add, that the gospel lays us under the strongest obligations from gratitude. It not only clearly informs us of our obligations to God, as the author of our beings and all our temporal blessings, which natural religion more faintly discovers, but superadds those more endearing ones derived from the scheme of man's redemption thro' the death of the eternal Son of God. Though the blessings of creation and providence are great in themselves, they are swallowed up, as it were, and lost in the love of God, which is commended to us by this matchless circumstance, "that while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us;" and while under the constraints of this love, we cannot but devote ourselves entirely to God (a).

Thus I have hinted at a few things among the many that might be mentioned to prove the Divinity of the Religion of JESUS, and its Sufficiency to bring men to repentance and salvation. And if it be so, why should it be rejected; or another sought? — This reminds me that I promised,

II. To expose the Vanity and Unreasonableness of the Objections against the Christian Religion, or of demanding another, &c.

What can our ingenious Infidels offer against what has been said? It must be something very weighty indeed to preponderate all this evidence.

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(a) 2 Corinth. v. 14, 15.

dence. A laugh, or a sneer, a pert witticism, declaiming against priestcraft and the prejudices of education, artful evasions, and shallow sophisms, the usual arguments of our pretended free-thinkers, these will not suffice to banter us out of our joyful confidence of the Divinity of the religion of Jesus; and I may add, these will not suffice to indemnify them. Nothing will be sufficient for this but demonstration: it lies upon them to prove the Christian religion to be certainly false; otherwise, unless they are hardened to a prodigy, they must be racked with anxious fears lest they should find it true at last to their cost; and lest that dismal threatening should stand firm against them: "He that believeth not, shall be damned."

What mighty objections then have they to offer? Will they say that the Christian religion contains several mysterious doctrines, which they cannot comprehend, which seem to them unaccountable? As that of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and Satisfaction of CHRIST, &c. But will they advance their understanding to be the universal Standard of Truth? Will they pretend to comprehend the infinite GOD in their finite minds? then let them go, and measure the heavens with a span, and comprehend the ocean in the hollow of their hand. Will they pretend to understand the divine nature, when they cannot understand their own? when they cannot account for or explain the
union

union between their own souls and bodies? Will they reject mysteries in Christianity, when they must own them in every thing else? Let them first solve all the phænomena in nature; let them give us a rational theory of the infinite divisibility of a piece of finite matter; let them account for the seemingly magical operation of the loadstone; the circulation of the blood upwards as well as downwards, contrary to all the laws of motion; let them inform us of the causes of the cohesion of the particles of matter; let them tell us, how spirits can receive ideas from material organs, how they hear and see, &c. let them give us intelligible theories of these things, and then they may with something of a better grace set up for critics upon God and his ways; but, while they are mysteries to themselves, while every particle of matter baffles their understandings, it is the most impious intellectual pride to reject Christianity upon the account of its mysteries, and to set up themselves as the supreme judges of truth.

Or will they object that there are a great many difficult and strange passages in the Scriptures, the meaning and propriety of which they do not see? And are there not many strange things in the book of nature, and the administration of providence, the design and use of which they cannot see, many things that to them seem wrong and ill-contrived? Yet they own the world was created by God, and that his providence rules it: and why will they

not allow that the Scriptures may be from God, notwithstanding these difficulties and seeming incongruities? When a learned man can easily raise his discourse above the capacity of common people, will they not condescend to grant that an infinite God can easily overshoot their little souls? Indeed a revelation which we could fully comprehend, would not appear the production of an infinite mind; it would bear no resemblance to its heavenly Father; and therefore we should have reason to suspect it spurious. It is necessary we should meet with difficulties in the Scriptures to mortify our pride. But farther, will they make no allowance for the different customs and practices of different ages? It is certain, that may be proper and graceful in one age which would be ridiculous and absurd in another; and since the Scriptures were written so many ages ago, we may safely make this allowance for them, which will remove many seeming absurdities. There should also allowance be made for the Scriptures being rendered literally out of dead difficult languages; for we know, that many expressions may be beautiful and significant in one language, which would be ridiculous and nonsensical if literally translated into another. Were *Homer* or *Virgil* thus translated into *English*, without regard to the idiom of the language, instead of admiring their beauties, we should be apt to think (as *Cowley* expresses

presses it) "that one madman had translated another madman."

Will they object the wicked lives of its professors against the holiness and good tendency of Christianity itself? But is it Christianity as practised in the world, or Christianity as taught by CHRIST and his apostles, and contained in the Bible, that I am proving to be divine? You know it is the latter, and consequently the poor appearance it makes in the former sense is no argument against its purity and divinity in this. Again, are the bad lives of professors taught and enjoined by genuine Christianity, and agreeable to it? No; they are quite contrary to it, and subversive of it, and it is so far from encouraging such professors, that it pronounces them miserable hypocrites, and their doom will be more severe than that of heathens. Again, are there not hypocritical professors of morality and natural religion, as well as of revealed? Are there not many who cry up morality, and the religion of nature, and yet boldly violate its plainest precepts? If therefore this be a sufficient objection against Christianity, it must be so too against all religion. Further, do men grow better, by renouncing the religion of JESUS? Observation assures us of quite the contrary. Finally, are there not some of the professors of Christianity, who live habitually according to it? Who give us the best patterns of piety and virtue that ever were exhibited to the world? This is sufficient

to vindicate the religion they profess, and it is highly injurious to involve such promiscuously in the odium and contempt due to barefaced hypocrites. How would this reasoning please the Deists themselves in parallel cases? "Some that have no regard to Christianity have been murderers, thieves, &c. therefore all that disregard it are such." Or "some that pretended to be honest, have been found villains; therefore all that pretend to it are such; or therefore honesty is no virtue."

Or will they change the note, and instead of pleading that Christianity leads to licentiousness, object that it bears too hard upon the pleasures of mankind, and lays them under too severe restraints? Or that its penalties are excessive and cruel? But does it rob mankind of any pleasures worthy the rational nature, worthy the pursuit of creatures formed for immortality, and consistent with the good of the whole? It restrains them indeed; but it is only as a physician restrains his patient from poison or an improper regimen; it restrains men from living like beasts; it restrains them from those pleasures which will ruin their souls and bodies in the event; it restrains them from gratifying a private passion at the expence of the public; in short, it restrains them from making themselves and others miserable. Hard restraints indeed! and the Deists, to be sure, are generous patrons of human liberty, that would free us from such grievances as these! however this objection

jection lets us into the secret, and informs us of the reason why our pretended free-thinkers are such enemies to Christianity; it is because it checks their lusts, and will not permit them to *act*, as well as to think *freely*, i. e. as they please. If they would content themselves with manly and rational pleasures they would not count the restraints of Christianity intolerable; nay, they would find in it a set of peculiarly noble and refined pleasures, which they might seek in vain elsewhere, for it is so far from being an enemy to the happiness of man, that it was designed to promote it, and then we make ourselves miserable, when we reject it, or it becomes our interest that it should be false. As to the penalty of everlasting punishment annexed to sin, which is but a temporal evil, I would ask them whether they are competent judges in a matter in which they are parties? Are they capable to determine what degree of punishment should be inflicted upon disobedience to the infinite majesty of heaven, when they are not only short-sighted creatures, but also concerned in the affair, and their judgments may be perverted by self-interest? Whether is it most fit that the judge of all the earth should determine this point, or a company of malefactors, as they are? Is it allowed to criminals in civil courts to determine their own doom; and pronounce their own sentence? If it were, few of them would be punished at all, and government would fall into contempt.

Again, let me remind them, that the penalty was annexed to prevent disobedience, and so to render the execution needless, and consequently it was primarily intended for their good. Why then will they frustrate this design, and, when they have rendered the execution necessary, complain of its severity? If they think the penalty so terrible let them watch against sin, let them accept the salvation the gospel offers, and, so avoid it, instead of quarrelling with its severity, and yet rushing upon it. Or if they say, they will persist in sin because they do not believe the punishment is eternal; this gives me room to appeal to themselves whether a less penalty than everlasting misery would be sufficient to restrain them from sin? and whether **G O D** would have taken all proper precautions to prevent sin, if he had annexed a less punishment to his law, since, by their own confession, nothing less could deter them from it? I shall only add, that as the human soul must always exist, and as by indulgence in sin in the present state it contracts such habits as render it incapable of happiness in the holy enjoyment of the heavenly world, it must by a natural necessity be for ever miserable, though **G O D** should not exert any positive act for its punishment. And if the Deists say, that punishment for some time would reclaim offenders from sin, and bring them to repentance, the difficulty is not removed, unless they can prove that
 misery

misery will bring men to love that God who inflicts it, which they can never do; and it is evident, that that repentance which proceeds merely from self-love, without any regard to God at all, can never be pleasing to him, nor prepare them for happiness in the enjoyment of him. Punishment would produce a repentance like that of a sick-bed, forced, servile, and transitory.

Will they object, that miracles are not a sufficient evidence of the truth and divinity of a Revelation, because infernal spirits may also work miracles, as in the case of the magicians of *Egypt*, to confirm an imposture? But it is known that our free-thinkers explode and laugh at the existence and power of evil spirits in other cases, and therefore must not be allowed to admit them here to serve a turn. However, we grant there are infernal spirits, and that they can perform many things above human power, which may appear to us miraculous, and yet the evidence in favour of Christianity taken from miracles stands unshaken; for (1) Can we suppose that these malignant and wicked spirits, whose business it is to seduce men to sin and ruin, would be *willing* to exert their power to work miracles to confirm so holy a religion; a religion so contrary to their design, and so subversive of their kingdom and interest? This would be wretched policy indeed. Or if we should suppose them willing, yet, (2) Can we think that God, who has them all at his control,

trol, would suffer them to counterfeit the great seal of heaven, and annex it to an imposture; that is, to work such miracles as could not be distinguished from those wrought by him, to attest an imposture? Would he permit them to impose upon mankind in a manner that could not be detected? This would be to deliver the world to their management, and suffer them to lead them blindfold to hell in unavoidable delusion: for miracles are such dazzling and pompous evidences, that the general run of mankind could not resist them, even though they were wrought to attest a religion that might be demonstrated by a long train of sublime reasoning to be false. God may indeed suffer the devil to mimic the miracles wrought by his immediate hand, as in the case of *Jannes and Jambres*, but then, as in that case too, he will take care to excel them, and give some distinguishing marks of his almighty agency, which all mankind may easily discriminate from the utmost exertion of infernal power. But tho' Satan should be willing, and God should permit him to work miracles, yet (3) Can we suppose that all the powers of hell united, are able to work such astonishing miracles as were wrought for the confirmation of the Christian Religion? Can we suppose that they can control the laws of nature at pleasure, and that with an air of sovereignty, and professing themselves the lords of the universe, as we know CHRIST did? If we can believe this then we deify them, and may

may as well ascribe the Creation and Preservation of the world to them. If they could exert a creating power to form new limbs for the maimed, or to multiply five loaves and two fishes into a sufficient quantity of food for five thousand, and leave a greater quantity of fragments when that were done, than the whole provision at first, then they might create the world, and support all the creatures in it. If they could animate the dead, and remand the separate soul back to its former habitation, and reunite it with the body, then I see not why they might not have given us life at first. But to suppose this would be to dethrone the King of heaven, and renounce his providence entirely. We therefore rest assured that the miracles related in the Scriptures were wrought by the finger of God.

But our free-thinkers will urge, How do we at this distance know that such miracles were actually wrought? They are only related in the Scripture-history, but to prove the truth of Scripture from arguments that suppose the Scripture true, is a ridiculous method of reasoning, and only a begging of the question. But (1) the Reality of those miracles was granted by the enemies of Christianity in their writings against it, and they had no answer to make, but this sorry one, that they were wrought by the power of *Magic*. They never durst deny that they were wrought; for they knew all the world could prove it. Indeed an honour-

honourable testimony concerning them could not be expected from infidels, for it would be utterly inconsistent that they should own these miracles sufficient attestations of Christianity, and yet continue infidels. And this may answer an unreasonable demand of the Deists, that we should produce some honourable testimony concerning these attestations from Jews and Heathens, as well as from Christians, who were parties. We should have much more reason to suspect the testimony of the former as not convictive when it did not convince the persons themselves. But (2) As these miracles were of so public a nature, and as so many were concerned to detect them, that they would unavoidably have been detected, when related in words, if they had not been done, so for the same reasons, they could not but have been detected, when related in writing, and this we know they never were. If these miracles had not been matters of undoubted fact they could not have been inserted at first in the gospel-history, for then thousands in various countries were alive to confute them; and they could not have been intruded into it afterwards for all the world would see that it was then too late, and that if there had been such things, they should have heard of them before, for they were much more necessary for the first propagation of Christianity than for its support when received.

But

But it may be objected, How can we at this distance know that these histories are genuine? May they not have been corrupted, and many additions made to them by designing men in ages since? And why is it not also asked, how do we know that there were such men as *Alexander*, *Julius Cæsar*, or *King William the Third*? How do we know but their histories are all romance and fable? How do we know that there were any generations of mankind before ourselves? How do we know but all the acts of parliament of former reigns are corrupted, and we are ruled by impositions? In short, How can we know any thing, but what we have seen with our eyes? We may as well make difficulties of all these things, and so destroy all human testimony, as scruple the genuineness of the sacred writings, for never were any writings conveyed down with so good evidence of their being genuine and uncorrupted as these. Upon their first publication they were put into all hands, they were scattered into all nations, translated into various languages, and all persuaded them, either to be taught by them, or to cavil at them. And ever since they have been quoted by thousands of authors, appealed to by all parties of Christians, as the supreme Judge of controversies; and not only the enemies of Christianity have carefully watched them to detect any alterations which pious fraud might attempt to make, but one sect of Christians has kept a watchful eye over the other,

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other, lest they should alter any thing in favour of their own cause. And it is matter of astonishment as well as conviction, that all the various copies and translations of the Scriptures in different nations and libraries are substantially the same, and differ only in matters of small moment, so that from the worst copy or translation in the world, one might easily learn the substance of Christianity.

Or will our infidels insist to be eye-witnesses of these facts? Must one arise from the dead, or new miracles be wrought to convince them by ocular demonstration? This is a most unreasonable demand, for (1) The continuance of miracles in every age would be attended with numerous inconveniencies. For example, Multitudes must be born blind, deaf, or dumb; multitudes must be afflicted with incurable diseases, and possessed by evil spirits; multitudes must be disturbed in the sleep of death; and all the laws of nature must be made precarious and fickle in order to leave room for miraculous operations, and all this to humour a company of obstinate infidels, who would not believe upon less striking though entirely sufficient evidence. (2) The continuance of miracles from age to age would destroy their very nature to which it is essential, that they be rare and extraordinary, for what is ordinary and frequent, we are apt to ascribe to the established laws of nature, however wonderful

ful it be in itself. For example, If we saw dead bodies rise from their graves, as often as we see vegetables spring from seed rotten in the earth, we should be no more surpris'd at the one phenomenon, than we are at the other, and our *virtuosi* would be equally busy to assign some natural cause for both.

And had we never seen the sun rise until this morning we should justly have accounted it as great a miracle as any recorded in the Scriptures; but because it is common we neglect it as a thing of course. Indeed, it is not any thing in the event itself, or in the degree of power necessary for its accomplishment, that renders it miraculous, but its being uncommon, and out of the ordinary course of things; for example, the generation of the human body is not in itself less astonishing, nor does it require less power, than its resurrection: the revolution of the sun in its regular course is as wonderful, and as much requires a divine power, as its standing still in the days of *Joshua*. But we acknowledge a miracle in the one case, but not in the other, because the one is extraordinary, while the other frequently occurs. Hence it follows, that the frequent repetition of miracles, as often as men are pleas'd to plead the want of evidence to excuse their infidelity, would destroy their very nature, and consequently, to demand their continuance is to demand an impossibility. But (3) Suppose that men should be indulg'd in this request, it

it would not probably bring them to believe. If they are unbelievers now it is not for want of evidence, but through wilful blindness and obstinacy; and as they that will shut their eyes can see no more in meridian light than in the twilight, so they that reject a sufficiency of evidence would also resist a superfluity of it. Thus the Jews, who were eye-witnesses of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, continue invincible infidels still. They had always some trifling cavil ready to object against the brightest evidence. And thus our modern infidels would no doubt evade the force of the most miraculous attestation by some wretched hypothesis or other; they would look upon miracles either as magical productions, or illusions of their senses, or rather, as natural and necessary events, which they would indeed have some reason to conclude, if they were frequently performed before their eyes. Some have pretended to doubt of the existence and perfections of God, notwithstanding the evidences thereof upon all this magnificent structure of the universe, and must God be always creating new worlds before these obstinate creatures for their conviction? Such persons have as much reason to demand it in this case as our Deists have to insist for new miracles in the other. I might add, that such glaring evidence, as like the light of the sun, would force itself irresistibly upon the minds of the most reluctant, would not leave room for us to shew our regard

to

to God in believing for we should then believe from extrinsic necessity, and not from choice. It is therefore most correspondent to our present state of probation, that there should be something in the evidence of a divine Revelation to try us; something that might fully convince the teachable, and yet not remove all umbrages for cavilling from the obstinate.

Thus I have answered as many objections as the bounds of one sermon would admit; and I think they are the principal ones which lie against my subject in the view I have considered it. And as I have not designedly selected the weakest, in order to an easy triumph, you may look upon the answers that have been given as a ground of rational presumption that all other objections may be answered with equal ease. Indeed, if they could not, it would not invalidate the positive arguments in favour of Christianity, for when we have sufficient positive evidence for a thing, we do not reject it, because it is attended with some difficulties which we cannot solve.

My time will allow me to make but two or three short reflections upon the whole.

1. If the Religion of JESUS be attested with such full evidence, and be sufficient to conduct men to everlasting felicity, then how helpless are they, that have enjoyed it all their life, without profit; who either reject it as false, or have not felt its power to reform their hearts and lives?

It is the last remedy provided for a guilty world; and if this fails, their disease is incurable, and they are not to expect better means.

2. If the Religion of JESUS be true, then wo unto the wicked of all sorts; wo to infidels both practical and speculative, for all the curses of it are in full force against them, and I need not tell you how dreadful they are.

3. If the Religion of JESUS be true, then I congratulate such of you, whose hearts and lives are habitually conformed to it, and who have ventured your everlasting All upon it. You build upon a sure foundation, and your hope shall never make you ashamed.

Finally, Let us all strive to become rational and practical believers of this heaven-born Religion. Let our understandings be more rationally and thoroughly convinced of its truth; and our hearts and lives be more and more conformed to its purity; and ere long we shall receive those glorious rewards it ensures to all its sincere disciples; which may God grant to us all for JESUS sake. Amen!

SERMON



S E R M O N II.

The method of Salvation through JESUS CHRIST explained and recommended.



J O H N III. 16.

For GOD so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

I HAVE been solicitously thinking in what way my life, redeemed from the grave, may be of most service to my dear people. And I would collect all the feeble remains of my strength into one vigorous effort this day to promote this benevolent end. If I knew what subject has the most direct tendency to save your souls, that is the subject to which my heart would cling with peculiar endearment, and which I would make the matter of the present discourse.

And when I consider I am speaking to an assembly of sinners, guilty, depraved, helpless creatures, and that if ever you be saved, it will be only through JESUS CHRIST, in that way,

which the gospel reveals; when I consider that your everlasting life and happiness turn upon this hinge, namely, the reception you give to this Saviour, and this way of salvation; I say, when I consider these things, I can think of no subject I can more properly choose than to recommend the Lord JESUS to your acceptance, and to explain and inculcate the method of salvation through his mediation; or, in other words, to preach the *pure gospel* to you; for the gospel, in the most proper sense, is nothing else but a revelation of a way of salvation for sinners of *Adam's* race.

My text furnishes me with proper materials for my purpose. Let heaven and earth hear it with wonder, joy, and raptures of praise! "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever, or that every one (a), that believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

This is a part of the most important evening conversation that ever was held, I mean, that between CHRIST and *Nicodemus*, a Pharisee and a Ruler of the Jews. Our Lord first instructs him in the doctrine of regeneration, that grand constituent of a Christian, and prerequisite to our admission into the kingdom of heaven; and then he proceeds to inform him of the gospel-method of salvation, which contains these two grand articles, the death of CHRIST, as the great foundation of blessedness, and faith in him, as the great qualification upon the part of the sinner.

He

(a) *omnes.*

He presents this important doctrine to us in various forms with a very significant repetition. "As *Moses* lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the Son of man be lifted up;" that is, hung on high on a cross; "that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Then follows my text, which expresses the same doctrine with great force: "GOD so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," gave him up to death, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He goes on to mention a wonder. This earth is a rebellious province of *Jehovah's* dominions, and therefore if his Son should ever visit it, one would think it would be as an angry judge, or as the executioner of his Father's vengeance. But, O astonishing! "GOD sent not his Son in- to the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Hence the terms of life and death are thus fixed, "He that believeth in him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of GOD." Sure the heavenly rivers of pleasure flow in these verses! Never, methinks, was there so much gospel expressed in so few words! Here take the gospel in miniature, and bind it to your hearts for ever. These verses alone, methinks, are a sufficient remedy for a dying world.

The truths I would infer from the text for present improvement are these; that without

CHRIST you are all in a perishing condition ; — that through JESUS CHRIST a way is opened for your salvation ; — that the grand prerequisite to your being saved in this way, is faith in JESUS CHRIST ; — that every one, without exception, whatever his former character has been, that is enabled to comply with this prerequisite, shall certainly be saved ; — and that the constitution of this method of salvation, or the mission of CHRIST into our world, as the Saviour of sinners is a most striking and astonishing instance and display of the love of GOD.

I. My text implies that without CHRIST you are all in a perishing condition. This holds true of you in particular, because it holds true of the world universally : for the world was undoubtedly in a perishing condition without CHRIST, and none but he could relieve it, otherwise GOD would never have given his only begotten Son to save it. GOD is not ostentatious or prodigal of his gifts, especially of so inestimable a gift as his Son, whom he loves infinitely more than the whole creation. So great, so dear a person would not have been sent upon a mission, which could have been discharged by any other being. Thousands of rams must bleed in sacrifice, or ten thousands of rivers of oil must flow ; our first-born must die for our transgressions, and the fruit of our body for the sin of our souls ; or *Gabriel*, or some of the upper ranks of angels, must leave their thrones, and hang upon a cross, if such methods of salvation had

had been sufficient. All this would have been nothing in comparison of the only begotten Son of GOD leaving his native heaven, and all its glories, assuming our degraded nature, spending thirty three long and tedious years in poverty, disgrace, and persecution, dying as a malefactor and a slave in the midst of ignominy and torture, and lying a mangled breathless corps in the grave. We may be sure there was the highest degree of necessity for it, otherwise GOD would not have given up his dear Son to such an horrid scene of sufferings.

This then was the true state of the world, and consequently yours without CHRIST; it was hopeless and desperate in every view. In that situation there would not have been so much goodness in the world as to try the efficacy of sacrifices, prayers, tears, reformation, and repentance, or they would have been tried in vain. It would have been inconsistent with the honour of the divine perfections and government, to admit sacrifices, prayers, tears, repentance, and reformation, as a sufficient atonement.

What a melancholy view of the world have we now before us! We know the state of mankind only under the gracious government of a Mediator, and we but seldom realize what our miserable condition would have been, had this gracious administration never been set up. But exclude a Saviour in your thoughts for a moment, and then take a view of the world—helpless!—hopeless!—under the righteous dis-

pleasure of GOD; and despairing of relief! — the very suburbs of hell! — the range of malignant devils! — the region of guilt, misery, and despair! — the mouth of the infernal pit! — the gate of hell! This would have been the condition of our world had it not been for that JESUS who redeemed it, and yet in this very world he is neglected and despised.

But you will ask me, “ How comes it that “ the world was in such an undone, helpless, “ hopeless condition without CHRIST? or what “ are the reasons of all this?”

The true account of this will appear from these two considerations, that all mankind are sinners; and that no other method but the mediation of CHRIST could render the salvation of sinners consistent with the honour of the divine perfections and government, with the public good, and even with the nature of things.

All mankind are sinners. This is too evident to need proof. They are sinners, rebels against the greatest and best of beings, against their Maker, their liberal Benefactor, and their rightful Sovereign, to whom they are under stronger and more endearing obligations than they can be under to any creature, or even to the entire system of creatures: sinners, rebels in every part of our guilty globe; none righteous, no not one; all sinners, without exception: sinners from age to age for thousands of years: thousands, millions, innumerable multitudes of sinners. What an obnoxious race is this!

this! There appears no difficulty in the way of justice to punish such creatures. But what seemingly insuperable difficulties appear in the way of their salvation! Let me mention a few of them to recommend that blessed Saviour who has removed them all.

If such sinners be saved, how shall the holiness and justice of God be displayed? How shall he give an honourable view of himself to all worlds, as a Being of perfect purity, and an enemy to all moral evil?

If such sinners be saved, how shall the honour of the divine government and law be secured? How will the dignity of the Law appear, if a race of rebels may thus trifle with it with impunity? What a sorry law must that be, that has no sanctions, or whose sanctions may be dispensed with at pleasure? What a contemptible government that may be insulted and rejected, and the offender admitted into favour without exemplary punishment? No government can subsist upon such principles of excessive indulgence.

How can such sinners be saved, and yet the good of the public secured, which is always the end of every wise and good ruler? By the public good I do not mean the happiness of mankind alone, but I mean the happiness of all worlds of reasonable creatures collectively, in comparison of which the happiness of mankind alone may be only a private interest, which should always give way to the public good. Now sin has a direct tendency, not only according

according to law, but according to the nature of things, to scatter misery and ruin wherever its infection reaches. Therefore the public good cannot be properly consulted without giving a loud and effectual warning against all sin, and dealing with offenders in such a manner as to deter others from offending. But how can this be done? how can the sinner be saved, and yet the evil of sin be displayed, and all other beings be deterred from it for ever? How can sin be discouraged by pardoning it? its evil displayed by letting the criminal escape punishment? These are such difficulties that nothing but divine wisdom could ever surmount them.

These difficulties lie in the way of a mere pardon, and exemption from punishment. But salvation includes more than this. When sinners are saved, they are not only pardoned but received into high favour, made the children, the friends, the courtiers of the King of heaven. They are not only delivered from punishment, but also advanced to a state of perfect positive happiness; and nothing short of this can render such creatures as we happy. Now in this view, the difficulties rise still higher, and it is the more worthy of observation, as this is not generally the case in human governments; and as men are apt to form their notions of the divine government by human, they are less sensible of these difficulties. But this is indeed the true state of the case here; how can the sinner be not only delivered from punishment, but also advanced to a state of perfect happiness; not only

only escape the displeasure of his offended sovereign, but be received into full favour, and advanced to the highest honour and dignity; how can this be done without casting a cloud over the purity and justice of the Lord of all; without sinking his law and government into contempt, without diminishing the evil of sin, and emboldening others to venture upon it, and so at once injuring the character of the supreme Ruler, and the public good? How can sinners, I say, be saved without the salvation being attended with these bad consequences?

And here you must remember, that these consequences must be provided against. To save men at random, without considering the consequences, to distribute happiness to private persons with an undistinguishing hand, this would be at once inconsistent with the character of the supreme Magistrate of the universe, and with the public good. Private persons are at liberty to forgive private offences; nay, it is their duty to forgive, and they can hardly offend by way of excess in the generous virtues of mercy and compassion. But the case is otherwise with a magistrate: he is obliged to consult the dignity of his government, and the interest of the public, and he may easily carry his lenity to a very dangerous extreme, and by his tenderness to criminals do an extensive injury to the state. This is particularly the case with regard to the great God, the universal supreme Magistrate of all worlds. And this ought to be seriously considered by those men of loose principles

principles among us, who look upon GOD only under the fond character of a Father, or a Being of infinite mercy, and thence conclude they have little to fear from him for all their audacious iniquities. There is no absolute necessity that sinners should be saved: justice may be suffered to take place upon them. But there is the most absolute necessity that the Ruler of the world should both be, and appear to be holy and just. There is the most absolute necessity that he should support the dignity of his government, and guard it from contempt, that he should strike all worlds with a proper horror of sin, and represent it in its genuine infernal colours, and so consult the good of the whole, rather than a part. There is, I say, the highest and most absolute necessity for these things, and they cannot be dispensed with as matters of arbitrary pleasure. And unless these ends can be answered in the salvation of men they cannot be saved at all. No, they must all perish, rather than GOD should act out of character, as the supreme Magistrate of the universe, or bestow private favours to criminals to the detriment of the public.

And in this lay the difficulty. Call a council of all the sages and wise men of the world, and they can never get over this difficulty, without borrowing assistance from the gospel. Nay, this, no doubt, puzzled all the angelic intelligences, who pry so deep into the mysteries of heaven, before the gospel was fully revealed. Methinks the angels, when they saw the fall of man,

man, gave him up as desperate. "Alas! they
 "cried, the poor creature is gone! he and all
 "his numerous race are lost for ever." This,
 they knew, had been the doom of their fellow-
 angels that sinned, and could they hope better
 for man? Then they had not seen any of the
 wonders of pardoning love and mercy; and
 could they have once thought that that glorious
 person, who filled the middle throne, and was
 their Creator and Lord, would ever become a
 man, and die, like a criminal, to redeem an in-
 ferior rank of creatures? no, this thought they
 would probably have shuddered at as blasphem-
 y.

And must we then give up ourselves and all
 our race as lost beyond recovery? There are
 huge and seemingly insuperable difficulties in
 the way, and we have seen, neither men nor
 angels can prescribe any relief. But "sing, O
 "ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it: shout
 "ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into
 "singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every
 "tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed
 "Jacob, and glorified himself in *Israel* (b)."
 Which leads me to add,

II. My text implies that thro' JESUS CHRIST
 a way is opened for your salvation. He, and
 he only was found equal to the undertaking;
 and before him all these mountains become a
 plain; all these difficulties vanish; and now
 God can be just, can secure the dignity of his
 character,

(b) *Isaiah* xliv. 23,

character, as the Ruler of the world, and answer all the ends of government, and yet justify and save the sinner that believeth in **JESUS**.

This is plainly implied in this glorious epitome of the gospel: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Without this gift, all was lost: but now whosoever believeth in him may be saved; saved in a most honourable way. This will appear more particularly if we consider the tendency the mediation of **CHRIST** had to remove the difficulties mentioned. But I would premise two general remarks.

The first is, That **GOD** being considered in this affair in his public character, as supreme magistrate, or governor of the world, all the punishment which he is concerned to see inflicted upon sin is only such as answers the ends of government. Private revenge must vent itself on the very person of the offender, or be disappointed. But to a ruler, as such, it may in some cases be indifferent, whether the punishment be sustained by the very person that offended, or by a substitute suffering in his stead. It may also be indifferent whether the very same punishment, as to kind and degree, threatened in the law, be inflicted, or a punishment equivalent to it. If the honour of the ruler and his government be maintained, if all disobedience be properly discountenanced, if, in short, all the

the ends of government can be answered, such things as these are indifferences. Consequently if these ends should be answered by CHRIST'S suffering in the stead of sinners there would be no objection against it. This remark introduces another, namely, (2) That JESUS CHRIST was such a person, that his suffering as the substitute or surety of sinners answered all the ends of government, which could be answered by the execution of the punishment upon the sinners themselves. To impose suffering upon the innocent, when unwilling, is unjust; but JESUS was willing to undertake the dreadful task. And besides, he was a person (*sui juris*) at his own disposal, his own property, and therefore he had a right to dispose of his life as he pleased, and there was a merit in his consenting to that, which he was not obliged to previous to his consent. He was also a person of infinite dignity, and infinitely beloved by his Father, and these considerations rendered the merit of his sufferings for a short time, and another kind of punishment than that of hell, equal, more than equal to the everlasting sufferings of sinners themselves. JESUS CHRIST was also above law, that is, not obliged to be subject to that law which he had made for his creatures, and consequently his obedience to the law, not being necessary for himself, might be imputed to others: whereas creatures are incapable of works of supererogation, or of doing more than they are bound to do,

do, being obliged to obey their divine lawgiver for themselves to the utmost extent of their abilities, and consequently, their obedience, however perfect, can be sufficient only for themselves, but cannot be imputed to others. Thus it appears, in general, that the ends of government are as effectually answered by the sufferings of CHRIST in the room of sinners, as they could be by the everlasting punishment of the sinners themselves; nay, we shall presently find they are answered in a more striking and illustrious manner. To mention particulars;

Was it necessary that the holiness and justice of God should be displayed in the salvation of sinners? See how bright they shine in a suffering Saviour! Now it appears that such is the holiness and justice of God that he will not let even his own Son escape unpunished, when he stands in the law-place of sinners, though guilty only by the slight stain, may I so speak, of imputation. Could the execution of everlasting punishment upon the hateful criminals themselves ever give so bright a display of these attributes? It were impossible. Again,

Was it a difficulty to save sinners, and yet maintain the rights of the divine government, and the honour of the law? See how this difficulty is removed by the obedience and death of CHRIST! Now it appears, that the rights of the divine government are so sacred and inviolable that they must be maintained, though the darling Son of God should fall a sacrifice
to

to justice; and that not one offence against this government can be pardoned, without his making a full atonement. Now it appears, that the supreme Ruler is not to be trifled with, but that his injured honour must be repaired, tho' at the expence of his Son's blood and life. Now the precept of the law is perfectly obeyed in every part, and a full equivalent to its penalty endured, by a person of infinite dignity; and it is only upon this footing, that is, of compleat satisfaction to all the demands of the law, that any of the rebellious sons of men can be restored into favour. This is a satisfaction which CHRIST alone could give: to sinners it is utterly impossible, either by doing, or suffering. They cannot *do* all the things that are written in the law: nor can they *endure* its penalty, without being for ever miserable. And therefore the law has received a more compleat satisfaction in CHRIST than it would ever receive from the offenders themselves. Further,

Was it a difficulty how sinners might be saved, and yet the evil of sin be displayed in all its horrors? Go to the cross of CHRIST, there, ye fools that make a mock of sin, there learn its malignity, and its hatefulness to the great GOD. There you may see it is so great an evil, that when it is but imputed to the man that is GOD's fellow, as the surety of sinners, it cannot escape punishment. No, when that dreadful stain lay upon him, immediately the commission was given to divine justice, "Awake,

" O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts; smite the shepherd (a)." When CHRIST stood in the room of sinners, even the Father spared not his own Son, but gave him up to death. That the criminals themselves, who are an inferior race of creatures should not escape would not be strange: but what an enormous evil must that be, which cannot be connived at even in the favourite of heaven, the only begotten Son of GOD? Surely nothing besides could give so striking a display of its malignity!

Was it a difficulty, how to reconcile the salvation of sinners, and the public good? that is, How to forgive sin, and yet give an effectual warning against it? How to receive the sinner into favour, and advance him to the highest honour and happiness, and in the meantime deter all other beings from offending? All this is provided for in the sufferings of CHRIST as a surety. Let all worlds look to his cross, and receive the warning which his wounds and groans and blood and dying agonies proclaim aloud; and sure they can never dare to offend after the example of man. Now they may see that the only instance of pardon to be found in the universe was not brought about but by such means as are not likely to be repeated; by the incarnation and death of the LORD of glory. And can they flatter themselves,

(a) Zech xiii. 7.

felves, that he will leave his throne, and hang upon a cross, as often as any of his creatures wantonly dare to offend him? No; such a miracle as this, the utmost effort of divine grace, is not often to be renewed; and therefore, if they dare to sin, it is at their peril. They have no reason to flatter themselves they shall be favoured like fallen man; but rather to expect they shall share in the doom of the fallen angels.

Or if they should think sin may escape with but a slight punishment, here they may be convinced of the contrary. If the Darling of heaven, the LORD of glory, though personally innocent, suffer so much, when sin is but imputed to him, what shall the sinners themselves feel, who can claim no favour upon the footing of their own importance, or personal innocence? "If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

Thus, my brethren, you may see, how a way is opened through JESUS CHRIST for your salvation. All the ends of government may be answered, and yet you pardoned, and made happy. Those attributes of the divine nature, such as mercy and justice, which seemed to clash, are now reconciled; now they mingle their beams, and both shine with a brighter glory in the salvation of sinners, than either of them could apart. And must you not acknowledge this a divine god-like scheme? Can you look round you over the works of Creation,

and see the divine wisdom in every object, and can you not perceive the divine agency in this still more glorious work of redemption? Redemption, which gives a full view of the Deity, not as the sun in eclipse, half dark, half bright, but as

“ A God all o'er, consummate, absolute,

“ Full orb'd, in his whole round of rays complete (a).”

And shall not men and angels join in wonder and praise at the survey of this amazing scheme? Angels are wrapt in wonder and praise, and will be so to all eternity. See! how they pry into this mystery: hark, how they sing! “ Glory to God in the highest;” and celebrate the Lamb that was slain! And shall not men, who are personally interested in the affair, join with them? O! are there none to join with them in this assembly? Surely none can refuse!

Now since all obstructions are removed on God's part, that lay in the way of our salvation, why should we not all be saved together? What is there to hinder our crowding into heaven promiscuously? Or what is there requisite on our part, in order to make us partakers of this salvation? Here it is proper to pass on to the next truth inferred from the text, namely,

III. That the grand prerequisite to your being saved in this way is faith in JESUS CHRIST.
Though

(a) Young's Night-Thoughts, B. 4.

Though the obstructions on GOD's part are removed by the death of CHRIST, yet there is one remaining in the sinner, which cannot be removed without his consent ; and which, while it remains, renders his salvation impossible in the nature of things ; that is, the depravity and corruption of his nature. Till this is cured, he cannot relish those fruitions and employments in which the happiness of heaven consists, and consequently he cannot be happy there. Therefore there is a necessity in the very nature of things that he should be made holy in order to be saved: nay, his salvation itself consists in holiness. Now faith is the root of all holiness in a sinner. Without a firm realizing belief of the great truths of the gospel, it is impossible a sinner should be sanctified by their influence. And without a particular faith in JESUS CHRIST, he cannot derive from him those sanctifying influences by which alone he can be made holy, and which are conveyed through JESUS CHRIST, and thro' him alone.

Further, It would be highly incongruous, and indeed impossible, to save a sinner against his will, or in a way he dislikes. Now, faith, as you shall see presently, principally consists in a hearty consent to, and approbation of the way of salvation through JESUS CHRIST, the only way in which a sinner can be saved consistently with the divine honour ; so that the constitution of the gospel is not only just, but as

merciful as it can be, when it ordains, that only " he that believeth shall be saved ; but that " he that believeth not, shall be damned "

Again, We cannot be saved through JESUS CHRIST, till his righteousness be so far made ours, as that it will answer the demands of the Law for us, and procure the favour of God to us ; but his righteousness cannot be thus imputed to us, or accounted ours in law, till we are so united to him as to be one in law, or one legal person with him. Now faith is the bond of union : faith is that which interests us in CHRIST ; and therefore without faith we cannot receive any benefit from his righteousness.

Here then a most interesting enquiry presents itself, " What is it to believe in JESUS CHRIST ? " or what is that faith which is the grand pre-requisite to salvation ? " If you are capable of attention to the most interesting affair in all the world attend to this with the utmost seriousness and solemnity.

Faith in CHRIST includes something speculative in it ; that is, it includes a speculative, rational belief, upon the testimony of GOD, that JESUS CHRIST is the only Saviour of men. But yet it is not entirely a speculation, like the faith of multitudes among us : it is a more practical experimental thing ; and that you may understand its nature you must take notice of the following particulars.

(1) Faith

(1) Faith presupposes a deep sense of our undone, helpless condition. I told you before, this is the condition of the world without CHRIST, and you must be sensible at heart that this is your condition in particular, before you can believe in him as your Saviour. He came to be a Saviour in a desperate case, when no relief could possibly be had from any other quarter, and you cannot receive him under that character till you feel yourselves in such a case; therefore, in order to your believing, all your pleas and excuses for your sins must be silenced, all your high conceit of your own goodness must be mortified, all your dependence upon your own righteousness, upon the merit of your prayers, your repentance, and good works, must be cast down, and you must feel that indeed you lie at mercy, that God may justly reject you for ever, and that all you can do can bring him under no obligation to save you. These things you must be deeply sensible of, otherwise you can never receive the Lord JESUS in that view in which he is proposed to you, namely, as a Saviour in a desperate case.

I wish and pray you may this day see yourselves in this true, though mortifying light. It is the want of this sense of things that keeps such crowds of persons unbelievers among us. It is the want of this that causes the Lord JESUS to be so little esteemed, so little sought for, so little desired among us. In short, it is the want of this that is the great occasion of so many

ny perishing from under the gospel, and as it were from between the hands of a Saviour. It is this, alas! that causes them to perish, like the impenitent thief on the cross, with a Saviour by their side. O that you once rightly knew yourselves, you would then soon know JESUS CHRIST, and receive salvation from his hands!

(2) Faith implies the enlightning of the understanding to discover the suitableness of JESUS CHRIST as a Saviour, and the excellency of the way of salvation through him. While the sinner lies undone and helpless in himself, and looking about in vain for some relief, it pleases a gracious God to shine into his heart and enable him to see his glory in the face of JESUS CHRIST. Now this once neglected Saviour appears not only absolutely necessary, but also all-glorious and lovely, and the sinner's heart is rapt away, and for ever captivated with his beauty: now the neglected gospel appears in a new light, as different from all his former apprehensions as if it were quite another thing. I have not time at present to enlarge upon this discovery of CHRIST and the gospel, which faith includes; and indeed should I dwell upon it never so long I could not convey just ideas of it to such of you as have never had the happy experience of it. In short, the Lord JESUS, and the way of salvation through him, appear perfectly suitable, all-sufficient and all-glorious; and in consequence of this,

(3) The

(3) The sinner is enabled to embrace this Saviour with all his heart, and to give a voluntary chearful consent to this glorious scheme of salvation. Now all his former unwillingness and reluctance are subdued, and his heart no more draws back from the terms of the gospel, but he complies with them, and that not merely out of constraint and necessity, but out of free choice, and with the greatest pleasure and delight. How does his heart now cling to the blessed JESUS with the most affectionate endearment! How is he lost in wonder, joy, and gratitude at the survey of the divine perfections, as displayed in this method of redemption! How does he rejoice in it, as not only bringing happiness to him, but glory to God, as making his salvation not only consistent with, but a bright illustration of the divine perfections, and the dignity of his government! While he had no other but the low and selfish principles of corrupt nature he had no concern about the honour of God; if he might be but saved it was all he was solicitous about: but now he has a noble generous heart; now he is concerned that God should be honoured in his salvation, and this method of salvation is recommended and endeared to him by the thought that it secures to God the supremacy, and makes his salvation subservient to the divine glory.

(4) Faith in JESUS CHRIST implies a humble trust or dependence upon him alone for the pardon of sin, acceptance with God, and every blessing.

bleffing. As I told you before, the finner's self-confidence is mortified; he gives up all hopes of acceptance upon the footing of his own righteousness: he is filled with self-despair, and yet he does not despair absolutely: he does not give up himself as lost, but has chearful hopes of becoming a child of GOD, and being for ever happy, guilty and unworthy as he is; and what are these hopes founded upon? Why upon the mere free grace and mercy of GOD, through the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST. On this he ventures a guilty, unworthy, helpless soul, and finds it a firm, immoveable foundation, while every other ground of dependence proves but a quicksand. There are many that flatter themselves they put their trust in GOD, but their trust wants sundry qualifications essential to a true faith. It is not the trust of a humble helpless soul that draws all its encouragement from the mere mercy of GOD, and the free indefinite offer of the Gospel; but it is the presumptuous trust of a proud self-confident finner, who draws his encouragement in part at least from his own imaginary goodness and importance. It is not a trust in the mercy of GOD *through Jesus Christ*, as the only medium through which it can be honourably conveyed, but either in the absolute mercy of GOD, which without a proper reference to a Mediator, or in his mercy, as in some measure deserved or moved by something in the finner.

Examine

Examine whether your trust in God will stand this test.

I have now given you a brief answer to that grand question, What is it to believe in JESUS CHRIST? and I hope you understand it, though I have not enlarged so much upon it as I willingly would. I shall only add, that this faith may also be known by its inseparable effects, which are such as follow. Faith purifies the heart, and is a lively principle of inward holiness. Faith is always productive of good works, and leads to universal obedience: faith overcomes the world and all its temptations: faith realizes eternal things, and brings them near; and hence it is defined by the apostle, "The substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen (a)."

Here I have a very important question to propose to you; Who among you can say, "Well, notwithstanding all my imperfections, and all my doubts and fears, I cannot but humbly hope, after the best examination I can make, that such a faith has been produced in this heart of mine?" And can you say so indeed? Then I bring you glad tidings of great joy; YOU SHALL BE SAVED: yes, saved you shall be, in spite of earth and hell; saved, however great your past sins have been. Which thought introduces the glorious truth that comes next in order, namely,

IV. My

(a) Heb. xi. 1.

IV. My text implies, that every one without exception, whatever his former character has been, that is enabled to believe in JESUS CHRIST, shall certainly be saved.

The number or aggravations of sin do not alter the case; and the reason is, the sinner is not received into favour, in whole or in part, upon the account of any thing personal, but solely and entirely upon the account of the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST. Now this righteousness is perfectly equal to all the demands of the Law; and therefore, when this righteousness is made over to the sinner as his by imputation, the Law has no more demands upon him for great sins than for small, for many than for few; because all demands are fully satisfied by the obedience of JESUS CHRIST to the Law. You see that sinners of all characters who believe in him are put upon an equality in this respect: they are all admitted upon one common footing, the righteousness of CHRIST, and that is as sufficient for one as another.

This encouraging truth has the most abundant support from the holy Scriptures. Observe the agreeable indefinite *whosoever* so often repeated. "WHOSOEVER believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." *Whosoever* he be, however vile, however guilty, however unworthy, if he does but believe, he shall not perish, but have everlasting life. What an agreeable assurance is this from the lips of him who has the final states of men at his disposal!

fall! The same blessed lips have also declared, "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out (a):" and "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (b)." He has given you more than bare words to establish you in the belief of this truth: upon this principle he has *acted*, choosing some of the most abandoned sinners to make them examples, not of his justice, as we might expect, but of his mercy, for the encouragement of others. In the days of his flesh he was reproached by his enemies for his friendship to publicans and sinners, but sure it is, instead of reproaching, we must love him on this account. When he rose from the dead he did not rise with angry resentments against his murderers; no, but he singles them out from a whole world of sinners, to make them the first offers of pardon thro' the blood which they had just shed. He orders "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (c);" at Jerusalem where he had been crucified a few days before, there he orders the first publication of pardon and life to be made. You may see what monsters of sin he chose to make the monuments of his grace in *Corinth*. "Neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom"

(a) John vi. 37. (b) Rev. xxii. 17. (c) Luke xxiv. 47.

"dom of GOD." What a dismal catalogue is this! It is no wonder such a crew should not inherit the kingdom of heaven; they are fit only for the infernal prison; and yet, astonishing! it follows, "SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the Spirit of our GOD (a)." What sinner after this can despair of mercy upon his believing in JESUS! St *Paul* was another instance of the same kind: "This, says he, is a faithful saying;" a saying that may be depended on as true, "and worthy of all acceptation," from a guilty world, "that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief: howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me *the chief*, JESUS CHRIST might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting (b)." A sinner of less size would not have answered this end so well; but if *Saul* the persecutor obtain mercy upon his believing, who can despair?

You see upon the whole, my brethren, you are not excluded from CHRIST and life by the greatness of your sins, but if you perish it must be from another cause: it must be on account of your wilful unbelief in not accepting of JESUS CHRIST as your Saviour. If you reject him then indeed you must perish, however small your sins have been; for it is only his death that

(a) 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

(b) 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

that can make atonement for the slightest guilt, and if you have no interest in that the guilt of the smallest sin will sink you into ruin.

Here is a door wide enough for you all, if you will but enter in by faith. Come then, enter in, you that have hitherto claimed an horrid precedence in sin, that have been ring-leaders in vice, come now take the lead, and shew others the way to JESUS CHRIST; harlots, publicans, thieves, and murderers, if such be among you, there is salvation even for you, if you will but believe. O! how astonishing is the love of God discovered in this way; a consideration which introduces the last inference from my text, namely,

V. That the constitution of this method of salvation, or the mission of a Saviour into our world, is a most striking and astonishing display of the love of God: "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son," &c.

View the scheme all through, and you will discover love, infinite love in every part of it. Consider the great God as self-happy, and independent upon all his creatures, and what but love, self-moved love, could excite him to make such provision for an inferior part of them! Consider the world sunk in sin, not only without merit, but most deserving of everlasting punishment, and what but love could move him to have mercy upon such a world? Consider the Saviour provided, not an angel, not the highest

highest creature, but his *Son*, his *only begotten Son*; and what but love could move him to appoint such a Saviour? Consider the manner in which he was sent, as a *gift*, a free unmerited gift; "God gave his only begotten Son:" And what but infinite love could give such an unspeakable gift? Consider the blessings conferred through this Saviour, deliverance from perdition, and the enjoyment of everlasting life, and what but the love of a God could confer such blessings? Consider the condition upon which these blessings are offered, faith, that humble, self-emptied grave, so suitable to the circumstances of a poor sinner, that brings nothing but receives all, and what but divine love could make such a gracious appointment? "It is by faith, that it may be of grace (a)." Consider the indefinite extent, or the universality of the offer, which takes in sinners of the vilest characters, and accepts against none: "Whosoever believeth shall not perish," &c. O what love is this! But I must leave it as the theme of your meditations, not only in the house of your pilgrimage, but through all eternity: eternity will be short enough to pry into this mystery, and it will employ the understandings of men and angels thro' the revolutions of eternal ages.

And now, my brethren, to draw towards a conclusion, I would hold a treaty with you this day about the reconciliation to God through **JESUS CHRIST**. I have this day set life and death before

(a) Rom. iv. 16.

“ believe of ourselves, why then do you exhort us
 “ to it? or how can we be concerned to endeavour
 “ your that which it is impossible for us to
 “ do?”

In answer to this, I grant the premises are true; and God forbid I should so much as intimate that faith is the spontaneous growth of corrupt nature, or that you can come to CHRIST without the Father's drawing you: but the conclusions you draw from these premises are very erroneous. I exhort and persuade you to believe in JESUS CHRIST, because it is while such means are used with sinners and by the use of them that it pleases God to enable them to comply, or to work faith in them. I would therefore use those means which God is pleased to bless for this end. I exhort you to believe, in order to set you upon the trial, for it is putting it to trial, and that only, which can fully convince you of your own inability to believe, and till you are convinced of this you can never expect strength from God. I exhort you to believe, because, sinful and enfeebled as you are, you are capable of using various preparatives to faith. You may attend upon prayer, hearing, and all the outward means of grace with natural seriousness: you may endeavour to get acquainted with your own helpless condition, and as it were put yourselves in the way of divine mercy: and though all these means cannot of themselves produce faith in you, yet it is only in the use of these means you are to expect divine

vine grace to work it in you : never was it yet produced in one soul, while lying supine, lazy, and inactive.

I hope you now see good reasons why I should exhort you to believe, and also perceive my design in it, I therefore renew the proposal to you, that you should this day, as guilty, unworthy, self-despairing sinners, accept of the only begotten Son of GOD as your Saviour, and fall in with the gospel-method of salvation; and I once more demand your answer. I would by no means, if possible, leave the pulpit this day till I have effectually recommended the blessed JESUS, my Lord and master, to your acceptance. I am strongly bound by the vows and resolutions of a sick-bed to recommend him to you; and now I would endeavour to perform my vows. I would have us all this day before we part consent to GOD's covenant that we may go away justified to our houses.

To this I persuade and exhort you in the name, and by the authority of the great GOD, by the death of JESUS CHRIST for sinners, by your own most urgent and absolute necessity, by the immense blessings proposed in the Gospel, and by the heavy curse denounced against unbelievers.

All the blessings of the Gospel, pardon of sin, sanctifying grace, eternal life, and whatever you can want, shall become yours this day, if you but believe in the Son of GOD: then let desolation over-run our land, let public and pri-

vate calamities crowd upon you, and make you so many *Jobs* for poverty and affliction, still your main interest is secure; the storms and waves of trouble can only bear you to heaven, and hasten your passage to the harbour of eternal rest. Let devils accuse you before God, let conscience indict you and bring you in guilty, let the fiery law make its demands upon you, you have a righteousness in JESUS CHRIST that is sufficient to answer all demands, and, having received it by faith, you may plead it as your own in law. Happy souls! rejoice in hope of the glory of God, for your hope will never make you ashamed!

But I expect, as usual, some of you will refuse to comply with this proposal. This, alas! has been the usual fate of the blessed Gospel in all ages and in all countries; as some have received it, so some have rejected it. That old complaint of *Isaiab* has been justly repeated thousands of times; "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed (a)?" And is there no reason to pour it out from a broken heart over some of you, my dear people? Are you all this day determined to believe? If so, I pronounce you blessed in the name of the Lord; but if not, I must denounce your doom.

Be it known to you then from the living God, that, if you thus continue in unbelief, you shut the door of mercy against yourselves, and

(a) *Isai.* liii. 1.

and exclude yourselves from eternal life. Whatever splendid appearances of virtue, whatever amiable qualities, whatever seeming good works you have, the express sentence of the Gospel lies in full force against you, "He that believeth not shall be damned (a).—He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the only begotten Son of GOD (b).—He that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of GOD abideth upon him (c)".—This is your doom repeatedly pronounced by him whom you must own to be the best friend of human nature, and if he condemn who can justify you?

Be it also known to you that you will not only perish, but you will perish with peculiar aggravations; you will fall with no common ruin; you will envy the lot of *Heathens* who perished without the Law: for O! you incur the peculiarly enormous guilt of rejecting the Gospel, and putting contempt upon the Son of GOD. This is an horrid exploit of wickedness, and this GOD resents above all the other crimes of which human nature is capable. Hence CHRIST is come for judgment as well as for mercy into this world, and he is set for the fall as well as the rising again of many in *Israel*. You now enjoy the light of the Gospel, which has conducted many through this dark world to eternal day; but remember also, "this is

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(a) Mark xvi. 16.

(b) John iii. 18.

(c) John iii. 36.

"the condemnation;" that is, it is the occasion of the most aggravated condemnation, "that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light." On this principle *Jesus* pronounced the doom of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* more intolerable than that of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* (a); and would it not be hard to find a place in *Virginia* where the doom of unbelievers is likely to be so terrible as among us?

And now does not all this move you? Are you not alarmed at the thought of perishing; of perishing by the hand of a Saviour rejected and despised; perishing under the stain of his profaned blood; perishing not only under the curse of the Law, but under that of the Gospel, which is vastly heavier? O! are you hardy enough to venture upon such a doom! This doom is unavoidable if you refuse to comply with the proposal now made to you.

I must now conclude the treaty; but for my own acquittance I must take witness that I have endeavoured to discharge my commission, whatever reception you give it. I call heaven and earth, and your own consciences to witness that life and salvation, through **JESUS CHRIST** have been offered to you on this day; and if you reject it, remember it; remember it whenever you see this place; remember it whenever you see my face, or one another; remember it, that you may witness for me at the supreme

(a) Matth. xi. 21, 22.

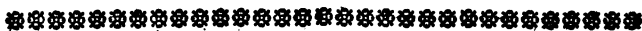
preme tribunal that I am clear of your blood. Alas! you will remember it among a thousand painful reflections millions of ages hence when the remembrance of it will rend your hearts like a vulture. Many sermons forgotten upon earth are remembered in hell, and haunt the guilty mind for ever. O that you would believe, and so prevent this dreadful effect from the present sermon!





S E R M O N III.

Sinners intreated to be reconciled to
G O D.



2 C O R. V. 20.

*We then are ambassadors for Christ, as though GOD
did beseech you by us. We pray you, in Christ's
stead, be ye reconciled to GOD.*

TO preside in the solemnities of public
worship, to direct your thoughts, and
choose for you the subjects of your
meditation on those sacred hours
which you spend in the house of God, and up-
on the right improvement of which your ever-
lasting happiness so much depends, this is a
province of the most tremendous importance
that can be devolved upon a mortal; and every
man of the sacred character, who knows what
he is about, must tremble at the thought, and
be often anxiously perplexed what subject he
shall choose, what he shall say upon it, and in
what

what manner he shall deliver his message. His success in a great measure depends upon his choice, for though the blessed Spirit is the proper agent, and though the best means, without his efficacious concurrence, are altogether fruitless, yet he is wont to bless those means that are best adapted to do good; and after a long course of languid and fruitless efforts, which seem to have been unusually disowned by my divine Master, what text shall I choose out of the inexhaustible treasury of God's word? In what new method shall I speak upon it? What new untried experiment shall I make? Blessed JESUS! my heavenly Master! direct thy poor perplexed servant that is at a loss, and knows not what to do; direct him that has tried and tried again all the expedients he could think of, but almost in vain, and now scarcely knows what it is to hope for success. Divine direction, my brethren, has been sought; and may I hope it is that which has turned my mind to address you this day on the important subject of your reconciliation to God, and to become a humble imitator of the great *St Paul*, whose affecting words I have read to you. "We then are ambassadors for CHRIST, as tho' God did beseech you by us: we pray you in CHRIST's stead be ye reconciled to God."

The introduction to this passage you find in the foregoing verses, "God hath given to us, [the apostles] the ministry of reconciliation;" the sum and substance of which is this, namely,

ly, " That GOD was in CHRIST reconciling the
" world unto himself, not imputing their tres-
" passes unto them." As if he had said, " The
great sovereign of the universe, though highly
provoked, and justly displeas'd with our rebel-
lious world, has been so gracious as to contrive
a plan of reconciliation, whereby they may not
only escape the punishment they deserve, but
also be restored to the favour of GOD, and all
the privileges of his favourite subjects." This
plan was laid *in Christ*; that is, it was he that
was appointed, and undertook to remove all ob-
stacles out of the way of their reconciliation, so
that it might be consistent with the honour and
dignity of GOD and his government. This he
performed by a life of perfect obedience, and
an atoning death instead of rebellious man.
Though " he knew no sin" of his own; yet " he
" was made sin," that is, a sin-offering, or a
sinner by imputation " for us," that we might
" be made the righteousness of GOD in him." Thus
all hindrances are removed on GOD's part.
The plan of a treaty of reconciliation is formed,
approved, and ratified in the court of heaven;
but then it must be published, all the terms
made known, and the consent of the rebels so-
licit'd and gain'd. It is not enough that all
impediments to peace are removed on GOD's
part; they must also be removed on the part of
man: the reconciliation must be mutual; both
the parties must agree. Hence arises the neces-
sity of the ministry of reconciliation which was
committed

committed to the apostles, those prime ministers of the kingdom of CHRIST, and in a lower sphere to the ordinary ministers of the Gospel in every age. The great business of their office is to publish the treaty of peace; that is, the articles of reconciliation, and to use every motive to gain the consent of mankind to these articles. It is this office St *Paul* is discharging, when he says, "We are ambassadors for CHRIST, as though GOD did beseech you by us: we pray you, in CHRIST's stead, be ye reconciled to GOD."

"We are *ambassadors* for CHRIST." The proper notion of an ambassador is that of a person sent by a king to transact affairs in his name, and according to his instructions with foreign states, or a part of his subjects, to whom he does not think proper to go himself and treat with them in his own person. Thus a peace is generally concluded between contending nations, not by their kings in person, but by their plenipotentiaries acting in their name, and by their authority; and, while they keep to their instructions, their negotiations and agreements are as valid and authentic as if they were carried on and concluded by their masters in person. Thus the Lord JESUS CHRIST is not personally present in our world to manage the treaty of peace himself, but he has appointed first his apostles, and then the ministers of the gospel through every age to carry it on in his name. This is their proper character; they are ambaf-
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adors for CHRIST, his plenipotentiaries, furnished with a commission and instructions to make overtures of reconciliation to a rebel world and treat with them to gain their consent.

Indeed aspiring ecclesiastics have assumed high-sounding titles merely to procure extravagant honours to themselves. They have called themselves ambassadors of CHRIST, messengers from GOD, the plenipotentiaries and viceroys of heaven, and I know not what, not with a design to do honour to their Master but to keep the world in a superstitious awe of themselves. This priestly pride and insolence I utterly abhor; and yet I humbly adventure to assume the title of an ambassador of the great King of heaven, and require you to regard me in this high character: but then you must know, that while I am making this claim, I own myself obliged inviolably to adhere to the instructions of my divine Master contained in the Bible. I have no power over your faith; no power to dictate or prescribe; but my work is only just to publish the articles of peace as my Master has established and revealed them in his word, without the least addition, diminution, or alteration. I pretend to no higher power than this, and this power I must claim, unless I would renounce my office; for who can consistently profess himself a minister of CHRIST without asserting his right and power to publish what

what his Lord has taught, and communicate his royal instructions?

Therefore, without usurping an equality with *St Paul*, or his fellow-apostles, I must tell you in his language I appear among you this day as the ambassador of the most high God; *I am discharging an embassy for Christ (a)*; and I tell you this with no other design than to procure your most serious regard to what I say. If you consider it only as my declaration, whatever regard you pay to it, the end of my ministry will not be answered upon you. The end of my office is not to make myself the object of your love and veneration, but to reconcile you to God: but you cannot be reconciled to God while you consider the proposal as made to you only by your fellow-mortal. You must regard it as made to you by the Lord JESUS CHRIST, the great Mediator between God and man. I not only allow, but even invite and charge you to enquire and judge whether what I say be agreeable to my divine instructions, which are as open to your inspection as mine, and to regard it no farther than it is so: but if I follow these instructions, and propose the treaty of peace to you just as it is concluded in heaven, then I charge you to regard it as proposed by the Lord of heaven and earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, though through my unworthy

(a) This is the most literal translation of *προσβόμην ὑπὲρ χριστοῦ*.

unworthy lips. Consider yourselves this day as the hearers not of a preacher formed out of the clay like yourselves, but of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Suppose him here in person treating with you about your reconciliation to God, and what regard you would pay to a proposal made by him in person, with all his divine royalties about him, that you should now shew to the treaty I am to negotiate with you in his name and stead.

The next sentence in my text binds you still more strongly to this; "as though God did beseech you by us." As if he had said, "God the Father also concurs in this treaty of peace, as well as CHRIST the great peace-maker; and as we discharge an embassy for CHRIST, so we do also for God, and you are to regard our beseeching and exhorting (a), as tho' the great God did in person beseech and exhort you by us." What astonishing condescension is here intimated! not that the ministers of CHRIST should beseech you; this would be no mighty condescension: but that the supreme JEHOVAH should beseech you; that he should not only command you with the stern air of authority as your Sovereign, but as a friend, nay as a petitioner should affectionately beseech you, you despicable, guilty worms, obnoxious rebels! How astonishing, how God-like, how unprecedented and inimitable is this condescension! Let heaven and earth
admire

(a) παρακαλῶς signifies exhorting, as well as beseeching.

admire and adore! It is *by us*, indeed, *by us* your poor fellow-mortals, that he beseeches, but O! let not this tempt you to disregard him or his intreaty: though he employs such mean ambassadors, yet consider his dignity who sends us, and then you cannot disregard his message even from our mouth.

The apostle, having thus prepared the way, proceeds to the actual exercise of his office as an ambassador for CHRIST: "We pray you," says he, in CHRIST'S stead, be reconciled to "GOD." As if he had said, "If CHRIST were now present in person among you, this is what he would propose to you, and urge upon you, *that you would be reconciled to GOD*, but him the heavens must receive till the time of the restitution of all things, but he has left us his poor servants to officiate in his place as well as we can, and we would prosecute the same design, we would urge upon you what he would urge, were he to speak, therefore we pray you in his stead be ye reconciled to GOD: we earnestly pray you to be reconciled; *that is the utmost which such feeble worms as we can do: we can only pray and beg*, but your compliance is not within the command of our power; the compliance belongs to you; and remember, if you refuse, you must take it upon yourselves, and answer the consequence."

Having thus explained the text, I proceed in my poor manner to exemplify it by negotiating the treaty with you for your reconciliation
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to God; and you see my business lies directly with such of you as are as yet enemies to God: you are the only persons that stand in need of reconciliation. As for such of you (and I doubt not but there are such among you) whose innate enmity has been subdued, and who are become the friends and subjects of the King of heaven after your guilty revolt I must desire you as it were to stand by yourselves for the present hour, and help me by your prayers, while I am speaking to your poor brethren, who still continue in that state of hostility and rebellion against God, in which you once were, and the miseries of which you well know, and still lament and deplore.

But by this proposal I am afraid I have deprived myself of hearers on this subject: for have you not all already placed yourselves among the lovers of God who consequently do not need to be reconciled to him? Is not every one of you ready to say to me, "If your business only lies with the enemies of God, you have no concern with me in this discourse? for, God forbid, that I should be an enemy to him. I have indeed been guilty of a great many sins, but I had no bad design in them, and never had the least enmity against my Maker; so far from it, that I shudder at the very thought!" This is the first obstacle that I meet with in discharging my embassy: the embassy itself is looked upon as needless by the persons concerned, like an attempt to reconcile

those that are good friends already. This obstacle must be removed before we can proceed any farther.

I am far from charging any of you with so horrid a crime as enmity and rebellion against GOD, who can produce satisfactory evidences to your own conscience that you are his friends. I only desire that you would not flatter yourselves, nor draw a rash and groundless conclusion in an affair of such infinite moment, but that you would put the matter to a fair trial, according to evidence, and then let your conscience pass an impartial sentence as your judge under the supreme Judge of the world.

You plead "*Not guilty*" to the charge, and alledgethat you have always loved GOD; but if this be the case, whence is it that you have afforded him so few of your affectionate and warm thoughts? Do not your tenderest thoughts dwell upon the objects of your love? But has not your mind been shy of him who gave you your power of thinking? Have not you lived stupidly thoughtless of him for days and weeks together? Nay, have not serious thoughts of him been unwelcome, and made you uneasy, and have you not turned every way to avoid them? Have you not often prayed to him, and concurred in other acts of religious worship, and yet had but very few or no devout thoughts of him, even at the very time? And is that mind well affected towards him that is so averse to him, and turns every way to shun a glance of him? Alas! is this

this your friendship for the God that made you, whose you are, and whom you ought to serve!

Would you not have indulged the fool's wish, *that there were no GOD*, had not the horror and impossibility of the thing restrained you? But, notwithstanding this restraint, has not this blasphemy shed its malignant poison at times in your hearts? If there was no God, then you would sin without controul, and without dread of punishment, and how sweet was this! Then you would have nothing to do with that melancholy thing, religion; and what an agreeable exemption would this be? But is this your love for him, to wish the parent of all being out of being! Alas! can the rankest enmity rise higher!

Again, If you are reconciled to God, whence is it that you are secretly, or perhaps openly disaffected to his image, I mean the purity and strictness of his Law, and the lineaments of holiness that appear upon the unfashionable religious few? If you loved God you would of course love every thing that bears any resemblance to him. But are you not conscious that it is otherwise with you; that you murmur and cavil at the restraints of God's Law, and would much rather abjure it, be free from it, and live as you list? Are you not conscious that nothing exposes a man more to your secret disgust and contempt, and perhaps to your public mockery and ridicule, than a strict and holy walk,

and a conscientious observance of the duties of devotion? and if you catch your neighbour in any of these offences, do not your hearts rise against him? and what is this but the effect of your enmity against God? Do you thus disgust a man for wearing the genuine image and resemblance of your friend? No; the effect of love is quite the reverse.

Again, If you do but reflect upon the daily sensations of your own minds, must you not be conscious that you love other persons and things more than God? that you love, pleasure, honour, riches, your relations and friends, more than the glorious and ever-blessed God? Look into your own hearts and you will find it so: you will find that this, and that, and a thousand things in this world, engross more of your thoughts, your cares, desires, joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears, than God, or any of his concerns. Now it is essential to the love of God that it be *supreme*. You do not love him truly at all, in the least degree, if you do not love him above all; above all persons and things in the whole universe. He is a jealous God, and will not suffer a rival. A lower degree of love for supreme excellence is an affront and indignity. Is it not therefore evident, even to your own conviction, that you do not love God at all; and what is this but to be his enemy? To be indifferent towards him, as though he were an insignificant being, neither good nor evil, a mere cypher; to feel neither love nor hatred towards

towards him, but to neglect him, as if you had no concern with him one way or other; what an horrible disposition is this towards him, who is supremely and infinitely glorious and amiable, your Creator, your Sovereign, and Benefactor, who therefore deserves and demands your highest love; or, in the words of his own Law, *that you should love him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength (a)*! From what can such indifference towards him proceed but from disaffection and enmity? It is in this way that the enmity of man towards God most generally discovers itself. They feel, perhaps, no positive workings of hatred towards him, unless when their innate corruption, like an exasperated serpent, is irritated by conviction from his Law; but they feel an apathy, a listlessness, an indifference towards him, and because they feel no more, they flatter themselves they are far from hating him, especially as they may have very honourable speculative thoughts of him floating on the surface of their minds. But alas! this very thing, this indifference, or listless neutrality is the very core of their enmity; and if they are thus indifferent to him now, while enjoying so many blessings from his hand, and while he delays their punishment, how will their enmity swell and rise to all the rage of a devil against him, when he puts forth his vindictive hand and touches them; and so gives occasion

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(a) Mark xii. 30.

to it to discover its venom! My soul shudders to think what horrid insurrections and direct rebellion this temper will produce when once irritated, and all restraints are taken off, which will be the doom of sinners in the eternal world, and then they will have no more of the love of God in them than the most malignant devil in hell! If therefore you generally feel such an indifferency towards God be assured you are not reconciled to him, but are his enemies in your hearts.

Again, All moral evil, or sin is contrary to God: it is the only thing upon earth, or in hell, that is most opposite to his holy nature, and the object of his implacable and eternal indignation. He is of purer eyes than to behold it or endure it. It is his hatred to sin that has turned his heart against any of his creatures, and is the cause of all the vengeance that he has inflicted upon the guilty inhabitants of our world or the spirits of hell. There is no object in the whole compass of the universe so odious to you as every sin is to a pure and all-holy God: now it is impossible you should at once love two things so opposite, so eternally irreconcilable. As much love as you have for any unlawful pleasure, just so much enmity there is in your hearts towards God. Hence, says *St Paul*, "you were enemies in your minds by wicked works (a)." intimating, that the love and practice of our wicked works is a plain evidence of

(a) Col. i. 21.

of inward enmity of mind towards God. The works of the flesh are sinful : hence, says the same apostle, " the carnal mind, or the mind-
 " ing of the flesh (a), is enmity against God ;
 " it is not subject to the Law of God, neither
 " indeed can it be : so then they that are in the
 " flesh ;" or under the power of a carnal mind,
 " cannot please God (b) ;" because, whatever
 seeming acts of obedience they perform, and
 whatever appearances of friendship they put on,
 they are at heart enemies to God, and there-
 fore cannot please him, who searches their
 heart, and sees the secret principle of their ac-
 tions. Hence also St. *James* tells us, that " if
 " any man would be a friend of the world, he
 " is the enemy of God, because the friendship
 " of the world is enmity against God (c) :"
 for the world enflames the lusts of men, and occa-
 sions much sin ; and if we love the tempter, we
 love the sin to which it would allure us, and if
 we love the sin we are the enemies of God ; and
 therefore the friendship of the world is enmity
 against God. This then is an established max-
 im without straining the matter too far That
 as far as you love any sin, so far are you ene-
 mies to God. The love, as well as the service
 of such opposite masters, is utterly inconsistent.
 Now, do not your own consciences witness a-
 gainst you, that have indulged, and still do ha-
 bitually indulge the love of some sin or other ?

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whether

(a) φρονίμα σαρκός, Rom. viii. 7.

(b) Rom. viii. 8.

(c) Jam. iv. 4.

whether it be covetousness or sensual pleasure, or ambition, or some angry passion, or whatever sin it be, as far as you love it, so far you are enemies to God: and if you take a view of your temper and practice must you not unavoidably be convicted of this dreadful guilt? Horrible as the crime is, is it not an undeniable matter of fact, that you do really love some sin, and consequently hate the infinitely amiable and ever-blessed GOD? and therefore you are the persons I have to deal with, as needing reconciliation with God.

Farther, Take a view of your general manner of serving GOD in the duties of religion; your manner of praying, meditation, hearing the word of GOD, and other acts of devotion, and then enquire, Do you perform this service as the willing servants of a master you love? Do you not enter upon such service with reluctance or listlessness, and perform it with languor and indifferency, as a business to which you have no heart? But is this your manner of performing a labour of love to a friend? Will your own reason suffer you to think you would be so lukewarm and heartless in the worship of GOD if you sincerely loved him? No; love is an active principle, a vigorous spring of action, and if this were the principle of your religious services, you would infuse more spirit and life into them, you would exert all your powers, and be " fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (a)."

But

(a) Rom. xii. 11.

But when you have performed offices of devotion with some degree of earnestness, which no doubt you have sometimes done, what was the principle or spring of your exertion? Was it the love of God? or was it purely the low principle of self-love? Why did you pray with such eager importunity, and attend upon the other means of grace with so much seriousness, but because you apprehended your dear selves were in danger, and you were not willing to be miserable for ever. This servile, mercenary kind of religious earnestness will not prove that you love God, but only that you love yourselves, and this you may do, and yet have no more true goodness, or genuine love to God, than an infernal spirit, for there is not a spirit in hell but what loves himself. Indeed self-love is so far from being an evidence of the love of God, that the extravagant excess of it is the source of that wickedness that abounds among men and devils. I do not mean by this utterly to exclude self-love out of genuine religion; it must have its place in the most excellent and best beings, but then it must be kept in a proper subordination, and not advance the creature above the Creator, and dethrone the supreme King of the universe. His love must be uppermost in the heart, and when that has the highest place, the indulgence of self-love in pursuing our own happiness is lawful, and an important duty. Now do you not find from this view of the case that you are not reconciled to God,

God, even in your most devout and zealous hours, much less in the languid inactive tenour of your lives? If so, place yourselves among those that I have to do with to-day; that is, the enemies of God.

So also, when you perform good offices to mankind; when you are harmless, obliging neighbours; when you are charitable to the poor, or strictly just in trade; is the love of God, and a regard to his authority, the reason and principle of your actions? That is, do you do these things *because* God commands them, and *because* you *delight* to do what he commands; or rather do you not do them merely *because* it is your nature to perform humane and honourable actions in such instances; or *because* you may acquire honour, or some selfish advantage by them? Alas! that God should be neglected, forgotten, and left out of the question, as of no importance, even in those actions that are materially good! that even what he commands should be done, not *because* he commands it, but for some other sordid selfish reason! O! if you did really love God would you thus disregard him, and do nothing for his sake, not only when you are doing what he forbids, but even when you are performing what he has made your duty! Would he be such a cypher, a mere nothing in your practical esteem, if your hearts were reconciled to him as your God! No; such of you must look upon yourselves as the very persons whom I am to pray

pray in CHRIST'S stead to be reconciled to
G O D.

I might thus, from obvious facts, lay before you many more evidences of your disaffection to the great GOD; but I must leave some room for the other part of my address to you, in which I am to persuade you to accept of the proposal of reconciliation, and therefore I shall add only one more test of your pretended friendship, a test which is established by the great founder of our religion, as infallibly decisive in this case, and that is, obedience, or the keeping of the commandments of GOD. This, I say, is established in the strongest terms by JESUS CHRIST himself, as a decisive test of love, "If ye love me, keep my commandments (*a*). Then are ye my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you (*b*). If any man love me, he will keep my words. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings (*c*). This is the love of GOD, says St *John*, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous (*d*)." That is, they are not grievous when love is the principle of obedience. The service of love is always willing and pleasing. Now, my brethren, bring your hearts and lives to this standard, and let conscience declare, Are there not some demands and restraints of the divine Law so disagreeable to you that you labour to keep yourselves

(*a*) John xiv. 15. (*b*) John xv. 14. (*c*) John xiv. 23, 24.

(*d*) 1 John v. 3.

yourself ignorant of them, and turn every way to avoid the painful light of conviction? Are there not several duties which you know in your consciences to be such, which you do not so much as honestly endeavour to perform, but knowingly and wilfully neglect? And are there not some favourite sins, which your consciences tell you God has forbidden, which yet are so pleasing to you, that you knowingly and allowedly indulge and practise them? If this be your case, you need not pretend to plead any thing in your own defence, or hesitate any longer: the case is plain, YOU ARE, BEYOND ALL DOUBT, ENEMIES TO GOD; you are undeniably convicted of it this day by irresistible evidence. You perhaps glory in the profession of Christians, but you are, notwithstanding, ENEMIES OF GOD. You attend on public worship, you pray, you read, you communicate, you are perhaps a zealous *church-man* or *dissenter*, but you are ENEMIES OF GOD. You have perhaps had many fits of religious affection, and serious concern about your everlasting happiness, but notwithstanding you are ENEMIES OF GOD. You may have reformed in many things, but you are still ENEMIES OF GOD. Men may esteem you Christians, but the GOD of heaven accounts you his enemies. In vain do you insist upon it, that you have never hated your Maker all your life, but even tremble at the thought, for undeniable facts are against you: and the reason why you have not seen your enmity was, because

because you were blind, and judged upon wrong principles: but if you this day feel the force of conviction from the Law, and have your eyes opened, you will see and be shocked at your horrid enmity against God, before yonder sun sets.

And now, when I have singled out from the rest those I am now to beseech to reconciliation with G O D, have I not got the majority of you to treat with? Where are the sincere lovers of God? Alas, how few are they! and how imperfect even is their love, so that they hardly dare call themselves lovers of God, but tremble lest they should still belong to the wretched crowd that are still unreconciled to him!

Ye rebels against the King of heaven! ye enemies against my Lord and Master JESUS CHRIST! (I cannot flatter you with a softer name) HEAR ME; ATTEND to the proposal I make to you, not in my own name, but in the name and stead of your rightful Sovereign; and that is, that you will this day **BE RECONCILED TO GOD.** "I pray you in his stead, (that is all I can do) " **BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD.**" That you may know what I mean, I will more particularly explain this overture to you.

If you would be reconciled to God, you must be deeply sensible of the guilt, the wickedness, the baseness, the inexpressible malignity of your enmity and rebellion against him. You must return to your rightful Sovereign as convicted, self-condemned, penitent, broken-hearted rebels, confounded and ashamed of your conduct

duct, loathing yourselves because you have loathed the Supreme Excellence, mourning over your unnatural disaffection, your base ingratitude, your horrid rebellion against so good a king. And what do you say to this article of the treaty of peace? Is it an hard thing for such causeless enemies to fall upon the knee, and to mourn and weep as prostrate penitents at the feet of their injured Maker? Is it an hard thing for one that has all his life been guilty of the blackest crime upon earth, or even in hell, I mean enmity against God, to confess "I have sinned," and to *feel* his own confession? to *feel* it, I say; for if he does not feel it, his confession is but an empty compliment, that increases his guilt?

Again, If you would be reconciled to God, you must heartily consent to be reconciled to him *in Christ*; that is, you must come in upon the footing of that act of grace which is published in the Gospel through CHRIST, and expecting no favour at all upon the footing of your own goodness. The merit of what you call your good actions, of your repentance, your prayers, your acts of charity and justice must all pass for nothing in this respect: you must depend only and entirely upon the merit of CHRIST'S obedience and sufferings, as the ground of your acceptance with God, and hope for forgiveness and favour from his mere mercy bestowed upon you only for the sake of CHRIST, or on account of what he has done and suffered

ed in the stead of sinners. The context informs you, that it is only *in Christ* that God is reconciling the world to himself; and consequently it is only *in Christ* that the world must accept of reconciliation and pardon. It does not consist with the dignity and perfections of the King of heaven to receive rebels into favour upon any other footing. I would have you consent to every article of the overture as I go along, and therefore here again I make a pause to ask you, what do you think of this article? Are you willing to comply with it, willing to come into favour with God, as convicted, self-condemned rebels, upon an act of grace procured by the righteousness of CHRIST alone? Is it a mortification to creatures that never have done one action truly good in all their lives, because they have never loved God in one moment of their lives, creatures that have always, even in what they counted their best dispositions and best actions, been hateful to God, because even in their best dispositions, and best actions, they were utterly destitute of his love? Is it a mortification to such creatures to renounce all their own merit, and consent to be saved only through grace, on account of the righteousness of another, even of JESUS CHRIST the great Peace-maker? Can it be a mortification to you to renounce what you have not, and to own yourselves guilty, and utterly unworthy, when you are really such? O! may
I not

I not expect your compliance with this term of reconciliation!

Again, If you would be reconciled to God, you must engage yourselves in his service for the future, and devote yourselves to do his will. His Law must be the rule of your temper and practice: whatever he commands you must honestly endeavour to perform, without exception of any one duty as disagreeable and laborious; and whatever he forbids you must, for that reason, abstain from, however pleasing, advantageous, or fashionable. You must no longer look upon yourselves as your own, but as bought with a price, and therefore bound to glorify God with your souls and your bodies, which are his. And can you make any difficulty of complying with this term; of obeying Him, whom the happy angels of heaven obey; of observing that Law which always unites your duty and your happiness, and forbids nothing but what is itself injurious to you in the nature of things; of doing the will of the wisest and best of beings rather than your own, who are ignorant and depraved creatures? O! can you make any difficulty of this! If not, you will return home his day reconciled to God; an happiness you have never yet enjoyed for one moment.

Finally, If you would be reconciled to God, you must break off all friendship with his enemies: your friendship with the world; I mean your attachment to its wicked fashions and customs, and your fondness for its rebellious inhabitants,

habitants, who continue enemies to GOD; your love of guilty pleasures, and every form of sin, however pleasing or gainful you may imagine it to be, your old habits and practices, while enemies to GOD, all these you must break off for ever, for your friendship with these is utterly inconsistent with the love of GOD. As long as you are resolved to love the world, to keep up your society with your old companions in sin, to retain your old pleasures and evil practices; as long, I say, as you are resolved upon this course, farewell all hope of your reconciliation to GOD: it is absolutely impossible. And do any of you hesitate at this article? Is sin so noble a thing in itself, and so happy in its consequences, as that you should be so loth to part with it? Is it so sweet a thing to you to sin against GOD, that you know not how to forbear? Alas! will you rather be an implacable enemy to the GOD that made you than break your league with his enemies and your own? Do you love your sins so well, and are you so obliged to them that you will lay down your life, your eternal life for their sake?

I might multiply particulars, but these are the principal articles of that treaty of peace I am negotiating with you, and a consent to these includes a compliance with all the rest. And are you determined to comply? Does the heaven-born purpose now rise in your minds, "I am determined I will be an enemy of GOD no longer, but this very day I will be recon-

“ciled to God upon his own terms?” Is this your fixed purpose; or is there any occasion to pray and persuade you?

I well know, and it is fit you should know, that you are not able of yourselves to consent to these terms, but that it is the work of the power of God alone to reconcile you to himself, and that all my persuasions and intreaties will never make you either able or willing. You will then ask me, perhaps, “Why do I propose the terms to you, or use any persuasives or intreaties with you?” I answer, Because you never will be sensible of your inability till you make an honest trial, and because you never will look and pray for the aid of the blessed Spirit till you are deeply sensible of your own insufficiency: and further, because, if the blessed Spirit should ever effectually work upon you, it will be by enlightning your understandings to see the reasonableness of the terms, and the force of the persuasives, and in this way, agreeably to your reasonable natures, sweetly constraining your obstinate wills to yield yourselves to God, therefore the terms must be proposed to you, and persuasives used, if I would be subservient to this divine agent, and furnish him with materials with which to work; and I have some little hope that he will, as it were, catch my feeble words from my lips before they vanish into air, and bear them home to your hearts with a power which you will not be able to resist. Finally, a conviction of the true
state

state of your case may constrain you from self-love and the low principles of nature to use the means of reconciliation with zeal and earnestness; this you are capable of, even with the mere strength of degenerate nature; and it is only in this way of earnest endeavours that you have any encouragement to hope for divine aid: therefore, notwithstanding your utter impotence, I must pray, intreat, and persuade you to be reconciled to God.

I pray you, in the name of the great God your heavenly Father, and of JESUS CHRIST your Redeemer. If God should once more renew the thunder and lightning, and darkness and tempest of *Sinai*, and speak to you as he once did to the trembling *Israelites*; or if he should appear to you in all the amiable and alluring glories of a sin-pardoning reconcilable God, and pray you to be reconciled to him, would you not then regard the proposal? or if JESUS, who once prayed *for* you from the cross, should now pray *to* you from his throne in heaven, and beg you with his own gracious voice to be reconciled, O! could you disregard the intreaty! Surely no. Now the overture of peace is as really made to you by the blessed God and his Son JESUS CHRIST, as if it were expressly proposed to you by an immediate voice from heaven. For I beseech you, "as though God did beseech you by me, and it is in CHRIST'S stead, that I pray you be reconciled to God." Therefore, however light you

may make of a mere proposal of mine, can you disregard an overture from the God that made you, and the Saviour that bought you with his blood, in which I am but the faint echo of their voice from heaven ?

In the name of God I pray you ; the name of the greatest and best of beings, that name which angels love and adore, and which strikes terror through the hardiest devil in the infernal regions, the name of your Father, the immediate Father of your spirits, and the author of your mortal frames, the name of your preserver and benefactor ; in whom you live, and move, and have your being, and who gives you life and breath, and all things ; the name of your rightful Sovereign and Lawgiver, who has a right to demand your love and obedience ; the name of your supreme Judge, who will ascend the tribunal, and acquit or condemn you, as he finds you friends or foes ; the name of that God, rich in goodness, who has replenished heaven with an infinite plenitude of happiness, in which he will allow you to share after all your hostility and rebellion, if you consent to the overture of reconciliation ; in the name of that God of terrible majesty and justice, who has prepared the dungeon of hell as a prison for his enemies, where he holds in chains the mighty powers of darkness, and thousands of your own race, who persisted in that enmity to him of which you are now guilty, and with whom you must have your everlasting portion,
if,

if, like them, you continue hardened and incorrigible in your rebellion; in the name of that compassionate God, who sent his dear Son (O the transporting thought!) to satisfy divine justice for you by his death, and the precepts of the Law by his life, and thus to remove all obstructions out of the way of your reconciliation on the part of God; in this great, this endearing and tremendous name, I pray you be reconciled to God. I pray you for his sake; and has this name no weight with you? Will you do nothing for his sake? what not so reasonable and advantageous a thing as dropping your unnatural rebellion, and being reconciled to him? Is your contempt of God risen to that pitch that you will not do the most reasonable and profitable thing in the world, if he intreat you to do it? Be astonished, O ye heavens! at this.

I pray you in the name, and for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, the true friend of publicans and sinners, in his name, and for his sake, who assumed your degraded nature, that he might dignify and save it; who lived a life of labour, poverty, and persecution upon earth, that you might enjoy a life of everlasting happiness and glory in heaven; who died upon a torturing cross that you might sit upon heavenly thrones; who was imprisoned in the gloomy grave, that you might enjoy a glorious resurrection; who fell a victim to divine justice, that you might be set free from its dreadful arrest; who felt

trouble and agony of soul that you might enjoy the smiles, the pleasures of divine love; who, in short, has discovered more ardent and extensive love for you than all the friends in the world can do: in his name, and for his sake, I pray you to be reconciled to God. And is his dear name a trifle in your esteem? Will you not do a thing so reasonable and so necessary and conducive to your happiness for his sake, for his sake who has done and suffered so much for you? Alas! has the name of JESUS no more influence among the creatures he bought with his blood! It is hard indeed if I beg in vain, when I beg for the sake of CHRIST, the friend, the Saviour of perishing souls.

But if you have no regard for him, you certainly have for yourselves; therefore, for your own sakes, for the sake of your precious immortal souls, for the sake of your own everlasting happiness, I pray you to be reconciled to God. If you refuse, you degrade the honour of your nature, and commence incarnate devils. For what is the grand constituent of a devil but enmity against God? You become the refuse of the creation, fit for no apartment of the universe but the prison of hell. While you are unreconciled to God you can do nothing at all to please him. He that searches the heart knows that even your good actions do not proceed from love to him, and therefore he abhors them. Ten thousand prayers and acts of devotion

tion and morality, as you have no principles of real holiness, are so many provocations to a righteous God. While you refuse to be reconciled, you are accessory to, and patronize all the rebellion of men and devils; for if you have a right to continue in your rebellion, why may not others? why may not every man upon earth? why may not every miserable ghost in the infernal regions? And are you for raising an universal mutiny and rebellion against the throne of the most High! O the inexpressible horror of the thought! If you refuse to be reconciled you will soon weary out the mercy and patience of God towards you, and he will come forth against you in all the terrors of an almighty enemy. He will give death a commission to seize you, and drag you to his flaming tribunal. He will break off the treaty, and never make you one offer of reconciliation more: he will strip you of all the enjoyments he was pleased to lend you, while you were under a reprieve, and the treaty was not come to a final issue, and will leave you nothing but bare being, and an extensive capacity of misery, which will be filled up to the uttermost from the vials of his indignation. He will treat you as his implacable enemy, and you shall be to him as *Amalek* (a), with whom he will make war for ever and ever. He will reprove you, and set your sins in order before you, and tear you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver.

I 4

liver.

(a) Exod. xvii. 16.

liver. He will meet you as a lion, " and as a
 " bear bereaved of her whelps, and will rend
 " the caul of your hearts (a)." He hath for a
 long time held his peace, and endured your
 rebellion, but ere long he will go forth as a
 mighty man; he shall stir up jealousy like a
 man of war; he shall cry, yea roar; he shall
 prevail against his enemies. Ah! he will ease
 him of his adversaries and avenge him of his
 enemies. He will give orders to the execution-
 ers of his justice: " These mine enemies, that
 " would not that I should reign over them,
 " bring them hither, and slay them before
 " me (b)." And now, if you will not submit
 to peace, prepare to meet your G O D, O sin-
 ners; gird up your loins like men; put on all
 the terror of your rage, and go forth to meet
 your almighty adversary, who will soon meet
 you in the field, and try your strength. Call
 the legions of hell to your aid, and strengthen
 the confederacy with all your fellow-sinners
 upon earth; put briars and thorns around you
 to inclose you from his reach. Prepare the
 dry stubble to oppose devouring flame. Affo-
 ciate yourselves, but ye shall be broken in pie-
 ces; gird yourselves, but, alas! ye shall be bro-
 ken in pieces.

But O! I must drop this ironical challenge,
 and seriously pray you to make peace with
 him whom you cannot resist: then all your
 past

(a) Hof. xiii. 8.

(b) Luke xix. 27.

past rebellion will be forgiven; you shall be the favourites of your sovereign, and happy for ever, and earth and heaven will rejoice at the conclusion of this blessed peace, and my now sad heart will share in the joy. Therefore, for your own sakes, "I pray you to be reconciled to G O D."

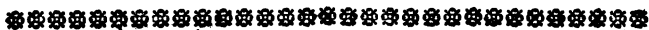


SERMON



S E R M O N IV.

The Nature and Universality of spiritual Death.



EPHES. II. 1, and 5.

—Who were dead in trespasses and sins.—Even when we were dead in sins.

THERE is a kind of death which we all expect to feel that carries terror in the very sound, and all its circumstances are shocking to nature. The ghastly countenance, the convulsive agonies, the expiring groan, the coffin, the grave, the devouring worm, the stupor, the insensibility, the universal inactivity, these strike a damp to the spirit, and we turn pale at the thought. With such objects as these in view courage fails, levity looks serious, presumption is dashed, the cheerful passions sink, and all is solemn, all is melancholy. The most stupid and hardy sinner cannot but be moved to see these things exemplified in others, and when he cannot

not avoid the prospect, he is shocked to think that he himself must feel them.

But there is another kind of death little regarded indeed, little feared, little lamented, which is infinitely more terrible, the death, not of the body, but of the soul: a death which does not stupify the limbs but the faculties of the mind: a death which does not separate the soul and body, and consign the latter to the grave, but that separates the soul from God, excludes it from all the joys of his presence, and delivers it over to everlasting misery: a tremendous death indeed! "a death unto death." The expression of St Paul is prodigiously strong and striking; *Θανατον εις Θανατον*, Death unto death, death after death, in a dreadful succession, and the last more terrible than the first (a); and this is the death meant in my text, "dead" in trespasses and sins."

To explain the context and shew you the connection I shall make two short remarks.

The one is, that the apostle had observed in the nineteenth and twentieth verses of the foregoing chapter that the same almighty power of God which raised CHRIST from the dead, is exerted to enable a sinner to believe. "We believe," says he, according to the working or "energy (b) of his mighty power which he wrought in CHRIST, when he raised him from "the dead." The one as well as the other is an exploit of omnipotence. The exceeding
greatness

(a) 2^d Cor. ii. 16.(b) *Ενεργειαν*.

greatness of his mighty power is exerted towards us that believe, as well as it was upon the dead body of CHRIST to restore it to life, after it had been torn and mangled upon the cross, and lain three days and three nights in the grave. What strong language is this! what a forcible illustration! Methinks this passage alone is sufficient to confound all the vanity and self-sufficiency of mortals, and entirely destroy the proud fiction of a self-sprung faith produced by the efforts of degenerate nature. In my text the apostle assigns the reason of this. The same exertion of the same power is necessary in the one case and the other; because, as the body of CHRIST was dead, and had no principle of life in it, so, says he, "ye were dead in trespasses and sins;" and therefore could no more quicken yourselves than a dead body can restore itself to life. "But GOD, verse 4th, who is rich in mercy, "for his great love wherewith he loved us;" that GOD, who raised the entombed Redeemer to life again, that same almighty GOD, by a like exertion of the same power, "hath quickened us, verse 5th, even when we were dead in "sins;" dead, senseless, inactive, and incapable of animating ourselves. Let any man carefully read these verses, and consider their most natural meaning, and I cannot but think common sense will direct him thus to understand them. The Scriptures were written with a design to be understood; and therefore that sense which

which is the most natural to a plain unprejudiced understanding is most likely to be true.

The other remark is, That the apostle having pronounced the *Ephesians* dead in sin, while unconverted, in the first verse, passes the same sentence upon himself and the whole body of the *Jews*, notwithstanding their high privileges in the fifth verse. The sense and connection may be discovered in the following paraphrase: “ You
 “ *Ephesians* were very lately Heathens, and,
 “ while you were in that state you were spiri-
 “ tually dead, and all your actions were *dead*
 “ *works*. In time past ye walked in trespasses
 “ and sins, nor were you singular in your
 “ course: though it be infinitely pernicious, yet
 “ it is the common course of this world, and it
 “ is also agreeable to the temper and instiga-
 “ tion of that gloomy prince, who has a pecu-
 “ liar power in the region of the air; that ma-
 “ lignant spirit who works with dreadful effi-
 “ cacy in the numerous children of disobedi-
 “ ence; but this was not the case of you Hea-
 “ thens alone: we also who are *Jews*, notwith-
 “ standing our many religious advantages, and
 “ even I myself, notwithstanding my high pri-
 “ vileges and unblameable life as a Pharisee,
 “ we also, I say, had our conversation in times
 “ past among the children of disobedience; we
 “ *all*, as well as they, walked in the lusts of the
 “ flesh, fulfilling the desires and inclinations (a)
 “ of our sensual flesh, and of our depraved
 “ minds;

(a) εὐλημῆσα.

“ minds; for these were tainted with spiritual
“ wickedness, independent upon our animal
“ passions and appetites, and we were all, even
“ *by nature*, children of wrath, even as others :
“ in this respect we *Jews* were just like the
“ rest of mankind, corrupt from our very birth,
“ transgressors from the womb, and liable to
“ the wrath of God. Our external relation and
“ privileges as the peculiar people of God, dis-
“ tinguished with a religion from heaven, makes
“ no distinction between us and others in this
“ matter. As we are all children of disobe-
“ dience by our lives, so we are all, without ex-
“ ception, children of wrath by nature : but
“ when we were all dead in sins, when *Jews* and
“ *Gentiles* were equally dead to God, then,
“ even then, God who is rich in mercy had pity
“ upon us ;” “ he quickened us ;” “ he inspired
“ us with a new and spiritual life by his own
“ almighty power, which raised the dead body
“ of CHRIST from the grave.” “ He quickened
“ us together with CHRIST :” “ We received our
“ life by virtue of our union with him as our
“ vital head, who was raised to an immortal life
“ that he might quicken dead souls by those
“ influences of his Spirit, which he purchased
“ by his death ; and therefore by grace are ye
“ saved. It is the purest, richest, freest grace,
“ that ever such dead souls as we were made alive
“ to God, and not suffered to remain dead for
“ ever.”

This

This is the obvious meaning and connection of these verses, and we now proceed to consider the text, "Dead in trespasses and sins:" you dead, we dead, *Jews* and *Gentiles*, all "dead" together in trespasses and sins." A dismal, mortifying character! "This one place, says *Beza*, like a thunderbolt, dashes all mankind "down to the dust, great and proud as they "are; for it pronounces their nature not only "hurt but *dead* by sin, and therefore liable to "wrath (a)."

Death is a state of insensibility and inactivity, and a dead man is incapable of restoring himself to life, therefore the condition of an unconverted sinner must have some resemblance to such a state in order to support the bold metaphor here used by the apostle. To understand it aright we must take care on the one hand that we do not explain it away in flattery to ourselves, or in compliment to the pride of human nature: and on the other hand that we do not carry the similitude too far, so as to lead into absurdities, and contradict matter of fact.

The metaphor must be understood with several limitations or exceptions; for it is certain there is a wide difference between the spiritual death of the soul, and the natural death of the body, particularly in this respect, that death puts an entire end to all the powers, actions,
and

(a) Hoc uno loco, quasi fulmine, totus homo, quantus quantus est prostrernitur. Neque enim naturam dicit *letalam*, sed *mortuam*, per peccatum; ideoque iræ obnoxiam.

and sensations of our animal nature universally with regard to all objects of every kind; but a soul dead in sin is only *partially* dead; that is, it is dead only with regard to a certain *kind* of sensations and exercises, but in the mean time it may be all life and activity about other things. It is alive, sensible, and vigorous about earthly objects and pursuits; these raise its passions and engage its thoughts. It has also a dreadful power and facility of sinning, though this is not its life but its disease, its death, like the tendency of a dead body to corruption. It can likewise exercise its intellectual powers, and make considerable improvements in science. A sinner dead in trespasses and sins may be a living treasury of knowledge, an universal scholar, a profound philosopher, and even a great divine, as far as mere speculative knowledge can render him such, nay, he is capable of many sensations and impressions from religious objects, and of performing all the external duties of religion. He is able to read, to hear, to pray, to meditate upon divine things; nay, he may be an instructor of others, and preach perhaps with extensive popularity: he may have a form of godliness, and obtain a name to live among men: he is in some measure able, and it is his duty to attend upon the means G O D has instituted for quickening him with spiritual life, and G O D deals with him as with a rational creature, by laws, sanctions, promises, exhortations, and invitations: these concessions I make, not only

to give you the sense of the text, but also to prevent the abuse of the doctrine, and anticipate some objections against it, as though it were an encouragement to continue idle, and use no means to obtain spiritual life; or as tho' it rendered all the means of grace needless and absurd, like arguments to the dead to restore themselves to life. But, notwithstanding all these concessions, it is a melancholy truth that an unregenerate sinner is dead. Though he can commit sin with greediness, though he is capable of animal actions, and secular pursuits, nay, though he can employ his mind even about intellectual and spiritual things, and is capable of performing the external duties of religion, yet there is something in religion with regard to which he is entirely dead: there is a kind of spiritual life of which he is entirely destitute: he is habitually insensible with regard to things divine and eternal: he has no activity, no vigour in the pure, spiritual, and vital exercises of religion: he has no prevailing bent of mind towards them: he has not those views and apprehensions of things which a soul spiritually alive would necessarily receive and entertain: he is destitute of those sacred affections, that joy, that love, that desire, that hope, that fear, that sorrow, which are as it were the innate passions of the new man. In short, he is so inactive, so listless, so insensible in these respects, that death, which puts an end to all action and sensation, is a proper emblem of his state; and this
this

this is the meaning of the apostle in my text. He is also utterly unable to quicken himself. He may indeed use means in some sort, but to implant a vital principle in his soul, to give himself vivid sensations of divine things, and make himself alive towards GOD, this is entirely beyond his utmost ability: this is as peculiarly the work of almighty power as the resurrection of a dead body from the grave. As to this death it is brought upon him by, and consists in "trespasses and sins." The innate depravity and corruption of the heart, and the habits of sin contracted and confirmed by repeated indulgences of inbred corruption, these are the poisonous, deadly things that have slain the soul; these have entirely indisposed and disabled it for living religion. "Trespasses and sins" are the grave, the corrupt effluvia, the malignant damps, the rottenness of a dead soul: it lies dead, senseless, inactive, buried "in trespasses and sins." "Trespasses and sins" render it ghastly, odious, abominable, a noisome putrefaction before an holy GOD, like a rotten carcass, or a mere mass of corruption: the vilest lusts, like worms, riot upon and devour it, but it feels them not, nor can it lift a hand to drive the vermin off. Such mortifying ideas as these may be contained in the striking metaphor, "dead in trespasses and sins;" and I hope you now understand its general meaning.

If you would know what has turned my thoughts to this subject I will candidly tell you,

K 2

though

though with a sorrowful heart. I am sure, if any objects within the compass of human knowledge have a tendency to make the deepest impressions upon our minds, they are those things which Christianity teaches us concerning God, concerning ourselves and a future state; and if there be any exercises which should call forth all the life and powers of our souls into action, they are those of a religious nature: but, alas! I often find a strange, astonishing stupor, and listlessness about these things. In this I am not singular; the best among us complain of the same thing; the most *lively* Christians feel this unaccountable languor and insensibility; and the generality are evidently destitute of all habitual concern about them: they are all alive in the pursuit of pleasure, riches, or honours; their thoughts are easily engaged, and their affections raised by such things as these; but the concerns of religion, which above all other things are adapted to make impressions upon them, and stir up all the life within them, seem to have little or no effect. When I have made this observation with respect to others, and felt the melancholy confirmation of it in my own breast, I have really been struck with amazement, and ready to cry out, "Lord what is this
" that has befallen me, and the rest of my fel-
" low-mortals? what can be the cause of such
" a conduct in a rational nature, to be active
" and eager about trifles, and stupid and care-
" less about matters of infinite importance? O
" whence

“whence is this strange infatuation!” Thus I have been shocked at this astonishing fact, and I could account for it no other way but by reflecting that we have all been “dead in trespasses and sins.” In such a solemn hour the apostle’s expression does not seem at all too strong. I have no scruple at all to pronounce, not only from the authority of an apostle, but from the evidence of the thing, that I, and all around me, yea, and all the sons of men have been dead, in the spiritual sense utterly dead. Multitudes among us, yea, the generality are dead still; hence the stillness about religion among us; hence the stupor, the carelessness about eternal things, the thoughtless neglect of God, the insensibility under his providential dispensations, the impenitence, the presumption that so much prevails. God has indeed, out of the great love wherewith he loved us, quickened some of us, even when we were dead in sins, and we have a little life, some vital sensations and impressions at times, but O! how little, how superficial, how much of a deadly stupor yet remains! how little life in prayer, in hearing, or in the nearest approach to the living God! The reflection is shocking, but, alas, it is too true; consult your own hearts and you will find it even so. Animal life seems to be a gradual thing; it gradually grows in an infant, it is perfect in mature age, and in old age it gradually decays, till all is gone; but how small is the degree of life, when the foetus is just animated, or the infant

born into the world! but little superior to that of a plant or an oyster: what faint sensations, what obscure and languid perceptions, what feeble motions! Such are the children of grace in the present state. Spiritual life is gradual; it is infused in regeneration; but O! how far from perfection while on this side heaven! Alas! the best of us are like the poor traveller that fell among thieves, and was left half dead: however, it is an unspeakable mercy to have the least principle of spiritual life, and we should prize it more than crowns and empires.

If you would know my design in choosing this subject, it is partly for the conviction of sinners, that they may be alarmed with their deplorable condition, which is the first step towards their being quickened; partly to rouse the children of grace to seek more life from their vital head; and partly to display the rich grace of God in quickening such dead sinners, and bestowing upon them a spiritual and immortal life; and surely nothing can inflame our gratitude and raise our wonder more than the consideration that we were dead in trespasses and sins! If I may but answer these ends it will be an unspeakable blessing to us all. And O that divine grace may honour this humble attempt of a poor creature, at best but half alive, with success! I hope, my brethren, you will hear seriously for it is really a most serious subject.

You

You have seen that the metaphorical expression in my text is intended to represent the stupidity, inactivity, and impotence of unregenerate sinners about divine things. This truth I might confirm by argument and scripture-authority, but I think it may be a better method for popular conviction to prove and illustrate it from plain instances of the temper and conduct of sinners about the concerns of religion, as this may force the conviction upon them from undoubted matters of fact and their own experience. This therefore is the method I intend to pursue, and my time will allow me to particularize only the following instances.

I. Consider the excellency of the divine Being, the sum total, the great original of all perfections. How infinitely worthy is he of the adoration of all his creatures! how deserving of their most intense thoughts, and most ardent affections! If majesty and glory can strike us with awe and veneration does not *Jehovah* demand it, who is clothed with majesty and glory as with a garment, and before whom all the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers, as nothing, as less than nothing, and vanity? If wisdom excites our pleasing wonder, here is an unfathomable depth. O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! If goodness, grace, and mercy attract our love and gratitude, here these amiable perfections shine in their most alluring glories. If justice

K 4

strikes

strikes a damp to the guilty, here is justice in all its tremendous majesty. If veracity, if candor, if any, or all of the moral virtues engage our esteem, here they all center in their highest perfection. If the presence of a king strikes a reverence, if the eye of his judge awes the criminal, and restrains him from offending, certainly we should fear before the Lord all the day, for we are surrounded with his omnipresence, and he is the Inspector and Judge of all our thoughts and actions. If riches excite desire, here are unsearchable riches: if happiness has charms that draw all the world after it, here is an unbounded ocean of happiness; here is the only complete portion for an immortal mind. Men are affected with these things in one another, tho' found in a very imperfect degree. Power awes and commands; virtue and goodness please; beauty charms; justice strikes with solemnity and terror; a bright genius is admired; a benevolent merciful temper is loved: thus men are affected with created excellencies. Whence is it then they are so stupidly unaffected with the supreme original excellencies of *Jebovah*? Here, my brethren, turn your eyes inward upon yourselves, and enquire, are not several of you conscious that, though you have passions for such objects as these, and you are easily moved by them, yet, with regard to the perfections of the supreme and best of beings, your hearts are habitually senseless and unaffected. It is not an easy thing to make impressions upon you by them; and what increases the wonder, and
 aggravates

aggravates your guilt, is, that you are thus senseless and unaffected, when you believe and profess that these perfections are really in God, and that in the highest degree possible. In other cases you can love what appears amiable, you revere what is great and majestic, you eagerly desire and pursue what is valuable, and tends to your happiness; and all this you do freely, spontaneously, vigorously, by the innate inclination and tendency of your nature, without reluctance, without compulsion, nay without persuasion; but as to God and all his perfections you are strangely insensible, backward, and averse. Where is there one being that has any confessed excellency in the compass of human knowledge that does not engage more of the thoughts and affections of mankind than the glorious and ever-blessed God? The sun, moon, and stars have had more worshippers than the uncreated fountain of light from which they derive their lustre. Kings, and ministers of state, have more punctual homage, and frequent applications made to them than the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Created enjoyments are more eagerly pursued than the supreme good. Search all the world over, and you will find but very little motions of heart towards God; little love, little desire, little searching after him. You will often indeed see him honoured with the compliment of a bended knee, and a few heartless words under the name of a prayer, but where is the heart, where are the thoughts, where the affections? These run wild through the world, and
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are scattered among a thousand other objects. The heart has no prevailing tendency toward **GOD**, the thoughts are shy of him, the affections have no innate propensity to him. In short, in this respect the whole man is out of order: here he does not at all act like himself; here are no affectionate thoughts, no delightful meditations, no ardent desires, no eager pursuits and vigorous endeavours, but all is listless, stupid, indisposed, inactive, and averse; and what is the matter? "Lord! what is this that has seized the souls of thine own offspring, that they are thus utterly disordered towards thee!" The reason is, they are dead, "dead in trespasses and sins." It is impossible a living soul should be so stupid and unaffected with such an object: it must be a dead soul *that* has no feeling. Yes, sinners, this is the melancholy reason why you are so thoughtless, so unconcerned, so senseless about the **GOD** that made you: you are dead. And what is the reason that you who have been begotten again to a spiritual life, and who are united to **CHRIST** as your vital head, what is the reason that you so often feel such languishments, that the pulse of spiritual life beats so faint and irregular, and that its motions are so feeble and slow? All this you feel and lament, but how comes it to pass? what can be the cause that you who have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious, and are sensible that he is all-glorious and lovely, and your only happiness, O! what can be the cause, that you, of all men in the world, should be so little engaged

engaged to him! Alas! the cause is you have been dead, and the deadly stupor has not yet left you: you have (blessed be the quickening spirit of CHRIST!) you have received a little life; but, alas! it is a feeble spark; it finds the principles of death still strong in your constitution; these it must struggle with, and by them it is often borne down, suppressed, and just expiring. Walk humbly then, and remember your shame, that you were once dead, and children of wrath, even as others. The carelessness and indisposition of the soul toward the supreme excellence will appear yet more evident and astonishing, if we consider,

II. The august and endearing relations the great and blessed God sustains to us, and the many ways he has taken to make dutiful and grateful impressions upon our hearts. What tender endearments are contained in the relation of a *Father!* This he bears to us: "he made us, and not we ourselves." Our bodies indeed are produced in a succession from *Adam* by generation, but who was it that began the series? It was the Almighty, who formed the first man of the dust: it was he who first put the succession of causes in motion, and therefore he is the grand original cause, and the whole chain depends upon him. Who was it that first established the laws of generation, and still continues them in force? It is the all-creating Parent of nature, and without him men would

would have been no more able to produce one another than stones or clods of earth. As to our souls, the principal part of our persons, GOD is their immediate author, without the least concurrence of secondary causes. Hence he is called the Father of your spirits in a peculiar sense (a), and he assumes the endearing name of "the GOD of the spirits of all flesh (b)." Now the name of a father is wont to carry some endearment and authority. Children, especially in their young and helpless years, are fond of their father; their little hearts beat with a thousand grateful passions towards him; they love to be with him, to be dandled on his knees, and fondled in his arms, and they fly to him upon every appearance of danger; but if GOD be a father, where is his honour? here, alas! the filial passions are senseless and immovable. It is but a little time since we came from his creating hand, and yet we have forgotten him. It seems unnatural for his own offspring to enquire "where is GOD my Maker?" They shew no fondness for him, no affectionate veneration, and no humble confidence; their hearts are dead towards him, as though there were no such being, or no such near relation subsisting between them. In childhood a rattle, or a straw, or any trifle, is more thought of than their heavenly Father: in riper years their vain pleasures and secular pursuits command more of their affections than their divine original and only happiness.

(a) Heb. xii. 9. (b) Numb. xvi. 22.

happinefs. Compare your natural temper towards your heavenly Father, and towards your earthly parents, and how wide is the difference! Nature works strong in your hearts towards them; but towards him all the filial passions are dull and dead; and why? alas! the reason is, you "are dead in trespasses and sins." But this relation of a Father is not the only relation our God sustains to you; he is your supreme *King*, to whom you owe allegiance; your *Law-giver*, whose will is the rule of your conduct; and your *Judge*, who will call you to an account, and reward or punish you according to your works, but how unnatural is it to men to revere the most high God under these august characters! Where is there a king upon earth, however weak or tyrannical, but is more regarded by his subjects than the King of heaven by the generality of men? Were ever such excellent laws contemned and violated? Did ever criminals treat their Judge with so much neglect and contempt? And are these souls alive to God who thus treat him? No. Alas! "they" are dead in trespasses and sins:" however lively they are towards other things, yet in this respect they are seized with a deadly stupor. God is also our *Guardian* and *Deliverer*; and from how many dangers has he preserved us, from how many calamities has he delivered us! Dangers, distresses, and deaths crowd upon us and surround us in every age and every place: the air, the earth, the sea, and every element are
pregnant

pregnant with numberless principles of pain and death ready to seize and destroy us : sickness and death swarm around us ; nay, they lie in ambush in our own constitution, and are perpetually undermining our lives, and yet our divine *Guardian* preserves us for months and years unhurt, untouched ; or if he suffers the calamity to fall, or death to threaten, he flies to our deliverance ; and how many salvations of this kind has he wrought for us, salvations from accidents, from sicknesses, from pain, from sorrows, from death ; salvations for our persons and our possessions, for ourselves, and for our friends and relations ; salvations from dangers seen and unseen ; salvations in infancy, in youth, and in maturer years ! These things we cannot deny without the most stupid ignorance, and an atheistical disbelief of divine Providence. Now such repeated, such long-continued, such unmerited favours as these would not pass for nothing between man and man. We have hearts to feel such obligations ; nay, the ten thousandth, the millionth part of such gracious care and goodness would be gratefully repented, and thankfully acknowledged. Indeed it is impossible we should receive even this small, this very small proportion of favours from men in comparison of what we receive from GOD ; and even when they are the instruments of our deliverance he is the original author. But after all, is there a natural aptitude in the hearts of men to think of their gracious

cious Guardian and Saviour? Does the principle of gratitude naturally lead them to love him, and to make thankful acknowledgments to him? Alas! no. They may indeed feel some transient, superficial workings of gratitude when under the fresh sense of some remarkable deliverance, but these impressions soon wear off, and they become as thoughtless and stupid as ever. But let a man, like yourselves, save you from some great distress, you will always gratefully remember him, think of him often with pleasure, and take all opportunities of returning his kindness, especially if your deliverer was much your superior, and independent upon you; if you had forfeited his favour, provoked him, and incurred his displeasure: great favours from such an one would make impressions upon the most obdurate heart. But tho' God be infinitely superior to us, and it is nothing to him what becomes of us, though we have rebelled against him, and deserve his vengeance, yet ten thousand deliverances from his hands have little or no effect upon the hearts of men: all these cannot bring them to think of him, or love him as much as they do a friend, or a common benefactor of their own species: and does such stupid ingratitude discover any spiritual life in them? No; they are dead in this respect, tho' they are all alive to those passions that terminate upon created objects. Farther, God is the *Benefactor* of mankind, not only in delivering them from dangers and calamities, but in bestowing unnumbered

unnumbered *positive* blessings upon them. Here I cannot pretend to be particular, for the list of blessings is endless; and it will be the happy employment of an eternity to recollect and enumerate them. What an extensive and well-furnished world has our God formed for our accommodation! For us he has enriched the sun with light and heat, and the earth with fruitfulness. The numerous inhabitants of every element, the plants, minerals, and beasts of the earth, the fishes of the sea, the fowls of the air, are all rendering their service to man; some afford him food, and others work for him: the winds and seas, fire and water, stones and trees, all conspire to be useful to him. Our divine Benefactor crowns us with the blessings of liberty, of society, of friendship, and the most endearing relations: he preserves our health, gives us "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and fills our hearts with food and gladness." In short, he gives us life, and breath, and all things; every day, every hour, every moment has arrived to us richly freighted with blessings; blessings have resided with us at home, and attended us abroad; blessings presented themselves ready for our enjoyment as soon as we entered into the world; then God provided hands to receive us, knees to support us, breasts to suckle us, and parents to guard and cherish us; blessings have grown up with us, and given such constant attendance, that they are become familiar to us, and are the inseparable companions
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of our lives. It is no new or unusual thing to us to see an illustrious sun rising to give us the day, to enjoy repose in the night, to rise refreshed and vigorous in the morning, to see our tables spread with plenty, the trees covered with fruit, the fields with grain, and various forms of animals growing up for our support or service. These are such familiar blessings to us, that they too often seem things of course, or necessary appendages of our being. What a crowd of blessings have crowned the present morning! You and yours are alive and well, you have not come hither ghastly and pining with hunger, or agonizing with pain. How many refreshing draughts of air have you drawn this morning, how many sprightly and regular pulses have beat through your frame, how many easy motions have you performed with hands, feet, eyes, tongue, and other members of your body, and are not all these favours from God? yes undoubtedly; and thus has he gone on blessing you all your days, without any interruption at all in many of these particulars of kindness, and with but very little in the rest. Sinful and miserable as this world is it is a treasury rich in blessings, a store-house full of provisions, a dwelling well furnished for the accommodation of mortals, and all by the care, and at the expence of that gracious God who first made and still preserves it what it is. " Lord, whence is it then that the inhabitants forget and neglect thee, as though they were not at all o-

bliged to thee? O whence is it that they love thy gifts, and yet disregard the giver; that they think less of thee than of an earthly father or friend, or an human benefactor; that there should be so little gratitude towards thee, that of all benefactors thou shouldst be the least acknowledged, that the benefactors of nations, and even of private persons, in instances unworthy to be mentioned with those of thy goodness, should be celebrated, and even adored, while thou art neglected, thine agency overlooked, and thy goodness forgotten? O whence is this strange phenomenon, this unaccountable, unprecedented stupidity and ingratitude in reasonable creatures! Surely, if they had any life, any sensation in this respect, they would not be capable of such a conduct; but they are dead, dead to all the generous sensations of gratitude to God: and as a dead corpse feels no gratitude to those that perform the last friendly office, and cover it with earth, so a dead soul stands unmoved under all the profusion of blessings which heaven pours upon it.

The blessings I have mentioned, which are confined to the present state, are great, and deserve our wonder and thanksgiving, especially considering that they are bestowed upon a race of rebellious, ungrateful creatures, who deserve the severest vengeance: but there is a set of blessings yet unmentioned, of infinitely greater importance, in which all others are swallowed up, by the glory of which they are obscured,
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like the stars of night by the rising sun. To some of our race God has given crowns and kingdoms. For *Israel* JEHOVAH wrought the most astonishing miracles; seas and rivers opened to make way for them; rocks burst into springs of water to quench their thirst; the clouds poured down manna and fed them with bread from heaven: their God delivered *Daniel* from the jaws of hungry lions, and his three companions from the burning fiery furnace. He has restored health to the sick, sight to the blind, and life to the dead. These blessings and deliverances have something majestic and striking in them, and had we been the subjects of them we could not but have regarded them as great and singular, but what are these in comparison of God's gift of his Son, and the blessings he has purchased? his Son, who is of greater value, and dearer to him than ten thousand worlds; his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; him has he given for us, given up to three and thirty years of the most mortifying abasement, and an incessant conflict with the severest trials, given up to death, and all the ignominy and agonies of crucifixion. Thus has God loved our world! and never was there such a display of love in heaven or on earth. You can no more find love equal to this among creatures than you can find among them the infinite power that formed the universe out of nothing. This will stand upon record to all eternity, as the unprecedented, unparalelled, ini-

mitable love of God. And it appears the more illustrious when we consider that this unspeakable gift was given to sinners, to rebels, to enemies, that were so far from deserving it, that, on the other hand, it is a miracle of mercy that they are not all groaning for ever under the tremendous weight of his justice. O that I could say something becoming this love; something that might do honour to it! but, alas! the language of mortals was formed for lower subjects. This love passes all description and all knowledge. Consider also what rich blessings CHRIST has purchased for us; purchased not with such corruptible things as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood: the price recommends and endears the blessings, though they are so great in themselves as to need no such recommendation. What can be greater or more suitable blessings to persons in our circumstances, than pardon for the guilty, redemption for slaves, righteousness and justification for the condemned, sanctification for the unholy, rest for the weary, comfort for mourners, the favour of God for rebels and exiles, strength for the impotent, protection for the helpless, everlasting happiness for the heirs of hell, and, to sum up all, grace and glory, and every good thing, and all the unsearchable riches of CHRIST for the wretched and miserable, the poor, and blind, and naked! These are blessings indeed, and in comparison of them all the riches of the world are impoverished, and vanish to nothing; and

and all these blessings are published, offered freely, indefinitely offered to you, to me, to the greatest sinner on earth, in the gospel; and we are allowed, — *allowed* did I say? we are *invited* with the utmost importunity, *intreated* with the most compassionate tenderness and condescension, and *commanded* by the highest authority upon pain of eternal damnation to accept the blessings presented to us: and what reception does all this love meet with in our world! I tremble to think of it. It is plain these things are proposed to a world dead in sin; for they are all still, all unmoved, all senseless under such a revelation of infinite grace; mankind know not what it is to be moved, melted, transported with the love of a crucified Saviour, till divine grace visits their hearts, and forms them into new creatures: they feel no eager solicitude, nay, not so much as a willingness to receive these blessings, till they become willing by almighty power: and judge ye, my brethren, whether they are not *dead* souls that are proof even against the love of GOD in CHRIST, that are not moved and melted by the agonies of his cross, that are careless about such inestimable blessings as these? Has that soul any spiritual life in it, that can sit senseless under the cross of JESUS, that can forget him, neglect him, dishonour him, after all his love and all his sufferings; that feels a prevailing indifferency and languor towards him; that loves him less than an earthly friend, and seeks him with less eagerness than gold and

silver? Is not every generous passion, every principle of gratitude quite extinct in such a spirit? It may be alive to other objects, but towards this it is dead, and alas! is not this the common case! O look round the world, and what do you see but a general neglect of the blessed JESUS, and all the blessings of his gospel? How cold, how untoward, how reluctant, how averse are the hearts of men towards him; how hard to persuade them to think of him and love him! Try to persuade men to give over their sins which grieve him, dishonour him, and were the cause of his death; try to engage them to devote themselves entirely to him, and live to his glory, alas! you try in vain; their hearts still continue cold and hard as a stone; try to persuade them to murder or robbery, and you are more likely to prevail. Suffer me, in my astonishment, to repeat this most melancholy truth again; the generality of mankind are habitually careless about the blessed JESUS; they will not seek him, nor give him their hearts and affections, tho' they must perish for ever by their neglect of him! Astonishing, and most lamentable, that ever such perverseness and stupidity should seize the soul of man! Methinks I could here take up a lamentation over human nature, and fall on my knees with this prayer for my fellow-men. "Father of spirits, and Lord of life, quicken, O quicken these dead souls!" O, sirs, while we see death all around us, and feel it benumbing our own souls, who can help
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the most bitter wailing and lamentation; who can restrain himself from crying to the great Author of life for a happy resurrection! While the valley of dry bones lies before me, while the carnage, the charnel-house of immortal souls strikes my sight all around me far and wide, how can I forbear crying, "Come from the four winds, O breath; breathe upon these slain, that they may live?" But to return from this digression, into which I was unavoidably hurried by the horror of the subject, I would observe farther, that kind usage and pleasing treatment may not be always best for such creatures as we are: fatherly severities and chastisements, though not agreeable to us, yet may be necessary and conducive to our greatest good. Accordingly God has tried the force of chastisements to make impressions upon our hearts: these indeed have been but few in comparison of his more agreeable dispensations; yet recollect whether you have not frequently felt his rod. Have you not languished under sickness and pain, and been brought within a near view of the king of terrors? Have you not suffered the bereavement of friends and relations, and met with losses, adversity, and disappointments? Others have felt still greater calamities in a closer succession, and with fewer mercies intermixed. These things, one would think, would immediately bring men to regard the hand that smites them, and make them sensible of their undutiful conduct, which has procured the cor-

rection: these are like the application of fire to one in a lethargy, to awaken him to life; but alas! under all these afflictions, the stupor and insensibility still remain. Sinners groan by reason of oppression, but it is not natural for them to enquire, "Where is God my Maker, that giveth songs in the night?" It is not natural for them to repent of their undutiful conduct and amend; or, if they are awakened to some little sense, while the painful rod of the Almighty is yet upon them, as soon as it is removed they become as hardened and senseless as ever. And is not a state of death a very proper representation of such sullen, incorrigible stupidity? Living souls have very tender sensations; one touch of their heavenly Father's hand makes deep impressions upon them; they tremble at his frown, they fall and weep at his feet, they confess their offences, and mourn over them; they fly to the arms of his mercy to escape the impending blow; and thus would all do were they not quite destitute of spiritual life.

I have materials sufficient for a discourse of some hours, but at present I must abruptly drop the subject: however, I cannot dismiss you without making a few reflections. And

1. What a strange affecting view does this subject give us of this assembly! I doubt not but I may accommodate the text to some of you with this agreeable addition, "You hath he quickened, though you were once dead in trespasses and sins." Though the vital pulse
beats

beats faint and irregular, and your spiritual life is but very low, yet, blessed be G O D, you are not entirely dead: you have some living sensations, some lively and vigorous exercises in religion. On the other hand, I doubt not but some of you not only were, but still are "dead" in trespasses and sins." It is not to be expected in our world, at least not before the millenium, that we shall see such a mixed company together, and all living souls. Here then is the difference between you; some of you are spiritually alive, and some of you are spiritually dead: here the living and the dead are blended together in the same assembly, on the same seat, and united in the nearest relations: here sits a dead soul, there another, and there another, and a few living souls are scattered here and there among them: here is a dead parent and a living child, or a dead child and a living parent: here life and death (O shocking!) are united in the bonds of conjugal love, and dwell under the same roof: here is a dead servant and a living master; and there a dead master (O terrible!) commands a living servant. Should I trace the distinction beyond this assembly into the world we shall find a family here and there that have a little life; perhaps one, perhaps two discover some vital symptoms; but O what crowds of dead families! all dead together, and no endeavours used to bring one another to life; a death-like silence about eternal things, a deadly stupor and insensibility reign among
them;

them; they breathe out no desires and prayers after God; nor does the vital pulse of love beat in their hearts towards him; but, on the contrary, their souls are putrifying in sin, which is very emphatically called *corruption* by the sacred writers; they are over-run and devoured by their lusts, as worms insult and destroy the dead body. Call to them they will not awake; thunder the terrors of the Lord in their ears they will not hear; offer them all the blessings of the gospel they will not stretch out the hand of faith to receive them: lay the word of God, the bread of life, before them, they have no appetite for it. In short, the plain symptoms of death are upon them: the animal is alive, but alas! the spirit is dead towards God. And what an affecting, melancholy view does this give of this assembly, and of the world in general! "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Weep not for the afflicted, weep not over ghastly corpses dissolving into their original dust, but O weep for dead souls. Should God now strike all those persons dead in this assembly whose souls are "dead in trespasses and sins, should he lay them all in pale corpses before us, like *Ananias* and *Sapphira* at the apostle's feet, what numbers of you would never return from this house more, and what lamentations would there be among the surviving few! One would lose a husband or a wife,

wife, another a son or a daughter, another a father or a mother, and alas! would not some whole families be swept off together, all blended in one promiscuous death! Such a sight as this would strike terror into the hardiest heart among you. But what is this to a company of rational spirits slain and dead in trespasses and sins? How deplorable and inexpressibly melancholy a sight this! Therefore,

2. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from dead, that CHRIST may give thee light." This call is directed to you dead sinners, which is a sufficient warrant for me to exhort and persuade you. The principle of reason is still alive in you; you are also sensible of your own interest, and feel the workings of self-love. It is GOD alone that can quicken you, but he effects this by a power that does not exclude, but attends rational instructions and persuasions to your understanding. Therefore, though I am sure you will continue dead still if left to yourselves, yet with some trembling hopes that his power may accompany my feeble words, and impregnate them with life, I call upon, I intreat, I charge you sinners to rouse yourselves out of your dead sleep, and seek to obtain spiritual life. Now, while my voice sounds in your ears, now, this moment waft up this prayer, "Lord, pity a
"dead soul, a soul that has been dead for ten,
"twenty, thirty, forty years, or more, and
"lain corrupting in sin, and say unto me, Live:
"from this moment let me live unto thee." Let
this

this prayer be still upon your hearts: keep your souls always in a supplicating posture, and who knows but that he, who raised *Lazarus* from the grave, may give you a spiritual resurrection to a more important life? But if you wilfully continue your security expect in a little time to suffer the second death; the mortification will become incurable; and then, though you will be still dead to God, yet you will be “tremblingly alive all over” to the sensations of pain and torture. O that I could gain but this one request of you, which your own interest so strongly enforces! but alas! it has been so often refused that to expect to prevail is to hope against hope.

3. Let the children of God be sensible of their great happiness in being made spiritually alive. Life is a principle, a capacity necessary for enjoyments of any kind. Without animal life you would be as incapable of animal pleasures as a stone or a clod; and without spiritual life you can no more enjoy the happiness of heaven than a beast or a devil. This therefore is a preparative, a previous qualification, and a sure pledge and earnest of everlasting life. How highly then are you distinguished, and what cause have you for gratitude and praise!

4. Let us all be sensible of this important truth that it is entirely by grace we are saved. This is the inference the apostle expressly makes from this doctrine; and he is so full of it, that he

he throws it into a parenthesis (verse 5th) though it breaks the connection of his discourse, and as soon as he has room he resumes it again, (verse 8th) and repeats it over and over in various forms in the compass of a few verses. "By grace are ye saved. — By grace are you saved through faith. — It is the gift of GOD;—not of yourselves,—not of works," (ver. 9th). This, you see, is an inference that seemed of great importance to the apostle, and what can more naturally follow from the premises? If we were once dead in sin, certainly it is owing to the freest grace that we have been quickened, therefore, when we survey the change, let us cry "Grace, grace unto it."

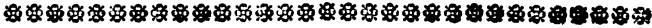


SERMON




S E R M O N V.

The Nature and Proceſs of ſpiritual Life.



E P H E S. II. 4, 5.

*But G O D who is rich in mercy, for his great
love wherewith he loved us, even when we were
dead in ſins, hath quickened us together with
C H R I S T.*

 T is not my uſual method to weary
your attention by a long confinement
to one ſubject; and our religion fur-
niſhes us with ſuch a boundleſs vari-
ety of important topics, that a miniſter who
makes them his ſtudy will find no temptation
to cloy you with repetitions, but rather finds it
difficult to ſpeak ſo conciſely on one ſubject, as
to leave room for others of equal importance:
however the ſubject of my laſt Diſcourſe was
ſo copious and intereſting that I cannot diſ-
miſs

miss it without a supplement. I there shewed you some of the symptoms of spiritual death, but I would not leave you dead as I found you ; and therefore I intend now to consider the counterpart of that subject, and shew you the nature and symptoms of spiritual life.

I doubt not but a number of you have been made alive to God by his quickening Spirit ; but many, I fear, still continue " dead in trespasses and sins ;" and, while such are around me, I cannot help imagining my situation something like that of the prophet *Ezekiel* (a) in the midst of the valley full of dry bones, spread far and wide around him ; and should I be asked, " Can these dry bones, can these dead souls live ?" I must answer with him, " O Lord God thou knowest." " Lord, I see no symptoms of life in them, no tendency towards it. I know nothing is impossible to thee : I firmly believe thou canst inspire them with life, dry and dead as they are : and what thy designs are towards them, whether thou intendest to exert thy all-quickening power upon them, thou only knowest, and I would not presume to determine ; but this I know, that, if they are left to themselves, they will continue dead to all eternity ; for, O Lord, the experiment has been repeatedly tried ; thy servant has over and over made those quickening applications to them, which thy Word, that sacred dispensary, prescribes, but

" all

(a) Ch. xxxvii.

" all in vain; they still continue dead towards
 " thee, and lie putrifying more and more in
 " trespasses and sins: however, at thy com-
 " mand, I would attempt the most unpromis-
 " ing undertaking; I would proclaim even un-
 " to dry bones and dead souls, " O ye dry bones,
 " O ye dead souls, hear the word of the Lord (a)."
 " I would also cry aloud for the animating
 " breath of the holy Spirit, " Come from the
 " four winds and breathe; breathe upon these
 " slain that they may live (b)."

Ye dead sinners, I would make one attempt
 more in the name of the Lord to bring you to
 life; and if I have the least hope of success it
 is entirely owing to the encouraging peradventure
 that the quickening Spirit of CHRIST may
 work upon your hearts while I am addressing
 myself to your ears. And, O sirs, let us all
 keep our souls in a praying posture throughout
 this discourse. If one of you should fall into
 a swoon or an apoplexy how would all about
 you bestir themselves to bring you to life again!
 And alas! shall dead souls lie so thick among
 us, in every assembly, in every family, and shall
 no means be used for their recovery? Did
Martha and *Mary* apply to JESUS with all the
 arts of importunity in behalf of their sick and
 deceased brother, and are there not some of
 you that have dead relations, dead friends and
 neighbours, I mean dead in the worst sense,
 " dead in trespasses and sins?" and will you not

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apply

(a) Ezek. xxxvii. 4. (b) Verse 9:

apply to Jesus the Lord of life, and follow him with your importunate cries, till he come and call them to life? Now let parents turn intercessors for their children, children for their parents, friend for friend, neighbour for neighbour, yea enemy for enemy. O should we all take this method we might soon expect to see the valley of dry bones full of living souls, "an exceeding great army (a)."

In praying for this great and glorious event, you do not pray for an impossibility. Thousands as dead as they have obtained a joyful resurrection by the power of God. Here in my text you have an instance of a promiscuous crowd of Jews and Gentiles that had lain dead in sin together, and even St *Paul* among them, who were recovered to life, and are now enjoying an immortal life in the heavenly regions; and, blessed be God, this spiritual life is not entirely extinct among us. Among the multitudes of dead souls that we every where meet with we find here and there a soul that has very different symptoms: once indeed it was like the rest; but now, while they are quite senseless of divine things, and have no vital aspirations after God, this soul cannot be content with the richest affluence of created enjoyments; it pants and breathes after God, it feeds upon his word, it feels an almighty energy in eternal things, and receives vital sensations from them. It discovers life and vigour in devotion, and serves the living God with pleasure, though it is also subject to fits of languishment,

(a) Ezek. xxxvii. 10.

languishment, and at times seems just expiring, and to lose all sensation. And whence is this vast difference? Why is this soul so different from what it once was, and what thousands around still are? Why can it not, like them, and like itself formerly, lie dead and senseless in sin, without any vital impressions or experiences from God or divine things? The reason, the happy reason, my brethren, is, this is a living soul: "God, out of the great love where-
" with he loved it, hath quickened it together
" with CHRIST," and hence it is alive to him.

My present design is to explain the nature and properties of this divine life, and to shew you the manner in which it is usually begun in the soul: I shall open with the consideration of the last particular.

Here you must observe, that, though spiritual life is instantaneously infused, yet God prepares the soul for its reception by a course of previous operations. He spent six days in the creation of the world, though he might have spoken it into being in an instant. Thus he usually creates the soul anew after a gradual process of preparatory actions. In forming the first man, he first created the chaos out of nothing, then he digested it into earth; on the sixth day he formed and organized the earth into a body, with all its endless variety of members, juices, muscles, fibres, veins and arteries; and then, after this process, he inspired it with a living soul, and what was but a lump of clay sprung up a perfect man. Thus also the foetus

in the womb is for some months in formation before the soul or the principle of life is infused. In like manner the Almighty proceeds in quickening us with spiritual life: we all pass thro' a course of preparation, though some through a longer, and some a shorter. And as one reason why the great Creator took up so much time in the creation of the world probably was that he might allow the angels time for leisurely surveys of the astonishing process, so he may advance thus gradually in the new creation, that we may observe the various steps of the operation, and make proper reflections upon it in future life. My present design is to trace these steps to their grand result that you may know whether ever divine grace has carried you through this gracious process.

And that you may not fall into needless perplexities it may be necessary for me to premise farther that there is a great variety in these preparatory operations, and in the degrees of spiritual life. Indeed the difference is only circumstantial, for the *work* is substantially the same, and *spiritual life* is substantially the same in all; but then, in such circumstances as the length of time, the particular external means, the degree of previous terror, and of subsequent joy and vitality, &c. GOD exercises a sovereign freedom, and shews that he has a variety of ways by which to accomplish his end; and it is no matter how we obtained it if we have but spiritual life. I shall therefore endeavour
to

to confine myself to the substance of this work without its peculiarities in different subjects; and, when I cannot avoid descending to particulars, I shall endeavour so to diversify them, as that they may be easily adapted to the various cases of different Christians. To draw their common lineaments, whereby they may be distinguished from all others, is sufficient to my present purpose; whereas to draw the particular lineaments, or peculiar features, whereby they may be distinguished from one another, is a very difficult task, and cannot be of any great service to what I have now in design.

I have only one thing more to premise, and that is, that the way by which divine grace prepares a sinner for spiritual life, is by working upon all the principles of the rational life, and exciting him to exert them to the utmost to obtain it. Here it is proper for you to recollect what I observed in my last discourse, that even a sinner dead in trespasses and sins is alive, and capable of action in other respects: he can not only perform the actions, and feel the sensations of animal life, but he can also exercise his intellectual powers about intellectual objects; and even about divine things: he is capable of thinking of these, and of receiving some impressions from them: he is also capable of attending upon the ordinances of the Gospel, and performing the external duties of religion. These things a sinner may do, and yet be dead in sin. Indeed he will not exercise his natural powers about

these things while left to himself: he has the power, but then he has no disposition to employ it: he is indeed capable of meditating upon spiritual things, but what does this avail when he will not turn his mind to such objects? or if he does, he considers them as mere speculations, and not as the most interesting and important realities. How few, or how superficial and unaffecting are a sinner's thoughts of them! Heaven and hell are objects that may strike the passions, and raise the joys and fears of a natural man, but in general he is little or nothing impressed with them. He is capable of prayer, hearing, and using the means of grace, but I believe, if you make observations upon the conduct of mankind, that you will find they are but seldom employed in these duties, or that they perform them in such a careless manner that they have no tendency to answer the end of their institution. In short, the more I know of mankind I have the lower opinion of what they will do in religion when left to themselves. They have a natural power, and we have seen all possible means used with them to excite them to put it forth, but alas! all is in vain, and nothing will be done to purpose till God stir them up to exert their natural abilities; and this he performs as a preparative for spiritual life. He brings the sinner to exert all his active powers in seeking this divine principle: nature does her utmost, and all outward means
are

are tried before a supernatural principle is implanted.

The evangelist *John* has given us the history of the resurrection of the dead body of *Lazarus* after it had been four days in the grave, and I would now give you the history of a more glorious resurrection, the resurrection of a soul that had lain dead for months and years, and yet is at last quickened by the same almighty power with a divine and immortal life.

Should I exemplify it by a particular instance, I might fix upon this or that person in this assembly, and remind you, and inform others of the process of this work in your souls. And O! how happy are such of you that you may be produced as instances in this case!

You lay, for ten, twenty, thirty years or more, dead in trespasses and sins; you did not breathe and pant like a living soul after God and holiness; you had little more sense of the burden of sin than a corps of the pressure of a mountain; you had no appetite for the living bread that came down from heaven; the vital pulse of sacred passions did not beat in your hearts towards God and divine things, but you lay putrifying in sin; filthy lusts preyed upon you like worms on the bodies of the dead; you spread the contagion of sin around you by your conversation and example, like the stench and corrupt effluvia of a rotting carcass; you were odious and abominable to God, fit to be shut up in the infernal pit out of his sight; and you

were objects of horror and lamentation to all that knew, and duly considered your case, your deplorable case. During this time many quickening applications were made to you; you had friends that used all means to bring you to life again, but alas! all in vain; conscience proved your friend, and pierced and chafed you, to bring you to some feeling, but you remained still senseless, or the symptoms of life soon vanished. God did not cast you away as irrecoverably dead, but stirred and agitated you within, and struggled long with the principles of death to subdue them: and, if it was your happy lot to live under a faithful ministry, the living oracles that contain the seeds of the divine life were applied to you with care and solicitude. The terrors of the Lord were thundered in your ears to awaken you. The experiment of a Saviour's dying love, and the rich grace of the Gospel, was repeatedly tried upon you: now you were carried within hearing of the heavenly music, and within sight of the glories of Paradise to try if these would charm you: now you were, as it were, held over the flames of hell, that they might by their pungent pains scorch and startle you into life. Providence also concurred with these applications, and tried to recover you by mercies and judgments, sickness and health, losses and possessions, disappointments and successes, threatenings and deliverances. If it was your unhappy lot to lie among dead souls like yourself
you

you had indeed but little pity from them, nay they and Satan were plying you with their opiates and poison to confirm the deadly sleep. And O! how astonishing is it that you should be quickened in a charnel-house, in the mansions of the dead, with dead souls lying all round you! But if it was your happiness to be in the society of the living, they pitied you, they stirred and agitated you with their warnings and persuasions, they, like *Martha* and *Mary* in behalf of their deceased brother, went to *JESUS* with their cries and importunities, "Lord, my child, my parent, my servant, my neighbour is dead, O come and restore him to life! " Lord, if thou hadst been here, he would not have died, but even now I know it is not too late for thee to raise him." Thus when one is dead in our heavenly Father's family, the whole house should be alarmed; and all the domestics be busy in trying to bring him to life again. But O! reflect with shame and sorrow how long all these quickening applications were in vain; you still lay in a dead sleep, or, if at times you seemed to move, and gave us hopes you were coming to life again, you soon relapsed; and grew as senseless as ever. And alas! are there not some of you in this condition to this very moment? O deplorable sight! May the hour come, and O that this may be the hour, in which such dead souls "shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live (a)!"

But

(a) John v. 25.

But as to such of you in whom I would exemplify this history of a spiritual resurrection when your case was thus deplorable, and seemingly helpless, the happy hour, the time of love came, when you must live. When all these applications had been unsuccessful the all-quickening Spirit of God determined to exert more of his energy, and work more effectually upon you. Perhaps a verse in your Bible, a sentence in a sermon, an alarming providence, the conversation of a pious friend, or something that unexpectedly occurred to your own thoughts, first struck your minds with unusual force; you found you could not harden yourselves against it as you were wont to do; it was attended with a power you never before had felt, and which you could not resist: this made you thoughtful and pensive, and turned your minds to objects that you were wont to neglect; this made you stand and pause, and think of the state of your neglected souls: you began to fear matters were wrong with you; "What will become of me when I leave this world? where shall I reside for ever? Am I prepared for the eternal world? How have I spent my life?" These, and the like enquiries put you to a stand, and you could not pass over them so superficially as you were wont to do; your sins now appeared to you in a new light; you were shocked and surprized at their malignant nature, their number, their aggravations, and their dreadful consequences. The great God, whom you were wont

went to neglect, appeared to you as a Being that demanded your regard; you saw he was indeed a venerable, awful, majestic Being, with whom you had the most important concern: in short, you saw that such a life as you had led would never bring you to heaven: you saw you must make religion more your business than you had ever done, and hereupon you altered your former course; you broke off from several of your vices, you deserted your extravagant company, and you began to frequent the throne of grace, to study religion, and attend upon its institutions, and this you did with some degree of earnestness and solicitude.

When you were thus reformed, you began to flatter yourselves that you had escaped out of your dangerous condition, and secured the divine favour: now you began to view yourselves with secret self-applause as true Christians; but all this time the reformation was only outward, and there was no new principle of a divine supernatural life implanted in your hearts; you had not the generous passions and sensations of living souls towards God, but acted entirely from natural, selfish principles: you had no clear heart-affecting views of the intrinsic evil, and odious nature of sin, considered in itself, nor of the entire universal corruption of your nature, and the necessity not only of adorning your outer man by an external reformation, but of an inward change of heart by the almighty power of God: you were not
deeply

deeply sensible of the extent and spirituality of the divine Law, nor of the infinite purity and inexorable justice of the Deity: you had no love for religion and virtue for their own sakes, but only on account of their happy consequences. Indeed your love of novelty and a regard to your own happiness might so work upon you for a time that you might have very raised and delightful passions in religious duties, but all your religion at that time was a mere system of selfishness, and you had no generous disinterested delight in holiness for its own excellency, nor did you heartily relish the strictness of pure, living religion: you were also under the government of a self-righteous spirit: your own good works were the ground of your hopes, and you had no relish for the mortifying doctrine of salvation through the mere mercy of GOD and the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST: though your education taught you to acknowledge CHRIST as the only Saviour, and ascribe all your hopes to his death, yet in reality he was of very little importance in your religion; he had but little place in your heart and affections, even when you urged his name as your only plea at the throne of grace: in short, you had not the spirit of the Gospel, nor any spiritual life within you. And this is all the religion with which multitudes are contented: with this they obtain a name that they live, but in the sight of GOD, and in reality, they are dead; and had you been suffered to rest here, according

according to your own desire, you would have been dead still.

But GOD, who is rich (O how inconceivably rich!) in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved you, resolved to carry on his work in you; and therefore, while you were flattering yourselves, and elated with a proud conceit of the happy change in your condition, he surprized you with a very different view of your case: he opened your eyes farther, and then you saw, you felt those things, of which till then you had little sense or apprehension, such as the corruption of your hearts, the awful strictness of the divine Law, your utter inability to yield perfect obedience, and the necessity of an inward change of the inclinations and relishes of your soul. These, and a great many other things of a like nature broke in upon your minds with striking evidence, and a kind of almighty energy; and now you saw you were still "dead in sin," weak, indisposed, averse towards spiritual things, and "dead in law," condemned to everlasting death and misery by its righteous sentence: now you set about the duties of religion with more earnestness than ever; now you prayed, you heard, and used the other means of grace as for your life, for you saw that your eternal life was indeed at stake; and now, when you put the matter to a thorough trial, you were more sensible than ever of your own weakness, and the difficulties in your way. "O! who would have thought my heart had been so depraved that
" it

“ it should thus fly off from God, and struggle
“ and reluctate against returning to him?” such
was then your language. Alas! you found
yourselves quite helpless, and all your efforts
feeble and ineffectual; then you perceived your-
selves really dead in sin, and that you must con-
tinue so to all eternity, unless quickened by a
power infinitely superior to your own: not that
you lay slothful and inactive at this time; no,
never did you exert yourselves so vigorously in
all your life, never did you besiege the throne
of grace with such earnest importunity, never
did you hear and read with such eager atten-
tion, or make such a vigorous resistance against
sin and temptation: all your natural powers
were exerted to the highest pitch, for now you
saw your case required it: but you found all
your most vigorous endeavours insufficient, and
you were sensible that, without the assistance of
a superior power, the work of religion could ne-
ver be effected.

Now you were reduced very low indeed.
While you imagined you could render your-
selves safe by a reformation in your own power
you were not much alarmed at your condition,
though you saw it bad. But O! to feel your-
selves dead in sin, and that you cannot help
yourselves; to see yourselves in a state of con-
demnation, liable to execution every moment,
and yet to find all your own endeavours utterly
insufficient to relieve you; to be obliged, after
all you had done, to lie at mercy, and confess
that

that you were as deserving of everlasting punishment as ever the most notorious criminal was of the stroke of public justice: this was a state of extreme dejection, terror, and anxiety indeed. The proud, self-confident creature was never thoroughly mortified and humbled till now, when he is slain by the Law, and entirely cut off from all hopes from himself.

And now, finding you could not save yourselves, you begun to cast about you, and look out for another to save you: now you were more sensible than ever of the absolute need of JESUS, and you cried and reached after him, and stirred up yourselves to take hold of him. The Gospel brought the free offer of him to your ears, and you would fain have accepted of him; but here new difficulties arose. Alas! you did not think yourselves good enough to accept of him, and hence you took a great deal of fruitless pains to make yourselves better: you also found your hearts strangely averse to the Gospel-method of salvation, and, though a sense of your necessity made you try to work up yourselves to an approbation of it, yet you could not affectionately acquiesce in it, and cordially relish it.

And now, how melancholy was your situation! you were "shut up to the faith (a);" there was no other possible way of escape, and yet, alas! you could not take this way: now you were ready to cry, "I am cut off: my
" strength

(a) Gal. iii. 23.

"strength and my hope are perished from the Lord;" but, blessed be God, he did not leave you in this condition. Man's extremity of distress is God's opportunity for relief and salvation, and so you found it.

Now the process of preparatory operations is just come to a result. Now it is time for God to work, for nature has done her utmost, and has been found utterly insufficient: now it is proper a divine supernatural principle should be infused, for all the principles of nature have failed, and the proud sinner is obliged to own it, and stand still, and see the salvation of God. In this situation you wanted nothing but such a divine principle to make you living Christians indeed. These preparatives were like the taking away the stone from the sepulchre of *Lazarus*, which was a prelude of that almighty voice which called him from the dead. Now you appear to me like the dry bones in *Ezekiel's* vision, in one stage of the operation. After there had been a noise, and a shaking among them, and the bones had come together, bone to his bone: "I beheld, says he, and lo the sinews" and the flesh came up upon them, and the "skin covered them above; but there was no "breath in them (a):" this was all that was wanting to make them living men. In like manner you at this time had the external appearance of Christians, but you had no divine supernatural life in you; you were but the fair carcases

(a) Ezek. xxxvii. 8.

carcases of Christians; your religion had a body compleatly formed, but it had no soul in it, and, had the holy Spirit now given over his work, you would have continued dead still.

But now the important crisis is come, when he who stood over the grave of *Lazarus*, and pronounced the life-restoring mandate, "*Lazarus* come forth;" when he who breathed into *Adam* the breath of life, and made him a living soul; I say, now the crisis is come, when he will implant the principles of life in your souls; suddenly you feel the amazing change, and find you are acting from principles entirely new to you; for now your hearts that were wont to reluctate, and start back from GOD, rise to him with the strongest aspirations: now the way of salvation through CHRIST, which you could never relish before, appears all amiable and glorious, and captivates your whole souls. Holiness has lovely and powerful charms, which captivate you to the most willing obedience, notwithstanding your former disgust to it; and, though once you were enamoured with sin, or disliked it only because you could not indulge it with impunity, it now appears to you a mere mass of corruption and deformity, an abominable thing, which you hate above all other things on earth or in hell. At this juncture you were animated with a new life in every faculty of your souls, and hereupon you felt the instincts, the appetites, the sym-

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(a) Eph. iv. 18.

thies and antipathies of a new life, a divine life, justly stiled by the apostle "the life of GOD;" the life of GOD in the soul of man. The pulse of sacred passions began to beat towards spiritual objects; the vital warmth of love spread itself through your whole frame; you breathed out your desires and prayers before GOD; like a new-born infant you began to cry after him, and at times you have learned to lisp his name with filial endearment, and cry "Abba, Father;" you hungred and thirsted after righteousness, and as every kind of life must have its proper nourishment, so your spiritual life fed upon CHRIST, the living bread, and the sincere milk of his word. You also felt a new set of sensations; divine things now made deep and tender impressions upon you; the great realities of religion and eternity now affected you in a manner unknown before; you likewise found your souls actuated with life and vigour in the service of GOD, and in the duties you owed to mankind. This strange alteration, no doubt, filled you with surprize and amazement, something like that of *Adam* when he found himself start into life out of his eternal non-existence. With these new sensations every thing appeared to you in a quite different light, and you could not but wonder that you had never perceived them in that manner before.

Thus, my dear brethren, when you were even dead in sin, GOD quickened you together with
with

with CHRIST. It is true the principle of life might be very weak at first, like the life of a new-born infant, or a foetus just animated in the womb: nay, it may be but very weak still, and at times may languish, and seem just expiring in the agonies of death; but, blessed be the quickening Spirit of CHRIST, since the happy hour of your resurrection you have never been, and you never will be to all eternity, what you once were, "dead in trespasses and sins." Should I give you your own history since that time, it would be to this purpose, and you will discern many symptoms of life in it. You have often known what sickness of soul is, as well as of body; and sometimes it has risen to such a height as to endanger your spiritual life. The seeds of sin that still lurk in your constitution, like the principles of death, or a deadly poison circulating through your veins, have often struggled for the mastery, and cast you into languishing or violent disorders; then was the divine life oppressed, and you could not freely draw the breath of prayer and pious desires; you lost the appetite for the word of God, and what you received did not digest well, and turn to kindly nourishment; the pulse of sacred passions beat faint and irregular, the vital heat decayed, and you felt a death-like cold creeping upon you and benumbing you. Sometimes you have been afflicted, perhaps, with convulsions of violent and outrageous passions, with the dropsy of insatiable desires after things below, with the

lethargy of carnal security, or the fever of lust : at other times you have felt an universal disorder through your whole frame, and you hardly knew what ailed you, only you were sure your souls were not well ; but perhaps your most common disorder that seizes you is a kind of consumption, a lowness of spirits, a languor and weakness, the want of appetite for your spiritual food, or perhaps a nausea and disgust towards it ; you also live in a country very unwholesome to living souls ; you dwell among the dead, and catch contagion from the conversation of those around you, and this heightens the disorder : add further, that old serpent the devil labours to infect you with his deadly poison, and increase the peccant humours by his temptations : at such times you can hardly feel any workings of spiritual life in you, and you fear you are entirely dead ; but examine strictly, and you will discover some vital symptoms even in this bad habit of soul : for does not your new nature exert itself to work off the disorder ? Are not your spirits in a ferment, and do you not feel yourselves in exquisite pain, or at least greatly uneasy ? Give all the world to a sick man, and he despises it all : " O give me my health, says he, or you give me nothing." So it is with you ; nothing can content you, while your souls are thus out of order. Do you not long for their recovery, that you may go about your business again ; I mean that you may engage in the service of God with all the vigour of

of health? and do you not apply to CHRIST as your only physician in this condition? And O! what an healing balm is his blood! what a reviving cordial is his love! and how kindly does his Spirit purge off the corrupt humours, and subdue the principles of sin and death! Has not experience taught you the meaning of the apostle when he says, "CHRIST is our life;" And "I live, yet not I, but CHRIST liveth in me (a)?" Do you not perceive that CHRIST is your vital head, and that you revive or languish just as he communicates or withholds his influence? And have you not been taught in the same way what is the meaning of that expression so often repeated, "The just shall live by his faith (b)?" Do you not find that faith is, as it were, the grand artery by which you derive life from CHRIST, and by which it is circulated thro' your whole frame; and that when faith languishes, then you weaken, pine away, and perhaps fall into a swoon, as though you were quite dead? Are you not careful of the health of your souls? You endeavour to keep them warm with the love of GOD; you shun those sickly regions as far as you can, where the example and conversation of the wicked spread their deadly infection, and you love to dwell among living souls, and breathe in their wholesome air. Upon the whole, it is evident, notwithstanding your frequent indispositions, you have some life within you: life takes occasion to shew itself, even

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from

(a) Gal. ii. 20.

(b) Hab. ii. 4.

Rom. i. 17.

Gal. iii. 11.

from your disorders. It is a plain symptom of it, that you have something within you that makes such a vigorous resistance against the principles of sin and death, and throws your whole frame into a ferment, till it has wrought off the distemper. In short, you have the sensations, the sympathies and antipathies, the pleasures and pains of living souls.

And is it so indeed? Then from this moment begin to rejoice and bless the Lord, who raised you to spiritual life. O let the hearts he has quickened beat with his love; let the lips he has opened, when quivering in death, speak his praise, and devote that life to him which he has given you, and which he still supports.

Consider what a divine and noble kind of life he has given you. It is a capacity and aptitude for the most exalted and divine services and enjoyments. Now you have a relish for the Supreme Good as your happiness, the only proper food for your immortal souls, and he will not suffer you to hunger and thirst in vain, but will satisfy the appetites he has implanted in your nature. You have some spirit and life in his service, and are not like the dead souls around you, that are all alive towards other objects, but absolutely dead towards him: you have also noble and exalted sensations; you are capable of a set of pleasures of a more refined and sublime nature than what are relished by groveling sinners. From your inmost souls you detest and nauseate whatever is mean, base, and abominable,

nable, and you can feast on what is pure, amiable, excellent, and worthy of your love. Your vitiated taste for trash and poison is cured, and you feed upon heavenly bread, upon food agreeable to the constitution of your spiritual nature; and hence you may infer your meetness for the heavenly world, that region of perfect vitality. You have a disposition for its enjoyments and services, and this is the grand preparative. God will not encumber the heaven of his glory with dead souls, nor infect the pure salubrious air of Paradise with the poison of their corruption; but the everlasting doors are always open for living souls, and not one of them shall ever be excluded: nay the life of heaven is already within you; the life that reigns with immortal health and vigour above is the very same with that which works in your breasts; only there it is arrived to maturity and perfection, and here it is in its rudiments and weakness. Your animal life, which was hardly perceivable in the womb, was the very same with that which now possesses you, only now it is come to perfection. Thus you are now angels in embryo, the fœtus, might I be allowed the expression, of glorified immortals; and when you are born out of the womb of time into the eternal world, this feeble spark of spiritual life will kindle and blaze, and render you as active and vigorous as “the rapt seraph that adores and burns.” Then you will feel no more weakness, no more languors, no more qualms of indisposition; the poison of

temptation, and the contagion of bad example cannot reach you there, and the inward seeds of sickness and death will be purged entirely out of your souls: you will be got quite out of this sickly country, and breathe a pure reviving air, the natural element of your souls. There you will find the fountain, yea whole rivers of the waters of life, of which you will drink in large draughts for ever and ever, and which will inspire you with immortal life and vigour. O how happy are you in this single gift of spiritual life! this is a life that cannot perish even in the ruins of the world. What though you must ere long yield your mortal bodies and animal life to death and rottenness? your most important life is immortal, and subject to no such dissolution; and therefore be courageous in the name of the Lord, and bid defiance to all the calamities of life, and all the terrors of death; for "your life is hid with CHRIST in GOD; and when CHRIST who is your life shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory (a)." I would willingly go on in this strain, and leave the pulpit with a relish of these delightful truths upon my spirit; but, alas! I must turn my address to another set of persons in this assembly: but "where is the Lord GOD of *Elijah*," who restored the *Sunamite's* son to life by means of that prophet? I am going to call to the dead, and I know they will not hear, unless he attend my feeble voice with his almighty

(a) Col. iii, 3, 4.

mighty power. I would pray over you, like *Elijah* over the dead child, "O Lord God, let this sinner's life come into him again (a)." Are not the living and the dead promiscuously blended in this assembly? Here is a dead soul, there another, and there another all over the house, and here and there a few living souls thinly scattered among them. Have you ever been carried through such a preparatory process as I have described? or if you are uncertain about this, as some may be who are animated with spiritual life, enquire, have you the feelings, the appetites and aversions, the pleasing and the painful sensations of living souls? Methinks conscience breaks its silence in some of you whether you will or not, and cries, "O no; there is not a spark of life in this breast."

Well, my poor ~~dead~~^{dead} friends, (for so I may call you) I hope you will seriously attend to what I am going seriously to say to you. I have no bad design upon you, but only to restore you to life. And though your case is really discouraging, yet I hope it is not quite desperate. The principles of nature, reason, self-love, joy and fear are still alive in you, and you are capable of some application to divine things. And, as I told you, it is upon the principles of nature that God is wont to work, to prepare the soul for the infusion of a supernatural life. And these I would now work upon,

(a) 1 Kings xvii. 21.

on, in hopes you are not proof against considerations of the greatest weight and energy. I earnestly beg you would lay to heart such things as these.

Can you content yourselves with an animal life, the life of beasts, with that superfluity, *reason*, just to render you a more ingenious and self-tormenting kind of brutes; more artful in gratifying your sordid appetites, and yet still uneasy for want of an unknown something; a care that the brutal world, being destitute of reason, are unmolested with? O! have you no ambition to be animated with a divine immortal life, the life of GOD?

Can you be contented with a mere temporal life, when your souls must exist for ever? That infinite world beyond the grave is replenished with nothing but the terrors of death to you, if you are destitute of spiritual life. And O can you bear the thought of residing among its grim and ghastly terrors for ever?

Are you contented to be cut off from GOD, as a mortified member from the body, and to be banished for ever from all the joys of his presence? You cannot be admitted to heaven without spiritual life. Hell is the sepulchre for dead souls, and thither you must be sent, if you still continue dead. And does not this thought affect you?

Consider also now is the only time in which you can be restored to life. And O will you let it pass by without improvement?

Shall

Shall all the means that have been used for your revival be in vain? Or the strivings of the Spirit, the alarms of your own consciences, the blessings and chastisements of providence, the persuasions, tears, and lamentations of your living friends, O! shall all these be in vain? Can you bear the thought? Surely no. Therefore, O heave and struggle to burst the chains of death. Cry mightily to God to quicken you. Use all the means of vivification, and avoid every deadly and contagious thing.

I know not, my brethren, how this thought will affect us at parting to-day, that we have left behind us many a dead soul. But suppose we should leave as many bodies here behind us, as there are of dead souls among us; suppose every sinner destitute of spiritual life, should now be struck dead before us, O how would this floor be overlaid with dead corpses! How few of us would escape? What bitter lamentations and tears would be among us! One would lose a husband, or a wife, another a child, or a parent, another a friend, or a neighbour. And have we hearts to mourn, and tears to shed over such an event as this, and have we no compassion for dead souls? Is there none to mourn over them? Sinners, if you will still continue dead, there are some here to-day who part with you with this wish, " O " that my head were waters, and mine eyes " fountains of tears, that I might weep day " and

"and night, for the slain of the daughter of
"my people." And O that our mournings
may reach the ears of the Lord of life, and that
you might be quickened from your death in
trespasses and sins! *Amen, and Amen.*



SERMON



S E R M O N VI.

Poor and contrite Spirits the Objects
of the divine Favour.



ISAIAH LXVI. 2.

*To this man will I look; even to him that is poor
and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my
word.*

As we consist of animal bodies as well
as immortal souls, and are endowed
with corporeal senses as well as ra-
tional powers, God, who has wisely
adapted our religion to our make,
requires bodily as well as spiritual worship, and
commands us not only to exercise the inward
powers of our minds in proper acts of devotion,
but also to express our inward devotion in suit-
able external actions; and to attend upon him
in the sensible outward ordinances which he has
appointed. Thus it is under the gospel; but
it was more remarkably so under the law,
which, compared with the pure and spiritual
worship

worship of the gospel, was a system of carnal ordinances, and required a great deal of external pomp and grandeur, and bodily services. Thus a costly and magnificent structure was erected, by divine direction, in the wilderness, called the tabernacle, because built in the form of a tent, and moveable from place to place, and afterwards a most stately temple was built by *Solomon* with immense cost, where the divine worship should be stately celebrated, and where all the males of *Israel* should solemnly meet for that purpose three times in the year.

These externals were not intended to exclude the internal worship of the Spirit, but to express and assist it. And these ceremonials were not to be put into the place of morals, but observed as helps to the practice of them, and to prefigure the great Messiah. Even under the mosaical dispensation God had the greatest regard to holiness of heart, and a good life, and the strictest observer of ceremonies could not be accepted without them.

But it is natural to degenerate mankind to invert the order of things, to place a part, the easiest and meanest part of religion, for the whole of it, to rest in the externals of religion as sufficient, without regarding the heart, and to depend upon a pharisaical strictness in ceremonial observances as an excuse or atonement for neglecting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.

This

This was the unhappy error of the Jews in *Isaiab's* time; and this the Lord would correct in the first verses of this chapter.

The Jews gloried in their having the house of God among them, and were ever trusting in vain words, saying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these (a)." They filled his altars with costly sacrifices, and in these they trusted to make atonement for sin, and secure the divine favour.

As to their sacrifices God lets them know, that while they had no regard to their morals, but chose their own ways, and their souls delighted in their abominations, while they presented them in a formal manner, without the fire of divine love, their sacrifices were so far from procuring his acceptance that they were odious to him. He abhors their most expensive offerings as abominable and profane. He "that killeth an ox for sacrifice," is as far from being accepted, "as if he unjustly slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck, &c (b)."

To remove this superstitious confidence in the temple, the Lord informs them that he had no need of it; that, large and magnificent as it was, it was not fit to contain him, and that, in consecrating it to him, they should not proudly think that they had given him any thing to which he had no prior right. "Thus saith
" the

(a) Jer. vii. 4.

(b) *Isaiab* lxvi. 3.

“ the Lord, the heaven is my throne, where I
 “ reign conspicuous in the visible majesty and
 “ grandeur of a GOD; and though the earth
 “ is not adorned with such illustrious displays
 “ of my immediate presence, though it does
 “ not shine in all the glory of my royal palace
 “ on high, yet it is a little province in my im-
 “ mense empire, and subject to my authority;
 “ it is my footstool. If then heaven is my
 “ throne, and earth is my footstool, if the
 “ whole creation is my kingdom, where is the
 “ house that ye build unto me? where is your
 “ temple which appears so stately in your eyes?
 “ it is vanished, it is sunk into nothing. Is it
 “ able to contain that infinite Being to whom
 “ the whole earth is but a humble footstool,
 “ and the vast heaven but a throne? Can you
 “ vainly imagine that my presence can be con-
 “ fined to you in the narrow bounds of a tem-
 “ ple; when the heaven, and the heaven of
 “ heavens cannot contain me? Where is the
 “ place of my rest? can you provide a place
 “ for my repose, as though I were weary? or
 “ can my presence be restrained to one place,
 “ incapable of acting beyond the prescribed li-
 “ mits? No; infinite space only can equal
 “ my being and perfections; infinite space
 “ only is a sufficient sphere for my opera-
 “ tions.”

“ Can you imagine you can bribe my fa-
 “ vour, and give me something I had no right
 “ to before, by all the stately buildings you can
 “ rear

“ rear to my name? Is not universal nature
“ mine? For all these things hath mine hand
“ made out of nothing, and all these things
“ have been, or still subsist by the support of
“ my all-preserving hand, and what right can
“ be more valid and inalienable than that
“ founded upon creation? Your silver and
“ gold are mine, and mine the cattle upon a
“ thousand hills; and therefore of mine own
“ do you give me, saith the Lord.”

These are such majestic strains of language as are worthy a GOD. Thus it becomes him to advance himself above the whole creation, and to assert his absolute property in, and independency upon the universe.

Had he only turned to us the bright side of his throne that dazzles us with insufferable splendor, had he only displayed his majesty unallayed with grace and condescension in such language as this, it would have overwhelmed us, and cast us into the most abject despondency, as the outcasts of his providence beneath his notice. We might fear he would overlook us with majestic disdain, or careless neglect, like the little things that are called great by mortals, or as the busy emmets of our species are apt to do. In the hurry of business they are liable to neglect, and in the power of pride and grandeur to overlook or disdain their dependents. We should be ready in hopeless anxiety to say,
“ Is all this earth which to us appears so vast,
“ and which is parcelled into a thousand mighty
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“ kingdoms, as we call them, is it all but the
 “ humble footstool of GOD? hardly worthy to
 “ bear his feet? What then am I? an atom
 “ of an atom-world, a trifling individual of a
 “ trifling race. Can I expect he will take any
 “ notice of such an insignificant thing as I?
 “ The vast affairs of heaven and earth lie upon
 “ his hand, and he is employed in the con-
 “ cerns of the wide universe, and can he find
 “ leisure to concern himself with me, and my
 “ little interests? Will a king, deliberating
 “ upon the concerns of nations, interest him-
 “ self in favour of the worm that crawls at his
 “ footstool? If the magnificent temple of *So-*
 “ *lomon* was unworthy of the divine inhabitant,
 “ will he admit me into his presence, and give
 “ me audience? how can I expect it? It seems
 “ daring and presumptuous to hope for such
 “ condescension. And shall I then despair of
 “ the gracious regard of my maker?”

No, desponding creature! mean and unwor-
 thy as thou art, hear the voice of divine con-
 descension, as well as of majesty: “ To this
 “ man will I look, even to him that is poor,
 “ and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at
 “ my word.” Though GOD dwelleth not in
 temples made with hands, though he pours
 contempt upon princes, and scorns them in all
 their haughty glory and affected majesty, yet
 there are persons whom his gracious eyes will
 regard. The high and lofty One that inhabit-
 eth eternity, that dwelleth in the high and holy
 place,

place, he will look down through all the shining ranks of angels upon — whom? not on the proud, the haughty and presumptuous, but upon him "that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word." To this man will he look from the throne of his majesty, however low, however mean he may be. This man is an object that can, as it were, attract his eyes from all the glories of the heavenly world so as to regard a humble self-abasing worm. This man can never be lost or overlooked among the multitude of creatures, but the eyes of the Lord will discover him in the greatest croud, his eyes will graciously fix upon this man, this particular man, though there were but one such in the compass of the creation, or though he were banished into the remotest corner of the universe, like a diamond in a heap of rubbish, or at the bottom of the ocean.

Do you hear this, you that are poor and contrite in spirit, and that tremble at his word? ye that above all others are most apt to fear that you shall be disregarded by him, because you of all others are most deeply sensible how unworthy you are of his gracious notice? God, the great, the glorious, the terrible God, looks down upon you with eyes of love, and by so much the more affectionately by how much the lower you are in your own esteem. Does not your heart spring within you at the sound? Are you not lost in pleasing wonder and gratitude,

and crying out, "Can it be? can it be? is it indeed possible? is it true?" Yes, you have his own word for it, and do not think it too good news to be true, but believe, and rejoice, and give glory to his name, and fear not what men or devils can do unto you.

This, my brethren, is a matter of universal concern. It is the interest of each of us to know whether we are thus graciously regarded by that God on whom our very being and all our happiness intirely depend. And how shall we know this? In no other way than by discovering whether we have the characters of that happy man to whom he condescends to look. These are not pompous and high characters, they are not formed by earthly riches, learning, glory and power, "But to this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." Let us inquire into the import of each of the characters.

I. It is the *poor* man to whom the majesty of heaven condescends to look.

This does not principally refer to those that are poor in this world, for though it be very common that "the poor of this world are chosen to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom (c)," yet this is not an universal rule, for many, alas! that are poor in this world are not rich towards God, nor rich in good works,
and

(c) James ii. 5.

and therefore shall famish through eternity in remediless want and wretchedness. But the poor here signifies such as CHRIST characterizes more fully by the "poor in spirit (d)." And this character implies the following ingredients:

(1.) The poor man to whom JEHOVAH looks is deeply sensible of his own insufficiency, and that nothing but the enjoyment of GOD can make him happy.

The poor man feels that he is not formed self-sufficient, but a dependent upon GOD. He is sensible of the weakness and poverty of his nature, and that he was not endowed with a sufficient stock of riches in his creation to support him through the endless duration for which he is formed, or even for a single day. The feeble vine does not more closely adhere to the elm than he to his GOD. He is not more sensible of the insufficiency of his body to subsist without air, or the productions of the earth, than of that of his soul without his GOD, and the enjoyment of his love. In short, he is reduced into his proper place in the system of the universe, low and mean in comparison with superior beings of the angelic order, and especially in comparison with the great parent and support of nature. He feels himself to be, what he really is, a poor impotent dependent creature, that can neither live, nor move, nor exist without GOD. He is sensible that his "suffi-

O 3

"ciency

(d) Matt. v. 3.

"ciency is of God (e)," and that all the springs of his happiness are in him.

This sense of his dependence upon God is attended with a sense of the inability of all earthly enjoyments to make him happy, and fill the vast capacities of his soul, which were formed for the enjoyment of an infinite good. He has a relish for the blessings of this life, but it is attended with a sense of their insufficiency, and does not exclude a stronger relish for the superior pleasures of religion. He is not a precise hermit, or a sour ascetic on the one hand; and on the other, he is not "a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God."

If he enjoys no great share of the comforts of this life, he does not labour, nor so much as wish for them as his supreme happiness: he is well assured they can never answer this end in their greatest affluence. It is for God, it is for the living God that his soul most eagerly thirsts. In the greatest extremity he is sensible that the enjoyment of his love is more necessary to his felicity than the possession of earthly blessings; nay, he is sensible, that if he is miserable in the absence of these, the principal cause is the absence of his God. O! if he were blest with the perfect enjoyment of God, he could say with *Habakkuk*, "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, and there should be no fruit in the vine, though the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields yield no meat; though the
" flock

(e) 2 Cor. iii. 5.

"flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stall;" though universal famine should strip me of all my earthly blessings, "yet I will rejoice in the Lord," as my compleat happiness; "I will joy in the God of my salvation (f)."

If he enjoys an affluence of earthly blessings he still retains a sense of his need of the enjoyment of GOD. To be discontent and dissatisfied is the common fate of the rich as well as the poor; they are still craving, craving an unknown something to compleat their bliss. The soul, being formed for the fruition of the supreme good, secretly languishes and pines away in the midst of other enjoyments, without knowing its cure. It is the enjoyment of GOD only that can satisfy its unbounded desires, but alas, it has no relish for him, no thirst after him; it is still crying, "More, more of the lights of the world," like a man in a burning fever, that calls for cold water, that will but inflame his disease, and occasion a more painful return of thirst. But the poor in spirit know where their cure lies. They do not ask with uncertainty, "Who will shew us any sort of good?" but their petitions centre in this, as the grand constituent of their happiness, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;" and this puts more gladness into their hearts, "than the abundance of corn and wine (g)."

O 4

of

(f) Hab. iii. 17, 18.

(g) Psalm iv. 6, 7.

of the psalmist, " There is none upon earth
 " that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my
 " heart faileth; but thou art the strength of my
 " heart, and my portion for ever (*i*). " And as
 this disposition extends to all earthly things, so
 it does to all created enjoyments whatsoever,
 even to those of the heavenly world; the poor
 man is sensible that he could not be happy even
 there without the enjoyment of his God. His
 language is, " Whom have I in heaven but
 " thee?" It is " beholding thy face in righte-
 " ousness, and awaking in thy likeness, that
 " alone can satisfy me (*k*). "

(2.) This spiritual poverty implies deep hu-
 mility and self-abasement.

The poor man on whom the God of hea-
 ven condescends to look is mean in his own
 apprehensions, he accounts himself not a being
 of mighty importance. He has no high esteem
 of his own good qualities, but is little in his
 own eyes. He is not apt to give himself the
 preference to others, but is ready to give way
 to them as his superiors. He has a generous
 sagacity to behold their good qualities, and a
 commendable blindness towards their imperfec-
 tions, but he is not quick to discern his own
 excellencies, nor sparing to his own frailties.

Instead of being dazzled with the splendor
 of his own endowments or acquisitions, he is
 apt to overlook them with a noble neglect, and

(*i*) Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26.

(*k*) Psalm xvii. 15.

is sensible of the weakness and defects of his nature.

And as to his gracious qualities they appear small, exceeding small to him. When he considers how much they fall short of what they should be, they as it were vanish and shrink into nothing. Alas! how cold does his love appear to him in its greatest fervour! How feeble his faith in its greatest confidence! How superficial his repentance in its greatest depth! How proud his lowest humility! And as for the good actions he has performed, alas! how few, how poorly done, how short of his duty do they appear! After he has done all he counts himself an unprofitable servant. After he has done all he is more apt to adopt the language of the *Publican* than the *Pharisee*, "God be merciful to me a sinner." In his highest attainments he is not apt to admire himself; so far is he from it that it is much more natural to him to fall into the opposite extreme, and to account himself the least, yea, less than the least of all other saints upon the face of the earth: and if he contends for any preference it is for the lowest place in the list of Christians. This disposition was remarkably exemplified in Saint *Paul*, who probably had made greater advancements in holiness than any saint that was ever received to heaven from this guilty world.

He that is poor in spirit has also a humbling sense of his own sinfulness. His memory is quick to recollect his past sins, and he is very sharp-

sharp-sighted to discover the remaining corruptions of his heart, and the imperfections of his best duties. He is not ingenious to excuse them, but views them impartially in all their deformity and aggravations. He sincerely doubts whether there be a sinner upon earth so exceeding corrupt; and, though he may be convinced that the Lord has begun a work of grace in him, and consequently that he is in a better state than such as are under the prevailing dominion of sin, yet he really questions whether there be such a depraved creature in the world as he sees he has been. He is apt to count himself the chief of sinners, and more indebted to free grace than any of the sons of men. He is intimately acquainted with himself, but he sees only the outside of others, and hence he concludes himself so much worse than others, hence he loaths himself in his own sight for all his abominations. (1). Self-abasement is pleasing to him; his humility is not forced; he does not think it a great thing for him to sink thus low. He plainly sees himself to be a mean, sinful, exceeding sinful creature, and therefore is sure that it is no condescension, but the most reasonable thing in the world for him to think meanly of himself, and to humble and abase himself. It is unnatural for one that esteems himself a being of great importance to stoop, but it is easy, and appears no self-denial for a
 poor

(1) Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

poor mean creature to do so, who looks upon himself and feels himself to be such.

Finally, the poor man is deeply sensible of his own unworthiness. He sees that in himself he deserves no favour from GOD for all the good he has ever done, but that he may after all justly reject him. He makes no proud boasts of his good heart, or good life, but falls in the dust before GOD, and casts all his dependence upon his free grace. Which leads me to observe,

(3.) That he who is poor in spirit is sensible of his need of the influences of divine grace to sanctify him, and enrich him with the graces of the Spirit.

He is sensible of the want of holiness; this necessarily flows from his sense of his corruption and the imperfection of all his graces. Holiness is the one thing needful with him, which he desires and longs for above all others. And he is deeply sensible that he cannot work it in his own heart by his own strength. He feels that without CHRIST he can do nothing, and that it is GOD who must work in him both to will and to do. Hence, like a poor man that cannot subsist upon his stock, he depends entirely upon the grace of GOD to work all his works in him, and to enable him to work out his salvation with fear and trembling.

(4.) He is deeply sensible of the absolute necessity of the righteousness of CHRIST for his justification.

He

He does not think himself rich in good works to bribe his judge, and procure acquittance, but, like a poor criminal, that having nothing to purchase a pardon, nothing to plead in his own defence, casts himself upon the mercy of the court, he places his whole dependence upon the free grace of GOD through JESUS CHRIST. He pleads his righteousness only, and trusts in it alone. The rich scorn to be obliged, but the poor, that cannot subsist of themselves, will chearfully receive. So the self-righteous will not submit to the righteousness of GOD, but the poor in spirit will chearfully receive it.

(5.) And lastly, the man that is poor in spirit is an importunate beggar at the throne of grace.

He lives upon charity; he lives upon the bounties of heaven; and, as these are not to be obtained without begging, he is frequently lifting up his cries to the Father of all his mercies for them. He attends upon the ordinances of GOD, as *Bartimeus* by the way side, to ask the charity of passengers. Prayer is the natural language of spiritual poverty. "The poor, saith *Solomon*, useth intreaties (*m*);" whereas they that are rich in their own conceit can live without prayer, or content themselves with the careless formal performance of it.

This is the habitual character of that poor man to whom the majesty of heaven vouchsafes the looks of his love. At times indeed he has
but

(a) *Prov.* xviii. 23.

but little sense of these things, but then he is uneasy, and he labours to re-obtain it, and sometimes is actually blessed with it.

And is there no such poor man or woman in this assembly? I hope there is. Where are ye poor creatures? stand forth, and receive the blessing of your Redeemer, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, &c." He who has his throne in the height of heaven, and to whom this vast earth is but a footstool, looks upon you with eyes of love. This spiritual poverty is greater riches than the treasures of the universe. Be not ashamed therefore to own yourselves poor men, if such you are. May God thus impoverish us all! may he strip us of all our imaginary grandeur and riches, and reduce us to poor beggars at his door!

But it is time to consider the other character of the happy man upon whom the Lord of heaven will graciously look; and that is,

II. Contrition of spirit. "To this man will I look, that is of a contrite spirit."

The word *contrite* signifies one that is beaten or bruised with hard blows, or an heavy burden: And it belongs to the mourning penitent whose heart is broken and wounded for sin. Sin is an intolerable burden that crushes and bruises him, and he feels himself pained and sore under it. His stony heart, which could not be impressed but repelled the blow, is taken away, and now he

he has an heart of flesh, easily bruised and wounded. His heart is not always hard and senseless, light and trifling, but it has tender sensations; he is easily susceptible of sorrow for sin, is humbled under a sense of his imperfections, and is really pained and distressed because he can serve his God no better, but daily sins against him. This character may also agree to the poor anxious soul that is broken with cruel fears of its state. The stout-hearted can venture their eternal all upon uncertainty, and indulge pleasing hopes without anxiously examining their foundation, but he that is of a contrite spirit is tenderly sensible of the importance of the matter, and cannot be easy without some good evidence of safety. Such shocking suppositions as these frequently startle him, and pierce his very heart, "What if I should be deceived at last? What if after all I should be banished from that God in whom lies all my happiness, &c." These are suppositions full of insupportable terror, when they appear but barely possible, and much more when there seems to be reason for them. Such an habitual pious jealousy as this is a good symptom, and to your pleasing surprise, ye doubtful christians, I may tell you that that majesty, who you are afraid disregards you, looks down upon you with eyes of pity. Therefore lift up your eyes to him in wonder and joyful confidence. You are not such neglected things as you think. The Majesty of heaven thinks it not beneath him to look down through

through all the glorious orders of angels, and through interposing worlds, down, down even upon you in the depth of your self-abhorrance. Let us,

III. Consider the remaining character of the happy man to whom the Lord will look :
 " Him that trembleth at my word.*

This character implies a tender sense of the great things of the word, and an heart easily impressed with them as the most important realities. This was remarkably exemplified in tender-hearted *Josiah* (n). To one that trembles at the divine word the threatnings of it do not appear vain terrors, nor great swelling words of vanity, but the most tremendous realities. Such an one cannot bear up under them, but would tremble, and fall, and die away, if not relieved by some happy promise of deliverance. He that trembles at the word of GOD is not a stupid hearer or reader of it. It reaches and pierces his heart as a sharp two-edged sword ; it carries power along with it, and he feels that it is the word of GOD, and not of man, even when it is spoken by feeble mortals. Thus he not only trembles at the terror, but at the authority of the word. Which leads me to observe farther, that he trembles with filial veneration of the majesty of GOD speaking in his word. He considers it as his voice who spake all things into being, and whose glory is such that a deep solemnity

(n) 2 Chron. xxxiv. 19, 20, 27.

solemnity must seize those that are admitted to hear him speak.

How opposite is this to the temper of multitudes who regard the word of God no more than (with horror I express it) the word of a child or a fool. They will have their own way, let him say what he will. They persist in sin in defiance of his threatenings. They sit as careless and stupid under his word, as tho' it were some old, dull, trifling story. It seldom makes any impressions upon their stony hearts. These are the brave, undaunted men of the world, who harden themselves against the fear of futurity. But, unhappy creatures! the God of heaven disdains to give them a gracious look, while he fixes his eyes upon the man that "is" "contrite, and that trembles at his word."

And where is that happy man? where in this assembly, where is the contrite spirit? where the man that trembleth at the word? you are all ready to catch at the character, but be not presumptuous on the one hand, nor excessively timorous on the other. Inquire whether this be your prevailing character. If so, then claim it, and rejoice in it, though you have it not in perfection. But if you have it not prevailingly do not seize it as your own. Though you have been at times distressed with a sense of sin and danger, and the word strikes a terror to your hearts, yet, unless you are habitually of a tender and contrite spirit, you are not to claim the character.

But

But let such of you as are poor and contrite in spirit, and that tremble at the word of the Lord, enter deeply into the meaning of this expression, that the Lord looks to you. He does not look on you as a careless spectator, not concerning himself with you, or caring what will become of you, but he looks upon you as a father, a friend, a benefactor: his looks are efficacious for your good.

He looks upon you with acceptance. He is pleased with the sight. He loves to see you labouring towards him. He looks upon you as the objects of his everlasting love, and purchased by the blood of his Son, and he is well-pleased with you for his righteousness sake. Hence his looking upon him that is poor, &c. is opposed to his hating the wicked and their sacrifices, *ver.* 3. And is he whom you have so grievously offended, he whose wrath you fear above all other things, is he indeed reconciled to you, and does he delight in you? what cause of joy, and praise, and wonder is here?

Again, he looks to you so as to take particular notice of you. He sees all the workings of your hearts towards him. He sees and pities you in your honest, though feeble conflicts with indwelling sin. He observes all your faithful though weak endeavours to serve him. His eyes pierce your very hearts, and the least motion there cannot escape his notice. This indeed might make you tremble, if he looked upon you with the eyes of a judge, for O how

many abominations must he see in you! But be of good cheer, he looks upon you with the eyes of a friend, and with that love which covers a multitude of sins. He looks upon you with the eyes of compassion in all your calamities. He looks on you to see that yeir be not overborne and crushed. *David*, who passed through as many hardships and afflictions as any of you, could say from happy experience, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry (o)."

Finally, he looks to you so as to look after you, as we do after the sick and weak. He looks to you so as to provide for you. And he will give you grace and glory, and "no good thing will he withhold from you (p)."

And are you not safe and happy under the inspection of a father and a friend? Let a little humble courage then animate you amid your many dejections, and confide in that care of which you feel yourself to be so unworthy.

Here it may be not amiss to observe, what must give you no small pleasure, that those very persons who according to the estimate of men are the most likely to be overlooked, are those whom God graciously regards. The persons themselves are apt to cry, "Happy I, could I believe that the God of heaven thus graciously regards me, but, alas! I feel myself a poor unworthy creature; I am a trembling broken-hearted thing, beneath the notice of
" so

(o) P^sal. xxxiv. 15.(p) P^sal. lxxxiv. 11.

“ so great a majesty.” And art thou so indeed? then I may convert thy objection into an encouragement. Thou art the very person upon whom God looks. His eyes are running to and fro through the earth in quest of such as thou art, and he will find thee out among the innumerable multitudes of mankind. Wert thou surrounded with crouds of kings and nobles, his eyes would pass by them all to fix upon thee. What a glorious artifice, if I may so speak, is this to catch at and convert the person’s discouragement as a ground of courage! to make that the character of the favourites of heaven, which they themselves look upon as marks of his neglect of them? “ Alas! says the “ poor man, if I was the object of divine notice, he would not suffer me to continue thus “ poor and broken-hearted.” But you may reason directly the reverse, he makes you thus poor in spirit, sensible of your sinfulness and imperfections, because he graciously regards you. He will not suffer you to be puffed up with your imaginary goodness, like the rest of the world, because he loves you more than he loves them.

However unaccountable this procedure seem there is very good reason for it. The poor are the only persons that would relish the enjoyment of God, and prize his love: they alone are capable of the happiness of heaven, which consists in the perfection of holiness.

To conclude, Let us view the perfection and condescension of God as illustrated by this subject. Consider, ye poor in spirit, who He is that stoops to look upon such little things as you. It is He whose throne is in the highest heaven, surrounded with myriads of angels and archangels, it is He whose footstool is the earth, who supports every creature upon it, it is He who is exalted above the blessing and praise of all the celestial armies, and who cannot without condescension behold the things that are done in heaven, it is He that looks down upon such worms as you. And what a stoop is this?

It is He that looks upon you in particular, who looks after all the worlds he has made. He manages all the affairs of the universe, He takes care of every individual in his vast family, He provides for all his creatures, and yet He is at leisure to regard you. He takes as particular notice of you as if you were his only creatures. What perfection is this! what an infinite grasp of thought! what unbounded power! and what condescension too? Do but consider what a small figure you make in the universe of beings. You are not so much in comparison with the infinite multitude of creatures in the compass of nature as a grain of sand to all the sands upon the sea-shore, or as a mote to this vast globe of earth, and yet He, that has the care of the whole universe, takes particular notice of you, you who are but trifles, compared with your fellow-creatures; and who, if you

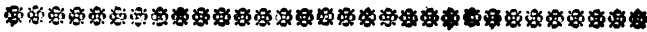
you were annihilated, would hardly leave a blank in the creation. Consider this, and wonder at the condescension of God; consider this, and acknowledge your own meanness; you are but nothing not only compared with God, but you are as nothing in the system of creation.

I shall add but this one natural reflection, if it be so great a happiness to have the great God for our patron, then what is it to be out of his favour? to be disregarded by him? methinks an universal tremor may seize this assembly at the very supposition. And is there a creature in the universe in this wretched condition? methinks all the creation besides must pity him. Where is the wretched being to be found? must we descend to hell to find him? no, alas! there are many such on this earth; nay, I must come nearer you still, there are many such probably in this assembly: all among you are such who are not poor and contrite in spirit, and do not tremble at the word of the Lord. And art not thou one of the miserable number, O man? What! disregarded by the God that made thee! not favoured with one look of love by the author of all happiness! He looks upon thee indeed but it is with eyes of indignation, marking thee out for vengeance, and canst thou be easy in such a case? wilt thou not labour to impoverish thyself, and have thy heart broken, that thou mayest become the object of his gracious regards?




S E R M O N VII.

The Nature and Danger of making
light of CHRIST and Salvation.



MATT. XXII. 5.

But they made light of it.


T H E R E is not one of us in this assembly that has heard any thing but what has heard of CHRIST and salvation: there is not one of us but has had the rich blessings of the gospel freely and repeatedly offered to us: there is not one of us but stands in the most absolute need of these blessings, and must perish for ever without them: I wish I could add, there is not one of us but has chearfully accepted them according to the offer of the gospel. But, alas! such an assembly is not to be expected on earth! Multitudes will still make light of CHRIST and the invitations of the gospel, as the Jews did.

This parable represents the great God under the majestic idea of a king.

He is represented as making a marriage-feast for his Son; that is, God in the gospel offers his Son JESUS CHRIST as a Saviour to the guilty sons of men, and, upon their acceptance of him, the most intimate, indearing union, and the tenderest mutual affection take place between CHRIST and them, which may very properly be represented by the marriage-relation. And God has provided for them a rich variety of blessings, pardon, holiness, and everlasting felicity, which may be signified by a royal nuptial feast, *verse 2.*

These blessings were first offered to the Jews, who were bidden to the wedding by *Moses* and the prophets, whose great business it was to prepare them to receive the Messiah, *verse 3.*

The servants that were sent to call them after they were thus bidden, were the apostles, and seventy disciples, whom CHRIST sent out to preach that the gospel-kingdom was just at hand, *verse 3.*

When the Jews rejected this call, he sent forth other servants, namely, the apostles after his ascension, who were to be more urgent in their invitations, and to tell them that, in consequence of CHRIST's death, all things were now ready, *verse 4.*

It is seldom that invitations to a royal feast are rejected; but, alas! the Jews rejected the invitation of the gospel, and would not accept
of

of its important blessings. They made light of CHRIST and his blessings; they were careless about them, and turned their attention to other things.

These things were not peculiar to the Jews, but belong to us sinners of the Gentiles in these ends of the earth. CHRIST is still proposed to us, to the same blessings we are invited, and I have the honour, my dear brethren, of appearing among you as a servant of the heavenly king, sent out to urge you to embrace the offer.

I doubt not but sundry of you have complied, and you are enriched and made for ever.

But, alas! must I not entertain a godly jealousy over some of you? have you not made light of CHRIST and salvation, to which you have been invited for so many years successively?

Your case is really lamentable, as I hope you will see before I have done, and I most sincerely compassionate you from my heart. I rise up in this solemn place with a design to address you with the most awful seriousness, and the most compassionate concern; and did you know how much your happiness may depend upon it, and how anxious I am lest I should fail in the attempt, I am sure you could not but pray for me, and pity me. If ever you regarded a man in the most serious temper and address I beg you would now regard what I am going to say to you.

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You cannot receive any benefit from this, or indeed any other subject, till you apply it to yourselves. And therefore in order to reform you of the sin of making light of CHRIST and the gospel, I must first inquire who are guilty of it. For this purpose let us consider,

What it is to make light of CHRIST and the invitations of the gospel.

I can think of no plainer way to discover this, than to inquire how we treat those things that we highly esteem; and also, by way of contrast, how we treat those things which we make light of; and hence we may discover whether CHRIST and the gospel may be ranked among the things we esteem, or those we disregard.

I. Men are apt to remember and affectionately think of, the things that they highly esteem; but as for those which they disregard, they can easily forget them, and live from day to day without a single thought about them.

Now do you often affectionately remember the Lord JESUS, and do your thoughts often go after him? do they pay him early visits in the morning? do they make frequent excursions to him through the day? and do you lie down with him in your hearts at night? Is not the contrary evident as to many of you? Can you not live from day to day thoughtless of JESUS, and your everlasting salvation? Recollect now, how many affectionate thoughts have you had
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of these things through the week past, or in this sacred morning. And can you indeed highly esteem those things which you hardly ever think of? Follow your own hearts, Sirs, observe which way they most naturally and freely run, and then judge whether you make light of the gospel or not. Alas! we cannot persuade men to one hour's serious consideration what they should do for an interest in CHRIST; we cannot persuade them so much as to afford him their thoughts, which are such cheap things, and yet they will not be convinced that they make light of CHRIST. And here lies the infatuation of sin; it blinds and befools men, so that they do not know what they think of, what they love, or what they intend, much less do they know the habitual bent of their souls. They often imagine themselves free from those sins to which they are most enslaved, and particularly they think themselves innocent of the crime of making light of the gospel, when this is the very crime that is likely to destroy them forever.

II. The things that men value, if of such a nature as to admit of publication, will be the frequent subjects of their discourse: the thoughts will command the tongue, and furnish materials for conversation. But those things that they forget and disregard they will not talk of.

Do not they therefore make light of CHRIST and salvation, who have no delight in conversing about them, and hardly ever mention the
name

name of CHRIST, but in a trifling or profane manner? they do not like the company where divine things are discoursed of, but think it precise and troublesome. They had much rather be entertained with humorous tales and idle stories, or talk about the affairs of the world. "They are of the world, says St *John*, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them (a)." They are in their element in such conversation. Or others may talk about religion, but it is only about the circumstances of it, as "How such a man preached; it was a very good, or a bad sermon, &c." but they care not to enter into the spirit and substance of divine things; and if they speak of CHRIST and experimental religion, it is in an heartless, insipid manner. And do not such make light of the gospel? and is not this the character of many of you?

III. Men make light of those things, if they are of a practical nature, which they only talk about, but do not reduce into practice.

Christianity was intended not to furnish matter for empty talkers, but to govern the heart and practice. But are there not some that only employ their tongues about it, especially when their spirits are raised with liquor, and then a torrent of noisy religion breaks from them. Watch their lives, and you will see little appearance of christianity there. And do not these evidently make light of CHRIST, who
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(a) 1 John iv. 5.

make him the theme of their drunken conversation, or who seem to think that GOD sent his Son from heaven just to set the world a talking about him? There is nothing in nature that seems to me more abominable than this.

IV. We take the utmost pains and labour to secure the things we value, and cannot be easy while our property in them is uncertain, but those things that we think lightly of we care but little whether they be ours or not.

Therefore have not such of you made light of CHRIST and salvation, who have lived twenty or thirty years uncertain whether you have any interest in them, and yet have been easy and contented, and take no method to be resolved? Are all that hear me this day determined in this important question, "What shall become of me when I die?" Are you all certain upon good grounds, and after a thorough trial, that you shall be saved? O that you were! but, alas! you know you are not. And do you think you would bear this uncertainty about it, if you did not make light of salvation? No; you would carefully examine yourselves, you would diligently peruse the scriptures to find out the marks of those that shall be saved; you would anxiously consult those that could direct you, and particularly pious ministers, who would think it the greatest favour you could do them to devolve such an office upon them. But now ministers may
fit

fit in their studies for a whole year, and not ten persons perhaps in five hundred agreeably intrude upon them on this most important business.

O, Sirs, if the gospel should pierce your hearts indeed, you could not but cry out with the convicted Jews, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved (b)?" Paul, when awakened, cries out in a trembling consternation, "Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?" But when shall we hear such questions now a-days?

V. The things that men highly esteem deeply and tenderly affect them, and excite some motions in their hearts; but what they make light of makes no impression upon them.

And if you did not make light of the gospel, what workings would there be in your hearts about it? what solemn, tender, and vigorous passions would it raise in you to hear such things about the world to come! what sorrows would burst from your hearts at the discovery of your sins! what fear and astonishment would seize you at the consideration of your misery! what transports of joy and gratitude would you feel at the glad tidings of salvation by the blood of CHRIST! what strong efficacious purposes would be raised in you at the discovery of your duty! O what hearers should we have, were it not for this one sin, the making light of the gospel! whereas now we are in danger of wearying them, or preaching them asleep with our
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(b) Acts ii. 37.

most solemn discourses about this momentous affair. We talk to them of CHRIST and salvation till they grow quite tired of this dull old tale, and this foolishness of preaching. Alas! little would one think, from the air of carelessness, levity, and inattention that appears among them, that they were hearing such weighty truths, or have any concern in them.

VI. Our estimate of things may be discovered by the diligence and earnestness of our endeavours about them. Those things which we highly value, we think no pains too great to obtain; but what we think lightly of we use no endeavours about, or we use them in a languid careless manner.

And do not they make light of CHRIST and salvation, who do not exert themselves in earnest to obtain them, and think a great deal of every little thing they do in religion? they are still ready to cry out, "What need of so much pains? we hope to be saved without so much trouble." And, though these may not be so honest as to speak it out, it is plain from their temper and practice they grudge all the service they do for CHRIST, as done to a master they do not love. They love and esteem the world, and therefore for the world they will labour and toil all day, and seem never to think they can do too much: but for the GOD that made them, for the LORD that bought them, and for their everlasting salvation, they seem afraid of taking too much pains. Let us preach to
them

them as long as we will, we cannot bring them in earnest to desire and pursue after holiness. Follow them to their houses, and you will hardly ever find them reading a chapter in their Bibles, or calling upon God with their families, so much as once a day. Follow them into their retirements, and you will hear no penitent confessions of sin, no earnest cries for mercy. They will not allow to God that one day in seven which he has appropriated to his own immediate service, but they will steal and prostitute some even of those sacred hours for idleness, or worldly conversation or business. And many of them are so malignant in wickedness, that they will reproach and ridicule others that are not so mad as themselves in these respects. And is not CHRIST worth seeking? is not eternal salvation worth so much trouble? does not that man make light of these things that thinks his ease or carnal pleasure of greater importance? Let common sense judge.

VII. That which we highly value we think we cannot buy too dear, and we are ready to part with every thing that comes in competition with it. The merchant that found one pearl of great price sold all that he had to purchase it (c), but those things that we make light of we will not part with things of value for them.

Now when CHRIST and the blessings of the gospel come in competition with the world and sinful pleasures, you may know which you most

(c) Matt. xiii. 46.

most highly esteem by considering which you are most ready to part with. You are called to part with every thing that is inconsistent with an interest in CHRIST, and yet many of you will not do it. You are called but to give God his own, to resign all to his will, to let go all those profits and pleasures which you must either part with or part with CHRIST, and yet your hearts cling to these things, you grasp them eagerly, and nothing can tear them from you. You must have your pleasures, you must keep your credit in the world, you must look to your estates, whatever becomes of CHRIST and salvation; as if you could live and die better without CHRIST than without these things; or as if CHRIST could not make you happy without them. And does not this bring the matter to an issue, and plainly shew that you make light of CHRIST in comparison of these things? CHRIST himself has assured you over and over, that unless you are willing to part with all for his sake, you cannot be his disciples; and yet, while you have the quite contrary disposition, you will pretend to be his disciples; as if you knew better what it is that constituted his disciples than he.

VIII. Those things which we highly value we shall be for helping our friends to obtain.

Do not those then make light of CHRIST who do not take half so much pains to help their children to an interest in him, as to set them up in credit in the world, and leave them large

fortunes? They supply the outward wants of their families, but they take little or no care about their everlasting salvation. Alas! Sirs, the neglected, ignorant, and vicious children and servants of such of you can witness against you that you make very light of CHRIST and salvation, and their immortal souls.

IX. That which men highly esteem they will so diligently pursue that you may see their regard for it in their endeavours after it, if it be a matter within their reach.

You may therefore see that many make light of the gospel by the little knowledge they have of it, after all the means of instruction with which they have been favoured. Alas! where is their improvement in holiness! how little do they know of their own hearts, of GOD and CHRIST, and the world to come, and what they must do to be saved! Ask them about these things, and you will find them stupidly ignorant; and yet they have so much conceited knowledge that they will not acknowledge it, or if they do, they have no better excuse than to say they are no scholars, or they have a poor memory; as if it required extensive learning, or a great genius to know the things that are necessary to salvation. O! if they had not made light of these things, if they had bestowed but half the pains upon them which they have taken to understand matters of trade and worldly business, they would not be so grossly ignorant as they are. When men that can learn the hardest

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est trade in a few years, when men of bright parts, and perhaps considerable learning, after living so many years, are still mere novices in matters of religion, and do not so much as know the terms of life according to the gospel, is it not plain that they care but little about these things, and that they make light of the Son of God, and all his inestimable immortal blessings?

Thus I have offered you sufficient matter of conviction in this affair. And what is the result? does not conscience smite some of you by this time, and say, "I am the man that have made light of CHRIST and his gospel?" If not, upon what evidence are you acquitted? Some of you, I doubt not, can say, in the integrity of your hearts, "Alas! I am too careless about this important affair, but God knows I am often deeply concerned about it: God knows that if ever I was in earnest about any thing in all my life, it has been about my everlasting state; and there is nothing in all the world that habitually lies so near my heart." But are there not some of you whom conscience does not accuse of this crime of too great carelessness about the gospel, not because you are innocent, but because you make so very light of it, that you will make no thorough search into it? and does not this alone prove you guilty? I beseech such to consider the folly of your conduct? do you think to excuse your crime, by being careless whether you are guilty

Q 2

of

of it or not? Can you avoid the precipice by shutting your eyes? If you discover your sin now it may be of unspeakable service, but if you now shut your eyes you must see it hereafter, when it will be too late, when your conviction will be your punishment. I beseech you also to consider the dreadful evil of your conduct in making light of a Saviour. And here I shall offer such arguments to expose its aggravations, as I am sure cannot fail to convince and astonish you, if you act like men of reason and understanding.

I. Consider you make light of him who did not make light of you, when you deserved his final neglect of you. You were worthy of nothing but contempt and abhorrence from him. As a man you are but a worm to GOD, and as a sinner you were viler than a toad or a serpent. Yet CHRIST was so far from making light of you that he left his native heaven, became a man of sorrows, and died in the most exquisite agonies that a way might be opened for the salvation of your miserable soul: and can you make light of him after all this regard to you? What miracles of love and mercy has he shewn towards you, and can you neglect him after all? Angels, who are less concerned in these things than we, cannot but pry into them with delightful wonder (*d*), and shall sinners, who have the most intimate personal concern in them, make

(*d*) 1 Peter i. 12.

make light of them? This is a crime more than devilish, for the devils never had a Saviour offered to them, and consequently never could despise him. And can you live in a carelessness of CHRIST all your days, and yet feel no remorse?

II. Consider you make light of matters of the greatest excellency and importance in all the world. O Sirs, you know not what it is that you slight; had you known these things you would not have ventured to make light of them for ten thousand worlds. As CHRIST said to the woman of *Samaria*, "If thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is that speaketh to thee, thou wouldest have asked of him living water (e)." Had the Jews known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (f)." So had you known what JESUS is, you would not have made light of him; he would have been to you the most important being in the universe. O had you been but one day in heaven, and seen and felt the happiness there! or had you been one hour under the agonies of hell, you could never more have trifled with salvation.

Here I find my thoughts run so naturally into the same channel with those of the excellent Mr *Baxter* about a hundred years ago that you will allow me to give you a long quotation from him that you may see in what light this great and good man viewed the neglected things

Q 3

which

(e) John iv. 10.

(f) 1 Cor. ii. 8.

which the gospel brings to your ears. His words are these, and I am sure to me they have been very weighty. " O Sirs, they are no trifles
" or jesting matters that the gospel speaks of. I
" must needs profess to you that when I have
" the most serious thoughts of these things, I
" am ready to wonder that such amazing mat-
" ters do not overwhelm the souls of men: that
" the greatness of the subject doth not so over-
" match our understandings and affections, as
" even to drive men beside themselves, but that
" God hath always somewhat allayed it by
" distance; much more do I wonder that men
" should be so blockish as to make light of such
" things. O Lord, that men did but know
" what everlasting glory and everlasting tor-
" ments are! would they then hear us as they
" do? would they read and think of these
" things as they do? I profess I have been
" ready to wonder when I have heard such
" weighty things delivered, how people can
" forbear crying out in the congregation, and
" much more do I wonder how they can rest,
" till they have gone to their ministers, and
" learned what they shall do to be saved, that
" this great business should be put out of doubt.
" O that heaven and hell should work no more
" upon men! O that eternity should work
" no more! O how can you forbear when
" you are alone to think with yourselves what
" it is to be everlastingly in joy or torment! I
" wonder that such thoughts do not break your
" sleep,

“ sleep, and that they do not crowd into your
 “ minds when you are about your labour! I
 “ wonder how you can almost do any thing
 “ else! How can you have any quietness in
 “ your minds? how can you eat, or drink, or
 “ rest, till you have got some ground of ever-
 “ lasting consolations? Is that a man or a
 “ corps that is not affected with matters of this
 “ moment? that can be readier to sleep than
 “ to tremble, when he hears how he must stand
 “ at the bar of GOD? Is that a man or a clod
 “ of clay that can rise up and lie down with-
 “ out being deeply affected with his everlasting
 “ state? that can follow his worldly business,
 “ and make nothing of the great business of
 “ salvation or damnation, and that when he
 “ knows it is hard at hand? Truly, Sirs,
 “ when I think of the weight of the matter, I
 “ wonder at the best saints upon earth, that
 “ they are no better, and do no more in so
 “ weighty a case. I wonder at those whom
 “ the world accounts more holy than needs,
 “ and scorns for making too much ado, that
 “ they can put off CHRIST and their souls with
 “ so little; that they do not pour out their
 “ souls in every prayer; that they are not more
 “ taken up with GOD; that their thoughts are
 “ not more serious in preparation for their last
 “ account. I wonder that they are not a thou-
 “ sand times more strict in their lives, and more
 “ laborious and unwearied for the crown than
 “ they are. And for myself (says that zealous,
 “ flaming,

Q 4

“ flaming, indefatigable preacher) as I am a-
 “ shamed of my dull and careless heart, and of
 “ my slow and unprofitable course of life, so
 “ the Lord knows I am ashamed of every ser-
 “ mon that I preach: when I think what I
 “ am, and who sent me, and how much the
 “ salvation and damnation of men is concerned
 “ in it, I am ready to tremble, lest God should
 “ judge me as a slihter of his truth and the
 “ souls of men, and lest in my best sermon I
 “ should be guilty of their blood. Methinks
 “ we should not speak a word to men in mat-
 “ ters of such consequence without tears, or the
 “ greatest earnestness that possibly we can.
 “ Were we not too much guilty of the sin
 “ which we reprove, it would be so. Whether
 “ we are alone or in company, methinks our
 “ end, and such an end, should still be in our
 “ mind, and as before our eyes; and we should
 “ sooner forget any thing, or set light by any
 “ thing, or by all things, than by this.”

And now, my brethren, if such a man as this
 viewed these things in this light, O what shall
 we, we languishing careless creatures, what shall
 we think of ourselves? Into what a dead sleep
 are we fallen! O let the most active and zeal-
 ous among us awake, and be a thousand times
 more in earnest: and ye frozen-hearted, care-
 less sinners, for God's sake awake, and exert
 yourselves to good purpose in the pursuit of sal-
 vation, or you are lost to all eternity.

III. Consider

III. Consider whose salvation it is you make light of. It is your own. And do you not care what becomes of your own selves? Is it nothing to you whether you be saved or damned for ever? Is the natural principle of self-love extinct in you? Have you no concern for your own preservation? Are you commenced your own enemies? If you slight CHRIST and love sin, you virtually love death (g). You may as well say, "I will live, and yet neither eat nor drink," as say, "I will go to heaven, and yet make light of CHRIST." And you may as well say this in words as by your practice.

IV. Consider your sin is aggravated by professing to believe that gospel which you make light of. For a professed infidel, that does not believe the scripture revelation concerning CHRIST, and a future state of rewards and punishments, for such a one to be careless about these things, would not be so strange: but for you that make these things your creed, and a part of your religion, for you that call yourselves Christians, and have been baptized into this faith, for you I say to make light of them, how astonishing! how utterly inexcusable! What! believe that you shall live for ever in the most perfect happiness or exquisite misery, and yet take no more pains to obtain the one, and escape the other? What! believe that the great and dreadful GOD will shortly be your judge,

(g) Prov. viii. 36,

judge, and yet make no more preparation for it? Either say plainly, "I am no Christian, I do not believe these things;" or else let your hearts be affected with your belief, and let it influence and govern your lives.

V. Consider what those things are which engross your affections, and which tempt you to neglect CHRIST and your salvation. Have you found out a better friend, or a more substantial and lasting happiness than his salvation? O! what trifles and vanities, what dreams and shadows are men pursuing, while they neglect the important realities of the eternal world! If crowns and kingdoms, if all the riches, glories, and pleasures of the world were insured to you as a reward for making light of CHRIST, you would even then make the most foolish bargain possible, for what are these in the scale to eternal joy or eternal torment? and "what shall it profit a man if he gain even the whole world, and lose his own soul (b)?" But you cannot hope for the ten thousandth part, and will you cast away your souls for this? You that think it such a great thing to live in riches, pleasures, and honours, consider is it such a mighty happiness to die rich? to die after a life of pleasure and honour? Will it be such a great happiness to give an account for the life of a rich sensualist, rather than of a poor mortified creature? Will *Dives* then be so much happier than *Lazarus*? Alas! what does the richest, the highest,

(b) Matt. xvi. 26.

est, the most voluptuous sinner, what does he do, but lay up treasures of wrath against the day of wrath? O how will the unhappy creatures torture themselves for ever with the most cutting reflections for selling their Saviour and their souls for such trifles! Let your sins and earthly enjoyments save you then, if they can; let them then do that for you which CHRIST would have done for you if you had chosen him. Then go and cry to the gods you have chosen: let them deliver you in the day of your tribulation.

VI. Your making light of CHRIST and salvation is a certain evidence that you have no interest in them. CHRIST will not throw himself and his blessings away upon those that do not value them. "Those that honour him he will honour, but they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed (i)." There is a day coming, when you will feel you cannot do without him; when you will feel yourselves perishing for want of a Saviour; and then you may go and look for a Saviour where you will; then you may shift for yourselves as you can; he will have nothing to do with you: the Saviour of sinners will cast you off for ever. I tell you, Sirs, whatever estimate you form of these things, GOD thinks very highly of the blood of his Son, and the blessings of his purchase; and if ever you obtain them, he will have you think highly of them too. If you
continue

(i) 1 Sam. ii. 30.

continue to make light of them all the world cannot save you. And can you find fault with GOD for denying you that which was so little in your account?

VII. And lastly, the time is hastening when you will not think so slightly of CHRIST and salvation. O, Sirs, when GOD shall commission death to tear your guilty souls out of your bodies, when devils shall drag you away to the place of torment, when you find yourselves condemned to everlasting fire by that Saviour whom you now neglect, what would you then give for a Saviour? When divine justice brings in its heavy charges against you, and you have nothing to answer, how will you then cry, "O if I had chosen JESUS for my Saviour, he would have answered all." When you see that the world has deserted you, that your companions in sin have deceived themselves and you, and all your merry days are over for ever, would you not then give ten thousand worlds for CHRIST? And will you not now think him worthy of your esteem and earnest pursuit? Why will you judge of things now quite the reverse of what you will do then, when you will be most capable of judging rightly?

And now, dear immortal souls! I have discovered the nature and danger of this common but unsuspected and unlamented sin, making light of CHRIST. I have delivered my message, and now I must leave it with you, imploring the

the blessing of GOD upon it. I cannot follow you home to your houses to see what effect it has upon you, or to make application of it to each of you in particular, but O may your consciences undertake this office! Whenever you spend another prayerless thoughtless day, whenever you give yourselves up to sinful pleasures, or an over-eager pursuit of the world, may your conscience become your preacher, and sting you with this expostulation, "Alas! " is this the effect of all I have heard? Do " I still make light of CHRIST and the concerns of religion? O! what will be the end " of such a conduct?"

I cannot but fear after all that some of you as usual will continue careless and impenitent. Well, when you are suffering the punishment of this sin in hell, remember that you were warned, and acquit me from being accessory to your ruin. And when we all appear before the supreme Judge, and I am called to give an account of my ministry; when I am asked, "Did " you warn these creatures of their danger? " Did you lay before them their guilt in making light of these things," you will allow me to answer, "Yes, Lord, I warned them in the " best manner I could, but they would not believe me; they would not regard what I said, " though enforced by the authority of thy awful name, and confirmed by thine own word."

O Sirs,

O sirs, must I give in this accusation against any of you? No, rather have mercy upon yourselves, and have mercy upon me, that I may give an account of you with joy and not with grief!



S E R M O N



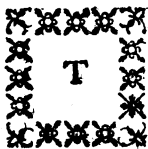
S E R M O N V I I I .

The Compassion of CHRIST to weak Believers.



M A T T . XII. 20.

A bruised reed shall be not break, and smoking flax shall be not quench.


THE Lord JESUS possesses all those virtues in the highest perfection, which render him infinitely amiable, and qualify him for the administration of a just and gracious government over the world. The virtues of mortals, when carried to a high degree, very often run into those vices which have a kind of affinity to them. "Right too rigid hardens into wrong." Strict justice steels itself into excessive severity, and the *man* is lost in the *judge*. Goodness and mercy sometimes degenerate into softness and an irrational compassion inconsistent with government. But in JESUS CHRIST these seemingly opposite virtues center and harmonize

monize in the highest perfection without running into extremes. Hence he is at once characterized as a Lamb, and as the Lion of the tribe of *Judah*: a Lamb for gentleness towards humble penitents, and a Lion to tear his enemies in pieces. CHRIST is said to judge and make war (a), and yet he is called "The prince of peace (b)." He will at length shew himself terrible to the workers of iniquity, and the terrors of the Lord are a very proper topic whence to persuade men; but now he is patient towards all men, and he is all love, and tenderness towards the meanest penitent. The meekness and gentleness of CHRIST is to be the pleasing entertainment of this day. And I enter upon it with a particular view to those mourning desponding souls among us, whose weakness renders them in great need of strong consolation. To such in particular I address the words of my text, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench."

This is a part of the Redeemer's character, as delineated near three thousand years ago by the evangelical prophet *Isaiab* (c), and it is expressly applied to him by St *Matthew*: "Behold," says the Father, my servant whom I have "chosen" for the important undertaking of saving the guilty sons of men; "my beloved, in whom my soul is well-pleased:" my very soul is well-pleased with his faithful discharge of the important

(a) Rev. xix. 11. (b) Isa. ix. 6. (c) Isa. xlii. 1—4.

important office he has undertaken. " I will
" put my Spirit upon him ;" that is, I will com-
pletely furnish him by the gifts of my Spirit
for his high character ; and " he shall shew
" judgment to the Gentiles ;" to the poor be-
nighted Gentiles he shall shew the light of sal-
vation by revealing the gospel to them, which,
in the style of the Old Testament, may be call-
ed his judgments. Or he will shew and exe-
cute the judgment of this world by casting out
its infernal prince who had so long exercised an
extensive cruel tyranny over it. " He shall not
" strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his
" voice in the streets ;" that is, though he en-
ters the world as a mighty prince and conqueror
to establish a kingdom of righteousness, and
overthrow the kingdom of darkness, yet he will
not introduce it with the noisy terrors and
thunders of war, but shall shew himself mild
and gentle as the prince of peace. Or the con-
nection may lead us to understand these words
in a different sense, namely, He shall do no-
thing with clamorous ostentation, nor proclaim
his wonderful works, when it will answer no
valuable end. Accordingly the verse of our
text stands thus connected, " Great multitudes
" followed him, and he healed them all, and
" charged them that they should not make him
" known. That it might be fulfilled which
" was spoken by *Isaiab* the prophet, saying, —
" He shall not cry, neither shall any man
" hear his voice in the streets ;" that is, he shall

not publish his miracles with noisy triumph in the streets, and other public places. And when it is said, "He shall not strive," it may refer to his inoffensive passive behaviour towards his enemies that were plotting his death. For thus we may connect this quotation from *Isaiab* with the preceding history in the chapter of our text. "Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. But when JESUS knew it," instead of praying to his Father for a guard of angels, or employing his own miraculous power to destroy them, "he withdrew himself from thence;—that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet *Isaiab*, saying, — He shall not strive."

The general meaning of my text seems to be contained in this observation, "That the Lord JESUS has the tenderest and most compassionate regard to the feeblest penitent, however oppressed and desponding, and that he will approve and cherish the least spark of true love towards himself."

The bruised reed seems naturally to represent a soul at once feeble in itself, and crushed with a burden, a soul both weak and oppressed. The *reed* is a slender frail vegetable in itself, and therefore a very proper image to represent a soul that is feeble and weak. A *bruised* reed is still more frail, hangs its head, and is unable to stand without some prop. And what can be a more lively emblem of a poor soul, not only

only weak in itself, but bowed down and broken under a load of sin and sorrow, that droops and sinks, and is unable to stand without divine support. Strength may bear up under a burden, or struggle with it, till it has thrown it off. But oppressed weakness, frailty under a burden, what can be more pitiable? and yet this is the case of many a poor penitent. He is weak in himself, and in the mean time crushed under an heavy weight of guilt and distress.

And what would become of such a frail oppressed creature, if, instead of raising him up and supporting him, JESUS should tread and crush him under the foot of his indignation? But though a reed, especially a bruised reed, is an insignificant thing, of little or no use, yet "a bruised reed he will not break," but he raises it up with a gentle hand, and enables it to stand, though weak in itself, and easily crushed in ruin.

Perhaps the imagery, when drawn at length, may be this. "The Lord JESUS, as an almighty conqueror, marches in state through our world; and here and there a bruised reed lies in his way. But, instead of disregarding it, or trampling it under foot, he takes care not to break it: he raises up the drooping straw, trifling as it is, and supports it with his gentle hand." Thus, poor broken-hearted penitents, thus he takes care of you, and supports you, worthless and trifling as you are. Though you seem to lie in the way of his justice,

tice, and it might tread you with its heavy foot, yet he not only does not crush you but takes you up, and inspires you with strength to bear your burden, and flourish again.

Or perhaps the imagery may be derived from the practice of the ancient shepherds, who were wont to amuse themselves with the music of a pipe of reed or straw, and when it was bruised they broke it, or threw it away as useless. But the bruised reed shall not be broken by this divine Shepherd of souls. The music of broken sighs and groans is indeed all that the broken reed can afford him: the notes are low, melancholy, and jarring: and yet he will not break the instrument, but he will repair and tune it, till it is fit to join in the concert of angels on high, and even now its humble strains are pleasing to his ears. Surely every broken heart among us must revive, while contemplating this tender and moving imagery!

The other emblem is equally significant and affecting. "The smoking flax shall he not quench." It seems to be an allusion to the wick of a candle or lamp, the flame of which is put out, but it still smokes, and retains a little fire, which may again be blown into a flame, or rekindled by the application of more fire. Many such dying snuffs or smoking wicks are to be found in the candlesticks of the churches, and in the lamps of the sanctuary. The flame of divine love is just expiring, it is sunk into the socket of a corrupt heart, and produces no
clear

clear steady blaze; but only a smoke, that is disagreeable, though it shews that a spark of the sacred fire still remains; or it produces a faint quivering flame that dies away, then catches and revives, and seems unwilling to be quenched entirely. The devil and the world raise many storms of temptation to blow it out, and a corrupt heart, like a fountain, pours out water to quench it. But even this smoking flax, this dying snuff JESUS will not quench, but he blows it up into a flame, and pours in the oil of his grace to recruit and nourish it. He walks among the golden candlesticks, and trims the lamps of his sanctuary. Where he finds empty vessels without oil or a spark of heavenly fire, like the foolish virgins, he breaks the vessels, or throws them out of his house. But where he finds the least spark of true grace, where he discovers but the glimpse of sincere love to him, where he sees the principle of true piety, which, though just expiring, yet renders the heart susceptible of divine love, as a candle just put out is easily rekindled; there he will strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die: he will blow up the dying snuff to a lively flame, and cause it to shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day. Where there is the least principle of true holiness he will cherish it. He will furnish the expiring lamp with fresh supplies of the oil of grace, and of heavenly fire, and all the storms that beat upon it, shall not

he able to put it out, because sheltered by his hand.

I hope, my dear brethren, some of you begin already to feel the pleasing energy of this text. Are you not ready to say, "Blessed JESUS! is this thy true character? Then thou art just such a Saviour as I want, and I most willingly give up myself to thee." You are sensible you are at best but a *bruised reed*, a feeble, shattered, useless thing; an untuneable, broken pipe of straw, that can make no proper music for the entertainment of your divine Shepherd. Your heart is at best but *smoking flax*, where the love of God often appears like a dying snuff, or an expiring flame that quivers and catches, and hovers over the lamp, just ready to go out. Such some of you probably feel yourselves to be. Well, and what think ye of CHRIST? "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;" and therefore, may not even your guilty eyes look to this gentle Saviour with encouraging hope? May you not say of him, with the sweet singer of *Israel*, in his last moments, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire (d)?"

In prosecuting this subject I intend to illustrate the character of a weak believer, as represented in my text, and then to illustrate the care and compassion of JESUS CHRIST even for such a poor weakling.

I. ¶

(d) 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

I. I am to illustrate the character of a weak believer as represented in my text by "a bruised reed, and smoking flax."

The metaphor of a *bruised reed*, as I observed, seems most naturally to convey the idea of a state of weakness and oppression. And, therefore, in illustrating it I am naturally led to describe the various weaknesses which a believer sometimes painfully feels, and to point out the heavy burdens which he sometimes groans under; I say, sometimes, for at other times even the weak believer finds himself strong, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man." The joy of the Lord is his strength; and he "can do all things through CHRIST strengthening him." Even the oppressed believer at times feels himself delivered from his burden, and he can lift up his drooping head, and walk upright. But, alas! the burden returns, and crushes him again. And under some burden or other many honest-hearted believers groan out the most of their lives.

Let us now see what are those weaknesses which a believer feels and laments. He finds himself weak in knowledge; a simple child in the knowledge of God and divine things. He is weak in love; the sacred flame does not rise with a perpetual fervor, and diffuse itself thro' all his devotions, but at times it languishes and dies away into a smoking snuff. He is weak in

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faith;

faith; he cannot keep a strong hold of the almighty; cannot suspend his all upon his promises with chearful confidence, nor build a firm immoveable fabric of hope upon the rock JESUS CHRIST. He is weak in hope; his hope is dashed with rising billows of fears and jealousies, and sometimes just overset. He is weak in joy; he cannot extract the sweets of christianity, nor taste the comforts of his religion. He is weak in zeal for God and the interests of his kingdom; he would wish himself always a flaming seraph, always glowing with zeal, always unwearied in serving his God, and promoting the designs of redeeming love in the world; but, alas! at times his zeal, with his love, languishes and dies away into a smoking snuff. He is weak in repentance; troubled with that plague of plagues an hard heart. He is weak in the conflict with indwelling sin, that is perpetually making insurrections within him. He is weak in resisting temptations; which croud upon him from without, and are often likely to overwhelm him. He is weak in courage to encounter the king of terrors, and venture through the valley of the shadow of death. He is weak in prayer, in importunity, in filial boldness in approaching the mercy-seat. He is weak in abilities to endeavour the conversion of sinners, and save souls from death. In short, he is weak in every thing in which he should be strong. He has indeed, like the church of
Philadelphia,

Philadelphia, a little strength (*e*), and at times he feels it, but, O! it seems to him much too little for the work he has to do. These weaknesses or defects the believer feels, painfully and tenderly feels, and bitterly laments. A sense of them keeps him upon his guard against temptations: he is not venturesome in rushing into the combat. He would not parley with temptation, but would keep out of its way; nor would he run the risk of a defeat by an ostentatious experiment of his strength. This sense of weakness also keeps him dependent upon divine strength. He clings to that support given to *St Paul* in an hour of hard conflict, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" and when a sense of his weakness has this happy effect upon him, then, with *St Paul* he has reason to say, "When I am weak, then am I strong (*f*)."

I say the believer feels and laments these weaknesses, and this is the grand distinction in this case between him and the rest of the world. They are weak too; much weaker than he; nay, they have, properly, no spiritual strength at all; but, alas! they do not feel their weakness, but the poor vain creatures boast of their strength, and think they can do great things, when they are disposed for them. Or if their repeated falls and defeats by temptation extort from them a confession of their weakness, they plead it rather as an excuse, than lament it as

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(*e*) Rev. iii. 8.(*f*) 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

at once a crime and a calamity. But the poor believer tries no such artifice to extenuate his guilt. He is sensible that even his weakness itself has guilt in it, and therefore he laments it with ingenuous sorrows among his other sins.

Now have I not delineated the very character of some of you? such weaklings, such frail reeds you feel yourselves to be. Well, hear this kind assurance, "Jesus will not break such a feeble reed, but he will support and strengthen it."

But you perhaps not only feel you are weak, but you are oppressed with some heavy burden or other. You are not only a reed for weakness, but you are a *bruised* reed, trodden under foot, crushed under a load. Even this is no unusual or discouraging case, for,

The weak believer often feels himself crushed under some heavy burden. The frail reed is often bruised. Bruised under a sense of guilt. Guilt lies heavy at times upon his conscience, and he cannot throw it off. Bruised with a sense of remaining sin, which he finds still strong within him, and which at times prevails, and treads him under foot. Bruised under a burden of wants, the want of tenderness of heart, of ardent love to God and mankind, the want of heavenly-mindedness and victory over the world, the want of conduct and resolution to direct his behaviour in a passage so intricate and difficult, and the want of nearer intercourse with the Father of his spirit: in short, a thousand

sand pressing wants crush and bruise him. He also feels his share of the calamities of life in common with other men. But these burdens I shall take no farther notice of because they are not peculiar to him as a believer; nor do they lie heaviest upon his heart. He could easily bear up under all the calamities of life, if his spiritual wants were supplied, and the burden of guilt and sin were removed. Under these last he groans and sinks. Indeed these burdens lie with all their full weight upon the world around him, but they are dead in trespasses and sins, and feel them not: they do not groan under them, nor labour for deliverance from them. They lie contented under them, with more stupidity than beasts of burden, till they sink under the intolerable load into the depth of misery. But the poor believer is not so stupid; and his tender heart feels the burden, and groans under it. "We that are in this tabernacle, says St Paul, do groan being burdened (g)." The believer understands feelingly that pathetic exclamation, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death (b)?" He cannot be easy till his conscience is appeased by a well-attested pardon through the blood of CHRIST, and the sins he feels working within him are a real burden and uneasiness to him, though they should never break out into action, and publicly dishonour his holy profession.

And

(g) 2 Cor. v. 4.

(b) Rom. vii. 24.

And is not this the very character of some poor oppressed creatures among you? I hope it is. You may look upon your case to be very discouraging, but JESUS looks upon it in a more favourable light. He looks upon you as proper objects of his compassionate care. Bruised as you are he will bind you up, and support you.

II. But I proceed to take a view of the character of a weak christian, as represented in the other metaphor in my text, namely, "smoking flax." The idea most naturally conveyed by this metaphor is, that of grace true and sincere, but languishing and just expiring, like a candle just blown out, which still smokes and retains a feeble spark of fire. It signifies a susceptibility of farther grace, or a readiness to catch that sacred fire, as a candle just put out is easily rekindled. This metaphor therefore leads me to describe the reality of religion in a low degree, or to delineate the true christian in his most languishing hours. And in so doing I shall mention those dispositions and exercises which the weakest christian feels, even in these melancholy seasons, for even in these he widely differs still from the most polished hypocrite in his highest improvements. To this subject let me solicit your most serious attention, for, if you have the least spark of real religion within you, you are now likely to discover it, as I am not going to rise to the high attainments of christians

christians of the first rank, but to stoop to the character of the meanest. Now the peculiar dispositions and exercises of heart which such in some measure feel, you may discover from the following short history of their case.

The weak christian in such languishing hours does indeed sometimes fall into such a state of carelessness and insensibility, that he has very few and but superficial exercises of mind about divine things. But generally he feels an uneasiness, an emptiness, an anxiety within, under which he droops and pines away, and all the world cannot heal the disease. He has chosen the blessed God as his supreme happiness, and when he cannot derive happiness from that source, all the sweets of created enjoyments become insipid to him, and cannot fill up the prodigious void which the absence of the supreme good leaves in his craving soul. Sometimes his anxiety is indistinct and confused, and he hardly knows what ails him, but at other times he feels it is for God, for the living God, that his soul pants. The evaporations of this smoking flax naturally ascend towards heaven. He knows that he never can be happy till he can enjoy the communications of divine love. Let him turn which way he will, he can find no solid ease, no rest, till he comes to this centre again.

Even at such times he cannot be thoroughly reconciled to his sins. He may be parleying with some of them in an unguarded hour, and seem

seem to be negotiating a peace, but the truce is soon ended, and they are at variance again. The enmity of a renewed heart soon rises against this old enemy. And there is this circumstance remarkable in the believer's hatred and opposition to sin, that they do not proceed principally, much less entirely, from a fear of punishment, but from a generous sense of its intrinsic baseness and ingratitude, and its contrariety to the holy nature of God. This is the ground of his hatred to sin, and sorrow for it, and this shews that there is at least a spark of true grace in his heart, and that he does not act altogether from the low, interested, and mercenary principles of nature.

At such times he is very jealous of the sincerity of his religion, afraid that all his past experiences were delusive, and afraid that, if he should die in his present state, he would be forever miserable. A very anxious state this! The stupid world can lie secure while this grand concern lies in the most dreadful suspence. But the tender-hearted believer is not capable of such fool-hardiness. He shudders at the thought of everlasting separation from that God and Saviour whom he loves. He loves him, and therefore the fear of separation from him, fills him with all the anxiety of bereaved love. This to him is the most painful ingredient of the punishment of hell. Hell would be a seven-fold hell to a lover of God, because it is a state of banishment from him whom he loves. He would for
ever

ever languish and pine away under the consuming distresses of widowed love, which those that love him not cannot feel. And has God kindled the sacred flame in his heart in order to render him capable of the more exquisite pain? Will he exclude from his presence the poor creature that clings to him, and languishes for him? No, the flax that does but smoke with his love was never intended to be fuel for hell, but he will blow it up into a flame, and nourish it till it mingles with the seraphic ardors in the region of perfect love.

The weak believer seems sometimes driven by the tempests of lust and temptation from off of the rock JESUS CHRIST. But he makes towards it on the stormy billows, and labours to lay hold upon it, and recover his station there, for he is sensible there is no other foundation of safety, but that without CHRIST he must perish for ever. It is the habitual disposition of the believer's soul to depend upon JESUS CHRIST alone. He retains a kind of direction or tendency towards him, like the needle touched with the load-stone towards the pole, and, if his heart is turned from its course, it trembles and quivers till it gains its favourite point again, and fixes there. Sometimes indeed a consciousness of guilt renders him shy of his God and Saviour, and after such base ingratitude he is ashamed to go to him. But at length necessity as well as inclination constrains him, and he is obliged to cry out, " Lord, to whom shall I
" go?"

“ go? thou hast the words of eternal life (i).”
 “ In thee alone I find rest to my soul ; and
 “ therefore to thee I must fly, though I am
 “ ashamed and confounded to appear in thy
 “ presence.”

In short, the weakest christian upon earth sensibly feels that his comfort rises and falls, as he lives nearer to or farther from his GOD. The love of GOD has such an habitual predominancy even in *his* heart, that nothing in the world, nor even all the world together can fill up his place. No, when he is gone, heaven and earth cannot replenish the mighty void. Even the weakest christian upon earth longs to be delivered from sin, from all sin without exception, and a body of death hanging about him is the burden of his life. Even the poor jealous languishing christian has his hope, all the little hope that he has, built upon JESUS CHRIST. Even this smoking flax sends up some exhalations of love towards heaven. Even the poor creature that often fears he is altogether a slave to sin, honestly, though feebly, labours to be holy, to be holy as an angel, yea, to be holy as GOD is holy. He has an heart that feels the attractive charms of holiness, and he is so captivated by it that sin can never recover its former place in his heart, no, the tyrant is for ever dethroned, and the believer would rather die than yield himself a tame slave to the usurped tyranny again.

Thus

(i) John vi. 63.

II. To illustrate the care and compassion of JESUS CHRIST for such poor weaklings as you.

This may appear a needless task to some, for who is there that does not believe it? But to such I would say, it is no easy thing to establish a trembling soul in the full belief of this truth. It is easy for one that does not see his danger, and does not feel his extreme need of salvation, and the difficulty of the work, to believe that CHRIST is willing and able to save him. But, O! to a poor soul, deeply sensible of its condition, this is no easy matter. Besides, the heart may need to be more deeply affected with this truth, though the understanding should need no farther arguments of the speculative kind for its conviction; and to impress this truth is my present design.

For this purpose I need but read and paraphrase to you a few of the many kind declarations and assurances which JESUS has given us in his word, and relate the happy experiences of some of his saints there recorded, who found him true and faithful to his word.

The Lord JESUS seems to have a peculiar tenderness for the poor, the mourners, the broken-hearted, and these are peculiarly the objects of his mediatorial office. "The Lord hath anointed me, says he, to preach good tidings to the meek, he hath sent me" all the way from my native heaven down to earth, upon this compassionate errand, "to bind up" the broken-hearted, to appoint unto them "that

mansion, or pitch his tent among mortals? yes, he dwells not only in his "high and holy place," but also "with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." He charges *Peter* to "feed his lambs," as well as his sheep; that is, to take the tenderest care even of the weakest in his flock (n). And he severely rebukes the shepherds of *Israel*, "Because, says he, ye have not strengthened the diseased, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken (o)." But what an amiable reverse is the character of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls! "Behold," says *Isaiak*, the Lord will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold his reward is with him, and his work before him." How justly may we tremble at this proclamation of the approaching God? for who can stand when he appeareth? But how agreeably are our fears disappointed in what follows? If he comes to take vengeance on his enemies, he also comes to shew mercy to the meanest of his people. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young (p);" that is, he shall exercise the tenderest and most compassionate care towards the meanest and weakest of his flock. "He

" looked

(n) John xxi. 15. (o) Ezek. xxxiv. 4. (p) Isa. xl. 10, 11.

" looked down, says the Psalmist, from the
 " height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the
 " Lord behold the earth;" not to view the gran-
 deur and pride of courts and kings, nor the he-
 roic exploits of conquerors, but " to hear the
 " groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that
 " are appointed to die. He will regard the
 " prayer of the destitute, and not despise their
 " prayer. This shall be written for the gene-
 " ration to come (q)." It was written for your
 encouragement, my brethren. Above three
 thousand years ago this encouraging passage was
 entered into the sacred records for the support
 of poor desponding souls in *Virginia*, in the
 ends of the earth. O what an early provident
 care does GOD shew for his people! There are
 none of the seven churches of *Asia* so highly
 commended by CHRIST as that of *Philadelphia*,
 and yet in commending her, all he can say is,
 " Thou hast a little strength." " I know thy
 " works; behold I have set before thee an open
 " door, and no man can shut it, for thou hast
 " a little strength (r)." O how acceptable is
 a little strength to JESUS CHRIST, and how
 ready is he to improve it? " He giveth power
 " to the faint, says *Ishaiab*, and to them that
 " have no might he increaseth strength (s)."

Hear farther what words of grace and truth
 flowed from the lips of JESUS. " Come unto
 " me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
 " and I will give you rest, for I am meek and

S 3

" lowly

(q) Psal. cii. 17—20. (r) Rev. iii. 8. (s) Isa. xl. 29.

" lowly in heart (t)." " Him that cometh un-
 " to me, I will in no wise cast out (u)." " If
 " any man thirst, let him come unto me and
 " drink (w)." " Let him that is athirst come ;
 " and whosoever will, let him come and take of
 " the water of life freely (x)." O what strong
 consolation is here! what exceeding great and
 precious promises are these! I might easily add
 to the catalogue, but these may suffice.

Let us now see how his people in every age
 have found these promises made good. Here
David may be consulted, *instar omnium*, and he
 will tell you, pointing to himself, " This poor
 " man cried, and the Lord heard and delivered
 " him out of all his troubles (y)." *St Paul* in
 the midst of affliction calls GOD " the Father
 " of mercies, and GOD of all comfort, who
 " comforteth us in all our tribulation (z)." "
 " GOD, says he, that comforteth those that are
 " cast down, comforted us (a)." What a sweet-
 ly emphatical declaration is this! " GOD, the
 " comforter of the humble, comforted us*."
 He is not only the Lord of hosts, the King of
 kings, the Creator of the world, but among his
 more august characters he assumes this title,
 " The comforter of the humble." Such *Saint*
Paul found him in an hour of temptation, when
 he

(t) Matt. xi. 28, 29.

(u) John vi. 37.

(w) John vii. 37.

(x) Rev. xxii. 17.

(y) Psal. xxxiv. 6.

(z) 2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

(a) 2 Cor. vii. 6.

* This is a more literal translation of — ὁ παρακαλῶν τῶς
 ταπεινῶς παρακαλεῖν ἡμᾶς ὁ Θεός.

he had this supporting answer to his repeated prayer for deliverance, " My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness (b)." Since this was the case, since his weakness was more than supplied by the strength of CHRIST, and was a foil to set it off, St Paul seems quite regardless what infirmities he laboured under. Nay, " most gladly, says he, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of CHRIST may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities—for when I am weak, then am I strong." He could take no pleasure in feeling himself weak, but the mortification was made up by the pleasure he found in leaning upon this almighty support. His wounds were painful to him, but O! the pleasure he found in feeling this divine physician dressing his wounds, in some measure swallowed up the pain. It was probably experience, as well as inspiration, that dictated to the apostle that amiable character of CHRIST, that he is " a merciful and faithful high-priest, who, being himself tempted, knows how to succour them that are tempted (c)." And " we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (d)."

But why need I multiply arguments? Go to his cross, and there learn his love and compassion, from his groans and wounds, and blood,

S 4

and

(b) 2 Cor. xii. 9. (c) Heb. ii. 17, 18. (d) Heb. iv. 15.

and death. Would he hang there in such agony for sinners, if he were not willing to save them, and cherish every good principle in them? There you may have much the same evidence of his compassion as *Thomas* had of his resurrection; you may look into his hands, and see the print of the nails, and into his side, and see the scar of the spear, which loudly proclaim his readiness to pity and help you.

And now, poor trembling doubting souls, what hinders but you should raise up your drooping head, and take courage? May you not venture your souls into such compassionate and faithful hands? Why should the *bruised reed* shrink from him, when he comes not to tread it down, but to raise it up?

As I am really solicitous that impenitent hearts among us should be pierced with the medicinal anguish and sorrow of conviction and repentance, and the most friendly heart cannot form a kinder wish for them, so I am truly solicitous that every honest soul, in which there is the least spark of true piety, should enjoy the pleasure of it. It is indeed to be lamented that they who have a title to so much happiness should enjoy so little of it; it is very incongruous that they should go bowing the head in their way towards heaven, as if they were hastening to the place of execution, and that they should serve so good a master with such heavy hearts. O lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen

strengthen the feeble knees! " Comfort ye,
" comfort ye my people, saith your GOD." " Be
" strong in the Lord, and in the power of his
" might." Trust in your all-sufficient Redeem-
er, trust in him though he should slay you.

And do not indulge causeless doubts and fears concerning your sincerity. When they arise in your minds examine them, and search whether there be any sufficient reason for them, and if you discover there is not, then reject them and set them at defiance, and entertain your hopes in spite of them, and say with the Psalmist,
" Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and
" why art thou disquieted within me? Hope
" thou in GOD, for I shall yet praise him, the
" health of my countenance, and my GOD(e)."

(e) Psalm xlii. 11.



SERMON



S E R M O N IX.

The Connexion between present Holiness and future Felicity.



H E B. XII. 14.

Follow — holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

AS the human soul was originally designed for the enjoyment of no less a portion than the everblessed God, it was formed with a strong innate tendency towards happiness. It has not only an eager fondness for existence, but for some good to render its existence happy. And the privation of being itself is not more terrible than the privation of all its blessings. It is true, in the present degeneracy of human nature, this vehement desire is miserably perverted and misplaced: man seeks his supreme happiness in sinful, or at best in created enjoyments, forgetful of the uncreated fountain of bliss, but yet still he seeks happiness; still this innate impetus is predomi-

predominant, and; though he mistakes the means, yet he still retains a general aim at the end. Hence he ransacks this lower world in quest of felicity; climbs in search of it the slippery ascent of honour; hunts for it in the treasures of gold and silver; or plunges for it in the foul streams of sensual pleasures. But since all the sordid satisfaction resulting from these things are not adequate to the unbounded cravings of the mind, and since the satisfaction is transitory and perishing, or we may be wrenched from it by the inexorable hand of death, the mind breaks through the limits of present enjoyments, and even of the lower creation, and ranges through the unknown scenes of futurity in quest of some untried good. Hope makes excursions into the dark duration between the present *now* and the grave, and forms to itself pleasing images of approaching blessings, which often vanish in the embrace, like delusive phantoms. Nay, it launches into the vast unknown world that lies beyond the grave, and roves through the regions of immensity after some complete felicity to supply the defects of sublunary enjoyments. Hence, though men, till their spirits are refined by regenerating grace, have no relish for celestial joys, but pant for the poor pleasures of time and sense, yet, as they cannot avoid the unwelcome consciousness that death will ere long rend them from these sordid and momentary enjoyments, are constrained to indulge the hope of bliss in a future state; and they

they promise themselves happiness in another world, when they can no longer enjoy any in this. And as reason and revelation unitedly assure them that this felicity cannot then consist in sensual indulgencies, they generally expect it will be of a more refined and spiritual nature, and flow more immediately from the great Father of spirits.

He must indeed be miserable that abandons all hope of this blessedness. The christian religion affords him no other prospect but that of eternal, intolerable misery in the regions of darkness and despair: and if he flies to infidelity as a refuge, it can afford him no comfort but the shocking prospect of annihilation.

Now if men were pressed into heaven by an unavoidable fatality, if happiness was promiscuously promised to them all without distinction of characters, then they might indulge a blind unexamined hope, and never perplex themselves with anxious enquiries about it. And he might justly be deemed a malignant disturber of the repose of mankind, that would attempt to shock their hope, and frighten them with causeless scruples.

But if the light of nature intimates, and the voice of scripture proclaims aloud, that this eternal felicity is reserved only for persons of particular characters, and that multitudes, multitudes who entertained pleasing hopes of it, are confounded with an eternal disappointment; and shall suffer an endless duration in the
most

most terrible miseries, we ought each of us to take the alarm, and examine the grounds of our hope, that, if they appear sufficient, we may allow ourselves a rational satisfaction in them; and, if they are found delusive, we may abandon them and seek for a hope which will bear the test now while it may be obtained. And however disagreeable the task be to give our fellow-creatures even profitable uneasiness, yet he must appear to the impartial a friend to the best interests of mankind, who points out the evidences and foundation of a rational and scriptural hope, and exposes the various mistakes to which we are subject in so important a case.

And if, when we look around us, we find persons full of the hopes of heaven, who can give no scriptural evidences of them to themselves or others; if we find many indulging this pleasing delusion, whose practices are mentioned by GOD himself as the certain marks of perishing sinners; and if persons are so tenacious of these hopes that they will retain them to their everlasting ruin, unless the most convictive methods are taken to undeceive them, then it is high time for those to whom the care of souls (a weightier charge than that of kingdoms) is intrusted to use the greatest plainness for this purpose.

This is my chief design at present, and to this my text naturally leads me. It contains these doctrines,

First,

First, That without holiness here it is impossible for us to enjoy heavenly happiness in the future world. To see the Lord is here put for enjoying him, see *Rom. viii. 24.* and the metaphor signifies the happiness of the future state in general, and more particularly intimates that the knowledge of God will be a special ingredient therein. See a parallel expression in *Matt. v. 8.*

Secondly, That this consideration should induce us to use the most earnest endeavours to obtain the heavenly happiness. Pursue holiness because "without it no man can see the Lord."

Hence I am naturally led,

- I. To explain the nature of that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."
- II. To shew what endeavours should be used to obtain it. And,
- III. To urge you to use them by the consideration of the absolute necessity of holiness.

I. I am to explain the nature of holiness, And I shall give you a brief definition of it, and then mention some of those dispositions and practices which naturally flow from it.

The most intelligible description of holiness, as it is inherent in us, may be this, "It is a conformity in heart and practice to the revealed will of God." As the supreme Being

is the standard of all perfection, his holiness in particular is the standard of ours. Then we are holy, when his image is stamped upon our hearts, and reflected in our lives, so the apostle defines it, "And that ye put on the new man, which after GOD is created in righteousness and true holiness (a)." "Whom he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son (b)." Hence holiness may be defined, "A conformity to GOD in his moral perfections." But as we cannot have a distinct knowledge of these perfections, but as they are manifested by the revealed will of GOD, I choose to define holiness as above, "A conformity to his revealed will." Now his revealed will comprizes both the law and the gospel: the law informs us of the duty which we as creatures owe to GOD as a Being of supreme excellency, as our Creator and Benefactor, and to men as our fellow-creatures; and the gospel informs us of the duty which as sinners we owe to GOD as reconcilable through a Mediator. Our obedience to the former implies the whole of morality, and to the latter the whole of evangelical graces, as faith in a Mediator, repentance, &c.

From this definition of holiness it appears, on the one hand, that it is absolutely necessary to see the Lord, for unless our dispositions are conformed to him, we cannot be happy in the enjoyment of him: and on the other hand, that they who are made thus holy, are prepared for the

(a) Eph. iv. 24.

(b) Rom. viii. 29.

the vision and fruition of his face, as they can relish the divinest pleasure.

But as a concise definition of holiness may give an auditory but very imperfect ideas of it, I shall expatiate upon the dispositions and practices in which it consists, or which naturally result from it, and they are such as follow.

1. A delight in GOD for his holiness. Self-love may prompt us to love him for his goodness to us, and so many unregenerate men may have a selfish love to GOD on this account. But to love GOD because he is infinitely holy, because he bears an infinite detestation to all sin, and will not indulge his creatures in the neglect of the least instance of holiness, but commands them to be holy as he is holy, this is a disposition connatural to a renewed soul only, and argues a conformity to his image. Every nature is most agreeable to itself, and a holy nature is most agreeable to an holy nature.

Here I would make a remark, which may GOD deeply impress on your hearts, and which for that purpose I shall subjoin to each particular, that holiness in fallen man is supernatural, I mean, we are not born with it, we give no discoveries of it, till we have experienced a great change. Thus we find it in the present case, we have no natural love to GOD, because of his infinite purity, and hatred to all sin, nay, we would love him more, did he give us greater indulgences, and I am afraid the love of some persons is founded upon a mistake, they love

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him because they imagine he does not hate sin, nor them for it, so much as he really does; because they think he will bring them to heaven at last, let them live as they list; and because they do not expect he is so inexorably just in his dealings with the sinner. It is no wonder they love such a soft, easy, passive Being as this imaginary Deity; but did they see the lustre of that holiness of God which dazzles the celestial armies; did they but know the terrors of his justice, and his implacable indignation against sin, their innate enmity would shew its poison, and their hearts would rise against God in all those horrible blasphemies with which awakened sinners are so frequently shocked. Such love as this is so far from being acceptable, that it is the greatest affront to the supreme Being; as, if a profligate loved you on the mistaken supposition that you were such a libertine as himself, it would rather inflame your indignation than procure your respect.

But to a regenerate mind how strong, how transporting are the charms of holiness! Such a mind joins the anthem of seraphs with the divinest complacency (c), and anticipates the song of glorified saints, "Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy (d)?" The perfections of God lose their lustre, or sink into objects of terror or contempt, if this glorious attribute be abstracted. Without holiness power becomes

(c) Rev. iv. 8.

(d) Rev. xv. 4.

becomes tyranny, omniscience craft, justice revenge and cruelty, and even the amiable attribute of goodness loses its charms, and degenerates into a blind promiscuous prodigality, or foolish undiscerning fondness: but when these perfections are clothed in the beauties of holiness, how god-like, how majestic, how lovely and attractive do they appear! and with what complacence does a mind fashioned after the divine image acquiesce in them! It may appear amiable even to an unholy sinner that the exertions of almighty power should be regulated by the most consummate wisdom; that justice should not without distinction punish the guilty and the innocent; but an holy soul only can rejoice that divine goodness will not communicate happiness to the disgrace of holiness; and that, rather than it should overflow in a blind promiscuous manner, the whole human race should be miserable. A selfish sinner has nothing in view but his own happiness, and if this be obtained, he has no anxiety about the illustration of the divine purity, but it recommends happiness itself to a sanctified soul, that it cannot be communicated in a way inconsistent with the beauty of holiness.

2. Holiness consists in an hearty complacence in the law of God because of its purity. The law is the transcript of the moral perfections of God, and if we love the original we shall love the copy. Accordingly it is natural to a renewed mind to love the divine law, because it

is perfectly holy; because it makes no allowance for the least sin, and requires every duty that it becomes us to perform towards God. *Psal.* cxix. 140. and xix. 7—10. *Rom.* vii. 12, compared with 22.

But is this our natural disposition? Is this the disposition of the generality? Do they not, on the contrary, secretly find fault with the law, because it is so strict? And their common objection against that holiness of life which it enjoins is, that they cannot bear to be so precise. Hence they are always for abating the rigour of the law, for bringing it down to some imaginary standard of their own, to their present ability, to sins of practice without regard to the sinful dispositions of the heart; or to the prevailing dispositions of the heart without regard to the first workings of concupiscence, those embryos of iniquity; and if they love the law at all, as they profess to do, it is upon the supposition that it is not so strict as it really is, but grants them greater indulgences, *Romans* viii. 7.

Hence it appears that, if we are made holy at all, it must be by a supernatural change; and when that is effected, what a strange and happy alteration does the sinner perceive? with what pleasure does he resign himself a willing subject to that law to which he was once so averse? And when he fails (as, alas! he does in many things) how is he humbled! he does not lay the fault upon the law as requiring impossibilities,

ibilities, but lays the whole fault upon himself as a corrupt sinner.

3. Holiness consists in an hearty complacency in the gospel method of salvation, because it tends to illustrate the moral perfections of the Deity, and to discover the beauties of holiness.

The gospel informs us of two grand pre-requisites to the salvation of the fallen sons of men, namely, The satisfaction of divine justice by the obedience and passion of CHRIST, that GOD might be reconciled to them consistently with his perfections. And the sanctification of sinners by the efficacy of the holy Ghost, that they might be capable of enjoying GOD, and that he might maintain intimate communion with them without any stain to his holiness. These two grand articles contain the substance of the gospel, and our acquiescence in them is the substance of that evangelical obedience which it requires of us, and which is essential to holiness in a fallen creature.

Now it is evident that without either of these the moral perfections of the Deity, particularly his holiness, could not be illustrated or even secured in the salvation of a sinner. Had he received an apostate race into favour, who had conspired in the most unnatural rebellion against him, without any satisfaction, his holiness would have been eclipsed; it would not have appeared that he had so invincible an abhorrence of sin, so zealous a regard for the vindication of his own holy law; or to his veracity, which

had threatned condign punishment to offenders. But by the satisfaction of CHRIST his holiness is illustrated in the most conspicuous manner ; now it appears that GOD would upon no terms save a sinner but that of adequate satisfaction, and that no other was sufficient but the suffering of his coequal Son, otherwise he would not have appointed him to sustain the character of Mediator ; and now it appears that his hatred of sin is such that he would not let it pass unpunished even in his own Son, when only imputed to him. In like manner, if sinners while unholy were admitted into communion with GOD in heaven, it would obscure the glory of his holiness, and it would not then appear that such was the purity of his nature that he could have no fellowship with sin. But now it is evident that even the blood of IMMANUEL cannot purchase heaven to be enjoyed by a sinner while unholy, but that every one that arrives at heaven must first be sanctified. An unholy sinner can be no more saved, while such, by the gospel than by the law ; but here lies the difference, that the gospel makes provision for his sanctification, which is gradually carried on here, and perfected at death, before his admission into the heavenly glory.

Now it is the genius of true holiness to acquiesce in both these articles. A sanctified soul places all its dependence on the righteousness of CHRIST for acceptance. It would be disagreeable to it to have the least concurrence in its
own

own justification. It is not only willing, but delights to renounce all its own righteousness, and to glory in CHRIST alone, *Phil.* iii. 3. Free grace to such souls is a charming theme, and salvation is more acceptable because conveyed in this way. It would render heaven itself disagreeable and wither all its joys, were they brought thither in a way that degrades or does not illustrate the glory of GOD's holiness; but O how agreeable the thought, that he that glorieth must glory in the Lord, and that the pride of all flesh shall be abased!

So an holy person rejoices that the way of holiness is the appointed way to heaven. He is not forced to be holy meerly by the servile consideration that he must be so or perish, and so unwillingly submits to the necessity which he cannot avoid, when in the mean time, were it put to his choice, he would choose to reserve some sins, and neglect some painful duties. So far from this, that he delights in the gospel-constitution, because it requires universal holiness, and heaven would be less agreeable, were he to carry even the least sin thither. He thinks it no hardship that he must deny himself in his sinful pleasures, and habituate himself to so much strictness in religion; no, but he blesses the Lord for obliging him to it, and where he fails he charges himself with it, and is self-abased upon the account.

This is solid rational religion fit to be depended upon, in opposition to antinomian licentious-

centiousness, the freaks of enthusiasm, and the irrational flights of passion and imagination on the one hand; and in opposition to formality, meer morality, and the self-sprung religion of nature on the other. And is it not evident we are destitute of this by nature? Men naturally are averse to this gospel method of salvation; they will not submit to the righteousness of God, but fix their dependence, in part at least, upon their own merit. Their proud hearts cannot bear the thought that all their performances must go for just nothing in their justification. They are also averse to the way of holiness; hence they will either abandon the expectation of heaven, and, since they cannot obtain it in their sinful ways, desperately conclude to go on in sin come what will; or, with all the little sophistry they are capable of, they will endeavour to widen the way to heaven, and persuade themselves they shall attain it, notwithstanding their continuance in some known iniquity, and though their hearts have never been thoroughly sanctified. Alas! how evident is this all around us! How many either give up their hopes of heaven rather than part with sin, or vainly hold them, while their dispositions and practices prove them groundless? And must not such degenerate creatures be renewed, ere they can be holy, or see the Lord?

4. Holiness consists in an habitual delight in all the duties of holiness towards God and man, and an earnest desire for communion with God
in

in them. This is the natural result of all the foregoing particulars. If we love God for his holiness, we shall delight in that service in which our conformity to him consists; if we love his law, we shall delight in that obedience which it enjoins; and if we take complacence in the evangelical method of salvation, we shall take delight in that holiness without which we cannot enjoy it. The service of GOD is the element, the pleasure of an holy soul; while others delight in the riches, the honours, or the pleasures of this world, the holy soul desires one thing of the Lord, that it may behold his beauty while enquiring in his temple, *Psal. xxvii. 4.* Such a person delights in retired converse with heaven in meditation and prayer, *Psal. cxxxix. 17. and lxiii. 5, 6. and lxxiii. 28.* He also takes pleasure in justice, benevolence, and charity towards men, *Psal. cxii. 5, 9.* and in the strictest temperance and sobriety, *1 Cor. ix. 27.*

Moreover, the meer formality of performing religious duties does not satisfy a true saint, unless he enjoys a divine freedom therein, receives communications of grace from heaven, and finds his graces quickened, *Psal. xlii. 1, 2.*

This consideration also shews us that holiness in us must be supernatural, for do we naturally thus delight in the service of GOD? or do you all now thus delight in it? is it not rather a weariness to you, and do you not find more pleasure in other things? Surely you must be
changed

changed, or you can have no relish for the enjoyment of heavenly happiness.

5. To constitute us saints indeed there must be universal holiness in practice. This naturally follows from the last, for as the body obeys the stronger volitions of the will, so when the heart is prevailingly disposed to the service of GOD, the man will habitually practise it. This is generally mentioned in scripture as the grand characteristic of real religion, without which all our pretensions are vain, 1 *John* iii. 3—10. and v. 3. *John* xv. 14. True christians are far from being perfect in practice, yet they are prevailingly holy in all manner of conversation; they do not live habitually in any one known sin, or wilfully neglect any one known duty, *Psal.* cxix. 6.

Without this practical holiness no man shall see the Lord; and if so, how great a change must be wrought on most before they can see him, for how few are thus adorned with a life of universal holiness? Many profess the name of CHRIST, but how few of them depart from iniquity? But to what purpose do they call him Master and Lord, while they do not the things which he commands them?

Thus I have as plainly as I could described the nature and properties of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord; and they who are possessed of it may lift up their heads with joy, assured that GOD has begun a good work in them, and that he will carry it on; and on

on the other hand, they that are destitute of it may be assured, that, unless they are made new creatures, they cannot see the Lord. I come,

II. To shew you the endeavours we should use to obtain this holiness. And they are such as these.

1. Endeavour to know whether you are holy or not by close examination. It is hard indeed for some to know positively that they are holy, as they are perplexed with the appearances of realities, and the fears of counterfeits; but it is easy for many to conclude negatively that they are not holy, as they have not the likeness of it. To determine this point is of great use to our successful seeking after holiness. That an unregenerate sinner should attend on the means of grace with other aims than one that has reason to believe himself sanctified, is evident. The anxieties, sorrows, desires, and endeavours of the one should run in a very different channel from those of the other. The one should look upon himself as a guilty condemned sinner, the other should allow himself the pleasure of a justified state; the one should pursue after the implantation, the other after the increase of holiness: the one should indulge a seasonable concern about his lost condition, the other repose an humble confidence in God as reconciled to him: the one should look upon the threatenings of God as his doom, the other embrace the promises as his portion. Hence it follows

follows that, while we are mistaken about our state, we cannot use endeavours after holiness in a proper manner. We act like a physician that applies medicines at random, without knowing the disease. It is a certain conclusion that the most generous charity, under scriptural limitations, cannot avoid, that multitudes are destitute of holiness, and ought not we to enquire with proper anxiety whether we belong to that number? Let us be impartial, and proceed according to evidence. If we find those marks of holiness in heart and life which have been mentioned, let not an excessive scrupulosity frighten us from drawing the happy conclusion: and, if we find them not, let us exercise so much wholesome severity against ourselves, as honestly to conclude we are unholy sinners, and must be renewed before we can see the Lord. The conclusion no doubt will give you painful anxiety, but if you was my dearest friend, I could not form a kinder wish for you than that you might be incessantly distressed with it till you are born again. This conclusion will not be always avoidable; the light of eternity will force you upon it; and whether is it better to give way to it now, when it may be to your advantage, or be forced to admit it then, when it will be only a torment?

2. Awake, arise, and betake yourself in earnest to all the means of grace. Your life, your eternal life is concerned, and therefore it calls for all the ardor and earnestness you are capable

ble of exerting. Accustom yourself to meditation, converse with yourselves in retirement, and live no longer strangers at home. Read the word of GOD and other good books, with diligence, attention, and self-application. Attend on the public ministrations of the gospel, not as a trifler, but as one that sees his eternal All concerned. Shun the tents of sin, the rendezvous of sinners, and associate with those that have experienced the change you want, and can give you proper directions. Prostrate yourselves before the GOD of heaven, confess your sin, implore his mercy, cry to him night and day, and give him no rest, till the importunity prevail, and you take the kingdom of heaven by violence.

But after all, acknowledge that it is GOD that must work in you both to will and to do, and that when you have done all these things you are but unprofitable servants. I do not prescribe these directions as though these means could effect holiness in you, no, they can no more do it, than a pen can write without a hand. It is the holy Spirit's province alone to sanctify a degenerate sinner, but he is wont to do it while we are waiting upon him in the use of these means; though our best endeavours give us no title to his grace, but he may justly leave us after all in that state of condemnation and corruption into which we have voluntarily brought ourselves. I go on,

III. And

III. And lastly, to urge you to the use of these means from the consideration mentioned in the text, the absolute necessity of holiness to the enjoyment of heavenly happiness.

Here I would shew that holiness is absolutely necessary, and that the consideration of its necessity may strongly enforce the pursuit of it.

The necessity of holiness appears from the unchangeable appointment of heaven, and the nature of things.

1. The unchangeable appointment of GOD excludes all the unholy from the kingdom of heaven; see *1 Cor.* ix. 6. *Rev.* xxi. 27. *Psal.* v. 4, 5. *2 Cor.* v. 17. *Gal.* vi. 15. It is most astonishing that many who profess to believe the divine authority of the scriptures, will yet indulge vain hopes of heaven, in opposition to the plainest declarations of eternal truth. But though there were no positive constitution excluding the unholy from heaven, yet,

2. The very nature of things excludes sinners from heaven; that is, it is impossible in the nature of things, that, while they are unholy, they could receive happiness from the employments and entertainments of the heavenly world. If these consisted in the affluence of those things which sinners delight in here, if its enjoyments were earthly riches, pleasures, and honours, if its employments were the amusements of the present life, then they might be happy there, as far as their sordid natures are capable of happiness. But these trifles have no place in heaven.

ven. The felicity of that state consists in the contemplation of the divine perfections, and their displays in the works of creation, providence, and redemption; hence is it described by seeing the Lord, *Matt.* v. 8. and as a state of knowledge, *1 Cor.* xiii. 10—12. in the satisfaction resulting thence, *Psal.* xvii. 15. and a complacency in God as a portion, *Psal.* lxxiii. 25, 26. and in perpetual serving and praising the Lord; and hence adoration is generally mentioned as the employ of all the hosts of heaven. These are the entertainments of heaven, and they that cannot find supreme happiness in these cannot find it in heaven. But it is evident these things could afford no satisfaction to an unholy person. He would pine away at the heavenly feast, for want of appetite for the entertainment; an holy GOD would be an object of horror rather than delight to him, and his service would be a weariness, as it is now. Hence it appears that if we do not place our supreme delight in these things here, we cannot be happy hereafter; for there will be no change of dispositions in a future state, but only the perfection of those predominant in us here, whether good or evil. Either heaven must be changed, or the sinner, before he can be happy there. Hence also it appears that GOD'S excluding such from heaven is no more an act of cruelty than our not admitting a sick man to a feast, who has no relish for the entertainments; or not bringing
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a blind man into the light of the sun, or to view a beautiful prospect.

We see then that holiness is absolutely necessary; and what a great inducement should this consideration be to pursue it? If we do not see the Lord, we shall never see good. We are cut off at death from all earthly enjoyments, and can no longer make experiments to satisfy our unbounded desires with them, and we have no GOD to supply their room. We are banished from all the joys of heaven, and how vast, how inconceivably vast the loss! We are doomed to the regions of darkness for ever, to bear the vengeance of eternal fire, to feel the lashes of a guilty conscience, and to spend an eternity in an horrid intimacy with infernal ghosts; and will we not then rather follow holiness, than incur so dreadful a doom? By the terrors of the Lord then be persuaded to break off your sins by righteousness, and follow holiness "with-
" out which no man shall see the Lord."

The END of the FIRST VOLUME.

W. H. L.



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